

INSPECTION REPORT

**WOLSINGHAM SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**

Wolsingham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114297

Headteacher: Mrs U Y S O'Reilly

Reporting inspector: J W Ashton
4492

Dates of inspection: 31 March – 4 April 2003

Inspection number: 254207

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Leazes Lane
Wolsingham
Bishop Auckland

Postcode: DL13 3DN

Telephone number: 01388 527 302

Fax number: 01388 528 173

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Donaghy

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4492	John Ashton	Registered inspector	Citizenship English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
10361	Frank Evans	Co-ordinator of sixth form inspection	Religious education	
19366	Bill Walker	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Best value
4926	Thelma Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics	Numeracy Assessment
27201	Clive Ashworth	Team inspector	English/Drama	Literacy
23246	John Mitchell	Team inspector	Science Biology Physics	
1759	Geoffrey Edwards	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	

15950	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art and design Business education	
17331	Pauline Rourke	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
10275	John Cosgrove	Team inspector	History	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development Staffing
20287	Desmond Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Education inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23499	Howard Seymour	Team inspector	Music	Resources Accommodation
12985	Shirley Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	Careers Work experience Extra-curricular activities

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	11
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	14
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	19
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	22
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	28
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	31
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	32
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	36
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	38
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	44
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	72

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wolsingham School and Community College is a medium sized 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school in the village of Wolsingham, in Weardale, 15 miles west of the city of Durham. Its roll is currently 887, including 131 in the sixth form. It draws pupils and sixth form students from a very wide area, including many from isolated rural communities. The school has pupils from across the full attainment range, but overall levels of attainment are below average on entry to the school. Average proportions of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, and unemployment is growing locally following the recent closure of the two largest nearby employers. There are 193 pupils on the school's register for pupils with special educational needs including two in the sixth form. As a proportion of the school's roll this is well above the national average. Twenty nine pupils have statements of special educational needs, mainly for moderate learning and emotional and behavioural difficulties, a proportion of the school's roll that is a little above the national average. There are virtually no pupils for whom English is an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wolsingham School and Community College is a successful school. It is well led and managed. Teaching is generally good and much of it is excellent. Consequently, pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form achieve well compared to their standards on entry to the school. The school therefore provides good value for the money it receives.

What the school does well

- Pupils' achievement throughout the main school and in the sixth form is good, compared to their prior attainment, the result of good quality teaching and learning in most subject areas.
- The A* and A grades in the 2002 GCSE results were above average, illustrating well the good provision for higher attaining pupils.
- Leadership and management are good in almost all areas of the school.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships with each other, and with the staff, are good.
- Very good use is made of performance data to monitor pupils' achievement.
- Geography provision is very good.
- Links with the community, including partner schools, and provision for pupils' social and moral development are all very good.
- The taught curriculum is broader than average, and extra-curricular provision is much better than a school which buses in so many pupils would be expected to provide.

What could be improved

- The present provision for French is unsatisfactory.
- The targets in the individual education plans for pupils with special education needs are not as clear and helpful as they could be.
- The co-ordination of design and technology across its two constituent areas is weak.
- Indoor provision for physical education is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not always monitored effectively enough to improve the pockets of weakness, nor is the excellent practice found in some subjects disseminated widely enough.

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 November 1996. Since then it has made good progress in virtually all the areas then listed as needing improvement and it has the capacity for further improvement. For instance:

- Performance data is used extensively to target the raising of levels of attainment of pupils throughout the school.
- The clarity and direction of the school's development planning have been improved by reducing the number of targets, ensuring that they are adequately resourced and co-ordinated, providing performance indicators, relating them to staff development needs and to a longer-term plan.
- Governors are more fully involved in strategic and financial planning and in monitoring the school's progress.
- The effectiveness of curriculum management has been improved.
- Pupils' attendance and the procedures for recording attendance have both improved.
- The spiritual and cultural dimensions of the school curriculum are now respectively satisfactory and good.
- Subject areas are now better resourced.
- The management of health and safety in the school is now good overall.

There are still weaknesses, however, in the provision for pupils with special educational needs, particularly the clarity and quality of targets in their Individual Education Plans.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
End of Key Stage 3 tests	C	C	D	C
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	C
A-levels/AS-levels		E	*	

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

** National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.*

On average, overall levels of attainment on entry to the school are below average in the core subjects English, mathematics and science. The school's improvement in results by the end of Year 9 matches the national trend of improvement. Compared to the results for similar schools these results matched the national average in 2002. Overall GCSE results have risen slightly over the past five years in line with improvement nationally. In 2002 they are below average overall, but match the average for similar schools.

Average point scores for sixth form students taking A and AS levels in 2002 were well below those for all schools nationally. Most students entered for advanced vocational examinations achieved in line with predicted grades based on their prior attainment.

Pupils achieve well by making better progress than might be expected from their starting points in most subjects in Years 7 to 11. Only in French was achievement less than satisfactory for any year groups in the main school in 2002. Of the subject areas inspected in depth in the sixth form, there are none in which students significantly underachieved compared to their predicted grades. Higher grades of A or B were gained by Year 13 students in the A2 examinations in mathematics, English

language, geography, physics, and art. In the AS examinations, Year 12 students gained higher grades in biology, chemistry, physics, English language, English literature, fine art, photography, music, geography, history, religious education and German.

In 2002, the school fell short of its agreed performance targets for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE grades A* to C and for at least one A* to G grade, but matched its target for average GCSE scores overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good overall. Pupils appreciate the pleasant environment provided for them and treat the premises and other property with respect.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. There is generally a good learning environment in lessons. The school is an orderly community between lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Very good relationships are reflected in a strong sense of community. Pupils benefit from the good quality of the personal, social and moral education provided.
Attendance	Satisfactory in that it matches the national average. The great majority of pupils are punctual and a prompt start is generally made to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall in the main school, including in all three of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. The result of this good teaching is good quality learning. Teaching and learning are both very good overall in the sixth form. There was some excellent teaching and learning in mathematics, art and design, geography, history, and Spanish in the main school, and in geography and business education in the sixth form. There was very good teaching and learning in most subjects across the school, but especially in English, mathematics, art and design, history, Spanish, music and citizenship in the main school, and in English, mathematics, physics, art and design and religious education in the sixth form. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory and improving. The teaching of numeracy is good overall, but there are still some inconsistencies in practice in the development of mental arithmetic skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall and improved since the last inspection. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall in that pupils with special educational needs have access to the same curriculum as other pupils, but enhanced also by alternative additions to the curriculum. The highest attaining pupils have good opportunities to take GCSE a year early in one of two subjects.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral and social development is very good, that for cultural development is good. Spiritual provision, poor at the last inspection, is now satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. It values and cares well for them all, and very good use is made of performance data to monitor pupils' achievement.

The school has worked very hard to establish constructive links with parents. Overall, the partnership between school and home has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Clear and determined leadership from the headteacher is backed up by a strong senior management team. Pastoral leadership is strong and effective. Curriculum leadership is generally good. Co-ordination of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is an area for further development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. Almost all legal duties have been satisfactorily fulfilled. The governing body supports the school well and is fully in touch with the school's financial position, a significant weakness at the time the present headteacher joined the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school evaluates its performance effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are used well in the main. Senior staff and governors understand and apply well the principles of best value.

Staffing is adequate and generally matches the needs of the curriculum. Almost all subjects are at least adequately resourced and in several departments resource levels are now good. There has been a significant improvement in accommodation since the last inspection. The lack of a dedicated space for indoor games continues to have a prejudicial impact on physical education and the space in the dining area is rather cramped.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress. • They are taught by good teachers who expect them to work hard. • Standards of behaviour are good. • Their children are happy at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework practice. • The information about their children's progress. • The extent to which the school works with parents.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive comments. They also found that in the recent past some end-of-year reports have tended to be a little too descriptive rather than giving information on how pupils might improve. Inspectors found homework was being set during the inspection but that the use of the homework planners to monitor it was inconsistent across tutor groups. On this particular issue the school has worked and continues to work hard to involve parents on how to take things forward.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11 - 18 school is smaller than most sixth forms. Currently, there are 131 students compared with the average size nationally of 171 students. Students enter the sixth form mainly from the main school and a few (11 in the present sixth form) come from other schools. Numbers rose from 102 students in 2000/01 to 131 at present. Projected figures for September 2003 suggest that numbers will increase even further. There are slightly more female than male students. All students are well supported in the sixth form. Overall, when joining they have below average points scores at GCSE. Students mainly follow AS and A level courses or a blend of AS and advanced vocational courses. Currently, 27 advanced level qualifications are offered to students. These include after-school courses administered as part of the community college provision. Increasing numbers of students - half the students in 2002/03 - move on to higher education. The projection for 2003/04 is that just over four fifths of the present Year 13 students will do so.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is good and a strength of the school. It is effective in meeting the needs of its students and is financially cost effective. Although many students enter the sixth form with lower levels of attainment than is usual, their achievement, measured in terms of progress from their starting points on entry, is generally good. The sixth form is growing in size and larger proportions of students continue on to higher education each year. The leadership of the sixth form team is very good. Student attendance is good. Students work hard and are very happy to be in the sixth form.

Strengths

- Student achievement, compared to their standards on entry, is good.
- Teaching in the sixth form is very good and leads to very good learning.
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are very good, both socially and academically.
- The breadth of curricular provision, which seeks to provide each student with credible and accredited pathways to learning is good and reflects the inclusive nature of the sixth form.
- The advice, support and guidance offered to students are very good and contribute to the atmosphere of warmth, friendship and respect that permeates the sixth form.
- There are very good procedures for assessing the students' attainment and monitoring their academic progress.
- The provision for geography is very good.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.

What could be improved

- Examination results are low overall.
- Students' social and work areas are not as distinct as they should be so that students do not have quiet working areas when they need them.

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. Very good teaching is leading to good achievement. Relationships are very good. Leadership and management are very good.
Biology	Satisfactory. Standards are below average. There is some underachievement in Year 12. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and relationships between students and teachers are very good.
Physics	Good. Standards are below average. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good for some. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teaching and management are good.
Business education	Good. The quality of teaching is having a very positive effect upon the quality of learning. As a consequence standards are rising and achievement is good.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Standards are below average but students are achieving as predicted. Achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Art and design	Good. Standards are improving because of the quality of teaching. Achievement is good, expectations are high and therefore students learn very well.
Geography	Very good. Achievement is very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated, work hard and enjoy geography. Large numbers of students from a wide range of prior experience and attainment are very well provided for.
History	Good. Purposeful teaching, in a good learning environment, promotes consistent standards for well motivated students who, in order to gain the high examination grades, need to be trained to convey the complexity of historical interpretation in relatively clear and concise terms.
English Literature	Good. Good teaching and learning is helping students to do better than their GCSE results predicted. Relationships are very good and students enjoy the course.

At least one lesson was also observed in each of further mathematics, chemistry, design and technology, information and communication technology, health and social care, music, drama, media studies, religious education, ethics, psychology, English language, French, Spanish and German. The teaching and learning in these lessons were very good in drama, media studies, ethics, information and communication technology and religious education. They were good in further mathematics, health and social care, music, psychology and English language. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed in the sixth form.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Sixth form managers and tutors create an atmosphere of warmth and trust in which students flourish. The provision for developing life and learning skills is very good and students are encouraged to be reflective and confident. There is very good advice and support for those wishing to go on to higher education or employment.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. From entry into the sixth form, students are carefully and consistently monitored and advised to ensure that they achieve as well as they can. Sixth form management promotes inclusiveness through the range of courses on offer and the opportunities the sixth form offers to all students. Data are used very effectively to track achievement and targets are regularly set to raise attainment. Sixth form managers and tutors contribute to the very positive learning atmosphere in the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enthusiasm and approachability of the teachers. • The friendly atmosphere in the sixth form - it is a happy place to be. • The quality of the advice, support and guidance offered to students. • The wide range of resources available in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are not enough computers and it is difficult to get access to them. • Better study areas are needed where they can work quietly.

The strengths and areas for improvement identified by the students are well founded. Although there are increasing numbers of computers in the school, they are still not yet available in some subject areas. The new sixth form centre provides an excellent social area but students do at times have difficulties finding quiet areas to study.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entry to the school, standards overall are consistently below average and in some respects well below average, confirmed by national test results in Year 6 and standardised testing of pupils early in Year 7.
2. At the end of Year 9, the results achieved by pupils in the national tests in English, mathematics and science in 2002 were below the national average in all three of the core subjects English, mathematics and science. The results matched the national average when compared with the results of similar schools (those with equally high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals). Overall results have improved over the past five years in line with improvements nationally, although 2002 was a dip year for all three subjects.
3. Overall GCSE results have also improved steadily over the last five years, broadly in line with the national trend, but again 2002 was a dip year which went against the trend, and overall attainment is below the national average but matches the average for similar schools. Girls outperformed boys overall in 2002 as in most previous years recently, though not when national differences between the results of boys and girls were taken into account.
4. GCSE results in English in 2002 were well below average compared to national figures and English Literature results were similarly well below average. Results have fluctuated slightly over recent years with 2001 and 2002 showing the lowest percentages of A*-C grades. Staffing and leadership turbulence in the English department during this period partially explain this decline, since these factors affected pupils' preparation for their examinations, their coursework in particular.
5. Mathematics GCSE results in 2002 were better than previous years with those taking the examination gaining an average score which was similar to the national picture. In the current Year 11 thirty-two pupils already have GCSE A* to C grades and some have begun further studies in mathematics.
6. In science, standards near the end of Year 11 are close to the national average and pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Although the proportion of pupils achieving at least grade C in the 2002 GCSE examinations is a little below the national average, almost all pupils reached at least grade G and the proportion reaching the very high grades of A and A* was significantly above the national average. On average, pupils achieve better in science than in many of their other subjects.
7. GCSE results in other subjects in 2002 were all significantly below the national average in terms of average scores, except for geography which matched and physical education which exceeded the national averages for each subject respectively.
8. Standards currently seen in lessons and in pupils' written work were often judged to be exceeding the most recent test and examination results. The year 2002 was a 'dip' year, a consequence of disturbances caused to the continuity of the pupils' education by the foot and mouth epidemic, particularly severe in this area. For example, work scrutiny and lesson observations in English showed standards to be somewhat higher than suggested by the 2002 examination results but still just below

average overall, and standards in mathematics were seen to be better in this year's than in last year's Year 11.

9. Standards of literacy on entry to the school are below and sometimes well below average. By the end of Year 9, in English for example, standards have improved considerably. However, grasp of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammatical structures remains a problem for all but the highest attaining pupils as they progress through the school.
10. Standards of attainment in numeracy are below average by the end of Year 9. Pupils have lower than average mental arithmetic skills and this impedes learning. Nevertheless they have sufficient skills to support learning in other subjects. By the end of Year 11 those with lower attainment have a secure grounding in basic written calculation forms and graph work. They sometimes find the requirements of other subjects, for example science, difficult. Those with high and average attainment produce very good graph work and data analysis and use their skills effectively in other subjects. For example, in history the pupils interpret the statistics of death effectively and in physical education they use graphs well to present data. By the end of Year 11, numeracy skills are satisfactory overall. Pupils achieve well due to the good provision and teaching, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11. Mental arithmetic calculations remain a difficulty for those with lower attainment.
11. By the end of Year 9 in 2002, pupils' achievement compared to their prior attainment on entry to the school was good in most subjects, in other words in English, science, art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) geography, history, Spanish and physical education. In almost all the other subjects it was satisfactory. Only in French was achievement less than satisfactory, because of the staffing difficulties in the modern foreign languages department.
12. By the end of Year 11 in 2002, pupil achievement compared to their prior attainment was again good in most subjects, in other words in mathematics, science, art and design, ICT, Spanish, music and physical education. It was again unsatisfactory only in French.
13. In work seen during the inspection, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs in Year 9 was generally good especially in lessons where teachers work hard to support them individually. The overall quality of the work of many, however, is adversely affected by the slow rate of working in lessons so that much of their work is unfinished and their understanding incomplete.
14. At the end of Year 11 in 2002 eight per cent of pupils left school with no passes at GCSE, twice the national average. Almost all pupils following the Youth Award course obtained an appropriate level of qualification. In work seen during the inspection, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs in Year 11 was generally good.
15. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils in GCSE examinations in 2002 was good. In many subjects, in particular in science, design and technology, physical education and geography, the proportion of pupils gaining A* was at or above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A* or A grades was at or above average in a majority of subjects. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school this is a high level of achievement. Attainment is outstanding amongst pupils studying geography where many of the highest grades are attained by pupils in Year 10, who then successfully continue their studies at AS level in Year 11.

16. In 2002, the school fell short of its agreed performance targets for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE grades A* to C and for at least one A* to G grade, but matched its target for average GCSE scores overall. The school is confident that it should achieve its high aspirational targets for 2003.

Sixth form

17. By the end of Year 13, the standards achieved by students in the sixth form are well below average overall for both male and female students when compared to those seen nationally. For example, in 2001 the average points score per candidate of students who were entered for two or more GCE Advanced level (A levels) or the advanced supplementary (AS level) equivalent was 10.3 which is well below the national average of 17.4. The results for 2002 are below those of 2001.
18. The results for 2002 show that students gained few passes at the higher grades of A or B, in fact, the lowest number the school has achieved in recent years. (9.9 per cent in 2002, 18.9 per cent in 2001 compared to 33.3 per cent in 2000.) The school data shows that the school's sixth form results were improving in 1999 and in 2000 the results matched the national average but then they dipped in 2001 and dipped further in 2002.
19. There are two major reasons for this large variation from year to year and for the dip towards 2002. The A and AS level results in 2001 and 2002 were affected by the severe outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the Spring of 2001, with all the travel restrictions imposed at this time. Just over a third of the students were affected. Some were unable to attend school at this time or had to live away from home for long periods due to travel restrictions. The results were even more affected by the loss of a large number of higher attaining pupils to colleges elsewhere. In September 2000, 17 out of the 20 highest attaining Year 11 pupils, who would normally have entered the sixth form, left to escape the disruption to the school caused by the complete rebuilding of the new sixth form block.
20. This said, the school has firm evidence based on value added calculations that those students left behind, those who stayed on at Wolsingham instead of leaving to escape the disruption, actually achieved as predicted by their GCSE results or sometimes better, as in mathematics, art and English literature. Of the subject areas inspected in depth, there are none in which students significantly underachieved compared to their predicted grades. Higher grades of A or B were gained by Year 13 students in the A2 examinations in mathematics, English language, geography, physics, and art. In the AS examinations, Year 12 students gained higher grades in biology, chemistry, physics, English language, English literature, fine art, photography, music, geography, history, religious education and German.
21. It was a similar picture in the vocational subjects. For example, in 2002, eight of the seventeen students in their first year of the Advanced Vocation Certificate of Education (AVCE) ICT course performed better than their predicted grades and a further five performed in line with their expected grades. Twenty students enrolled for the AVCE in 2002, of which only half had an average GCSE points score of 5 or above. Significantly forty-three of the forty-eight sixth form students achieved a pass in the 2002 Key Skills external test.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. The attitude to school of the great majority of pupils, their behaviour in class, in moving about the campus and during their leisure periods, are very good. These

aspects are now a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with their colleagues and with members of staff. Their personal development is good. Attendance is broadly in line with other schools nationally. This again is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when an unsatisfactory level of attendance was considered to have a negative effect on the progress of some pupils. The school has made good, and in many respects very good, progress in this whole area over recent years.

