

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KING EDWARD VII SCHOOL**

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107140

Headteacher: Mr Michael Lewis

Reporting inspector: Mr Andrew A Henderson  
2941

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 192383

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Glossop Road Sheffield S. Yorkshire
Postcode:	S10 2PW
Telephone number:	0114 2662518
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	John Cornwell
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
2941	A A Henderson	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements How well are students taught
31779	J Harrison	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students
11975	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	English	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2644	M MacLeod	Team inspector	Physics	
22985	J Sparkes	Team inspector	Biology Health and social care	
31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
5851	M Robottom	Team inspector	Business education History	
11966	J Clay	Team inspector	Design and technology	
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Drama Music	
	N Carr	Team inspector	Economics Psychology	
23709	A Powell	Team inspector	French Spanish	
4193	C Radley	Team inspector		Sixth form coordinator How well is the school led and managed How good are the curricular and other opportunities for students

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

King Edward VII School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11–18 which has achieved specialist Language College status. The school is very large, occupies two sites two kilometres apart, and is heavily oversubscribed. In 2001 the number joining the sixth form rose by almost one quarter. Currently, there are 1640 pupils on roll, of whom 481 are students in the sixth form, and the school draws its pupils from across the whole of Sheffield and beyond. The annual intake of pupils into Year 7 comprises a wide social mix, coming from more than 30 different primary schools, and indicative of parents' recognition of the school's success. There is a great diversity of intake which reflects the truly comprehensive nature of the school. Attainment on entry is average, with the full range of ability represented. The proportion of pupils on the register for special educational needs is above average, although there are fewer than usual with formal statements. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds include areas of both social affluence and inner-city deprivation; the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is generally average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is high at over 25 per cent with about one in six pupils whose first language is not English, including some at an early stage of language acquisition. Pupils from the Indian sub-continent form the largest group, representing around 10 per cent of the school's total, and there are significant numbers of pupils of Chinese, African, African-Caribbean, Middle Eastern and dual heritage origins. A key feature is the language college provision which enhances the curriculum for the school and its community. Since the previous inspection, the school has gained Training School status for the initial training of teachers, has been granted the Sportsmark and the School Achievement Award in recognition of its positive progress, and has strong involvement in major developments such as Excellence in Cities and private finance initiatives.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

King Edward VII is a very good and successful school which provides a high quality of education for all its pupils, regardless of background or ability. The school has many outstanding features, not least its high degree of racial harmony, together with high expectations for responsibility, learning, achievement and the fulfilment of individual pupils' potential. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well because teaching is good, and because they have very good attitudes to their learning. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examinations are well above the national average, and pupils make particularly good progress in Years 7-9. The leadership and management of the school is very good, and it provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The results of Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations are well above the national average, and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and have improved since the previous inspection.
- Attitudes to learning are very good, and provision for pupils' personal development is a major strength.
- Very good leadership and management provide the key to the school's many successes.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in ICT in Years 10-11, and its use and application in subjects.
- Supervision of Lower School pupils outside the school building.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made very good overall improvement since the previous inspection in 1997. There has been impressive progress in further improving academic standards across Years 7-9. Well above average standards have been sustained in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form, supported by consistently good teaching, and the pupils' strong commitment to learning and their personal development. Issues raised by the previous inspection have been successfully tackled in most respects. School planning has notably improved, and has resulted in a revised school management structure which provides a coherent framework for each phase of the school with stronger academic and pastoral monitoring of pupils' progress. The senior management team has progressed, and, as a consequence, the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work as a whole is developing well. More is now being done to meet pupils' special educational needs and

the learning needs of gifted pupils. However, despite improvement, concerns remain about resource provision, the consistent provision of a daily act of collective worship, and the limitations of accommodation in Upper School. These few shortcomings are offset by the notable improvement to the Lower School accommodation, and by the positive impact of the school's wide-ranging involvement in an extensive range of national and local initiatives since 1997.

## 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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
average	C
Below average	D
well below average	E

Results in National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 in 2001 were well above average for all schools, and very high compared with similar schools (that is, for schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Girls do better than boys, in line with the national picture, but both were above their respective national averages. Performance, based on average points scored, was above average in English, and well above average in mathematics and science. The overall rate of improvement has been above the national trend since the previous inspection. The inspection shows that the standards of the current Year 9 pupils' work is well above average in science, and above average in English, mathematics and across the curriculum generally. This represents at least good achievement and progress in Years 7 to 9 for all pupils, given their overall average starting points on entry, including both those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language.

In 2001, pupils' average GCSE points score was well above both the national average and the results of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, and the school exceeded its targets. GCSE results have been sustained at this level since the previous inspection, with a rate of improvement that is less marked than the national trend. Girls' and boys' results are above their national averages, and whilst girls tend to do better than boys, the variation is less than is usually found. The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ passes at the higher A\*-C grades was above the national average, and well above average for similar schools. The proportion achieving 5+ passes across the full range of A\*-G grades included virtually all those for whom English is an additional language, and was in line with the national average but above average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs do well in examinations and few fail to achieve GCSE passes in five or more subjects. The work seen in the current Year 11 reflects the school's GCSE results and is above average overall. Pupils are making appropriate progress from the end of Year 9, and their achievement is good. Pupils' skills in numeracy are high, and are above average in literacy – both are supporting their access to learning in all subjects very well. However, standards in the use of ICT are not yet high enough.

Since the previous inspection, A-level results have been well above average, and have improved at a similar rate to the national picture. In 2001, the average points score per student was well above average; more than 85 per cent of students successfully completed their A-level examinations, with almost half, a very high proportion, gaining the higher A-B grades, including some exceptionally high individual results. In 2001, the results of Year 12 students in the new AS level examinations were above average with an overall pass rate exceeding 90 per cent, with more than 40 per cent achieving A-B grades. These impressive results represent good student achievement in relation to their previous overall GCSE attainment, and it is noteworthy that almost all successfully complete their courses, and continue to the higher education courses of their choice. The standards of work seen in the current Years 12 and 13 are above average overall, and reflect the previous examination standards. Students' progress and achievement are good, and standards are notably high in English literature, French, music and drama.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work. They are attentive and focused in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils show good behaviour in lessons and around the school. However, there is an element of unsatisfactory behaviour at the Lower School during the lunch times in unsupervised areas outside the building. Pupil exclusions are lower than average for a school of this size.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are very good, pupils mix easily with one another. Pupils achieve very good levels of personal development, notably because of the excellent PSHE programme.
Attendance	Attendance levels are broadly in line with the national average in both Years 7-11 and in the sixth form.

## 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 and learning are consistently good in Years 7-11, and form the main foundation for the school's success. Overall teaching shows notable improvement since the previous inspection. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, and the generally good consistency of teaching quality across subjects is a major strength.

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-11 in English and mathematics, and are very good in science. Teaching in these three core subjects meets pupils' needs very well, making suitably challenging demands on them. It enables pupils to gain ever more advanced knowledge and greater skills, particularly in Years 7-9 as they are taken relatively quickly through the levels of the National Curriculum.

Most of the teaching in Years 7-11 is consistent and well-informed, and the expectations of teachers are high. Examples of good teaching feature in every subject, and are characterised by good planning, appropriately matched activities, and very effective management of pupils. Pupils respond very well, and there is a shared commitment to learning which ensures their progress is good. They have very good attitudes to their work, and apply themselves with increasing concentration and independence as they move through the school. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and effectively support learning in many subjects. However, the use and application of ICT in subjects requires improvement, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Homework is used generally well, although marking is of variable quality – the best practice indicates clearly how well pupils have done, and provides them with guidance for improvement. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs supports their good progress in learning. Good additional support is provided for those experiencing literacy problems. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language are very effectively supported in acquiring fluent English, and their progress in their work is similar to that of their peers.

Teaching in the sixth form is very good, and is a major strength of the school. The combination of this consistency of teaching quality together with students' exceptional levels of interest, independence and commitment to academic study ensures that both progress and attainment are notably high. Teaching is particularly strong in English, French, music and drama. Elsewhere there was much to commend, and just one lesson fell short of the usual standards seen. However, in most sixth form subjects there is need for further use and application of ICT to enhance learning and extend students' independent learning skills.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, curriculum provision is good, and offers a suitable and challenging range of learning opportunities to all pupils – the provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11, nor for religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved, and is now good. These pupils make good progress and their attainments match their potential.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good. Approximately 20 per cent of the school's population have English as an additional language, although few are at an early stage of language acquisition. Those who require support are given specialist help. The progress of all pupils in ethnic minorities is systematically monitored, and they make the same good progress as other pupils in Years 7-11.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to work together both in class and in extra-curricular activities, and a number of events such as the annual "International Week" ensure that pupils learn to respect each other's different cultures and faiths, and work together harmoniously.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of pupils and there are a wide range of strategies to support pupils who experience difficulties. There is an excellent programme of personal and social education. There is inadequate supervision in the outside play areas at lunch times in the Lower School, whilst recognising that the disruption caused by the on-going building programme has contributed to this.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides clear direction and impetus for improvement, and is very well supported by a strong senior management team. Subjects are well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governance is very good. The governors are diligent, well-informed and monitor standards well. They are strongly committed to the school's well-being. They determine school and financial priorities, and evaluate change and development thoroughly. However, statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not met, and arrangements for collective worship are inconsistent.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its examination performance very well. Senior staff monitor subject performance in a variety of ways, including observation of lessons. This is less consistently developed within subjects.
The strategic use of resources	A well-monitored and managed budget which provides very good value for money and best value. Money allocated for specific purposes, such as the education of pupils with special educational needs, is spent appropriately. Indeed, the school is very successful in attracting additional sources of funding, for example, from the private finance initiative which has provided the vast improvement in Lower School