23. Pupils at Wolsingham are proud of their school. They appreciate the pleasant environment provided for them and treat the premises and other property with respect. Despite the time which many of them spend in travelling to school, most pupils arrive in good spirits and in sufficient time to enable the teachers to make a prompt start to the day. They speak well of their teachers and say they enjoy many of their lessons, as well as the many activities out of school hours which are made available to them. In lessons the great majority of pupils behave very well. They listen to their teachers, collaborate effectively, and apply themselves conscientiously to their work. A few pupils are less attentive, become easily distracted, particularly when the pace of a lesson slows, and sometimes by their manner cause disruption in lessons. Such incidents are more often found amongst younger pupils. The evidence of the inspection suggests that as pupils mature, and become more familiar with the demands of secondary education, their attitude in the classroom becomes more responsible. There is generally a good learning environment in lessons. About the school, pupils move in a calm and purposeful way. Most observe social norms, such as holding open doors for others and deferring to adults. They are courteous, polite and pleasant. During meal times pupils queue patiently and generally show good manners in eating their food. About the school grounds they socialise or engage in sporting activities in a mature and civilised manner. The school is an orderly community. No evidence of oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection, and whilst pupils recognise that bullying does occur from time to time, they showed no concerns about it. They appreciate the part played by student counsellors in allaying their fears and express confidence that members of staff would quickly resolve any significant problems.
24. An unusually high proportion of pupils and students travel to and from school by bus and this is the source of a particular behavioural problem. Both parents and pupils have drawn attention to occasions when some pupils take advantage of the lack of supervision to be disorderly and aggressive, or to engage in inappropriate activity such as smoking. At such times the pupils are not, of course, the responsibility of the school, although the headteacher and governors are very conscious that such matters adversely affect both the welfare of pupils and the reputation of the school. Firm action has led to the withdrawal of bus passes when incidents come to light, and members of staff travel with the pupils whenever it is possible to do so. The problem continues to be monitored by both the school management and by pupils through their school council. The perception of pupils is that there has been a significant improvement in recent years.
25. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last three years. The number of fixed term exclusions is in line with the national average. Over the last three years there has been a slight increase in the number but this is a reflection of a deliberate policy to use this sanction consistently whenever there is any violence shown towards other pupils. Detailed records are kept. The governors are fully involved when appropriate and proper procedures are followed.
26. This is an inclusive school where very good relationships are reflected in a strong sense of community. Teachers and other members of the school staff work well as a

team. They share a common commitment to the well-being of their pupils, and this communicates itself to those in their charge. Pupils learn to value each other. This is shown, for example, by the way in which pupils in class listen to the opinions of their colleagues; it was illustrated in a Year 7 assembly when spontaneous applause greeted awards for sporting success or personal achievement. Pupils consistently work well together, socialise amicably and generally enjoy each other's company. There are tensions, quite often related to issues quite extraneous to the school, but pupils recognise the limits of acceptable behaviour within school premises and generally comply with the rules.

27. Personal development is good. Pupils new to the school soon experience the mature and caring attitude of older colleagues, some who support them through their induction week in the Summer term, and others who act as friends and advisers as they settle into their new and very much larger surroundings. They find peer counsellors to support them should they feel threatened by overbearing or oppressive behaviour, and through the "House" system they quickly establish a bond with other pupils which cuts across year groupings. In the words of some Year 7 pupils, "There is always someone to talk to.", "They always make you feel welcome.", "It is very safe here." Some pupils go on to represent their form or year group in the school council and members have been successful in achieving much for the benefit of their peers. Over recent months they have secured reviews of homework provision, meal prices and wet weather accommodation; they have drawn attention to misbehaviour in the library and on the buses, publicised external counselling services and reached an agreement on the availability of drinking water in the classrooms. They are an effective and respected body who contribute significantly to day-to-day life in the school. There is scope for pupils to assume a wider role in organising their own work and for older pupils to take a more active, whole school role in the daily routines of school life. The school has made much progress in this area since the previous inspection.
28. The school has taken firm action to improve attendance, following criticism in the previous inspection report. Members of staff have worked closely with the education welfare officer to encourage more regular attendance. Unfortunately the support of the local authority has been adversely affected recently by recruitment and retention difficulties in that office. Good use of new technology has been made to record, collate and analyse data, and difficulties with the computer programme are now being resolved. Good progress has been made. In only one year group does attendance fall slightly below 90 per cent. Overall, levels are now broadly in line with those found nationally, and above those found within the local education authority area. The rates of unauthorised absence compare favourably with the national trend. The great majority of pupils are punctual and a prompt start is generally made to lessons.
29. The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs is good in most lessons. Mostly, they are interested in their work and are keen to succeed. Occasionally they need extra encouragement to persist with work but most teachers are alert to this and pupils respond well to individual support and encouragement.

Sixth form

30. Students in the Sixth Form are serious about their work. Most attend regularly and on time, keen to start the day and become involved in the life of the school. They are very happy to discuss their work with visitors, speaking warmly about their tutors and often with enthusiasm about their courses. Their behaviour in lessons is usually very good and in about one quarter of the lessons observed it was considered to be

excellent. They listen well, apply themselves conscientiously and take much pride in the preparation and presentation of their work. When opportunities arise to work in pairs or small groups they show sensitivity to viewpoints which differ from their own, and are very willing to support others, particularly those who may be experiencing difficulty in completing their task. About the school, students behave in a mature and sensible way. They react well to the trust placed in them to organise their own non contact time and most, but not all students, make good use of quiet rooms to pursue their individual studies. They show appreciation for the very pleasant common room by maintaining modest noise levels and treating the property with commendable care. A few students play a leading role in the school council and in the House system, but most do not at present take an active part in the day-to day life and organisation of the school. Levels of attendance are good, particularly in Year 13, and compare very favourably with those in the main school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. Both teaching and learning in the main school are good across Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11. In nineteen out of every twenty of the 131 lessons seen in Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning were at least satisfactory. In just under two thirds of lessons seen they were at least good, and in one quarter they were at least very good. In a creditable seven lessons the teaching and learning were excellent. In only five lessons was either the teaching or the learning unsatisfactory and in only two lessons was either of them poor. This amounts to a substantial improvement in teaching and learning quality since the time of the previous inspection.
32. The excellent teaching and learning seen in the main school was in mathematics in Year 11, art and design in Year 7, geography in Years 10 and 11, history (two separate lessons in Year 7) and Spanish in Year 9. There was very good teaching and learning in most subjects, but especially in English in Years 10 and 11, mathematics in Years 9 and 11, art and design in Years 7 and 11, history in Years 7, 9 and 11, Spanish in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11, music in Years 7, 10 and 11 and citizenship in Years 7 and 9.
33. The better teaching and learning are memorable for the teachers' good command of their subjects, clear lesson objectives, very good classroom management skills, good levels of challenge, high expectations and brisk pace. In these lessons pupils were seen to respond well. They were attentive, interested and worked with concentration so their learning was good. They were clear about what was expected of them, were given sufficient time to complete tasks and completed them well and carefully. They were engaged by the lessons and took pride in their work. For example, pupils were seen to be learning Spanish very quickly because their teachers are so proficient in Spanish that they speak it persistently in lessons. Pupils in the best geography lessons were inspired by very high teacher expectations to do well and to become independent learners. The result in geography was high levels of success in GCSE and advanced level examinations a year early for large groups of pupils.
34. The unsatisfactory and poor teaching and learning were mainly in French and occasionally also in mathematics, geography and music. In French the problem is due to either temporary or unqualified and non-specialist teaching with a consequent lack of proficiency in the language and not using French in the classroom so that pupils have very little chance of hearing it spoken properly. The effect is that students do not learn to speak and little progress is made in their capacity to understand and react to the language in everyday situations. In mathematics a poor lesson was seen that was a direct result of unsatisfactory behaviour on April Fool's day. In geography, the shortcomings in teaching relate in particular to the written

work of some pupils being inaccurately and over-generously assessed. In music the less successful learning was when the lesson objectives were unclear to pupils and tasks lacked some appropriateness and a sufficient musical focus.

35. In some lessons where the teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, there were some shortcomings. One in particular, stands out, and concerns the teaching of pupils in some mixed ability groups in Years 7 and 8. For example, there is an over rigid adherence to covering targets in a given time in mathematics in Years 7 and 8. Thus not all pupils gain the necessary understanding or have enough time to consolidate their learning before the next concept is explained, despite teachers' efforts to prepare different tasks for pupils with different levels of attainment in each class. This leads to untidy and unfinished work in exercise books and a lack of pride in achievement. In a few science lessons, the learning of some pupils proceeds more slowly because the lesson does not cater adequately for the needs of everyone in the class, particularly in Years 7 and 8. In other instances, teaching strategies, such as lengthy whole class discussions, lose effectiveness because they do not take full account of the short concentration span of some pupils. In geography lessons, some pupils with special educational needs achieve less well as they do not always finish their work and their written expression is unclear, especially if tasks have not been modified to make them accessible.
36. Subject specialists teach pupils with special educational needs, either in mixed ability tutor groups or in smaller, ability related sets, so they experience the same quality of teaching as their peers. Many learn well as a result of work which is appropriately modified to meet their learning needs and good individual assistance offered by teachers. In many lessons however, the work is not sufficiently modified, so pupils struggle to complete tasks and sometimes fail to complete them in the available time and leave them unfinished. Setting arrangements in Years 10 and 11 make it easier for teachers to set work appropriate to the learning needs of pupils.
37. The quality of teaching in the special class in Year 7 for pupils with special educational needs varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Where teachers have developed suitable teaching strategies and materials and have developed appropriate expertise, as in an excellent, practically based history lesson on the storming of a castle, pupils are interested, work hard and learn very well. Their learning in some other subjects such as French where teachers have little knowledge and understanding of their needs is much less good.
38. Gifted and talented pupils are taught well as a result of much extra-curricular provision in many subjects. In art, PE and mathematics, good extension tasks and activities are provided in lessons and expectations are high. This is most notably the case in geography in Years 10 and 11, where pupils are entered early for GCSE and AS level with a high degree of success. In many other subjects, gifted and talented pupils are not challenged as well as they could be and extension activities are not commonly provided.
39. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory and improving. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors are corrected well in English and history but in some other subjects they are not. Most departments display key subject specific words well and some also use these actively in lessons. Few departments require extended reading beyond the immediate demands of the curriculum. On the other hand, several departments, for example, English, science, religious education and ICT do require pupils to produce extended writing. A number of subjects, for example, religious education, art, English and history encourage the skills of speaking and listening by

role-play, discussion, debate or presentations. ICT and the library are used well by some departments to further literacy skills.

40. The teaching of numeracy is good overall, and is strongest in Years 9,10 and 11. Mathematics teachers use the most recent national guidance to support learning in Years 7 and 8 and build on the different strategies for calculation that the pupils have developed in primary schools. These strategies are often carried over to other years. In the most effective lessons, pupils are asked to explain their strategies and select the method with which they are most comfortable. For example, in one very good lesson in Year 10 for lower attaining pupils, they worked through three different methods of calculating percentages and chose their own way of working. There are still some inconsistencies in practice in the development of mental arithmetic skills. In graph work, pupils are taught the importance of accuracy and careful labelling, and this is re-enforced in subjects such as science and geography. Specific data-handling skills, using spreadsheets, are taught well in ICT.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form

41. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good overall. In just under eight out of every ten of the 47 lessons seen, teaching was at least good and in the remaining lessons it was satisfactory. Teaching in more than four lessons in every ten was very good, and in one in eleven lessons it was excellent. There were no unsatisfactory or poor lessons. The resulting learning was equally very good, overall. This is remarkable in some subjects, for example religious education, where some students have not studied that subject at GCSE.
42. Excellent teaching and learning was seen in AVCE business education and geography. These lessons are characterised by the high quality interaction between teachers and students, brisk pace and challenging and demanding questions which are focused accurately on a task or an examination question. In business education, students show a high level of independent learning and a very good understanding of what an examination question requires of them. In geography, where the students are in Year 12, following the A level course a year early, teaching is lively, engaging, well paced and challenging. In both subjects the effect of such excellent teaching is that the students develop confidence in learning because their knowledge and understanding of facts and concepts is very secure. This, together with encouragement from the teachers by well directed questions, which make the students think hard, results in excellent learning. Students are not 'spoon-fed' with information but carefully directed to seek it, either in the subject or from elsewhere, and use their research to consolidate or extend their knowledge. This leads to high standards and creates an enthusiasm for learning.
43. Teaching in the sixth form leads to very good learning overall. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and very good relationships with their students. Lessons are well planned and show an understanding of student's learning needs. For example, in mathematics, this leads to working rigorously through all stages of a problem to develop the understanding of concepts and skills, which results in very good learning. ICT skills are used as an integral part of the course in physics. Where lessons are sometimes satisfactory rather than good or very good it is often because teachers are too directive, talking for too long and not encouraging students to be involved as more independent learners either through researching a topic or, as in history, taking part in debates about historical problems.

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

44. Since the previous inspection the school has made a number of important improvements to the curriculum. This is particularly true of the provision for pupils with learning needs who now enjoy much better access to the curriculum. Provision for ICT and art, criticised in the previous report, is now good. The school now meets its obligations to provide religious education for all of its pupils. The improved structure of the school day has benefited everyone in the community, and extra-curricular activities, previously mentioned as being patchy, are now very good. Taken together, therefore, the curriculum now provides a good breadth of experience for all of its pupils in Years 7 to 11. It also satisfies all of the requirements of the National Curriculum.
45. In their first three years in the school pupils study all subjects of the National Curriculum and follow courses in religious education, drama and personal, social and health education. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from weekly lessons in thinking skills through mathematics and design technology, and ICT, taught as a separate subject. When they enter the school in Year 7 pupils also have the choice of one of three foreign languages to start. The long-term absence of the head of the modern foreign languages department has delayed the introduction of the second language in Year 8. A particular innovation in the Year 7 curriculum is the creation this year of a small "shelter" group to help pupils with learning needs make an easier transition to secondary school. Pupils in this group have made good progress overall.
46. For pupils in Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is also good. The school has made strong progress in the past few years in providing work-orientated courses for pupils who struggle with their more academic mainstream subjects. Courses leading to applied GCSE and GNVQ qualifications attract good numbers of pupils and can be taken side by side with conventional GCSE subjects. A small number of pupils with learning needs follow a specially tailored curriculum in Year 11 concentrating on life skills and survival in the workplace in addition to examination subjects. In Year 10, also, a group of pupils deemed to be at risk of dropping out of education follows a special programme that includes an afternoon per week at a college of further education on practical courses. This works very well and is entirely relevant to the needs of these disaffected young people.
47. The curriculum also caters very well for the needs of the highest-attaining pupils. In mathematics and geography, pupils in the top sets in Year 10 take GCSE one year early. This enables them to retake GCSE in Year 11 if they need to improve their grades, or, in most cases, to start studying for AS level a year early. In English, also, pupils have a choice of taking a course in literature or media studies in addition to English language. A few of the highest attaining pupils are doing all three. This is unusually good provision.
48. The broad choice of foreign languages in Years 7, 8 and 9 works against the interest of keen linguists in Years 10 and 11 who want to continue studying two languages. The combinations of languages needed to offer this option are such that groups would be unfeasibly small. The result of this is that no one in Years 10 and 11 is learning two languages, even though most of them learnt two in Years 8 and 9 and a few would have liked to continue with both. This is an area of weakness which the school management is currently taking steps to put right. The amount of time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11, while enough to satisfy the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, is insufficient to allow good coverage of the GCSE short course, which many pupils are following.

49. Provision for developing pupils' literacy skills is satisfactory and improving. There is a new whole school literacy policy, which is well devised but has not yet had time to influence fully the practice in the school. Provision for the development of numeracy skills is good and improving. There is a suitable whole school numeracy policy, although most subject leaders have not adapted the written policy to meet the demands of their subject. Much work has been done to establish the most recent national guidance for Years 7 and 8, the National Numeracy Strategy that builds on the provision in primary schools. In mathematics, teachers are improving their range of strategies to develop mental and written calculation skills, and a carefully planned scheme of work has been produced to help teachers with this, although there are still some inconsistencies in practice. There is a suitable emphasis on the development of key numeracy skills in Years 9,10 and 11. Teachers in other subjects have been taught how calculation skills are developed and a well produced guidance document supports their understanding. In most subjects the use of numeracy, and the ability of pupils to apply their skills is good.
50. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs accords with the principles of social inclusion in that pupils are members of mixed ability tutor groups and have access to the same curriculum as their peers. There is a range of additional curriculum provision to support pupils with weak skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils are withdrawn for lessons to use a computer assisted learning system. Those who attend regularly make good measurable gains in basic skills. Pupils are also withdrawn from lessons to work in small groups on literacy and numeracy. The work that they do is not sufficiently structured or challenging. Pupils with dyslexia attend a helpful after-school support group. Two useful ten-week, family learning sessions for some pupils with special educational needs and their parents have been held after school during the previous two terms, run in conjunction with the local college. Well attended, weekly homework clubs help improve pupils' literacy and numeracy and also help boost their confidence. Successful summer schools have been held in the last four years for pupils in Year 6 whose literacy and numeracy skills were particularly weak, during which they made measurable progress.
51. Pupils whose behavioural difficulties become acute are well provided for in the short term by the well-resourced learning support unit. They enter through a formal, though swift, process for periods from a couple of days up to two weeks. The unit offers them a calm and supportive atmosphere, in which they are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour. Staff in the learning support unit have high expectations of pupils' behaviour that are generally well met. Pupils continue with schoolwork in the unit but staff focus particularly on raising pupils' self esteem and helping them find the means of improving their behaviour.
52. Three successful summer schools for gifted and talented pupils have been held and a fourth one is planned for this summer. They offer a range of enrichment experiences and activities for pupils and are valuable in raising their aspirations. The geography department successfully pioneered a policy of early entry for GCSE in Year 10 followed by early entry for AS level in Year 11 which last year also involved early entry in mathematics, modern foreign languages and expressive arts. Pupils in these early entry groups had their level of aspiration and commitment sufficiently raised to attain well in a large number of GCSE subjects.
53. Pupils follow a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education aimed at developing personal skills and awareness, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, and informing their life choices. A good programme of sex education and health education, including drugs awareness, forms part of the provision. A

good quality training course prepared staff particularly well for teaching the sex education parts of the programme. Members of the local community, including medical and police workers give valuable support to the sex and drugs education parts of the course respectively. In history, the course on Crime and Punishment, which includes a visit from a local policeman, is a good example of community links and provision for citizenship. The impressive mock trial which won for the pupils involved second prize in a competition was performed for whole year groups in school and involved the active participation of a magistrate and a local police officer. Several students have won awards for citizenship and community work. Not all teachers are equally enthusiastic about teaching personal, social and health education to their own forms.

54. The school makes very good use of the local community for the benefit of pupils. This is true, for example, of pupils in Year 10 and above who have many contacts with businesses and other organisations in the community in the course of vocational programmes, through business studies and work experience. Artists and performers, such as a troupe of Indian musicians and a rock group from Gateshead; speakers on a host of different topics; the police and fire service, all visit the school at various times to address different constituencies of pupils. In their turn, pupils go out into the community for sport, performance or work experience. For example, some pupils recently worked with local primary schools to create poetry.
55. The school has very good relationships and productive links with its partner primary schools, and with colleges of further education. Throughout the year, contacts are maintained at many levels and the pastoral manager of Year 7, together with the head teacher, visit all thirteen of the primary schools and talk to staff and parents. Subject departments such as mathematics, English and science, also visit the schools, help them with materials and plan for continuity of the curriculum over the two phases. All this culminates at the end of the summer term in a whole week of induction for the Year 6 children to prepare them for the secondary school experience.
56. The provision of careers education and work experience is good. There has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection, and the issues identified at that time have been resolved. Pupils feel that they receive good support and guidance in this aspect at the key points in their school career, particularly in Years 9 and 11. Careers provision is well organised and documented, within the personal, social and health education programme, through which it is delivered throughout the school. Work experience has been arranged, as central to the Years 10 and 11 programmes, with adequate preparation time and follow-up through pupils' presentations to their peers. There is good liaison with outside agencies. Monitoring of careers provision takes place, effectively, through the Careers Core Group, which brings together all those involved in this aspect.
57. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. An extensive range of activities enhances and extends the taught curriculum at lunchtimes and after school. Subject departments run a number of clubs, such as a wide variety of sports, the performing arts and mathematics to name but a few. There is open access to the library and computer facilities at break, lunchtimes and after school for independent study. Good social opportunities are provided by theatre trips, the dance festival, sporting competitions, geography fieldwork and many visits further afield, both in Britain and abroad. These extra-curricular opportunities are well attended by pupils, despite difficulties caused by many pupils having to travel home by special buses. Pupils value the variety they are offered in the extra-curricular programme.