	accommodation.
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## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching is good and their children make good progress.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard, and are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed, and is approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minority are concerned about inconsistencies in homework.</li> <li>• A small minority have reservations about behaviour in Lower School.</li> </ul>

Parents hold the school in good regard. They appreciate the good academic standards, teaching and work ethos and feel comfortable approaching the school with any concerns. Their positive responses are strongly endorsed by the inspection team.

The inspectors agree with parents that homework, whilst appropriate in content, provides an uneven workload. The inspectors also agree with the small number of parents who expressed a concern about some anti-social behaviour at lunch times in the Lower School.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The school has a very large sixth form with 481 on roll, comprising 200 male and 281 female students. The intake is diverse with students from wide-ranging backgrounds and ethnic minorities from across the whole city of Sheffield and beyond. The sixth form is open and inclusive, but sets a basic requirement of admission for a full programme of A-levels or AVCE courses of five passes at grade C in GCSE. 60 per cent of Year 11 pupils continue into Year 12, joined by a growing proportion of pupils from other schools, currently representing 50 per cent of the students. The attainment of students on entry is across a wide range and overall is close to the average. A wide choice of subjects is offered, with 26 subjects leading to AS and A-level examinations, and a range of vocational courses leading to GNVQ, vocational AS and AVCE qualifications.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is inclusive and very effective in meeting the learning needs of its students. Their progress is very good, and they achieve high standards because the teaching is very good and the school sets high expectations. It is very well managed, highly cost-effective and creates an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

**Strengths**

- Public examination results, particularly in music, drama, English and French.
- Attitudes of students - very high level of commitment to work, to each other and to the school.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Curriculum provision is very good, and is enhanced by Language College status - a major influence on language studies, and by the very good range of enrichment activities.

**What could be improved**

- Monitoring of students' progress is variable because it lacks structure.
- Inadequate time given to tutorial support and to careers guidance, which relies too heavily on students' own initiative.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT within subject areas.

*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.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> The combination of teachers' expertise and their harmonious relationships with students results in most students achieving satisfactorily. The proportion of students who achieve grades A or B at A-level is consistently above the national average.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> The percentage of A and B grades has improved each year since the last inspection. The percentage of A to E grades has been uneven, and dropped in 2001 making the results average overall. Teaching and learning are very good.

Physics	<b>Good.</b> A-level results are well above average and show good achievement for pupils. Staff have a strong subject knowledge, teaching is good and students work hard.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Design and Technology	<b>Good.</b> A-level results are above average and AS level results well above average. Both are better than would be expected from the students' GCSE results. Teaching and learning are consistently good.
Business Studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are above average in GNVQ Intermediate and in AVCE. Teaching is satisfactory. Planning and assessment are inconsistent. There is a lack of monitoring of teaching and learning.
Economics	<b>Good.</b> Examination results are in line with national expectations for all grades, below for the top grades. Standards of work seen are above average. Teaching is good. Expectations are high. Teachers have a good knowledge of both micro/macro economics.
Health and Social Care	<b>Good.</b> Results are above average and are improving each year. Students are achieving well as a result of good teaching and well-developed independent learning skills.
Art	<b>Good.</b> Although A-level results are well below average in 2001, currently standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average. Students are achieving well because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Photography and ICT are used effectively to support and extend their work.
Music	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good overall. Grades achieved are usually high and in 2001 all students achieved grade A in the A-level examination. In the AS examination all students achieved a grade between A and C. The excellent extra-curricular activities considerably enhance the music provision in the sixth form.
Drama	<b>Very good.</b> A-level results in 2001 were disappointing, but overall the standards achieved remain very high and well above average. In the AS level examination results were above average, and students achieved well. Teaching and learning overall are very good. The excellent extra-curricular activities considerably enhance the drama provision, and the subject is increasingly popular.
History	<b>Good.</b> Results are improving as a result of good teaching and very good attitudes to the subject. There is a need for more concentration on examination technique, help for pupils of lower ability and more curriculum choice.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Examination results in Year 12 are above average for the top grades and across all grades. In Year 13 results are above average. Teaching is very good. Students enjoy their learning. Teaching engages interest and challenges all students to work hard.
English	<b>Very good.</b> Courses are well matched to students' capabilities, assessment and support are good. Attainment in English literature is well above average, and in English language is average.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Results at A and AS level are well above average and the proportion achieving grades A or B is high. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated and achievement is good. Standards are well above average, and extra-curricular provision is very good.
Spanish	<b>Good.</b> A-level results improved to above average in 2001. Teaching and learning are good. In the AS examination all students passed, although

	the proportion of higher grades was low. Students are achieving well, and standards in Year 12 are already above average.
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In addition to the subjects inspected in depth, lessons were also seen in chemistry, geology, further mathematics, application of number, sociology, politics, English Language, English Literature and Language combined and German. All the lessons were at least good and standards were above average in chemistry, further mathematics, sociology, politics and German, and average in geology, English Language and English Language and Literature combined. The course in the application of number forms part of the provision for Key Skills and students look set to achieve success at Level 2.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Guidance and support for students is well planned, but careers advice is provided too late in Year 12 and relies heavily on the initiative of individual students. Twice weekly tutor periods, often brief in length, provide too little opportunity for in-depth discussions and counselling of students. However, most students seek out opportunities to obtain the help and advice they need in the pursuit of career and higher education choices.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is open and inclusive, making equally good provision for all students. It is very well led and managed. Although students' progress is monitored, it would benefit from a more structured, coherent approach across all subjects.

## 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"> <li>• Accessibility of teachers.</li> <li>• Suitability of course options.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Thorough assessment of work.</li> <li>• Being treated as adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers advice and guidance.</li> <li>• Information on progress.</li> </ul>

The students' views were expressed in questionnaires and in discussions, and it was clear that they hold the school in very high regard. Inspectors agreed with their concerns over the timing of the introduction of careers advice and guidance until after AS examinations. However, this is overcome to some extent by the accessibility of teachers and their concern and willingness to support students as fully as possible. Inspectors do not agree that students lack information on progress, as their work is thoroughly assessed, but believe progress could be monitored and reviewed more effectively to emphasise the outcomes of the assessments, and guide them towards improvement.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **The results of Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations are well above average, and pupils achieve well**

1. The school ensures that its pupils achieve well in national tests and examinations. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are both well above average for all schools nationally. This represents good progress and achievement for the pupils across their five years in the school because their standards of attainment when they join the school in Year 7 are generally average. Parents are very happy with the school's standards, and justifiably so.

2. The results of the national Year 9 tests have improved since the previous inspection at a faster rate than the national trend. In 2001, results in English were above average, and were well above average for mathematics and science. Taken together, the overall results were well above average for all schools nationally, and very high for those schools having pupils from similar backgrounds. Girls did better than boys, in line with the national variation, but both boys' and girls' results were ahead of their respective national averages. Given their overall average starting points, these results reflect the good progress made in Years 7-9 by pupils of all ranges of attainment, including the significant numbers of pupils having special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language.

3. The GCSE average points score for 2001 was well above average for both all schools, and similar schools. This has been the case since the previous inspection, although the rate of improvement is less marked than the national trend. Girls' and boys' results are above their national averages, and whilst girls tend to do better than boys, the variation is less than is usually found. The proportion of pupils with five or more passes at the higher A\*-C grades was above the national average, and well above average for similar schools. The proportion achieving five or more passes across the full A\*-G range included virtually all those for whom English is an additional language, and was in line with the national average, although above average for similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs do well in examinations, and few fail to achieve GCSE passes in at least five subjects. Overall, this high level of performance has ensured that the school exceeded its targets for GCSE by a considerable margin.

4. GCSE results for subjects for 2001 were significantly above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, English literature, French and geography. They were above or close to average in all other subjects. Results in English literature and French were particularly high, and included well above average proportions of pupils achieving the highest A\* and A grades. Passes at these highest grades were also well above average in design and technology, geography and German. Throughout Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to build on their improving attainment. Their achievement and progress is universally good across all abilities, including those higher attaining pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented. Pupils with special educational needs make good advances in their learning; the progress made by those for whom English is an additional language in relation to their prior attainment matches that of their peers.

#### **Teaching and learning are good overall, and have improved since the previous inspection**

5. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7-11. During the inspection 80 per cent of lessons seen were at least good, with one lesson in seven judged very good. Teaching in science is very good. In both English and mathematics teaching is good overall. This consistency of teaching quality in the three core subjects meets pupils' needs well, and enables them to access advanced knowledge and greater skills across the whole curriculum. Both parents and pupils recognise and appreciate the good quality of teaching provided by the school.