Curriculum provision in the sixth form

58. Curricular provision in the sixth form is very good. Despite the small size of the sixth form the school offers a wide range of courses at advanced supplementary level (AS) and advanced level (A2) courses. There is also provision for students to follow advanced vocational courses (AVCE) and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses. Most students follow a blend of AS and A2 courses or combine them with vocational courses.
59. Religious education in the sixth form is offered through the very good ethics course in Year 12, which all students follow, along with a series of well organised day conferences and visits in Year 13. Students enjoy the ethics course and the conferences and visits and their evaluations are noted.
60. The personal, social and health education course is very good. It is directed to raising students' awareness of opportunities beyond the sixth form and, importantly, to providing them with the key skills of communication and presentation. The sixth form is inclusive. The school strives to provide a meaningful and accredited pathway to learning for all its students. The sixth form curriculum builds very well on the 11 to 16 provision in this respect.
61. There is a well thought out approach to 14 to 19 education which reflects a very good strategic oversight of emerging opportunities to develop 14 to 19 provision. For example, the use of the community college provision to provide extra courses after school in drama, media studies and psychology considerably enriches the curriculum, and the policy of early entry for GCSE, AS and A2 courses, offers an achievable challenge for gifted and talented students. The school has developed a very good learning pathway for students on vocational courses, who can follow this alternative path up to advanced vocational level. Through the Travel and Tourism AVCE, the school has established unique links with schools in Canada and Australia. Together with these schools, working by way of the Internet, students at Wolsingham are investigating tourism in three different rural communities in liaison with the local tourist authority.
62. Careers education in the sixth form is good. Students are well advised by the Connexions service about career opportunities in further education or employment. The number of students applying for higher education courses is increasing each year. This reflects the intensive but supportive work done by the sixth form team of managers and tutors. Great care is taken to assist students to complete documentation for higher education which builds up their self confidence as well as encouraging them to reflect on their own strengths.
63. Given that so many students come from isolated rural areas and have to travel by bus, a good range of extra-curricular activities are on offer. These include sports, debating society, trips to Europe and Canada, work experience and opportunities for students to work as classroom assistants.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision

64. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and provision for their moral and social development is very good. This is a big improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection when the spiritual and cultural provision was poor and there was no co-ordinated, coherent planning for the whole school policy. Now there is a policy and it is well monitored and evaluated according to external criteria.

65. Spiritual development is satisfactory. The school does not comply with the statutory requirements to provide collective worship each day for all its pupils but it does provide opportunities for reflection in assemblies and in tutor periods by means of a Thought for the Day such as reflections on 'Life'. Sometimes the assemblies contain a valuable contribution, including an act of worship, from local clergy and governors. The pupils are polite, interested and attentive but not always involved. Religious education plays its expected role in the provision of opportunities for reflection and spiritual insights, and other opportunities occur in the curriculum to reflect upon the natural world as in history, geography, science and mathematics. Expression of feelings and the joy of achieving occur in art and music, drama and sport, often through role-play. There is a spiritual dimension to the school's caring ethos and this is particularly seen in the respect shown for deceased members of the community and for those who fell in two world wars.
66. Moral provision is very good. The school has a clear code of conduct. The visitor is struck by the very good behaviour of pupils in and outside of lessons and where there are reports of misbehaviour the school has effective ways of dealing with the problems. Opportunities occur in religious education and personal social and health education to raise moral issues and choices such as abortion and divorce, sex and drugs, war and peace, and world poverty. Discussions take place in history on the Holocaust and the victims of persecution. Moral concerns over environmental issues or cloning arise in geography and science. Some of the geographical topics make a very good contribution to the moral social and cultural aspects of this provision particularly in relation to local and wider environmental issues. Some of these, often linked with ICT, have a relevance to the local employment situation and may even benefit the local community in terms of eco-tourism and other possibilities as moral issues arising from the closure of works and the possible introduction of wind power and thermal power are discussed.
67. The provision for social development is very good. Students learn well about society in subjects such as history and personal, social and health education. They also learn to work in the school as part of a harmonious but not multicultural society. The work in several subjects and the shouldering of responsibility in the school council and other activities is an impressive contribution to the training in citizenship. Personal, social and health education courses and the humanities make a good contribution to citizenship and social development. Visits, including a number of residential visits for some students, help the process of socialisation in a school which plays an important part in a rural community. Opportunities range from foreign trips, musical and dramatic performances, sport, debates, many extra curricular activities of all kinds, lunch time house matches and summer schools involving the smooth transition of pupils from primary schools. Younger pupils are looked after by anti bullying counsellors, peer supports, and a successful Year 7 shelter group. When interviewed, the pupils are very positive about liking the school and they always mention the extra-curricular activities as one of its strengths. Moral concern of a high order is shown in social and charitable activities such as the Shoe Box appeal for Rumania. The Interact Club is active within the community raising £600 for Comic Relief, and money for a mini bus for adults with learning difficulties in the Dales. Some pupils read to older people in local homes. The group entered the Square Mile Project for children "Making a Difference" in their communities and as a result, some Year 9 and Year 10 pupils have given free information technology lessons to local retired people in the IT suite in the lower school. Having won over 4000 other entrants they won a trip to South Africa which proved to be a very good cultural experience and fostered a link with a school in South Africa.

68. The provision for the cultural development of pupils is good and a big improvement on the last inspection when it was poor. Subjects such as drama, music and art play a good, and often a very good, part in cultural development. The school and its immediate locality do not furnish many examples of first hand multicultural experience but opportunities exist in the curriculum to study other cultures, religions and races, and the school does promote appropriate attitudes to racism. In religious education the students gain a good introduction to Christianity, other major religions and cultural traditions. In history the layers of development of the culture of this country and of others, is an intrinsic part of the curriculum. In English, food and textiles, and in geography some of the themes studied have a multiracial content. Music makes a big contribution including contributions on modern Rock and Pop culture. Almost all lessons in art contain references to artists and cultures and contain discussions which touch upon present cultural and multicultural aspects. There are valuable extra-curricular visits to galleries and museums. Summer Schools with Theatre Workshops have a multicultural dimension. Modern Foreign languages could make a bigger contribution in class to cultural development and dance is still developing but during inspection week there took place a lively dance festival involving the primary schools and the School Sports Co-ordinator Scheme pupils who performed and shared performances with enthusiasm. Dance is developing to play a part in the context of a specialist performing arts college. There are some impressive links with overseas schools, including one with Native Canadians, as well as contacts with France, Spain, Russia and Zambia. Most of these contacts are supplemented by web-site and video links.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in the sixth form

69. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students in the sixth form is part of the good provision for the main school and should be considered in that context. The spiritual provision is satisfactory with an appropriate contribution from religious studies although the time allocated to this subject is a limiting factor on its effectiveness. During inspection week a valuable assembly was delivered by a local clergyman and governor on the meaning of life. Students have visited a Buddhist monastery in Scotland and gained spiritual and cultural insights as a result. The Ethics programme is a good contributor to all elements of this aspect and is appropriate to the age group involved.
70. The moral and social provision is very good and has some extra features to the main school provision. Sixth formers have acted as mentors for Year 7 pupils as reading partners and as helpers at Summer schools and with music groups. They have been active in helping pensioners and some have done coaching certificates and first aid certificates which have been useful in school life. A valuable debating society was started in 2001 and has debated topics such as war, the monarchy, asylum seekers and science versus religion. Last year they reached the semi-final of the European Youth Parliament debating competition. The Debating group are also members of the European Youth Parliament and are going to Strasbourg at the end of April to debate with 500 other students from member states. A sixth form Amnesty group is being set up.
71. The provision for cultural development is good, with religious education and history carrying on the main school work of introducing the various religious and cultural influences which have made up the culture of the world in which we live, and the performing arts allowing students to explore their own feelings and to get the sense of achievement that comes with successful performance. Geography continues to provide a very good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of sixth form students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

72. The school is a caring and inclusive community. Pastoral support is strong. Health and safety provision is good overall, with plans to deal with the two identified matters. The arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. The school is successful in promoting good attendance and behaviour. There are effective arrangements to assess pupils' attainment and progress and the information is used well to support the educational and personal development of pupils. Most shortcomings in this area identified in the previous inspection have been largely resolved. Despite an increase in the range of provision available to pupils with special educational needs there are weaknesses in some aspects of this support.
73. Pastoral care has a very high profile at Wolsingham. Younger pupils have described the school as a welcoming and safe place where tutors get to know them very well. This high praise reflects a very considerable commitment by the school to ensure that all pupils have access to the support they need. Before pupils arrive at the school, teachers work closely in partnership with their colleagues in primary schools to develop warm and trusting relationships. The ensuing links are manifold, covering personal, social, sporting and curricular areas. They are carefully structured to be conducive to a smooth and trouble free transfer for pupils. Particular care is shown for those coming from the smaller village schools. The pattern of focused support continues throughout the school. For example, all pupils transferring from primary schools have the benefit of an induction week in the summer term, whilst more sensitive pupils benefit from sheltered, smaller classes during their first year. All pupils in Year 8 attend mentoring sessions to develop learning skills and attitudes. "Booster" classes and "taster" days are provided for Year 9 to help guide them in choosing the right options for examinations. Post graduate students from Durham university work with Year 10 to raise their expectations, whilst in Year 11 pupils have access to additional teaching support and mentors from the business world. These and other initiatives, such as the counselling service provided by the school nurse and the anti bullying counsellors, represent good practice, designed to enable even the most vulnerable to grow in maturity and self-esteem.
74. Following criticism in the previous report there has been good improvement in the provision for health and safety. Governors have agreed an updated policy within the last year. It is a comprehensive document which makes provision for all areas of school life, designates responsibility for regular and routine risk assessment, and ensures that the governors are fully involved in monitoring. Governors are also very conscious of the road safety hazard as pupils and students walk between the upper and the lower school buildings. This is particularly apparent at the beginning and end of the school day. Discussions are currently being held with pupils, the council and the local community with a view to minimising the risk of accident. The school complies with locally agreed child protection procedures, but as at the time of the previous inspection, there has been no training in recent years to raise the awareness of all members of staff to maintain and update their knowledge and understanding of the procedures. The headteacher is aware of the need to review this provision.
75. The school has made consistent and considerable efforts to improve attendance since the previous inspection. The importance of regular and prompt attendance is regularly reinforced in communications with parents, whilst pupils are effectively encouraged by a range of incentives. Registration procedures are now good. Any unauthorised absence is immediately investigated. Tutors conscientiously monitor the attendance patterns of individual pupils whilst comparative data is analysed by the pastoral managers, in collaboration with the education welfare officer. Despite

problems experienced with unreliable technology and several unavoidable changes in staff, the school has been successful in raising the level of attendance significantly and in minimising the level of unauthorised absence. Where, for whatever reason, there has been a period of poor attendance the school has a structured reintegration programme involving a range of external agencies. The school's procedures for dealing with problems of behaviour and discipline are incorporated into the comprehensive pastoral care policy. There is a strong emphasis on positive encouragement and pastoral management. Pupils know the limits of acceptable behaviour and are well aware of the sanctions which, with few exceptions, are applied consistently in the school. The learning support unit has proved to be an effective element in dealing with the more persistent problems and maintaining good standards of behaviour in the great majority of lessons. The school's strategies to promote good attendance and behaviour are a further reflection of the school's good care for its pupils.

76. Most pupils with special educational needs are identified by the primary schools, with whom the school enjoys very good working relationships. The large number of primary schools inevitably causes some discrepancies in categorisation of need but the school subsequently modifies these. In Year 7, all pupils are screened through a series of tests that further helps identification. A staged referral process identifies pupils whose particular needs become apparent later. The school works well with a wide range of support agencies and many visit the school regularly to work with individual pupils and advise staff. A useful weekly meeting is held involving senior pastoral staff, special educational needs staff and members of the support agencies. They share experiences and common concerns about the pupils with whom they are working in order to make the best provision for them.
77. Individual education plans are in place for pupils with statements of special educational need. They are not, however, written in a form that helps teachers to ensure that they meet pupils' needs in their teaching, or that helps parents to understand how their child's needs will be provided for. They are not sufficiently closely related to the details of provision in the pupils' statements of special educational needs to ensure that provision is made for them in accordance with those requirements. Some specifics of provision are not met. Other pupils on the register for pupils with special educational needs have coded lists of individual targets that are unhelpful and do not invite an accurate process of review.

Academic assessment

78. Apart from some pupils with special educational needs, since the previous inspection there has been very good improvement in the use of performance data to target raising of levels of attainment of pupils throughout the school. This not only identifies the needs of individual pupils but also is an effective tool for monitoring the teaching by every teacher in every subject. A particularly strong feature of the assessment procedures is the way that data are used to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress in a number of subjects or achieving particularly badly in any one subject. Appropriate mentoring and support is then given to identify the cause of the problem and help the pupils overcome any specific difficulties. Similarly in Year 11, assessment information is used well to identify pupils who could achieve 5 GCSE grades A* to C with adapted provision, and those close to a C grade in individual subjects. The management of the information collected and its use in whole school planning and target setting is very good. In individual subjects, assessment procedures are mostly good. All pupils have individual subject targets negotiated regularly, and achievement is discussed with parents and pupils together. There is a secure marking policy. The use of assessment to adapt the curriculum is also good.

For example in geography and mathematics monitoring of performance in previous GCSE examinations has led to early GCSE entry and an early start to AS level courses for those with high attainment in the current Year 11.

Assessment in the sixth form

79. The use of performance data to assess attainment and monitor the progress of individual pupils, to predict expected national examination grades and to set realistic targets for their attainment is very good, both at whole school level and within subjects. In geography it is excellent. In a minority of subjects (science and physical education) it is satisfactory. Data collected are used systematically to identify students who are underachieving, to diagnose their learning needs and to identify possible weaknesses in teaching. Suitable action is taken to help and support those students who are not achieving well enough. In interview, students stated that they "cannot possibly not know what grades we are likely to get in examinations, and what we could get if we try harder" because of the regular discussions with their tutors. They also believe that they get sufficient advice and guidance on how to improve although it is better in some subjects, for example mathematics and business studies. Data are also used well by the school to assess overall performance each year and set targets for improvement in future courses.

Advice, support and guidance in the sixth form

80. Very good advice, support and guidance are offered to students in the sixth form. From entering the sixth form until they leave, the students feel that they are part of a community where each is valued and supported.
81. The induction to the sixth form is very well organised and managed. Year 12 students speak warmly of the friendliness of the initial conference when they all met for the first time. Great care is taken to make sure that students are following the courses that suit them both academically and personally. If a student wishes to follow a course for which they do not have the necessary GCSE qualifications they are thoroughly briefed and, if they wish to do the course, are regularly counselled regarding their progress. This kind of regular contact is a feature of this sixth form.
82. Assessment procedures are thorough and meticulous. Each student's progress is monitored regularly with follow up interviews with form tutors. Students remark on the very good quality of the advice and support that they receive. As part of the support, students are encouraged to develop key skills, especially of communication and presentation. Year 12 students enjoy this experience because it makes them research information, on future careers, prepare and give a presentation and, at a later date, review it with their form tutor. This whole process is exceptionally well organised and student centred. The advice and support offered to students in preparing for higher education is very good.
83. Provision for careers education is very good. It includes good opportunities to speak to a professional careers advisor, a Career Development Module and intensive work with students to make the best of their opportunities for higher education. Those students seeking employment are equally well prepared through interviews and handbooks for the world of work.
84. Students speak highly of their tutors and teachers. They appreciate the time and attention staff give them. The school values what students achieve and it encourages them in every way to seize the opportunities that the sixth form presents. The environment in the sixth form is warm and friendly. The head of sixth form and the

tutors are always available to assist students and this friendliness and accessibility helps students to value themselves, to be aware of their potential and to mature as sensible and balanced young people.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

85. The school has worked very hard to establish constructive links with parents. The good practice that attracted favourable comment in the previous inspection report has, with the exception of the summer camp for prospective pupils, been maintained and in many cases extended. The weakness in relation to the detail in the prospectus has been resolved. Parents have expressed largely positive views about the school. They are provided with good quality information, particularly about their children's progress. This information, however, tends to be a little too descriptive of what pupils have been covering, rather than giving information on how pupils might improve. Students in the sixth form speak very well of the provision made for them and have a high regard for their teachers. They told inspectors that they needed a clearer distinction made between study areas and social areas so that they could work quietly when they needed to. Overall, the partnership between school and home has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
86. Parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire and those who attended the meeting with inspectors were in many areas very supportive of the school, but they also made some pointed criticisms. What pleases parents most is that their children make good progress, and are taught by good teachers who expect them to work hard. The great majority of parents consider that behavioural standards are good and their children are happy at school. They believe they are helped to become mature and responsible and appreciate the opportunities to engage in activities outside of lessons. Most think the school is well led and managed and say they feel comfortable approaching the teachers. These are all areas to which, in a recent separate survey, parents gave high priority. They are also areas in which the inspection evidence is consistent with the views expressed. A significant minority of parents has reservations about homework, the information provided about their children's progress and the extent to which the school works closely with them. All three are areas in which the school is conscious of the need for a review. A survey has been conducted to elicit parental views on homework and although the majority of parents think it about right, teachers are conscious that there is inconsistency. Action is currently being taken to evaluate and monitor homework within departments. The partnership with parents and the provision of information on their children's progress are the subject of comment below.
87. There are many good features about the school's documentation for parents. The prospectus and governors' annual report are well presented documents both of which comply with statutory requirements as to their content. The newsletters sent to parents each half term are a very good means of communicating non-urgent but relevant and interesting material about the day-to-day life and achievements within school. The provision for verbal and written communications with parents at every significant stage of pupils' education, particularly at times of transfer between key stages, is very helpful. The weakness stems from some inconsistency in practice. In the recent past some end of year reports have tended to be descriptive rather than judgmental and targets have been in such general terms that they do not allow for later evaluation as to pupils' attainment. The school has already identified this problem and teachers from all departments have collaborated in reviewing the format of reports. The fruits of this review will be seen at the end of the current academic year.

88. The quality of information provided for parents enables them to make a positive contribution to their children's learning at school and in the home. Teachers make much effort to involve parents, providing them with information about the curriculum and discussing with them at some length their children's progress and the realistic targets at which they should aim. At intervals through the year reports are given to parents about the effort and achievement of their children, their attendance record and any behavioural problems there may be. Parents respond positively to this approach and the great majority attends parents' consultation evenings, especially those held to agree targets. Parental support for homework is also more variable and the use of the "planner" to monitor work done in the home is inconsistent. Overall, however, the picture is improving. The school is working hard to develop the partnership. The level of support provided by parents is much valued by the school and makes a positive contribution to pupils' attainment and progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

89. Leadership and management are good overall, although there are areas requiring attention. A significant factor in the growing success of Wolsingham School is the clear and determined leadership of the headteacher, backed by the school's larger than average but effective senior management team.
90. The governing body supports the school well through its regular meetings and the work of its committees, and is able to demonstrate, for example, that it is fully in touch with the school's financial position, a significant weakness at the time the present headteacher joined the school. Almost all legal duties have been satisfactorily fulfilled. The exception is that not every pupil experiences a daily act of collective worship.
91. School development planning is now well established in the school and is much improved since the last inspection. The overall annual strategic plan looks forward three years at a time and is built up from the grass roots via departmental plans drawn up to a common format devised by the senior team. There are fewer targets than used to be the case and success criteria and named responsible persons are identified.
92. Pastoral leadership is a considerable strength. Well-organised pastoral managers co-ordinate the day-to-day care of pupils very well, in partnership with their teams of tutors. Curriculum leadership is generally good, occasionally very good (geography, music and religious education) and almost never less than satisfactory. The main exception is modern foreign languages where a combination of illness, too large a choice of separate languages and some non-specialist teaching has led to an unsatisfactory situation which is already being addressed. Co-ordination across the two disparate halves of design and technology is also an area for improvement.
93. Co-ordination of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is an area for further development. The school has a clear commitment to meeting the needs of all of its pupils and teachers are keen to help pupils with special educational needs attain well and to feel secure. However, teachers are insufficiently well guided in the means of meeting those needs. The co-ordination, monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of provision is unsatisfactory. Annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice. The recently appointed governor for special educational needs, who is also chair of governors, takes a serious interest in his responsibilities. Some of the requirements of the statements of special educational needs are not well met. Individual education plans are in place for pupils with statements of special

educational needs. However, they are not written in a form that helps teachers to understand and meet pupils' needs. The religious education department has devised its own useful, subject related individual education plans, for all pupils on the special educational needs register. Pupils whose special needs are behavioural have helpful behaviour modification plans that identify clear, short-term attainable targets for pupils which teachers can monitor. Fully effective individual education plans are not in place, however, for other pupils with special educational needs in literacy and numeracy, as the Code of Practice requires. The alternative system developed by the school is overly brief and unhelpful.

94. Leadership and management of the provision for gifted and talented pupils are good. The co-ordinator of provision has devised a policy, identified pupils who are gifted and talented and has organised some enrichment provision including three Summer Schools. Plans are in hand to ensure the provision of extension tasks and activities for pupils in all lessons.
95. The school has a pupil:teacher ratio which is an improvement since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average. Over the last two years there has been a relatively healthy but not excessive turnover of teaching staff. Staffing generally matches the needs of the curriculum in terms of staff qualifications and experience but some subjects, particularly French, due to staff absence, rely unsuccessfully at present on non-specialist and temporary teaching.
96. Teaching staff are well supported by efficient administrative, premises and other domestic staff who contribute particularly well to the smooth running of the school. There is satisfactory provision of technical staff and provision of support in design and technology is very good. Training is available for ancillary staff. On the other hand there is one special educational needs support assistant and one classroom assistant which is relatively limited provision. Statutory requirements for the performance management of teaching staff are in place and effectively carried out.
97. Professional staff development has maintained a good balance in meeting the needs of the school and those of individual staff. It is related to five interlocking strands of perceived need and it is managed, monitored and evaluated in the light of the development planning cycle, the performance management cycle, government initiatives, the departmental development plans and individual needs. It calls upon local authority help and outside expertise and often takes the form of whole-day training and working groups. The benefits of training are cascaded down so that colleagues share them. The school can rightly claim that everyone receives some sort of training each year. There is a need at the moment for the system to support and help some teachers whose lessons are unsatisfactory. Arrangements for the induction and training of student teachers and newly qualified teachers are good and current members of staff trained by the school are testimony to their effectiveness. The support given by the senior management team and by the departments is good.
98. There has been a significant improvement in accommodation and resources since the last inspection. The teaching areas for several departments have been relocated, increased in size or refurbished. There is a rolling programme for decoration and maintenance including the removal of asbestos. The buildings and grounds are well cared for by the site maintenance staff. The lack of a dedicated space for indoor games continues to have a prejudicial impact on physical education and the space in the dining area is rather cramped. The school is heavily involved in an ongoing debate to reduce to a minimum the risk of accidents to pupils from the narrow and restricted site access.

99. Almost all departments, are at least adequately resourced and in several departments (art, business studies, design technology, religious education and maths) the resources are now good. On the other hand, book supply is a problem in some areas. For example, there are insufficient GCSE texts in science and too few reference books available in the art department to enhance the quality of pupils' research. In the library, more shelving is needed for books. The fiction stock is satisfactory, but non fiction needs updating and more books are required to support A level teaching. ICT equipment is another problem. There are limited resources in music for pupils in Years 7-9 and the availability of computer rooms is a constraint on free use of ICT for subjects without their own equipment, for example in history due to security reasons. The lower school ICT suite has the only interactive whiteboard, which is used by the English and language departments on a half-term rotation arrangement. The school has a small number of data projectors, which are used well to extend teaching and learning styles. Areas which have already been identified, and clusters of computers installed, include business studies, technology, religious education, sixth form, lower school and library resource area. Suitable accommodation to site further clusters is proving difficult in the school where space is a premium.
100. The school uses its resources effectively to support its educational priorities. The headteacher and governors have successfully built on the good practice that was being put in place at the time of the previous inspection. Short and medium term planning is good. Governors have agreed a detailed financial policy which is in close accord with the guidance in this area given by the Audit Commission. The school has a three-year strategic plan which is updated annually to ensure a continuance of the longer term vision. Educational priorities are clearly identified along with resource implications for the current financial year. Meetings of the finance committee are held each half term to monitor the detail of expenditure in the current year and anticipated income in the coming year. Detailed reports are submitted to the full governing body. This good practice enables the governors to account fully for their stewardship. The longer term targets, for example the sports hall bid and other building development, and the specialist school status, are individually subject of much discussion and evaluation. Governors have already planned to bring together these projects into a cohesive long term plan with the estimated capital expenditure made explicit.
101. Day-to-day financial management and control is very good. The senior administrative officer, who acts also as the bursar, keeps meticulous records of all sources of income and expenditure from which he prepares monitoring reports for governors and all budget holders. Governors are able to demonstrate that specific grants are used for their intended purpose. The bursar also accesses comparative data so that governors are aware of income and expenditure patterns locally and nationally. The most recent audit report was in September 2001. The several minor recommendations that were made have been implemented.
102. Governors are very familiar with the principles of "best value" and at a recent meeting formally accepted them for "evaluating the performance of the school, service level agreements and contracts". Both they and senior members of staff are able to discuss the principles readily and cite several occasions where their implementation has proved particularly successful. Recent examples include the reallocation of the grounds maintenance contract, ("The difference is fantastic."), and the direct employment of cleaning staff, ("who go the extra mile to help the school and are not confined to cleaning duties"). In other areas, such as catering, governors found that the current providers gave the best value for money. The headteacher is very conscious of the value of regular consultation, and through meetings and by

questionnaire often seeks opinion from pupils, parents and the wider community, about many areas of school life, including behaviour, health, road safety and accommodation.

103. The school's unit costs per pupil are broadly average. However, the quality of education provided, particularly the good and very good teaching, the results in terms of pupils' progress in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form, and the good improvements in the areas diagnosed as needing it in the last inspection, indicate that the school provides good value for money.

Sixth form leadership and management

104. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Three members of the senior management team share the responsibility, one of whom is head of the sixth form. Although each person has a separate role, the arrangement works well and is effective.
105. Very good use is made of available data to predict results, track students' progress and set individual targets. This rigorous procedure, together with the very good relationships between tutors, the management team and students means that the head of sixth form has an accurate picture of how each student is progressing. Any signs of underachievement are quickly picked up and acted upon.
106. The induction of new students into the sixth form and their preparation for higher education or employment is very good. Students who enter the sixth form from other schools are made to feel welcome very quickly. Attendance is very good. There is a clear emphasis on developing each student's personal and academic strengths to enable them to understand and have confidence in their own potential as well as the opportunities available to them. This often involves members of the community coming into school to interview students as well as attendance at conferences and visits to universities. The pastoral care of students is very good.
107. The inclusive nature of the sixth form is encouraged and there is a very clear vision about how this sixth form can grow and provide different pathways to learning between the ages of 14 and 19.

Resources in the sixth form

108. The sixth form is well resourced. The new sixth form centre is a spacious and pleasant area, which the students value highly. There are computers in some teaching areas but not yet in all. Where they are provided, for example in mathematics, physics and religious education, they are used to promote effective learning. In English literature the stock of critical and other text related books is insufficient.
109. The school recognises the importance of sustaining a sixth form which is financially independent of the main school. Pending the full implementation of the new funding arrangements detailed records have been maintained of periods taught so that staffing costs can be calculated proportionate to the amount of teaching time used. The evidence to date indicates that, with increasing numbers on roll, the sixth form is now self-financing. There are still some very small group sizes in minority subjects and discussions are being held with other schools and colleges of further education to establish whether it would be cost-effective to make joint provision in some subject areas. This could enable the school to broaden the options made available to students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

110. **In order to improve the quality of education and to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:**

(1) Improve provision in modern foreign languages, by:

- raising the quality of teaching and learning in French;
- especially by increasing the use of the target language in lessons.

(Paragraphs 34, 187-196)

(2) Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs, by:

- strengthening its co-ordination across the school;
- ensuring that all pupils with special educational needs have an acceptable educational plan with which to monitor their progress;
- making these individual plans clearer and easier to understand than the present ones in use;
- increasing where possible the in-class support given to pupils in order to minimise the disruption to their learning.

(Paragraphs 13, 35-37, 50, 77, 93)

(3) Improve provision in design and technology by:

- strengthening co-ordination across the two disparate sections of the department in order to make the whole into a design and technology department in the modern sense;
- bringing about a common approach to planning and to the development of the key features of designing and making;
- improving the quality of the teaching and learning;
- rectifying the identified health and safety issue in the workshops.

(Paragraphs 92, 160-165)

(4) Improve facilities for physical education by:

- building, as soon as funds permit, the necessary indoor accommodation to match at least the present provision for outdoor work.

(Paragraphs 98, 206)

(5) Improve the monitoring of teaching and learning in order to:

- disseminate more effectively the excellent practice found in some areas of the school;
- eliminate the relatively few areas of weakness by providing the necessary support and guidance;
- eliminate the shortcomings connected with mixed ability teaching in some Year 7 and 8 classes.

(Paragraphs 33, 34, 35)

Sixth form

- (6) Continue to strive to improve end of year examination results.**
 - (7) Sharpen the distinction between students' social and work areas:**
 - in order to ensure that students have guaranteed quiet study areas when they need them.
- (Paragraph 85)

Other issues the school will wish to add to its school development planning include:

- How to improve behaviour on the school buses;
 - Bringing to a satisfactory conclusion the ongoing debate on how to solve the access problems to the school site, to minimise the risk of accidents to pupils.
- (Paragraphs 24, 98)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	131
	Sixth form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		77

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
--	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

Years 7 – 11

Number	7	25	52	40	5	2	0
Percentage	5%	19%	40%	30%	4%	2%	0%

Sixth form

Number	4	17	18	8	0	0	0
Percentage	9%	36%	38%	17%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	756	131
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	121	N/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	193	2

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	39
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	73	85	158

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	43	43
	Girls	56	50	45
	Total	90	93	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (60)	59 (62)	56 (67)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (24)	37 (38)	28 (38)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	49	30
	Girls	61	59	39
	Total	91	108	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (61)	69 (64)	44 (55)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (36)	41 (36)	15 (24)
	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	89	71	160

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	34	79	82
	Girls	34	62	65
	Total	68	141	147
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (44)	88 (92)	92 (96)
	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	35.2
	National	39.8

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
	2002	14	21	35

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	14	21	35
	Average point score per candidate	8.6	11.5	10.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
877	49	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.94
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

Education support staff: Y7 - Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	283

Deployment of teachers: Y7 - Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.8
-----------------------------------------------------------	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 - Y13

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	20.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	2,360,122
Total expenditure	2,277,176
Expenditure per pupil	2,582
Balance brought forward from previous year	81,362
Balance carried forward to next year	82,946

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17.2
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	756
Number of questionnaires returned	294

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	55	10	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	55	9	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	54	13	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	50	20	9	1
The teaching is good.	24	62	10	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	51	17	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	45	7	6	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	49	4	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	19	53	16	8	4
The school is well led and managed.	24	52	9	5	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	55	9	4	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	44	11	3	7

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 provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching facilitates good learning.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The teachers are a committed and hard working team.
- There is a good range of curriculum options in English in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, especially at the end of Year 11, have been lower than expected.
- Insufficient differentiation is provided for above and below average attainers in some lessons.
- The stock of good quality reading books, especially for Years 7-9, is not extensive enough.
- The scheme of work for Years 10 and 11 is not developed enough.

Standards and achievement

111. Pupils enter the school with below – and sometimes well below – average standards in English. Most years, by the end of Year 9, standards are broadly in line with national averages. In 2002, however, standards were well below average in relation to pupils attaining the higher National Curriculum levels. These results were, nevertheless, average for schools with a similar intake. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The results were considerably lower than in previous years. From 1999 to 2001 results for Level 5+ were either in line with or above national averages.
112. In 2002, GCSE results in English were well below average compared to national figures and English Literature results were similarly well below average. Results have fluctuated slightly over recent years with 2001 and 2002 showing the lowest percentages of A*-C grades. Staffing and leadership turbulence in the English department during this period at least partially explain this decline, since these factors affected pupils' preparation for their examinations, their coursework in particular.
113. The evidence from inspection is that standards are somewhat higher than suggested by the 2002 examination results but are still just below average overall.
114. Standards of speaking and listening across all year groups are just below average, overall. As at the time of the last inspection some pupils are articulate and confident speakers but many others lack confidence and respond briefly, using limited vocabulary. However, pupils are presented with many situations which encourage them to speak at length and respond well to different situations. Listening skills are good throughout all years; most pupils, including lower attainers, concentrate well and respond to instructions and suggestions.

115. Reading skills are below average overall by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 but with wide variations. Most pupils refer to aspects of plot, character and theme. The responses of higher attainers are sometimes well considered and use evidence from reference texts very well. Middle and lower attainers sometimes respond to reading in a literal and over-simplistic manner. Most lower attaining pupils read for meaning and understand simple text. The provision of a range of good quality reading books suitable for Years 7-9 is not wide enough to further the development of their reading skills sufficiently.
116. Writing skills are just below average overall by the end of Years 9 and 11 but vary widely. The writing of higher attainers is good in its accuracy, development and imagination. Some particularly good narrative work was seen in Years 8 and 9. Some of the original writing by Years 10 and 11 is mature and well structured. However, many middle and lower attainers have difficulties with spelling, grammar, punctuation and structural accuracy: this weakens their work. Almost all work seen was, however, well presented.
117. Achievement by both boys and girls is good to the end of Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs make progress consistent with their previous attainment. Their progress is better when well-briefed classroom assistants support them. On a number of occasions, however, no such help is available. Gifted and talented pupils usually make sound progress because lessons offer good levels of challenge, although in some lessons no additional extension material is available.

Quality of education

118. Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the inspection week and three quarters of all lessons seen were good and better. Strengths of the best teaching include:
- teachers' good subject knowledge.
 - clear objectives stated at the outset of the lesson and returned to in whole class discussion at the end.
 - very good classroom management skills which enable lessons to proceed in a calm and purposeful manner.
 - most lessons have good pace which maintains pupil interest and motivation.
 - a good level of challenge in most lessons. On occasions this is very good as when a Year 10 group were encouraged to engage in a wide ranging discussion of Shakespeare and his work; learning was rapid and of a high level because of the structure of the discussion.
 - teacher-pupil relationships are good. Pupils learn well in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
119. Independent learning through exploration and discovery is not encouraged sufficiently. Most lessons are over-directed by the teachers. Where lessons are less effective, though still satisfactory, relative weaknesses include:
- lack of clearly stated objectives for the lesson.
 - lack of differentiated material for pupils with special educational needs or for the highest attaining pupils.
 - failure to give pupils sufficient knowledge and techniques to aid successful task completion.

120. Marking is generally good. Either National Curriculum levels, or grades and comments indicate what pupils must do to improve further. Occasionally marking is too brief and general. Literacy is well supported by the use of key words, writing frames and work requiring extended writing and reading activities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used thoughtfully as an adjunct to the teaching of English. Some impressive examples of work produced using ICT were seen during the inspection week.
121. Drama within the department is good. Pupils usually begin the course with no previous experience of drama and achieve well. In the week of the inspection, Year 7 were exploring improvisation, tableaux and thought tracking. A group of Year 11 pupils are preparing for the GCSE drama examination and show enthusiasm, good collaborative skills and maturity in their work. Potential GCSE grades range from A to E, which is creditable considering the pupils lack of previous experience. Drama teaching shares all the positive features already outlined. Drama makes a significant contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills and to their personal and social development.
122. Attitudes to English are very positive throughout all year groups. Pupils usually arrive ready to work, settle quickly and respond well to their teachers. Almost all lessons have a very positive atmosphere of serious effort and good humour. Behaviour is very good; pupils have sufficient interest and motivation to concentrate for extensive periods. Pupils are good at collaborative work in pairs or groups.

Leadership and management

123. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear vision of how the subject should develop. His style is active and innovative. Some very good changes have already occurred. The curriculum has been broadened for Years 10 and 11: media studies is an alternative to English Literature; there is a new, well considered scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 and a more suitable examination syllabus has been adopted for Years 10 and 11. These steps should improve attainment. There is a brief but well focussed departmental development plan. Assessment methods are sound. However, methods for tracking and targeting pupils are capable of further refinement. The team of specialist, hard working and committed teachers now contains a good mix of experience.
124. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is now better matching of work to varying pupil attainment in Years 7 to 9 and pupils now have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Standards at the end of Year 9 have been maintained (with the exception of 2002). Given the quality of teaching and leadership the department is well placed to continue to improve.

Literacy across the curriculum

125. Provision for the development of literacy skills is satisfactory and improving. Standards of literacy on entry to the school are below and sometimes well below average. By the end of Year 9, standards have improved considerably. Grasp of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammatical structures remains a problem for all but the highest attaining pupils as they progress through the school. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors are corrected well in English and history but in some other departments they are not. Most departments display key subject specific words well and some also use these actively in lessons. Few departments require extended reading beyond the immediate demands of the curriculum. On the other hand, several departments, for example, English, science, religious education, and

information and communication technology do require pupils to produce extended writing. A number of subjects, for example, religious education, art, English, and history encourage the skills of speaking and listening by role play discussion, debate or presentations. Information and communication technology and the library are used appropriately by some departments to further literacy skills. There is a new whole school literacy policy, which is well devised but has not yet had time to affect fully practice in the school.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The achievement of pupils by the end of Year 11 is good.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment is used effectively to set targets for improvement.
- Subject management is good.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. This creates a positive learning environment in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils with different levels of attainment in Years 7 and 8.
- The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs do not help to support their learning.

Standards and achievement

126. When pupils enter the school their standards in numeracy measured by the national tests at the end of Year 6 are well below the national average. The full range of attainment is present and an average number of pupils have above average attainment. Levels of attainment are below average at the end of Year 9 and match the national average by the end of Year 11. This equates to satisfactory achievement overall in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
127. In 2002, standards attained in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average and matched those of similar schools. These results are slightly lower than the previous year, but the overall trend is one of steady improvement. When results of national tests in Year 6 are taken into account, achievement for all pupils was at least satisfactory and good for those with higher attainment. Overall attainment is similar to English and science although more pupils achieve higher levels in mathematics. Mathematics reached the target set by the local education authority for all schools for the year. In Year 11, the proportion of pupils entered for GCSE was below the national average but those taking the examination gained an average score which was similar to the national picture due to the above average numbers gaining grades A* to G. The proportion gaining A* to C was below the national average, but the percentage of pupils attaining the highest grades of A* and A was similar to those found nationally in all schools. Results were good compared with other subjects, taking into account the numbers of pupils that take mathematics GCSE. Results were better than previous years. The targets for examination results based on previous performance were exceeded. In the current Year 11 thirty-two pupils already have GCSE A* to C grades and some have begun further studies in mathematics. Carefully focused teaching is raising the levels of attainment of pupils

close to the borderline GCSE grade C. Thus standards in the present Year 11 are better than the previous year. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Throughout the school there is no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.

128. In Year 9, pupils attain below average standards in number skills. Mental arithmetic skills are the weakest area of number work and this impedes their progress in learning. Knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measure and of data-handling are also below average overall. Although those in higher sets have secure above, and sometimes well above average skills. Although much work in books is skills-based, pupils do understand their work and apply it competently.
129. In the work seen in Year 11, those with the highest attainment have very good algebraic skills and use them well in work towards the AS level pure mathematics modules. Pupils about to take the intermediate or higher GCSE examination present their work accurately using correct mathematical notation. Diagrams and graph work are also well presented. Mental arithmetic skills are satisfactory. Those taking foundation stage examinations have weak mental skills but basic written methods of calculation, algebra and work in shape, space and data-handling are secure.