6. Teaching shows improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in Years 7-9, and is the main reason for the school's marked progress. The incidence of unsatisfactory teaching has



been virtually eliminated – just one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 11 religious education, where progress was insufficient as a result of the immature and uncooperative behaviour of a group of boys. Overall, the consistently good quality of teaching is a key feature of the school's success. The impact of the school's focus since the previous inspection on improving teaching and learning by the identification and sharing of good practice has clearly been effective. As a result, the strong teaching quality combines with pupils' very good attitudes and learning skills to ensure that they make rapid progress, leading to the very good test and examination results evident since 1997.

7. Teaching is notably effective in personal and social education. Across the school, examples of good teaching feature in every subject. Teachers know their subjects well, and their enthusiasm, even passion for some, communicates itself to the pupils and creates an atmosphere of real enquiry in many lessons. In a very good science lesson on the synthesis of fertilizers in Year 11, for instance, the teacher's enthusiasm and very good understanding of the subject led to clear explanations of key concepts and processes, encouraging a vibrant yet focused investigation by the pupils. Teachers' careful planning and their positive presentation of their subjects have a strong impact on pupils' rate of progress and attainment, and teachers have successfully created very good learning environments in which pupils are able to develop both their academic and personal potential. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, and for those for whom English is an additional language.

8. The clarity of the beginning of lessons is a strong feature of much teaching. Teachers are very effective at setting the scene, explaining the aims of the lesson and ensuring that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. Pupils' progress and understanding are regularly checked, and drawn together in effective lesson summaries. A Year 8 German lesson on what pupils do in their spare time demonstrated these qualities. In this lesson, the clarity of purpose from the outset, the benefits of sustaining a good pace and of keeping pupils challenged were clearly revealed. Teachers generally have good awareness of setting time limits to activities to ensure that lessons move at a good pace and pupils feel challenged by the tasks. Awareness of the needs of the most able pupils is developing rapidly, and good examples of work which extended their capabilities were seen in history, mathematics and English.

9. The management of pupils is a considerable strength of the teaching. Relationships are very good. Teachers are good role models and relate well to pupils, providing a high level of individual support and encouragement. Expectations of behaviour and response are high. Many teachers are good listeners who treat all pupils with equal respect. As a result, the school is free from tension and confrontation, and has a strong atmosphere of trust and consideration in which pupils are able to thrive in their learning and personal development. This level of trust was clearly evident in a very good PSHE lesson in which Year 7 pupils developed and shared their knowledge and experience of drugs.

10. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good and support the good progress made in subjects generally. However, the use and application of ICT in subjects requires improvement, particularly in Years 10-11.

**Attitudes to learning are very good, and provision for pupils' personal development is a major strength**

11. The school successfully promotes very good attitudes amongst its pupils. These strong attitudes support learning very effectively, and are reflected in the pupils' rapid acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils work well, are very motivated and organise their work, including homework, efficiently. They apply themselves to their studies with increasing confidence and concentration as they move through the school. Pupils are placed in a strong position to take responsibility for their own learning by being made aware of their potential as learners, and of their progress towards the clear learning objectives set by teachers.

12. Pupils like school and value the opportunities it offers. Their attendance is satisfactory, and they are attentive and cooperative in lessons. Around school, pupils are friendly and helpful. They generally respond well to the levels of responsibility expected of them, and parents recognise how the school is helping them to develop into mature, sensible young people.

13. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils, both in class and around school, is good. The school's codes of conduct and expectations encourage a high degree of personal responsibility, and most pupils respond well because these are understood well, valued and supported.

14. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils relate well to their teachers and trust them. Bullying is rare, and pupils say they feel safe and at ease in the school. The school is a very diverse community. Pupils from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are very well integrated, and there is a remarkable level of racial harmony across the school. Pupils of all backgrounds collaborate effectively in lessons, and show respect and concern for each other.

15. The school's provision for pupils' personal development is a major strength. Through its unique ethos, it places great emphasis of pupils' personal responsibility in the learning process, and provides good opportunities for pupils to exercise their responsibility within school and the wider community. The strong programme for PSHE is a key vehicle for promoting good citizenship and developing personal values. Pupils develop strong awareness of a range of moral issues here and as a result of their studies in other subjects. Their social skills are enhanced by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and visits both locally and further afield. The multi-ethnic environment of the school develops tolerance and respect for different cultures and traditions, and this is reinforced by a number of events, including the annual International Week.