The quality of education

130. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Years 7 – 9, teaching is satisfactory with some very good teaching in Year 9. This does much to remedy some underachievement in Years 7 and 8. Teaching is good overall in Years 10 and 11, where approximately one third of lessons are very good and excellent. The teaching of GCSE Grade C borderline candidates in Year 11 is excellent. A poor lesson was seen that was a direct result of unsatisfactory behaviour on April Fool's day. In almost all lessons, pupil management is very good, and classroom routines are clearly understood and followed by pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good which means that pupils listen to their teachers carefully. Teachers prepare work thoroughly and the necessary resources are easily accessible so that no time is wasted in lessons. Strong features of the most effective lessons are the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding and careful development of each small step in learning and a very clear knowledge of the errors that pupils make. This latter is used very well to ensure that pupils understand each stage and build a secure foundation of knowledge and skills. This was very evident in both an excellent and a very good Year 11 lesson to develop the difficult concept of solutions of inequalities through graphs.
131. The school has adopted the most recent national guidance for teaching mathematics in Year 7 and 8, and much work has been done to prepare materials and develop new skills. Key vocabulary is carefully identified but seldom clearly developed, and rarely are pupils asked to use the key words in their response to questions. Not all teachers use a short sharp activity to develop strategies for calculating mentally. This is clearly impeding progress in learning. There is an over rigid adherence to covering targets in a given time. Thus not all pupils gain the necessary understanding or have enough time to consolidate their learning before the next concept is explained, despite teachers' efforts to prepare different tasks for pupils with different levels of attainment in each class. This leads to untidy and unfinished work in exercise books and a lack of pride in achievement. This problem is largely eliminated in Years 9, 10 and 11 where the pace of work is more carefully matched to the needs of the pupils in each set and is relevant to their needs. Marking of work and its use to help pupils improve is variable. There is some excellent practice where all work in books is marked and the teacher makes detailed comments about

errors and how to correct them. Homework is used effectively to support learning. Blocks of time are taken with each class to use computers to support and develop specific mathematical skills, and calculators are used well, but there is no regular and easy access to computers in the classrooms to support learning.

132. Although all pupils have learning targets and teachers work hard to support pupils with special educational needs there are no suitable individual education plans that set clearly defined and achievable targets for these pupils and they seldom have the opportunity to consolidate their learning through practical activities. One very effective activity used in some lessons to help these pupils learn is the use of a computer aided learning package. This can only be used when there is a classroom assistant or older student available. Nevertheless, by the time they reach Year 11, pupils with very low standards of attainment on entry to the school, achieve well and gain GCSE grades, due to the efforts of the teachers particularly in Years 9,10 and 11.

Leadership and management

133. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Responsibilities have been delegated effectively to manage the department prior to the appointment of a new head of department. Teachers work together well to develop materials and share ideas. There is good vision for subject development. Monitoring the subject's performance through department and national tests is very good and assessment data is used effectively to target the learning of particular pupils needing additional support or subject content needing greater emphasis. Checking and evaluating standards and teaching are well established although in a few aspects results are not always fully effective, for example their use to improve marking. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, both in terms of standards and achievement.

Numeracy across the curriculum

134. Provision for the development of numeracy skills is good and improving. There is a suitable whole school numeracy policy, although most subject leaders have not adapted the written policy to meet the demands of their subject. Much work has been done to establish the most recent national guidance for Years 7 and 8, the National Numeracy Strategy that builds on the provision in primary schools. There is a suitable emphasis on the development of key numeracy skills in Years 9,10 and 11. The use of numeracy in a sample of subjects has been carefully audited by the numeracy co-ordinator and through the local education authority. In most subjects the use of numeracy, and ability of pupils to apply their skills is good. In a few subjects, for example science and information and communication technology mathematical skills are actively taught, and some teachers for example in geography emphasise the importance of accurate presentation and correct mathematical notation. Standards of attainment in numeracy are below average in by the end of Year 9. Pupils have lower than average mental arithmetic skills and this impedes learning. Nevertheless they have sufficient skills to support learning in other subjects. By the end of Year 11 those with lower attainment have a secure grounding in basic written calculation forms and graph work. They sometimes find the requirements of other subjects, for example science, difficult. Those with high and average attainment produce very good graph work and data analysis and use their skills effectively in other subjects. For example in history the pupils interpret the statistics of death effectively and in physical education they use graphs to present data. By the end of Year 11 numeracy skills are satisfactory overall. Pupils achieve well due to the good provision and teaching, particularly in years 9, 10 and 11. Mental arithmetic calculations remain a difficulty for those with lower attainment. The

teaching of numeracy is good overall, it is strongest in year 9,10 and 11. Mathematics teachers using the most recent national guidance to support learning in Years 7 and 8 and build on the different strategies for calculation that the pupils have developed in primary schools. These strategies are often carried over to other years. There are still some inconsistencies in practice in the development of mental arithmetic skills. In graph work pupils are taught the importance of accuracy and labelling, and this is re-enforced in subjects such as science and geography. Specific data-handling skills, using spreadsheets, are taught in information and communication technology lessons.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision for science is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils achieve well between the ages of 11 and 16 due to the good teaching, good relations with their teachers and their own positive attitude to learning.
- Leadership and management are good and there is a good vision for future development.
- There are some creative ideas being used to enrich the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not sufficiently focussed to identify the needs for developments in teaching.
- The use and analysis of data are not firmly embedded in the department's planning.
- Resources of books for GCSE are inadequate.

Standards and achievement

135. At the end of Year 9, standards are below the national average. In national tests in 2002, the proportion of both boys and girls reaching at least level 5 and those reaching at least level 6 were below the national averages. Performance matches that of schools with pupils from similar social backgrounds and, over time, results are improving at a rate similar to that seen nationally. Test results and work seen during the inspection show that pupils are achieving well between the Years 7 to 9. All pupils acquire gains in scientific knowledge, understanding and the development of experimental skills at a rate better than average. This stems from the good teaching they experience, their own positive attitudes and good relations with their teachers as well as the good information they receive on how well they are doing.
136. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils are beginning to develop some understanding of how electric circuits work, properties of some chemical elements and show high standards of numeracy and scientific literacy. An instruction card on How to Make an Electric Motor, made by a pupil in Year 9 incorporated photographs, showed high competence in using ICT and understanding of electromagnetism. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs also achieve well. All pupils learn safe laboratory practices from Year 7 onwards and make good progress in planning and carrying out their own experiments. In spite of many difficulties with the language of science, the good support they receive from their teachers ensures that they can, for example, carry out experiments successfully and draw clear circuit diagrams.

137. Standards near the end of Year 11 are close to the national average and pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Although the proportion of pupils achieving at least grade C in the 2002 GCSE examinations is a little below the national average, almost all pupils reached at least grade G and the proportion reaching the very high grades of A and A* was significantly above the national average. On average, pupils achieve better in science than in many of their other subjects. As with younger pupils, all achieve well due to good teaching, positive attitudes and work tailored to meet the needs of all pupils. For example, many high attaining pupils produce excellent coursework and acquire some real understanding of Newton's Laws of Motion. Pupils in a group following Single Award Science with Rural Science appreciate the chance to learn their science in the real context of local farming practices.

Quality of education

138. Teaching is good overall and leads to good learning. In lessons seen, teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. Major features of teaching include very good subject knowledge with expectations invariably matched to the needs of pupils; universally good planning and very good relationships with pupils which make for a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. Teachers always ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the purpose and content of lessons. A series of short, varied activities such as "digestion bingo", experimental work and pupils testing each other with questions of their own devising, all act to develop and consolidate new knowledge and understanding of their science. In whole-class sessions, in which there is constant interaction between pupils and teacher, questioning is used very effectively to assess what pupils know and to further develop understanding.
139. Focus on keywords as a way of developing literacy in science is a strong feature as an aid to learning in many lessons. In the best examples seen, teachers return to these words at regular intervals during the lessons, including reviewing at the end how well they have been assimilated. Good assessment procedures ensure in a variety of ways that pupils are well informed about how well they are doing. Pupils relate their marks in tests to National Curriculum levels and are regularly set targets for future performance. All teachers mark work regularly but there is some variation in the quality of information it provides. The very best examples, seen in the work of a few teachers, give detailed comments which not only praise what pupils have done but also give very secure guidance on how they can do better.
140. In a few lessons, the learning of some pupils proceeds more slowly because the lesson does not cater adequately for the needs of everyone in the class, particularly in Years 7 and 8. In other instances, teaching strategies, such as lengthy whole class discussions, lose effectiveness because they do not take full account of the short concentration span of some pupils.
141. Pupils make a significant contribution to their own learning. They arrive at lessons ready to learn and behave well towards each other and their teachers. Many are articulate speakers and make very good contributions to lessons. Some, particularly high attaining pupils, generate ideas which contribute to the learning of the class as a whole. In a Year 11 physics lesson, a pupil very perceptively produced a testable hypothesis to account for unexpected results in an air-track experiment on accelerated motion.

Leadership and management

142. Leadership and management are good. The head of science has a very good awareness of the many strengths of the department and a good vision for how it needs to develop in the future. Much credit is due to the whole science staff who are working hard to maintain and improve standards in the department during the current secondment of the head of science to work with the local education authority. The department has a good system for assessing and recording attainment and there are good procedures for identifying pupils who appear to be in danger of underachieving.
143. The use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning is not integral to the department's thinking although curriculum review is ongoing with some good initiatives in the pipeline. The monitoring of teaching is mainly informal and could be sharpened to identify and address teachers' specific developmental needs. There is a wide ranging programme of opportunities to enrich pupils' experience of science, the most notable of which was the recent Centre Stage project in which pupils between 11 and 14 wrote and staged a science based drama on "baby cloning" in a competition organised by the Wellcome Trust. The department is also making a significant contribution to the school's citizenship programme with a well-researched and carefully planned series of lessons focussing on links between science and the citizen.
144. Accommodation is satisfactory overall with some improvements having recently been made but some laboratories still need refurbishing. Resources are just about satisfactory but there are insufficient GCSE textbooks. The technical staff work very hard to ensure that the best possible use is made of available resources. The main storage area is small and very cramped.
145. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved. Assessment is now much more secure and marking, although inconsistencies remain, is significantly better. There has been some improvement in the accommodation but some deficiencies in resources still remain.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The relationships between teachers and the pupils are very good, providing a very effective learning environment in lessons.
- The management of the subject is effective in the promotion of high expectations in pupils and a clear direction for teachers.
- The good quality of teaching ensures good quality learning.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few reference books available in the department to enhance the quality of research.
- Visiting artists could provide additional stimuli for pupils.

Standards and achievement

146. By the end of Year 9, the evidence from inspection indicates that standards of attainment are average compared with national expectations. This represents good

achievement compared with the well below average skills and knowledge of pupils on entry in Year 7. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils draw and paint with confidence, have experience of print making, collage, mixed media techniques, digital photography and three-dimensional construction. They increase their knowledge and understanding about certain artists and cultures and gain an understanding of perspective, proportion, scale in drawings and accurate observation. Pupils with special education needs and also the higher attaining pupils achieve well. Homework assignments include written annotations and evaluations and are improving research skills and assisting in the promotion of high standards in lessons. Pupils show pride in their achievements which is a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning.

147. In the year 2001 GCSE results, grades A*-C were above the national average and were better than most other subjects within the school curriculum. Over the past three years all pupils entered for GCSE examinations achieved at least grade G. GCSE results in 2002 fell below the national average, partly the consequence of disturbances caused to the continuity of the pupils' education by the foot and mouth epidemic. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are improving in Year 10 and are generally above average in Year 11. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop an understanding of the work of significant artists and cultures and incorporate these influences into their work. Skills are well developed in the applications of digital photography linked to computer software packages. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.

Quality of education

148. Teaching is good, and often very good. The best lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching and specially designed learning opportunities, which offer pupils the opportunity to succeed. Higher attaining pupils are offered extension studies to provide them with additional challenges. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation. Connections are also established in many lessons to the school's literacy strategy. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures. All classrooms within the department and certain public areas around the school contain very good displays of work, providing encouragement for pupils to appreciate the standards of work being produced. Assessment is effective and is used as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes a certain amount of pupil self-assessment and therefore when questioned the pupils were well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given target grades for examinations and discuss their progress towards achieving these targets. Work is marked at intervals usually linked to the completion of a project. The marking of work is always reinforced by supportive comments by teachers and, therefore, pupils in all year groups are well aware of their level of achievement and what they have to do to make further progress.
149. The majority of pupils from Years 7 to 11 learn well due to the challenging and diverse nature of the experiences on offer from the effective teaching. The promotion by teachers of key words in many lessons is having a positive effect upon the pupils' understanding of technical language within the subject. Group or class discussions occur in all lessons and play an important role in promoting the use of language, the formation of opinions and the ability of the pupils to defend those opinions. Pupils in

all years are developing an increasing awareness and skills in the use of computers in art, particularly with digital photography. Homework is used to good effect.

Leadership and management

150. The management of the department is good, promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction. The teachers offer a range of complementary skills and expertise and therefore work as an effective team. Departmental documentation is comprehensive and well organised. The assessment policy and practice is very effective in tracking and recording pupil progress. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate and target grades are given to pupils studying for GCSE examinations. Accommodation is good and is having a positive effect upon the quality of education provided. Resources are good and used effectively, although the quality and quantity of books available in the department to improve the research skills of the pupils is too low. Pupils are given opportunities to visit galleries and museums, including a one-day visit to London.
151. Improvements since the previous inspection are good. The previous inspection drew attention to the fact that the pupils' knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design was not sufficiently well developed. This is no longer the case. Some teaching was then judged to be unsatisfactory: teaching is now good often very good. Accommodation then was unsatisfactory. The art rooms have since been re-located and accommodation is now good. The introduction of visiting artists could also raise pupil awareness, knowledge and understanding of art in society.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The subject is taught well as a distinctive part of the personal, social and health education programme.
- Some departments, especially science and history, have identified well where their subject contributes to pupils' understanding of citizenship.
- Pupils show a good responsibility towards each other and to the school and wider communities, ensuring that citizenship is beginning to permeate the fabric and life of the whole school.

Areas for improvement

- Some printed resources need revising to make them more acceptable for use in lessons.
- Not all subjects contribute sufficiently to the development of pupils' citizenship.
- Not all teachers are enthusiastic about teaching citizenship to their tutor groups.

Standards and achievement

152. Standards are just below average at the end of Years 9 and 11, reflecting pupils' abilities in both oracy and literacy. On the other hand, pupils achieve well throughout the school compared to their starting points.
153. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils gain a good understanding of the need for rules in communities. They recognise well the need to look after and conserve resources

and also learn about the roles, duties and responsibilities of the police. They gain a sound understanding of the need for good relationships with others in life in general and our interdependence on each other. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils recognised well the issues associated with sex discrimination and stereotyping in home and work situations. The whole of Year 9 played a full part in the mock trial of youths accused of serious anti-social behaviour, with very good involvement of a local policeman and real magistrates. The main participants on stage were word perfect in their role-play. The level of discussion amongst the audience (the jury) was good.

154. In Years 10 and 11, pupils show evidence of an expanding understanding of human rights, from the time of the Magna Carta through to the United Nations declaration of 1948. Year 11 pupils collaborate well with each other as they plan a community event, dealing well in turn with what constitutes the 'community' and with many of the possible pitfalls of organising such an event. Their subsequent group presentations varied in quality but showed good evidence of increasing skill in brainstorming suggestions and of presenting visual ideas convincingly to an audience.

Quality of education

155. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It varies in lessons seen from satisfactory to very good. The subject is taught by the form tutors who all know their pupils well. This enables planning to be directed to the needs of each group. The lessons are planned as a distinct part of the personal, social and health education programme of study yet it is done so that the whole programme is directed to helping pupils to become informed citizens. Citizenship is seen as contributing to pupils' self-esteem and this is central to the school's aims.
156. In the better lessons, teachers are very well prepared and have made the material their own, and interesting. They manage their pupils well, infect them with their own enthusiasm, keep the pace brisk and vary the learning strategy to suit both the topic and the age and attainment range of the pupils. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to be active in their own learning, to exercise some initiative, to take a lead in group work, to question, to suggest and to debate.

Leadership and management

157. Overall co-ordination of the subject is good. The group approach whereby one pastoral manager has overall responsibility but is assisted by her colleague pastoral managers, works well on the whole. There is a satisfactory range of resources and teaching aids. Regular meetings are held to evaluate the success of the lessons and to address any concerns form tutors may have. The school is well aware that some of the commercial materials used are badly in need of revision to make them more acceptable for use in lessons.
158. Some subjects contribute much more to the ideas of citizenship across the curriculum than others. History and science have made exceptional efforts to do this with some success.
159. Not all form tutors are enthusiastic about teaching citizenship as part of personal, social, and health education, or even about teaching all its other aspects. Time is short for fitting citizenship in around all the other important topics, such as sex education and careers education, all of which have to go into the weekly hour-long sessions. Serious consideration should be given to trading some of the benefits of continuity of teaching against those of the probable gains to be had from using a small team of 'specialist' enthusiasts to teach the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge of their pupils, which helps them meet pupils' individual needs on a day-to-day basis.
- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- The recently revised courses of study cover a wide range of interesting tasks.

Areas for improvement

- The overall co-ordination of all teachers involved in the delivery of design and technology is unsatisfactory.
- There is no common approach to planning or to the development of the key features of designing and making.

Standards and achievement

160. National test results at the end of Year 9 have been close to the national averages over recent years, but dipped in 2002, including when compared to the overall school averages. Results in the 2002 statutory Teacher Assessments were well below expected national levels. A little over half the pupils at the end of Year 9 in design and technology reached the national expectation, level 5 or above. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE in 2002 was also below the school average and well below the national average. Overall, there has been a steady fall in results at this higher level, A*-C over the last three years. Therefore, even after taking into account the effects of the foot and mouth crisis, achievement was at best satisfactory across Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11.
161. Standards in design and technology on entry to the school are average. The pupils' earlier experiences and opportunities to learn and practise the range of design and technology skills are variable. The standards of designing and sketching are less well developed than the skills of making. Close to the end of Year 9, standards are very variable, with broad variations between the material areas that collectively deliver the design and technology National Curriculum. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils use safely a good range of hand and machine tools for designing and making a range of products and articles, in both resistant and compliant materials and food products. Pupils do not always recognise and use the knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work to inform increasingly demanding design and make activities in new situations. Research, analysis and evaluation are, however, used effectively as methods of learning in food and textiles, for example, when investigating and testing cakes and producing fabric patterns celebrating Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. The use of ICT as a design tool is beginning to improve presentation and extend the range of design possibilities with, for example, graphs showing questionnaire data and when designing a maze game in resistant materials. Pupils' level of independence and collaboration are good and are exploited to good effect by teachers, for example when conducting group product analysis and researching a new packed lunch in food technology.
162. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 10 and 11 are also very variable and there is a marked improvement as pupils move through these two years. There is still underachievement in sketching and drawing, which slows design

fluency; for example in the Year 11 systems class, a significant number of pupils did not fully understand how to produce three-dimensional drawings of their designs or control mechanisms. Working drawings with dimensions are similarly underdeveloped. Higher-attaining pupils consolidate skill acquisition through good research, organisation and evaluation, and produce design folders of a good standard, as in textiles, where pupils designed and made a 'pair of shorts'. The recently acquired digital camera in food technology allows good opportunities for pupils to record and evaluate their work.

Quality of education

163. Teaching in design and technology is satisfactory overall. It was good in one lesson observed.
164. Teacher-pupil relationships are good. This is reflected in pupils' attitudes and behaviour, which are similarly good. Pupils receive high levels of individual support, which enables all, including those with special educational needs, to make satisfactory progress overall. In these better lessons, learning objectives are clear and shared with the pupils and they understand what is expected of them, including the clear deadlines given. Lessons that were satisfactory had some good features, but in some instances teachers are over-directive and the focus for the lesson is aimed towards the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. In some instances the pace was too slow which results in unfinished work and ultimately to unsatisfactory progress for these pupils.

Leadership and management

165. Day-to-day leadership and management within each of the two technology areas ('soft' and 'hard' technology) are satisfactory but co-ordination across design and technology as a whole is unsatisfactory. The design and technology curriculum area has good potential for development, but has made unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. For instance, there is no common approach to planning or to the development of the key features of designing and making. The recently introduced assessment and recording system has yet to be evaluated in terms of consistency and monitoring variations in teaching and learning across the department. Specialist accommodation is good and tools and equipment are maintained to a high standard. Resources for the teaching of 'control' in resistant materials are a limiting factor. The size of some classes requires skilful management to ensure optimum use is made of the resources available.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Gifted and talented pupils are very well provided for in Years 10 and 11 and achieve exceptionally well compared to their prior attainment.
- GCSE results in 2002 were significantly above the national average and were the best in the school. Geography had the largest GCSE entry outside the core subjects.
- Pupils' learning is good because of the high quality of most of the teaching they experience.
- From Year 7 onwards pupils use ICT well, both for research in their enquiry work and for presentation.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils present their work carelessly and draw poor quality diagrams which do not aid their understanding and from which they cannot easily learn.
- The work of some pupils is over-generously and inaccurately assessed so that they do not know how they are achieving and do not know how to improve.

Standards and achievement

166. Although pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are below average, their results in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were at the national average. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at this stage. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, pupils' attainment was significantly above the national average at grades A*-C. Work seen during the inspection shows pupils attaining above the national average overall. The standard of work of gifted and talented pupils was very high.
167. By the end Year 9, pupils are competent in a range of geographical skills. They capably interpret and construct graphs and accurately identify significant geographical features on photographs, drawing diagrams to illustrate their work. A significant number of pupils, however, present their graphs and diagrams carelessly so that they do not make processes clear and their understanding of such processes as plate tectonics is weakened. All pupils have a good geographical vocabulary which they use with confidence and accuracy. Pupils make good use of ICT for research and presentation. For instance, pupils of high prior attainment carried out an enquiry into the nature and occurrence of earthquakes and volcanoes for which they obtained information from the Internet, wrote imaginatively in the form of a broadcast about a specific volcanic eruption and word-processed their report well. Pupils have a very good understanding of how human processes such as tourism affect the landscape and are sensitive to the need to protect National Parks. Some pupils with special educational needs achieve less well as they do not always finish their work and their written expression is unclear, especially if tasks have not been modified to make them accessible.
168. Gifted and talented pupils at the end of Year 11 are attaining standards well above average. They have already passed GCSE, many with high grades, and are now successfully completing an advanced supplementary (AS level) GCE course. They showed their exceptional achievement in a lesson in which they made capable group presentations on plant colonisation. All pupils in Year 11 carry out very good investigations. They use a range of forms of data presentation, draw well argued

conclusions and present their work to a very high standard making very good use of ICT. The overall standard at the end of Year 11 of those pupils who did not sit the GCSE examination a year early is below average but represents satisfactory achievement in relation to those particular pupils' prior attainment. The quality of work of some is marred by careless and inaccurate drawings and descriptions of processes, and by leaving work incomplete.

Quality of education

169. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Two excellent lessons were seen in Years 10 and 11. The best lessons are marked by very high expectations of pupils which inspire them to do well and to become independent learners. Teachers set challenging tasks which demand that pupils think hard, as in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were completing a coursework task requiring statistical analysis. Lively exposition engages the interest of pupils, encourages them to work hard and to achieve well. Teachers' accurate use of language, for instance in a Year 11 lesson on plant succession, constantly reinforces pupils' ability to use appropriate vocabulary with confidence and accuracy. Questioning is used skilfully, involving all pupils and encouraging them to think. Relationships with teachers are very good and pupils are willing to share and explore ideas and test their understanding. While pupils are working, teachers constantly check their work. Shortcomings in teaching relate particularly to a lack of concern that pupils produce high quality, accurate written work. The written work of some pupils is inaccurately and over-generously assessed.
170. Pupils respond well to the good teaching. They are attentive, interested and work with concentration so their learning is good. When they are clear about what is expected of them and are given adequate time to complete tasks they complete them well and carefully. When they are engaged by the lessons they seek help when necessary to ensure that they do what is required of them and take much pride in their work. When they are less engaged they are careless about the accuracy of their writing and diagrams. Their learning is then only satisfactory.

Leadership and management

171. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Concern for the highest standards of achievement by pupils and a sensitivity to the capacity of some to rise to a considerable challenge led to the policy of entering pupils early for GCSE in Year 10 and early for AS level in Year 11. The policy has been a considerable success and has contributed significantly to raising achievement in other subjects. However, there is not yet sufficient monitoring of teaching across the department to ensure that the very high standards of practice are developed by all teachers of geography. The curriculum is well developed to provide for the needs of all pupils especially in its emphasis on the value of individual enquiry work and the effective use of ICT.
172. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Since the last inspection the department has maintained and improved upon its high standards. While resources are only satisfactory, they have improved since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The specialist teaching is sometimes excellent.
- The teaching of Year 7 children with special needs is outstanding.
- Good leadership and management have led to very good improvement since the last inspection and have made the subject a much more popular option.

Areas for improvement

- Standards attained in the GCSE are well below the national average.
- In Years 7-8 there is insufficient introduction of source material into lessons.
- In Year 8 in particular there is insufficient interesting detail to put over the authentic flavour of the age being studied.
- In Years 10 and 11 there is insufficient pupil-to-pupil learning.

Standards and achievement

173. By the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is average and this represents good achievement in the light of their attainment on entry to the school. By the end of Year 11, the attainment of the pupils entered for the GCSE examination in history in 2002 is well below national averages but this represents satisfactory achievement in the light of their recorded attainment in 2000.
174. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress with the help of adapted materials and modified teaching styles and all pupils benefit from satisfactory strategies to improve their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils designated as being gifted and talented do not do as well as they might do in examinations and in relation to other subjects. A good contribution is made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils studying history.
175. The work seen in lessons and in exercise books confirms the judgement that pupils in Years 7-9 demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. The work done in Year 7 is particularly good and very important for laying the foundations for the success of the subject in later years. Pupils in Year 7 demonstrate an excitement for the subject which is rarely seen elsewhere and their thinking skills are improved a great deal by an exercise that involves working out ways of attacking and of defending castles. The way that pupils with special educational needs benefit from this exercise is a tribute to the first class teaching involved. Pupils in Year 8 demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the English Civil War but the momentum of Year 7 is not fully maintained. Knowledge and understanding is the main focus but historical skills, such as those concerned with source evaluation and the critical evaluation of evidence, are under-developed. In Year 9, pupils demonstrate good knowledge of the rise of Hitler and associated topics and are introduced to the need to base judgements on evidence.
176. In Years 10 and 11, the work seen on topics such as the Appeasement of Hitler and the development of crime and punishment over a long period of time, shows good knowledge and understanding and is better than the examination statistics imply. The learning is mainly teacher-led and would benefit from a greater degree of independent, personal investigation. The lessons on the options facing western leaders confronted by the threat of Hitler were well taught but could exploit better the

strategy of allowing the pupils to be faced with the options without necessarily knowing what the eventual historical outcome was. One lesson on crime and punishment benefited from a visit by a local policeman and was a good contribution to the development of citizenship.

Quality of education

177. Overall the teaching is good and the specialist teaching is often very good, sometimes excellent. Where a Year 8 class was taught about the Civil War by a non-specialist teacher some aspects were well taught in terms of knowledge but less so in terms of source evaluation and the conveying of the flavour of the period studied. In another class a non-specialist missed opportunities to develop recognisable historical skills and presented tasks that were not relevant to the declared historical objectives. Almost all the teachers bring very good subject knowledge, very good planning and great enthusiasm to the task in hand. The teaching is usually characterised by its brisk pace and purposeful delivery, good humour and very good relationships. In every class observed the pupils responded accordingly.
178. Some excellent teaching was observed in Year 7 on the topic of castles. Such teaching is laying the foundations in Year 7 for the continued improvement of the department since the last inspection, by interesting pupils enough to make them want to choose it in increasing numbers in Year 10 and in the sixth form. The provision in Year 8 has insufficient source work to accompany the good knowledge and understanding of main people and events. Abstract notions such as power, money and religion should be made more human and placed in a real historical situation by the inclusion of interesting detail from the period. In Year 9 a very good example of how to train pupils to ask the right questions of sources was observed. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and pupils co-operate well in the learning process. Year 10 pupils show by their answers some good prior teaching of the topic of appeasement and some empathetic understanding of the dilemmas faced by western leaders. Year 11 pupils are taught well how to tackle the important historical and sociological phenomenon of witchcraft by the very enthusiastic guidance they receive. In Years 10 and 11 the 60-minute lessons were largely teacher-led and, although good use was made of a video, the long lessons could be profitably split up by an alternative approach to source work which places more independence on the pupil and encourages more pupil-to-pupil cross-talk.

Leadership and management

179. Leadership and management are good and a big improvement on the situation described at the time of the last inspection. Some aspects of it such as the documentation, policies and development plans are very good. The schemes of work, the mechanisms for assessing and tracking pupil performance and the use of the unappealing mobile accommodation are all good. With the big exception of the examination results there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The teaching is on occasion excellent, relationships are very good, the subject has been raised in status and more and more pupils are choosing it as an option. Overall the provision of history in the school is good and with the present specialist staff there is every promise of it becoming even better.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils, who in turn are very interested in the subject.
- Progress in extending the curriculum to include key skills units of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, is good.

Areas for improvement

- The current pupil – computer ratio is below the national target.
- The level of support for non-specialist teachers involved in the delivery of ICT is still an area for close monitoring.

Standards and achievement

180. In Years 7 to 9, the school teaches ICT through two timetabled lessons per ten days, with additional cross-curricular work for all three year-groups. In the statutory teacher assessments in 2002, a little over three-quarters of the pupils reached the national average, level 5 or above. The girls' results were close to the national average and better than the boys, as is the case nationally. Since 1999, results have improved significantly. They dipped slightly from 2001-2002 but remained similar to the overall school averages.
181. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are below average but they improve at a good rate as they move through the school. In Year 7, pupils can log on to the network, access the Internet and have basic word-processing skills. Keyboard skills are less well developed, which slows their work in some instances. By the end of Year 9, their achievement is good since they have good opportunities to learn information and communication skills and understand how to gather, process and output information in text and image form. They explore a variety of image-capture and image-manipulation methods to create suitable image data. They also learn to develop strategies of group working for example, when researching and discussing the implications of a 'cashless society.' Pupils learn well how to use a variety of search mechanisms to explore the potential of ICT-based information sources.
182. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an ICT course. The present Year 11 will all receive a school IT Certificate of Achievement Award. Year 10 are following the IT Skills Unit Qualification, working towards Level 2, higher attaining pupils are generating portfolio evidence to meet the Level 3 standards. Here pupils make good use of a variety of skills, for example in the 'copyright research' unit of work. Pupils understand how different methods and media are used to provide information and are able to recognise advantages or limitations for each and are confident in using a search engine, moving between Internet pages and websites. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall.

Quality of education

183. The quality of teaching is good. Specialist teachers make very effective use of their very good subject knowledge to give clear explanations, which helps pupils to learn

well. In all lessons pupils make at least satisfactory progress as they learn new skills and reinforce existing ones. They make good progress in word processing and presentation skills, including those pupils with special educational needs. They are encouraged to good effect to take calculated risks or experiment with their work in, for example, a Year 8 unit of work on 'control', using a flowchart and writing instructions to change the temperatures and moisture levels in a model greenhouse. Lessons are well planned, particularly in the key skills classes. Teachers make very effective use of technology with the use of data projectors and the interactive whiteboard, which are effective in helping pupils to understand processes, when they can see them clearly displayed.

184. Behaviour of pupils and pupils and relationships with teachers are consistently good. The positive attitudes displayed by pupils and pupils and ability to work independently, contribute well to their learning. Lunch time and after school opportunities, in the library resource centre, ICT and sixth form base are popular and well subscribed.

Leadership and management

185. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of ICT has a clear vision for ongoing development. The ICT pupil logbook is comprehensive and prime time interviews between teachers and pupils are effective in recording assessments and negotiating targets for improvement. These, along with the very good progress in introducing key skills elements, are strengths of the department. On the other hand, the level of support for non-specialist teachers involved in the delivery of ICT is still an area for close monitoring.
186. Overall progress since the last inspection is good. Technical support is very good, but still stretched in maintaining the systems and on both school sites. The current pupil – computer ratio is below the national target. Identified National Grid for Learning funding will provide sufficient workstations to at least match these targets. The school is still pursuing Broadband Internet connection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The quality of provision in Spanish is **good**; in German provision is **satisfactory** and in French it is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils studying Spanish achieve well because of very strong teaching.
- Pupils behave well and most have positive attitudes to learning a foreign language.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in French, both at GCSE and in lessons, are too low.
- Many pupils are underachieving in French because of insecure teaching that fails to challenge them.
- In the absence of the subject leader the modern foreign languages department currently lacks the means to check and improve unsatisfactory teaching.

Standards and achievement

187. The long-term absence of the head of modern foreign languages has taken its toll on the department, in particular the quality of provision in French. At the time of the inspection this was unsatisfactory because of the employment of temporary and unqualified staff whose teaching did not promote adequate learning.
188. In 2002 nearly all Year 11 pupils were entered for one of the three languages in GCSE. Results in French were well below the national average and many pupils did less well than predicted. In German a smaller number of mostly higher-attaining pupils achieved results in line with the national average. Pupils who took Spanish, many of lower attainment, achieved grades that were similar to the ones they got in other subjects. Taken together, these results were not as good as those of 2001. Girls did much better than boys in all three languages.
189. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards in **Spanish** are in line with the national average towards the end of Year 9. Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well because very strong teaching demands a lot from them and they learn fast and enjoyably as a result. Many of them have Spanish-sounding pronunciation and are able to adapt the language to talk about their own situation. They hear Spanish spoken most of the time by their teachers so their skills in listening are well developed. Boys and girls are at a similar standard in their speaking and listening, although boys do not do as well in writing because they often have less of an eye for accuracy. Standards in **German** are below the national average in Year 9. However, most pupils achieve satisfactorily given that many are of below-average attainment. Girls reach higher standards than boys because some of the boys quickly lose attention. In **French** standards are well below those expected at this stage and many pupils are under-achieving. Pupils do not hear enough of the language spoken in the classroom or have enough chance to practise it, so their use and understanding of French are much less well developed than they should be.
190. Standards seen towards the end of Year 11 fall into a similar pattern. In **Spanish**, for example, a good number of higher-attaining linguists cope well with complex grammar and use different verb tenses correctly. They speak confidently and have good listening skills. These pupils are achieving well above average standards. Even pupils of more modest attainment, carried along by challenging teaching and a strong ethos for learning, are reaching average standards. A group of pupils of very low

attainment, most of them with significant learning needs, continue to learn Spanish in Year 10 and, like others, are achieving well. In **German** the smaller number taking GCSE are below average on aggregate although a few good linguists are on target for higher grades. The wide range of attainment in this group slows down the pace of teaching. Achievement here is satisfactory. In **French** there is widespread under-achievement, especially among those of higher attainment. These pupils took GCSE in French in 2002 at the end of Year 10. The majority who did not gain a grade C or above are retaking GCSE in 2003 but have made negligible progress in the intervening year. Their standards are below average and pupils are unable to conduct simple dialogues in French without the use of dictionaries. The teaching they currently receive is inappropriate and unchallenging. Pupils of lower attainment are achieving satisfactorily in French.

Quality of education

191. Reflecting the differences in standards and achievement, the quality of teaching, and the rate at which pupils learn, also vary considerably. The best teaching is in **Spanish** and is very good, sometimes excellent. Pupils learn very fast because their teachers are so proficient in Spanish that they speak it persistently in lessons. This means that pupils learn to listen carefully and eventually to understand the language spoken with authentic pronunciation. In turn this leads to a confident use of Spanish which is further encouraged by plenty of good practice through repetition and pair work. This teaching is also very demanding and does not avoid difficulties or accept second best. In one lesson, for example, pupils spontaneously asked for things in Spanish because of the teacher's previous insistence on this. Persistent use of Spanish and rehearsing of good pronunciation led to better fluency and comprehension. The teaching of **German** is well managed and carefully planned but sometimes lacks a challenging edge and is not consistently conducted in the language. It is satisfactory overall and pupils' learning is also satisfactory.
192. The teaching of **French** is unsatisfactory, sometimes poor. Staff who are either temporary or unqualified and non-specialist currently do much of the teaching of French. There is a lack of proficiency in the language and teachers do not use French in the classroom so that pupils have very little chance of hearing it spoken properly. The effect of this is that pupils do not learn to speak and little progress is made in their capacity to understand and react to the language in everyday situations.
193. Teachers manage pupils firmly but in a friendly way so relationships are cordial and most pupils are willing to co-operate and get down to their work. They generally help themselves and each other in their learning by their positive attitudes and good behaviour. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are very mature and can be trusted entirely to work unsupervised. Even when teaching is unengaging pupils are at worst quietly inattentive.

Leadership and management

194. Thanks to the commitment of established teachers and the effectiveness of the absent subject leader, the modern foreign languages department runs smoothly from day-to-day. Its documentation and systems are very clear and efficient. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and their progress clearly tracked. Some teachers make good use of ICT and pupils benefit from word-processing their work and presenting it attractively. There is scope for even more use of ICT and other engaging media that can inspire real interest in language learning. In this respect, and in its lack of good up to date audio-visual equipment, the department's resources are unsatisfactory.

195. However, in the subject leader's continuing absence the department lacks leadership and co-ordination. The deficiencies of French teaching cannot be properly tackled with the situation as it is at present. There is a pressing need to check and improve the quality of this teaching. The school management has plans to put this in hand and to modify the modern foreign languages curriculum in order to clarify the relative position of each foreign language.
196. Since the previous inspection the modern foreign languages department has not made satisfactory improvements. Standards in French, in particular, have reduced and too many pupils are underachieving. Low expectations and inadequate use of the foreign language, referred to in the previous report, still persist in too many lessons. By contrast, pupils' achievement in Spanish has improved and, overall, pupils continue to behave well. Provided the school builds on the strengths in the department, it will be well placed to improve.

MUSIC

The overall provision in music is **good with some very good features**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, enabling pupils to have a positive experience of music and to achieve well.
- Accommodation and resources are improved.
- Very good leadership is providing the energy, commitment and vision to take the department forward.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT is under developed in the work of Years 7 to 9.
- Instrumental teaching is securely established, but numbers are still below average for the size of the school.

Standards and achievement

197. Teacher assessments for Year 9 pupils indicate that standards are a little above national expectations. The quality of work seen during the inspection suggests that this judgement is slightly inflated and that standards are about in line with national norms. GCSE results are very good and significantly better than the national average.
198. Year 9 pupils know and understand a range of specialist vocabulary and use it well in the context of performing and composing, listening and appraising. They acquire basic skills in keyboard performance and singing and create musical structures for a variety of mediums. They learn the elements of conventional notation as well as explore graphic representation of sound. An example of performing from graphic notation was seen in a Year 9 lesson, but it was only partly successful. This kind of activity seemed not to be embedded in the pupils' experience, and imagination was rather limited as were the sound sources available. Across the first three years, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. They enter the school at a standard approaching national expectations, make rapid progress during Year 7, but this levels off later, to end broadly in line with national norms by the end of Year 9. The work seen from the current GCSE pupils is generally good or better. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Compositions are carefully crafted in relation to the examination criteria. This was evident in a piece being worked upon by a Year 10 girl. Some Year 11

pupils use ICT software well in their composition work. One girl has written a competent ground bass piece for instrumental ensemble and one boy's fusion piece is outstanding in its imagination and use of the medium.

Quality of education

199. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are varied, well prepared and mostly carefully matched to the needs of pupils. Some particularly effective teaching in Year 7 is establishing positive attitudes to the subject and building up a secure base of knowledge and experience for later work. The most productive lessons show a clear sense of direction and a good pace. Where they are less successful, it is because objectives are unclear to pupils and tasks lack some appropriateness and a sufficient musical focus. Pupils' work and progress is appropriately assessed. All groups have access to the music curriculum, with boys and girls responding equally well overall. A strength of the department is a commitment in philosophy and practice to making sure that all pupils are involved in all areas of work. For example, pupils with special educational needs are effectively catered for and some are enabled to pursue examination courses. The curriculum comprises a range of modules broadly in line with National Curriculum requirements, but music from the western classical tradition is under-represented compared to world music. ICT is under-developed in the first three years.