### **Very good leadership and management provides the key to its many successes**

16. The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. As a result, the school is a strong, harmonious community of learners with a common purpose of worthwhile activity. Its carefully nurtured ethos provides a clear sense of purpose which permeates its day-to-day practice. The school aspires to 'create the excitement of a learning community in which each individual strives for excellence and is enabled to achieve personal fulfilment', and is succeeding to a high degree.

17. Since tackling many of the issues raised in the previous inspection the school has gone from strength to strength. The headteacher, ably supported by a very good senior management team, has skilfully harnessed the energies of the teachers. He has been the driving force behind the school's extensive catalogue of initiatives and developments since the previous inspection, with the fundamental intention of raising further the already strong standards of teaching and learning. A key improvement has been the recent formation of an innovative management structure through which systems of accountability and support are clear and very effective. The linked structure, which strengthens both curricular and pastoral coordination and management, enables senior managers to work very closely with colleagues in close-knit teams. This is resulting in greater clarity in roles and responsibilities, improvements in the quality of monitoring of teaching, and clearer identification of teachers' and pupils' needs.

18. The headteacher and senior team work very well together in providing consistent leadership and expectation for the school. The complexities of managing a difficult split-site operation are very well handled. School development planning is clearly focused on improving teaching and learning, and realistic targets are set for development. There is clear concern for pupils at all levels of attainment. The management of subjects is generally good, and there is a growing responsibility for the departmental monitoring of teaching and learning, and for self-evaluation. Regular subject reviews are held, and a good system of performance management is in place. The school's work as a training school is developing teachers' ability to look critically at their own teaching.

19. The governing body does its work well. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are playing a major part in its development. Through their clear committee structure and appropriate programme of meetings, governors are very well informed and provide strong support for the school. They have productive links with the headteacher and senior staff, and take an active part in determining the school's priorities, and in overseeing financial processes. They are well-informed about target-setting, and effectively hold the school to account

for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided. Their work, in conjunction with the headteacher, in negotiating the recent private finance initiative has been particularly successful and has brought tangible benefit to the school in the recent completion of the new Lower School buildings. Statutory responsibilities are generally met, although religious education is not provided in the sixth form, and arrangements for collective worship are inconsistent.

20. The school's finances are in good order and the budget is very well monitored by the headteacher and governors, who ensure that all specific grants are used wisely for the purpose intended. Indeed the school is very successful in attracting additional sources for funding, for example, through private finance, and via Excellence in Cities, from which two learning mentors were able to be appointed to support pupils in difficulty. The senior staff and governors work hard to ensure that the school obtains best value and that money is well spent. The sixth form is highly cost-effective. Taking all factors into account the school gives very good value for money.

21. The outcomes of the very good quality of leadership and management across the school are reflected in the improvements in the academic standards, particularly in Years 7-9, and in the quality of teaching. A striking feature is the positive way in which the potentially debilitating effects of the split site operation and the extended building programme at Lower School have been overcome whilst standards have been improved. This is testimony to the clarity of leadership and to the commitment and dedication of staff. The vision, determination and strategic awareness of the headteacher and governors are also reflected in their successful on-going efforts in seeking avenues to support improvement through national initiatives other than private finance. The successful acquisition of Language College status has brought benefits to the school far beyond the modern foreign language provision, as has the Excellence in Cities funding for both learning support and work with gifted and talented pupils and students. The particular attention given to ethnic minority pupils through work with the Ethnic Minority Advisory Service (EMAS) has ensured their progress is better than is found nationally.

22. The school is extremely popular amongst parents, and with students from other schools who join the sixth form. They recognise that the quality of its work is unusually good. It is the very good quality of leadership and management, academic, strategic and financial, that enable the school to function as successfully as it does. The results of national tests and examinations are used well by the school to judge its effectiveness. The school continues to learn from its evaluations and experience, and reveals a strong commitment to continued improvement.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Standards in ICT in Years 10 and 11, and its use and application in subjects**

23. Although ICT is taught well in Year 7 and good standards are achieved, elsewhere, particularly in Years 10 and 11, the use and application of ICT is not given sufficient emphasis in other subjects. As a result, standards are below expectation.

24. At the time of the last inspection, provision of computers was a cause for concern. Since that time there has been considerable investment and improvement, notably with the new ICT suites provided in the new Lower School, and the multi-media provision in Upper School. More improvement is required, and this is recognised by the school's development plan for ICT.

25. There is need to ensure that the use and application of ICT across the curriculum fulfils expectations. Appropriate assessment procedures should be put in place which record both pupils' experience and levels of attainment, and ensure that they successfully develop the skills required to access and enhance their learning across the full range of subjects. At present, ICT is not well embedded in most subjects, and requires urgent development.