Leadership and management

200. Leadership and management of the department are very good and are responsible for significant improvements since the last inspection. Accommodation has been re-sited and extended along with an increase in resources. Instrumental teaching is securely established, though numbers are still below average for the size of the school. Extra-curricular work is developing and standards are rising steadily. Pupils' music making is becoming well embedded in the corporate life of the school and the wider community. Many valuable initiatives and links are being pursued which extend cultural opportunities for pupils – the Arts Foundation Creative Partnership being a good example. Music is now a strong and increasingly influential department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well in the GCSE examination.
- Extra-curricular sport offers very good opportunities for all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in school and beyond.
- Good links with local sports clubs and organisations enhance and extend pupils' attainment and progress.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough monitoring, sharing and development of teaching to ensure the very best practice.
- Inadequate accommodation for the subject hinders attainment and progress in indoor games.

Standards and achievement

201. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment in physical education. The 2002 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, confirmed by work seen during the inspection, indicate that standards are average. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. The 2002 GCSE results were above the national average, and all pupils gained at least grade G. These results were a significant improvement on those gained in 2001. Pupils did better in physical education than in the other subjects they studied.
202. By the end of Year 9, standards are average in games. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of skills and understand the principles of play in invasion games, as seen in basketball. A limiting factor in pupils' achievement in indoor games is the unsatisfactory amount of space provided by the accommodation. Standards in swimming are above average. Almost all pupils swim with an effective technique and maintain this over distance. Most pupils of all levels of ability improved their personal best time, for two lengths of front crawl. Pupils' skills in evaluating and improving performance are also well developed, they help their partners improve their skill at surface diving. Standards in gymnastics are variable. Good quality work was seen in a Year 7 class, where high attaining pupils showed good control and body tension in rolling and balancing skills. In contrast, a lower attaining Year 8 class had not mastered the basic gymnastics skills; their performance was limited by lack of understanding of the principles of balancing. Most pupils know how to warm up before exercise, but they are not yet fully equipped to do this independently. Pupils' literacy skills develop well when they focus on key words, and discuss their understanding of performance.
203. By the end of Year 11, standards in team games are above average overall, and this represents a good level of achievement, given pupils' prior attainment. Boys and girls perform well in hockey, playing at speed and sharing a good awareness of each other in keeping possession of the ball. The same qualities are evident in football, where pupils of all levels of ability have a good grasp of the game. Standards in GCSE practical coursework are above average, as seen in football, hockey and basketball. Despite the limitations of the accommodation, boys and girls have a good understanding of the principles of play in basketball, applying their knowledge, skill and understanding of rules and tactics, effectively, in the game. Written work is average overall, and pupils show a sound knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Their books are well presented, but there is little evidence of pupils' use of ICT in their coursework.
204. A very good programme of extra-curricular sport provides opportunities for all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel both in school and beyond. Close links with the community and local sports clubs enhance and extend standards of attainment. The school is justifiably proud of the number of pupils who gain representative honours at district, county and, sometimes, national level in a variety of sports.

Quality of education

205. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. All teachers have good knowledge of the activities they teach, plan lessons carefully and share learning objectives with the pupils, so that they know what they have to achieve. Pupils make most progress in their learning when teachers have high expectations and set a stimulating pace. This was evident in a gymnastics lesson, where pupils were well motivated by a video recording, and were eager to achieve a high standard of work

themselves. As well as setting a demanding physical challenge, the teacher also used probing questions to challenge pupils' understanding of what made their performance effective, resulting in very good learning. A demanding pace of learning was also a feature of a good swimming lesson. Literacy skills also developed well in these lessons through the use of key words and the specialist language of the subject. Some learning is too tightly controlled by the teacher and pupils spend too long listening. Pupils lose their concentration and the pace slows. This also happens when pupils are left too long on a task without the teacher's intervention to move them forward. The teachers' organisation and management of pupils are usually of a high order and, together with very good relationships between staff and pupils, they make a significant contribution to pupils' promptness, high levels of participation and good behaviour in lessons. Most pupils have good attitudes towards the subject, are well motivated and put energy and effort into their work. The marking of GCSE coursework is very good, and pupils receive good advice on how to improve, though there is little indication of the progress they are making against targets set. Although good overall, teaching requires a sharper focus through tighter learning targets, giving pupils a greater share of responsibility for their learning and insisting on good quality performance.

Leadership and management

206. The leadership and management of the subject are good, ably supported by an enthusiastic and committed staff team. Development planning focuses well on raising attainment, and has led to a significant improvement in the GCSE results this year. The improvement since the last inspection is good with standards of attainment maintained, and GCE A level introduced. Teaching is now good. Last year, the department gained the Sportsmark award. New curriculum initiatives are having a positive impact on physical education. Dance has been introduced, successfully, into the curriculum. The department is benefiting from the support received from the district school sports co-ordinator, and through more active links with its feeder primary schools. The benefits of these new developments were seen during the inspection at the Wear Valley Dance Festival. Thirty pupils from the school performed alongside all the contributory primary schools, establishing the continuity of dance through all years, and adding impetus to the concept of a specialist performing arts college. The unsatisfactory nature of the indoor accommodation for the subject has long been a problem. The department's strong sporting links with the community and local sports clubs have come together to put forward a bid for a new sports hall, the outcome of which is eagerly awaited. Monitoring of the subject's performance is in place, but more needs to be done on the monitoring and development of teaching to bring the good teaching up to the quality of the very best.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The Short Course GCSE.
- The quality of teaching, which leads to good learning.
- The quality of overall planning in the subject.
- The excellent use of assessment and of performance data.
- The very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for development

- A*-C grades in the GCSE Full Course are too few.
- There are too few teachers with specialist religious education qualifications.
- The allocation of time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is too low.

Standards and achievement

207. By the end of Year 9, standards in religious education are average and meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. Pupils enter the school with standards below those seen nationally, except for higher attaining pupils whose standards are above average. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory overall. Their knowledge and understanding of the topics studied improve but the written skills of some pupils do not improve at the same rate.
208. Results in the GCSE full and short courses are below national averages at grades A* - C but above average at grades A* to G. Despite being below the national average at grades A* - C, the short course results were in line with departmental predictions. However the proportion of grades A* - B is above that achieved nationally, showing that gifted and talented pupils achieve very well in this subject. Given the staffing problems of recent years, which has involved non-specialists teaching the subject, these results are encouraging overall and achievement is satisfactory overall.
209. In the lessons observed and work seen, pupils also achieve satisfactorily from Year 7 to 9 compared to their attainment on entry to the school. Significant factors in this process are the consistent lesson structure and the equally consistent emphasis on teaching the key words of each topic. The attention to literacy development, both spoken and written, is seen to be crucial to improving pupils' knowledge and understanding. Work seen in pupils' exercise books shows that teachers have high expectations of all pupils. There is some good work on the Five Pillars of Islam and some interesting work on 'Pacifism'. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons.
210. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to improve. Pupils following the GCSE courses make better progress than those following the non-examination course. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils preparing for the GCSE examination learn well about the different liturgies of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. They are clear on the order of service in each Church but some are confused by the Orthodox belief in the Eucharist. It is a challenging lesson for this group of pupils. At the end of the lesson, pupils explain the key words correctly, showing that they do understand what has been taught. For example, one pupil explains 'transubstantiation' correctly. Written work and coursework contains evidence of pupils responding to the high standards expected of them.

Quality of education

211. The quality of teaching is good. There are no unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but is good and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very well planned and resourced. Marking is very good and teachers are confident and accurate in their assessments. Time is used well and pupils are actively involved in learning from the beginning of a lesson. Teachers keep the focus of the lesson clear and use a variety of teaching and learning methods. Pupils are encouraged to be independent learners. This consistent structure and approach means that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Where progress is better, it reflects very good specialist subject knowledge and approach.
212. Learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils are very well prepared for the GCSE examinations. Lessons often have a clear focus on an examination question, which helps pupils to prepare and revise. In all years, the emphasis on knowing and understanding key words and their related concepts is bringing an academic rigour to the subject and arousing the pupils' curiosity. The work ethic evident in lessons and written work is raising pupils' expectations.

Leadership and management

213. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the development of religious education plus a determination to raise standards. Assessment, monitoring and target setting are very good. The department's use of the recently devised levels of attainment is very good. The head of department has revised these levels of attainment to link them specifically to each topic studied. This is motivating pupils to achieve. The use of performance data to track each pupil's progress is exemplary. ICT is well integrated into the subject. Accommodation and resources are very good. The religious education curriculum complies with the requirements of the local agreed syllabus, but time is still too short in Years 10 and 11.
214. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The provision for religious education in the sixth form now meets statutory requirements. The very good practices in the subject and the recent appointment of a specialist teacher of religious education means that the department is now poised to move on and raise standards further. It certainly has the capacity to do so.

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.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	17	65		6		N/a	
Chemistry	9	89		33		N/a	
Physics	15	80		20		N/a	
Mathematics	7	86		57		N/a	
Applied Mathematics	1	100		0.0		N/a	
Design and technology	1	100		0.0		N/a	
English Language	14	100		28		N/a	
English Literature	9	100		11		N/a	
Fine art	1	100		0.0		N/a	
Graphics	2	100		0.0		N/a	
Photography	7	100		43		N/a	
Music	3	67		33		N/a	
Sports Studies	8	63		0.0		N/a	
General Studies	8	75		0.0		N/a	
Geography	33	79		12		N/a	
History	9	89		11		N/a	
Religious education	3	100		33		N/a	
French	2	100		0.0		N/a	
German	1	0.0		100		N/a	
Spanish	1	100		0.0		N/a	
Psychology	20	60		0.0		N/a	

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
English Language	6	100		17		N/a	
English Literature	3	100		0.0		N/a	
French	2	100		0.0		N/a	
General Studies	2	100		0.0		N/a	
History	6	100		0.0		N/a	
Religious Education	3	100		0.0		N/a	
Biology	3	100		0.0		N/a	
Mathematics	4	100		25		N/a	
Chemistry	1	100		0.0		N/a	
Sports Studies	5	80		0.0		N/a	
Geography	13	77		8		N/a	
Physics	4	75		2.5		N/a	
Art	3	66		33		N/a	
German	2	50		0.0		N/a	
Psychology	4	75		25		N/a	
Business AVCE	6	83		0.0		N/a	
Computing AVCE	1	100		0.0		N/a	
Health and social care AVCE	4	75		0.0		N/a	
Leisure and tourism AVCE	11	100		18		N/a	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

215. Mathematics, biology and physics were inspected in depth and further mathematics and chemistry were sampled. The teaching and learning in the chemistry lesson seen were satisfactory, but the students would have benefited from a more active teaching and learning strategy. Provision for further mathematics is very good due to the high quality of teaching and the rigorous development of students' understanding. Students achieve well and some of their work is exceptionally good.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Achievement of students based on their prior attainment is good.
- Assessment and its use to help students improve is very good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Support and help offered to students outside lessons is very good.
- Students' attitudes to the course are positive, and they appreciate the quality of provision.
- Management is very good.
- The course is beginning to attract higher numbers of students.

Areas for improvement

- There is no immediate access to computers in lessons to support learning.

Standards and achievement

216. Relatively small numbers of students have taken GCE Advanced (A2) level and Advanced Supplementary (AS) level in recent years due to unusual circumstances, which are not reflected in the quality of provision. In the A2 level examinations in 2002 all four students gained pass grades spread across the range from A to E and achievement was much better than those predicted from students' GCSE grades. In AS level, eight students took the course and although two students did not achieve pass grades, this was not related to the quality of teaching. Students who wish to follow the course are usually accepted regardless of their GCSE grades, although they are securely counselled about the potential difficulties.
217. The six students in Year 13 are progressing well, particularly the ones with the highest and lowest attainment on entry to the course. Predictions and current grades for the students in Year 13 indicate that achievement will also be greater than expected taking prior attainment into account. Algebra skills are very secure and support students in their learning. In statistics, students have a good understanding of tests of significance. Students use correct mathematical notation particularly well and present arguments clearly so that their working can be followed. Weaker students have difficulty retaining some of the higher order work, for example integration by substitution, over a period of time but revision soon brings the processes back to mind.

218. Students in Year 12 are also achieving better than their GCSE results predict. Out of the 14 students taking the course only one does not intend to continue at A2 level. The good achievement is due to the very good quality of teaching and high expectation of the large quantities of work that pupils are expected to complete in class and in private study. In the lesson observed students showed a very good understanding of mathematical vocabulary. Algebra and number skills are well developed. In both year groups, students use the good quality notes taken during lessons to help them solve problems.

Quality of education

219. The quality of teaching is very good overall. About half of lessons are good, and half very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and work rigorously through all the stages needed to develop the understanding of concepts and skills. Lessons are very well prepared and the pace of lessons is matched to the needs of students so that no time is wasted. Homework tasks both reinforce and develop skills learned in lessons. Students concentrate very well. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students are prepared to ask for additional help, both in and out of lesson time, when they have difficulties. The quality of provision and additional help is much appreciated by the students, and almost all students work hard. All these factors lead to very good learning. During the inspection no mechanics lessons were observed, since these modules are currently not being taught. Previous examination results suggest that the teaching of mechanics is also very good.

Leadership and management

220. Co-ordination of the subject is very good. The expertise of teachers is well deployed to make best use of their skills. There is flexibility in provision to take into account the needs of different year groups and individual students, for example, in the subject modules studied. There is a close working relationship between the two teachers taking A and AS levels, hence information is shared well. Assessment procedures and the use of information to inform planning and to challenge students to better performance are very good. There are sufficient learning resources, for example texts, library materials and graphic calculators, although there is no direct access to computers in classrooms to support learning.

BIOLOGY

Overall, the provision for biology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and a good range of experience.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good leading to a positive learning atmosphere in lessons.
- Students are mature and can work well independently.
- The provision in school of advanced biotechnology equipment through industrial links gives students a unique enrichment opportunity.

Areas for improvement

- Some students, particularly in Year 12, do not achieve as well as they might.
- Schemes of work do not provide for teaching strategies suited to the learning styles of all students, particularly for those in Year 12 with relatively low attainment at GCSE.
- There is some limitation on the use of ICT in lessons due to the general lack of computer facilities within the department.

Standards and achievement

221. In Year 13, overall attainment is below national expectations. The proportion of students who passed the 2001 A2 level examination was close to the national average but that reaching the higher grades of A or B was significantly below average. In 2002, for which no national comparisons are available, all four students passed but there were no higher grades. Over time, results are average in relation to pass rate but below expectations at the grades A and B. Students in Year 13 who complete the two years of the A2 level course achieve, on average, the results to be expected from their GCSE results because of their own perseverance and the good support they receive from their teachers.
222. Work seen during the inspection shows a similar range of attainment. High attaining pupils can, for example, coherently discuss the microscopic structure and function of the human kidney. Many of those with lower attainment need a good deal of support in gaining and retaining a detailed understanding of the mechanism of photosynthesis and their independent written work often lacks detail and explanation.
223. Standards reached by pupils in Year 12 are also below average. In the 2001 AS level examination, results were below average in terms of both proportions reaching at least grade E and the higher grades of at least grade B. Results in 2002 were similar. Some students achieve at least as well as expected from their GCSE results and some do better but a significant proportion do not. Students who start the course with relatively low GCSE grades find the transition to sixth form work very difficult and several achieve little by the end of the year. Over the last two years, about half of those who start the course at the beginning of Year 12 continue to the end of Year 13. Work seen shows a range of attainment from well above expectations to well below although the work of many confirms the difficulties they face, particularly in getting to grips with acquiring and retaining the very demanding technical vocabulary of the subject and understanding, for example, details of molecular structure.

Quality of education

224. Learning in lessons is never less than satisfactory and is often good or better. This results from the teaching they receive, from students own positive attitude to work and the very good relationships between them and their teachers. Of the four lessons seen, two were satisfactory, one was good and one very good. Teachers have first rate subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and have an air of clear academic authority which is much appreciated by students. Learning is good or very good, particularly when questioning is used effectively both to check on what students have learned and to further develop understanding such as in a discussion session in a lesson on the nitrogen cycle. In a lesson on the structure and function of the human kidney, learning moved on quickly for both high and low attaining students as a result of a number of short but coherently linked activities. On some occasions students learn less effectively because single activities go on for too long and do not allow all lesson objectives to be achieved including a review of gains in learning at the end of the lesson.
225. Most students make a good contribution to their own learning in the way they tackle the subject. They listen well in lessons and some, though not all, are confident and articulate speakers. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and lessons proceed in a very positive learning atmosphere. All students can work effectively on their own on research tasks and, although the standard of the work is very variable, it is always very well presented, mostly using ICT. Access to

computers in lessons is limited by the lack of machines available for use within the department.

Leadership and management

226. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. Coursework and the opportunities for independent learning are well organised. The scheme of work adequately covers the content of the syllabus specification. It does not, however, identify in detail how teachers can address the learning needs of all students, particularly those who start in Year 12 from relatively weak GCSE results and who need a good deal of support at the start of the course. This is a factor contributing to the underachievement of some and which also may in part account for the relatively high numbers of students who do not continue from AS to A2 level. There are a number of good opportunities for students to enrich their experience in biology beyond lessons. A high quality residential field trip is available annually and there are some good links with industry. The school is the only one in the country to have on-site biotechnology equipment, provided by collaboration between school and industry, for students to have the quite remarkable opportunity of experiencing at firsthand DNA fingerprinting in school.

PHYSICS

Overall, the provision for physics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- Some students achieve well at the end of both Year 12 and Year 13.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and lead to a very positive working atmosphere.
- Management is good and there is a clear vision for the future development of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The schemes of work are not fully developed to make best use of the wealth of resource material available.
- The accommodation for the subject is adequate in quantity but drab in quality.

Standards and achievement

227. Standards in physics reached by students in Year 13 are below average overall although achievement in terms of the gains students make from the start of the course are satisfactory for most and good for some. Numbers of students taking the A2 level examination in recent years have been so small that it is impossible to draw firm conclusions from data alone. Over time, the proportion achieving at least a pass grade has been in line with national expectations but few students reach the higher grades of A and B.

228. Work seen during the inspection is closer to standards seen nationally but range of attainment is wide. Some high attaining students, working above expectations, show a good understanding of magnetic and gravitational fields while lower attainers have difficulties in planning and evaluating their coursework experiments. All the current Year 13 are very willing to work independently, many with little need for support and are tackling an interesting range of experiments, including the creative use of a Webcam to capture images in an experiment on electromagnetic damping. Most

students who start the course in Year 12 continue with their studies into a second year and there has been a significant rise in numbers taking the course in the last two years.

229. The five students who took the AS level examination in 2001 at the end of Year 12 generally achieved the results to be expected from their GCSE results and were close to the national average. Results were similar in 2002 but with slightly fewer high grades. In this year, two students achieved well having started from low GCSE scores. For students in the present Year 12, standards similarly are around national expectations. Some students are making above average progress in acquiring important basic concepts such as current, charge and potential difference. Others, with lower attainment, find such concepts very challenging and have difficulties in grasping stress-strain relationships accurately.

Quality of education

230. Teaching is good overall and some of it very good. This leads to learning which is never less than good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and communicate enthusiastically with their students. Lessons are very well planned with a coherent structure, creating a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. The good and very good learning results from both variety within a lesson and from the very good support students receive in their independent work.
231. The use of ICT is an integral part of the course and provides a wide range of learning opportunities for students of all levels of attainment. In more formal lessons, understanding is promoted effectively by the use of questions and by students and teachers working together on problem-solving activities such as in a lesson on the motion of charged particles in electric and magnetic fields. The combination of working together as well as individually, coupled with the very good use of a computer modelling programme, was a powerful combination in this lesson in developing understanding of this challenging topic.
232. Students show a clear sense of enjoyment in lessons and have very good relationships with their teachers, which means that they make a significant contribution to their own learning and achievement. They work well independently and research topics thoroughly. One student, when in Year 12, produced an outstanding piece of research work on Materials and a presentation to go with it worthy of a university research student. The basic skills of numeracy, literacy and ability to use ICT are well-developed and give good support to students' work in physics.