### **Levels of outdoor supervision in Lower School**

26. The on-going building development at Lower School brings major benefits to the school. Currently, the final stages of the work are focused on the school grounds. This presents many potential hazards, and severely restricts the outdoor play provision available at the moment. The school is experiencing difficulty in providing a full complement of mid-day supervisors, with only 3 of the allocated 8 posts filled. This, combined with the potential hazards of the building works, provides cause for concern. Parents expressed justifiable concerns about misbehaviour at Lower School, particularly at lunch times. Instances of unsatisfactory behaviour in the unsupervised areas outside the school buildings were noted during the inspection which also raised concerns about pupil safety. There is need for the school to ensure that it meets its duty of care properly, and provides sufficient outdoor supervision to monitor pupils' behaviour effectively.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. The school has few weaknesses. However, in order to maintain its momentum for improvement and raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- (1) Improve provision for, and attainment in, ICT by:
  - ensuring the widespread development and application of pupils' skills in ICT across all subjects;
  - developing effective assessment procedures which audit and record pupils' experience and achievement in ICT across the curriculum;
  - continuing to improve computer provision, as finances allow.
  
- (2) Improve arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils in Lower School by:
  - improving levels of outdoor supervision at break and lunch times.

### Sixth form

- (1) Improve the monitoring of students' progress by:
  - establishing a consistent procedure for assessing students' attainment and progress;
  - ensuring a common approach for the use of data in setting targets for both individual students, and for subjects;
  - sharing current good practice in assessment, for example, in English, science and EMAS.
  
- (2) Strengthen pastoral support for students by:
  - developing the role of the sixth form tutor;
  - increasing tutorial contact for support and monitoring of students' progress;
  - improving the timing and the range of advice relating to careers and work-related opportunities.
  
- (3) Improve students' use and application of ICT by:
  - ensuring students' use and application of ICT by subjects;
  - improving facilities for students' independent study and research;
  - continuing to improve computer provision, as finances allow.

In addition to the key issues, the following should be considered:

- Take further steps to ensure that the school meets the requirements for religious education in the sixth form.
- Continue to seek improvements to accommodation in Upper School.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	35
	Sixth form	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		58

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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#### Years 7 – 11

Number	0	5	22	6	1	0	0
Percentage	0	15	65	18	2	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	2	24	36	10	1	0	0
Percentage	3	33	49	14	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1159	481
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	232	0

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	38	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	361	7

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	295

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	102	125	227

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	67	78	82
	Girls	92	90	95
	Total	159	168	177
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (67)	74 (72)	78 (67)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (40)	58 (51)	55 (40)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	81	65
	Girls	95	99	80
	Total	156	180	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (61)	80 (69)	64 (70)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (31)	57 (48)	35 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	124	107	231

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	72	114	122
	Girls	67	98	105
	Total	139	212	227
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (56)	95 (96)	98 (99)
	National	48 (47)	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	47 (47)
	National	39 (38)

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



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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	81	56	137

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	77	56	124
	Average point score per candidate	21.9 (22.2)	22.6 (23.4)	22.2 (22.8)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.7)	18 (18.6)	17.5 (18.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	72	52	124	5	8	13
	Average point score per candidate	20.4	22.3	21.2	17.2	11.0	13.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	10.1	11.4	10.6

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	25
Black – African heritage	72
Black – other	0
Indian	10
Pakistani	121
Bangladeshi	32
Chinese	32
White	1195
Any other minority ethnic group	151

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	9	2
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	1	0
Chinese	0	0
White	28	0
Other minority ethnic groups	11	1

*This 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)	110
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.9

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	687

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	21.1
Key Stage 4	19.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	4577323
Total expenditure	4462555
Expenditure per pupil	2896
Balance brought forward from previous year	2368
Balance carried forward to next year	117136

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31

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	1640
Number of questionnaires returned	277

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	47	8	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	52	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	53	10	3	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	44	19	2	2
The teaching is good.	34	58	3	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	52	6	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	47	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	51	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	49	8	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	39	51	5	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	47	9	1	7

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

28. Since the previous inspection in 1997, overall results in A-level examinations have been well above average each year. In 2001, the average A-level points score was well above average, with similar levels of attainment by male and female students. The overall pass rate was above average, with almost half of students achieving passes at the higher A-B grades – a very high proportion – and including some exceptionally high individual results. Individual subject results in 2001 were strongest in English literature, French, German, music and physics. They were above average in chemistry, design and technology, mathematics, Spanish and sociology, whilst most other results were average. The weakest examination results were in art, English language, history and psychology. Many students improved their individual points score with good results in general studies, where overall results were well above average.