Leadership and management

233. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The course leader, in developing the new course over the last three years, has a good vision of how it can be adapted to meet the needs of Wolsingham students. Good opportunities to use ICT are an integral part of this innovative course which is proving very popular with students. The Engineering Education Scheme provides good opportunities for a few students to enrich their experience in physics by taking part in an annual competition and the school has had some good success in recent years. Resources for the subject are good. A wealth of resource material is made available by the examination board and the department is at an early stage of adapting much of this for its own use. The accommodation for the subject is satisfactory but in some need of refurbishing and the number of computers available will be inadequate if numbers rise further. None are networked at present which is a disadvantage.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Work in design and technology was sampled as part of the inspection. Teaching and learning were both satisfactory in the product and design lesson seen.

BUSINESS

Business Education is offered as an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education. (AVCE)

Overall, the provision for business education is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good and brings about very good quality of learning is very good. Standards continue to improve.
- The relationships between teachers and students are excellent, providing a very good learning partnership in lessons.
- The quality of planning of the course content is very effective, affording all students the opportunity to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- There is a shortage of software packages for business students to enhance the quality of research and additional opportunities for independent learning.
- Newspapers and business magazines are not used sufficiently to improve knowledge and understanding of business in society.
- Visiting speakers and/or the provision of outside visits are not used to enhance the existing quality of learning.

Standards and achievement

234. Standards in 2002 were below average. In previous years standards had been above average when the department offered GNVQ Post 16 courses.
235. From work seen during the inspection, standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are average but improving. The achievement of the students is good and learning is very good because of very good teaching. In Year 12, AVCE students are learning very well in understanding the central ideas of the subject, including those relating to the economic environment in which business operates. Students in Year 13 also learn very well in their current work. Their portfolios are well organised providing evidence of good research skills and some analytical ability when dealing with hypothetical situations in business. In all lessons there is evidence of students engaging in discussions on a range of issues which demonstrated well-developed skills in promoting and supporting ideas and opinions. Students are articulate and comfortable with their use and understanding of technical language. Most students in both year groups are generally adept in planning their own work when researching and completing assignments. Students are competent in the use of computers. For example, assignments are submitted in typescript, using a variety of fonts. Graphics are imported into text and illustrations and data is extrapolated into charts and diagrams. There is no significant difference in the attainment of male and female students.

Quality of education

236. The quality of teaching is very good and excellent. Since the teachers have previous experience in industry they have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This fosters interest and understanding in the majority of students through the carefully planned lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, promoting high levels of mutual respect and understanding. Lessons are invariably designed around current events in the business world. Examples include the impact of the closure of some major local employers on the local economy. Teaching strategies promote knowledge and understanding through whole-class and small-group activities. Expectations are very high and the work is challenging, allowing students to experience the complexity of the world of business.

Leadership and management

237. Co-ordination of the subject is good. A clear vision exists relating to the present and future development of the subject. Department documentation is comprehensive and well organised. The teachers work as an effective team, sharing ideas and monitoring all aspects of the work. The planning of the course content is detailed and very effective. Student assessment is detailed, very effective, and is used to influence the planning of lessons. Students have a clear understanding of their progress, and likely future attainment. They are given quality advice on career development. The students are appreciative of the support and guidance given to them by their teachers. Accommodation is excellent and is having a positive effect upon the attitude and achievement of the students. Resources are good and used effectively. The present computer software for business studies does not allow students to improve their knowledge and understanding or to improve skills of research and independent learning. Students lack opportunities to widen their knowledge of business and society through the provision of newspapers and business magazines, listening to visiting speakers or outside visits.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Work in information and communication technology was sampled during the inspection. In the lesson observed the teaching was very good and the learning was good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Assessment information is used effectively to set individual targets, so that students know what they should be achieving.
- Students' attitudes are very good and they take an active role in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure the best practice.
- There are no opportunities for all students to engage in regular physical activity as part of their enrichment curriculum.

Standards and achievement

238. The school offers courses at AS level and A2 level in physical education, and attracts viable numbers. The 2002 A2 level examination results were below average, but students generally gained the grades that were predicted on the basis of their GCSE results, and their achievement was satisfactory. Five of the eight AS students achieved pass grades, and are continuing with the course to A2 level.
239. Students in Year 12 show a sound knowledge and understanding of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. In presentations to other students, they explain confidently how these systems interact to allow exercise. Students' independent learning skills developed well in this lesson. High attainers were challenged effectively, as they took a lead in responding quickly to organising the group research and preparing the presentations within a tight time target. Year 13 students have a good knowledge of the use and misuse of drugs in sport. A very good student presentation on this topic motivated a lively discussion in which almost all the group took an active role. Communication skills developed well, and the discussion illustrated the depth of students' understanding, enabling them to relate theory to their practical experience. All students are proficient in the use of ICT and use these skills very well in extended essays.
240. Standards in practical work are above average in students' chosen sports. Good levels of skill were demonstrated by girls in hockey, and boys in football. Although standards of work seen in lessons are broadly average, written work in Years 12 and 13 does not reflect the depth of understanding seen in the lessons. Some students are insecure in their grasp of theoretical aspects of the subject. Too many files are poorly organised and are not useful as good revision aids.

Quality of education

241. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Relationships are very good and the students respond positively to the supportive guidance they are given. Students are well-motivated and have very good attitudes to the subject. The teachers have very good subject knowledge. They prepare well and usually begin their lessons with a challenging and motivating opening. This challenges the students to think, and to be actively involved in setting the climate for learning. Although they are sometimes tentative in putting forward their ideas, students respond well to the good use of questioning that is characteristic of all the teaching. Very good teaching and learning took place in a Year 12 class, where students were given a significant share of the responsibility for the outcomes. Working in small groups, students experienced a demanding pace of learning, as they completed two challenging tasks to a tight time scale. The high expectations of the teacher were fully justified by the quality of work achieved. Learning outcomes were not as strong in a lesson that was too tightly controlled by the teacher. In this lesson, students became passive learners. Marking is satisfactory, but does not give enough information about how students are progressing against targets set. There is not enough monitoring of students' files to ensure that they become an effective revision resource.

Leadership and management

242. Co-ordination of physical education is satisfactory. Development planning puts appropriate emphasis on raising standards, and assessment data is used effectively to set individual targets. Curriculum initiatives, such as the introduction of practical units in the A2 level course and opportunities for all students to gain the Community Sports Leader Award, enhance learning opportunities, together with a good extra-

curricular programme. However, there are no opportunities for all students to participate in regular physical activity as part of the enrichment curriculum. The teaching of A2 level physical education by five teachers from two departments lacks co-ordination. Although the monitoring and development of teaching is in place, this has not yet had an impact in raising the quality of teaching to that of the very best. The lack of adequate indoor accommodation for the subject severely restricts curriculum options for the sixth form students, as it does for the rest of the school.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The work in health and social care was sampled during the inspection. In the lesson observed the teaching and learning were both good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The work in art was inspected in depth, that for drama, and media studies was sampled. Teaching in both of the drama and media studies lessons seen was very good.

ART and DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in Art and Design is **good**.

The school offers a range of art and design courses, including GCE AS level and A2 level courses in fine art, graphic design and photography.

Strengths

- Achievement in the sixth form continues to improve due to the very good quality of the teaching and the range of opportunities available to the students.
- The teachers have high expectations and work as a very effective team, offering complementary skills that bring benefits to the students.
- The attitude of the students and their relationships with their teachers is very good providing an effective learning partnership in lessons.
- The quality of leadership and management of the subject provides clear vision and the promotion of high expectations is having a positive effect upon student achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Some opportunities are missed by not using local visiting artists to provide additional stimulus and improve students' knowledge of art in society.
- The department has not yet developed effective strategies to raise standards of attainment to the higher grades of A and B in the AS and A2 level examinations.

Standards and achievement

243. The evidence from inspection indicates that standards are around average. Since the numbers of students following courses in art are small, comparisons with national trends are difficult. However, attainment has improved since the previous inspection as it has from 2001. For the past three years all students taking AS and A2 level examinations achieved a pass grade. Photography students have achieved the best results. The average points score achieved in 2002 by art students in both AS and A2 level examinations shows that these students achieved better in art than in their other subjects. Most students who study art at AS level continue to A2 level.

244. The quality of work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are improving. A significant proportion of the work produced is good, particularly in fine art and photography. Student portfolios demonstrate that students have carried out thoughtful investigation and creative exploration of ideas. Effective use of computers as a research tool is evident in sketchbooks and individual assignments. The work produced by students in Year 13 demonstrates that the development of skills and knowledge is improving over the two years of their studies. Most students are confident when working with a variety of materials and resources. Students discuss their work with confidence demonstrating pride in their achievements. Their attitude toward the subject is very good. This is reflected in the quality of work produced in their portfolios and displayed throughout the art department and the school. Therefore achievement is good when consideration is given to the students' prior attainment.

Quality of education

245. Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject well. The lessons are challenging and very well planned in order to provide all students with opportunities to improve. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective. Project briefs are well designed. They include clear aims and objectives, well-defined assessment criteria and deadlines for completion. Consequently students know what is expected of them and work at a good pace, making good, often very good, progress. The use of a wide range of resources maintains students' interest and helps them to learn. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order raise creative and visual appreciation.
246. Learning is very good as a direct result of very good teaching and the promotion of independent learning skills. Students are attentive, productive and have excellent relationships with their teachers. They rise to the challenges set by their teachers and use their time well, often working outside set lesson times in a designated area within the department. The excellent displays within the department relating to the work of significant artists or cultures and the visits to art galleries at home and abroad, provide students with opportunities for enrichment and developing a wider appreciation of art. Some opportunities are missed by not using local visiting artists to provide additional stimulus and improve their knowledge of art in society. Students support and help each other and are very complimentary about the level of support given to them.

Leadership and management

247. Co-ordination of the subject is good. There is clear vision and effective planning which promotes high standards in lessons. The teachers work as an effective team. Department documentation is well organised and used to good effect. Assessment of student work, which includes some self-assessment, is particularly effective, tracking and recording progress and achievement. It has an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. Students receive regular feedback and support on their progress and are aware of how well they are doing. The quality of the work of the students on display in the art department and around the school is good. The department has not yet developed effective strategies to raise standards of attainment to the higher grades of A and B in the AS and A2 level examinations.

HUMANITIES

248. Both geography and history were inspected in depth. Work in religious education, ethics and psychology was sampled. In religious education, teaching is good and

very good. Students are making good progress, despite none of them having studied the subject for GCSE. Ethics is taught to all Year 12 students as part of the religious education entitlement. The lesson seen was a debate on the current war in Iraq. Students spoke passionately and were clearly very involved in the morality of the situation. In psychology, which is taught as part of the community college provision by a visiting teacher, the evidence is that teaching and learning are both good.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The very high quality of teaching leads to very good learning.
- The subject successfully provides for a very wide range of student attainment from those who have already at passed AS level in Year 11 to those who have not studied geography to GCSE level.
- Students value the high quality of teaching that they receive and are highly motivated, work hard and enjoy their studies.
- Standards of achievement are usually very high. They were disappointing in 2002 but work seen during the inspection was of a very high standard.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Standards and achievement

249. In each of the four years prior to 2002 all students passed A2 level, many with high grades. Results at AS and A2 level in 2002 were disappointing, in particular the low marks for coursework that the department found difficult to understand as previously their students had excelled in this area. Work seen during the inspection was well above average in the group in Year 12 who have already passed AS with high grades and are taking A2 level early. They are considering taking the extension paper next year, which is within their capability. Work seen from students in Year 13 was above average.
250. Good knowledge and understanding of the very comprehensive coverage of the courses are evident in students' work. Their essays and written answers to examination questions are well argued, making their points clearly, and exemplified by well researched and up to date case studies. A2 level students in Year 12 wrote very capably of the negative effects on the environment of increasing demands for recreation and tourism. Students use the subject vocabulary very well. Year 13 students do this well even in a brainstorming session on the problems of remote rural areas. They all make very competent use of well presented graphs and diagrams to illustrate and explain processes such as accounts of glacial processes by A2 level students in Year 12. Students have a good general sense of the locations and characteristics of a range of areas in the United Kingdom and a keen sense of the geography of their local area, that they use to understand other areas of the UK. Very occasionally a failure to use the appropriate vocabulary mars work, and weak or careless mathematical skills hamper the work of some students.

Quality of education

251. All teaching is very good and excellent, leading to very good learning. It is lively, engaging, well paced and challenging. Very effective use is made of current materials such as an article from the previous day's newspaper in a lesson about National Parks. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and constantly make clear the importance of using correct language through their own precise use of geographical terminology.
252. Students' learning is very well directed but they have to think hard for themselves. In a Year 12 lesson, after an explanation of the methodology of data plotting and analysis in their river study, students had to cope with some problems in completing the task. They did this well, partly by talking over some of their difficulties amongst themselves. Students perceive that what they are required to do is challenging but not so difficult that they will be unable to achieve it, so they try very hard to succeed. Students recognise the high quality of the teaching they experience and have no hesitation in asking for assistance or advice for they know they will be treated with absolute respect.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

253. Co-ordination of the subject is excellent. Very good provision is made for a very wide range of students, who are taught effectively, mainly in large classes. The curriculum is very well developed and appropriately enriched by extensive use of ICT, first hand field investigation and what has become an annual visit to Canada. Since the last inspection the department has developed even further its high quality of provision.

HISTORY

Overall, the provision for history is **good**.

Strengths

- Enthusiastic purposeful teaching leads to consistent results and a high pass rate.
- A brisk, purposeful delivery conveys information but also presents some challenge to pupils.
- Relationships are very good.
- There is good analysis of examination results and thought given on how to improve grades.
- Students are enabled to build up reasoned, balanced answers firmly based on evidence.
- The students are all very well motivated and contribute to their own learning experience.

Areas for improvement

- Students could learn a little more from each other as well as from the teacher.
- Analysis of why students do not get the high grades of pass in exams does not include the need to give students access to a wider range of source material and the opportunity to take up and defend a position based on personal research.
- Where some students lack the necessary skills of literacy, care should be taken to give them practice in conveying the complexity of an historical interpretation but phrasing it in relatively clear and concise terms.

Standards and achievement

254. Because of the small numbers involved it is not profitable to compare the pass rates in history with national trends but A2 level students in the sixth form consistently achieve one hundred per cent pass rate at grades A-E. This was so in 2002, although not in the highest grades. At AS level students achieved results at a satisfactory level but below last year's results. Students in the sixth form, some of whom come from other schools and some of whom have not done a GCSE in history make good achievement and progress. This is all the more true when the background of national disruption caused by the foot and mouth problem and the confusion over the marking of A2 level results in 2002 is considered. Over the last two years, history has become a very popular choice for students in the sixth form and numbers are increasing each year. The retention rate is high and it is a mark of the success of the department that some students want to study history at university level.
255. Work seen in class and in students' files contain satisfactory notes and essays on the topics studied. A strength of the learning is the way in which teachers and students discuss examination requirements and methods of tackling different types of essay questions so that they build up reasoned, balanced answers. This explains why all students consistently gain pass grades if not necessarily the higher grades. Students are not encouraged to prepare and deliver their own short presentations based on wider reading than the set texts and sources. The lessons take place in a mobile classroom which is not the best of settings but it is well used and could be used even more effectively if attention was paid to re-arranging the seating arrangements to facilitate more cross-talk. Teachers and students form a harmonious group and the learning experiences make a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.

Quality of education

256. The teaching in the sixth form was always good in the three lessons observed on Home Rule, William Cecil and the Puritan Threat to Queen Elizabeth. The teachers seen had very good subject competence, very good relationships, good planning and a brisk, purposeful delivery which conveyed information but also called for some challenge and individual response. The students were all very well motivated and contributed to their own learning experience. There was good learning from the teacher but not as much learning from each other. There was little evidence of students being encouraged to talk more by staging mini-debates in which they defend or oppose a particular position. Students are not yet skilled enough in the historian's art of being able to describe the complex issues of an historical situation in relatively clear and simple terms. Historical literacy can be understood as being wider than the usual acquisition of new and unfamiliar words and to include the use of well chosen adjectives to limit broader generalisations and to demonstrate greater understanding and thinking skills.

Leadership and management

257. Co-ordination of the subject in the sixth form is good and results in satisfactory standards, very good relationships and the pursuit of continuous improvement. Analysis of examination results in order to improve performance is thoughtful. The provision of history in the sixth form is a good improvement on the provision found at the time of the last inspection but the standards have not yet significantly improved.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

258. The focus of the inspection was English Literature, but AS and A2 level English Language courses were sampled. In the two English Language lessons seen, teaching, learning and progress were good and students' attitudes were positive. Media Studies and drama at AS level are provided after school as part of the community evening class provision. One lesson of each subject was sampled. In both lessons, the teaching and learning were very good, progress was rapid and students were very involved. Three modern languages sessions (one each of Spanish, French and German) were also sampled. The numbers of students are small (one in Spanish, two each in French and German). In Spanish, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Much of the lesson is conducted in Spanish, which has a positive effect on the student's pronunciation. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in French but the learning would have been better if more of the lesson had been conducted in French. In German, teaching is satisfactory. As one student is from Year 12 and the other from Year 13, learning is unsatisfactory because as each student is at a different level of understanding and skill in the language, progress is limited.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the course.
- The teaching encourages individual thought and research.

Areas for improvement

- Standards could be improved further, especially at the higher grades.
- The stock of critical and other text related books is insufficient.
- There is insufficient guided reading other than around set texts.

Standards and achievement

259. Numbers taking the course have been relatively small making statistical comparison with national averages of doubtful validity. In 2002, three students took the A2 level examination and all passed with grades C to E. At AS level there were nine candidates, of whom one passed with an A grade and the rest with C-E grades. Other data shows that value has been added to most of these students' achievements and attainment is usually in line with that predicted from GCSE grades.
260. Standards seen in the inspection week were higher than suggested by these results. Overall, the present A2 level students are of at least average standard, with some students attaining above average. Most are able to construct well-considered critical responses to texts studied. Essays are often fluent and appropriately structured. Students' notes are detailed, relevant and useful for revision. They employ suitable subject specific vocabulary. Most use text appropriately when developing critical arguments. Students research aspects of their texts – for example, historical and cultural aspects of Blake's poetry – and present their findings to their peers. The lower attaining students have a less secure grasp on suitable essay structure and development. Their work sometimes suffers from lack of clarity in expression and lack of accuracy in grammatical composition. AS level students are secure in their

knowledge of *The Handmaid's Tale* and discuss aspects of the major characters with assurance.

Quality of education

261. The quality of teaching and learning are good, overall. Planning is good and subject knowledge is very good. Seminar methods – for example, when students are delivering the results of their research on Blake's poetry –are effective, with the teacher acting as facilitator and synthesising the students' contributions. There is a good emphasis on the social, cultural and historical aspects of the texts studied. Relationships between students and teachers are very good; the students are appreciative of the high level of personal support and guidance they receive. The pace and organisation and level of challenge of lessons are good. Students are expected to think, contribute and explore ideas for themselves. The present A2 level students expressed great satisfaction with this; they felt they were being given responsibility for their own learning.
262. Note taking and essay techniques have been well taught. Students are encouraged to use ICT widely. They research texts, download useful notes and present their work in neat word-processed form. Students work well in lessons. They are keen as they enjoy English. They work well collaboratively and are supportive of each other in group work. There is not enough emphasis placed on the process of reading critical works associated with set texts. There are some enrichment activities such as theatre visits and university lectures but this programme is limited at present.

Leadership and management

263. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The course is well organised; students are exposed to different teaching styles from different teachers. They express appreciation of this since it adds to the interest of the course. The level of support and guidance available is good. Teachers are well qualified and group sizes are such that individual help is always available. Students' work is well marked and progress tracked. The stock of critical texts for students to consult, however, needs expanding both in the department and the school library.