29. The overall results in the new AS examinations taken by students in Year 12 reflect similarly high standards, with female students' performance notably ahead of males. Both the overall pass rate and the proportion of higher A-B grades gained were well above average. Very good results were achieved in English, French, geography, German, history, music and sociology with virtually all students gaining pass grades, including high proportions of A-B grades. The weakest results in the AS examinations were in mathematics and economics.

30. Further evidence of the high sixth form standards emerged in the work seen during the inspection, where standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average overall. The inspection of lessons and review of students' work confirm that standards are well above average in English, French, music and drama. They are above average in all other subjects that were the focus of the inspection in the sixth form, except for business studies where standards are average. Little difference was noted in standards between Years 12 and 13 in the vast majority of subjects. Standards in Spanish were higher in Year 12 than in Year 13, whilst the reverse was the case in drama and business studies. Standards in key skills are average with most students attaining at least level 2. Teachers generally pay due attention to the key skills of communication and use of number, and this supports students' learning well. However, the use and application of ICT in many subjects is not sufficiently developed, notable exceptions being art, physics and business studies.

31. Students' progress and achievement in the sixth form are very good. When they join the sixth form, their overall GCSE performance is close to average. Given this, most make very good progress and achieve very well in their A-level examinations. Course completion rates are high, reflecting the students' determination to succeed. In 2001, the students with the highest GCSE attainment did well, with virtually all achieving at least their expected A-level results, and many exceeding this, with some outstanding individual performances. Those with the lowest attainment also did well, with most achieving expected results. The middle group achieved satisfactorily overall, although a significant minority did not do as well as expected. Currently, students are achieving well. They are responding very positively to the very good quality of teaching which has high expectations of them, and the vast majority are showing a very strong commitment to their studies. Progress and achievement are notably strong in music and drama, are as expected in mathematics, and in all other subjects, they are good.

32. Overall, students are achieving very well in the sixth form. As average entrants to A and AS level courses, most successfully complete their courses, and given their starting points, achieve better than expected results. The sixth form arrangements are notably successful in meeting students' needs, and importantly, the school is very effective in ensuring its students successfully access the higher education courses of their choice.

## **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

33. Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning. In lessons they are very focused and swiftly organise themselves to work. They show an enthusiasm for their subjects and have excellent independent learning skills.

34. Students have a good degree of respect for their teachers and tutors and say that they are well taught and enjoy the sixth form. Relationships are good. Students joining the sixth form from other schools integrate easily and there is a relaxed yet friendly atmosphere. Students are treated as responsible adults and generally live up to these expectations. There can be occasional less mature behaviour, for example in the treatment of their common room, but students themselves have addressed this by forming a common room committee and agreeing a code of sixth form conduct.

35. Personal development is good. Many students studying a foreign language take up the exciting opportunities of extended sponsored placements in France. A relatively high number of students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, others enjoy the opportunities offered on the Wednesday afternoons for outward bound pursuits such as rock climbing or help in local schools or hospitals. Students participate enthusiastically in drama and music productions with the rest of the school.

36. The school does not keep a daily record in the sixth form of attendance at school but individual attendance at lessons is registered. These records suggest that students' levels of attendance are satisfactory.

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

37. The quality of teaching in the sixth form, and the learning that it promotes, are very good. 85 per cent of the teaching seen is at least good, with one lesson in three judged to be very good or better.

38. A wide range of sixth form subjects was sampled during the inspection, and fifteen subjects were inspected in greater depth. In these 'focus' subjects, teaching and learning were very good in English, biology, music, drama, history, psychology and French. They were good in mathematics, physics, design technology, economics, health and social care, art and Spanish. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall in business studies, where weaknesses in planning resulted in unsatisfactory progress in one Year 13 lesson. However, examples of good teaching featured in every subject, with some lessons of the very highest quality, for example, in Year 12 English literature and Year 13 drama.

39. The sixth form is a strong community of learners as a result of this very good quality of teaching. Students apply themselves to their work with increasing confidence and independence as they move through the sixth form, and this, together with their strong commitment and determination to succeed, results in standards of work seen during the inspection which reflect the high standard of examination results.

40. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Their enthusiasm for their subjects feeds students' curiosity. In the most effective lessons, expectations of students' response are high, so that they are required to tackle challenging tasks and activities with consequent positive impact on their progress and attainment. This was the case, for example, in a very successful Year 12 history lesson which extended students' understanding of the Reformation. An equally successful approach was seen in a Year 12 English lesson in which students critically analysed the poetry of C. A. Duffy.

41. Across the sixth form, teachers plan work well. Planning is carefully linked to the course specifications, often with good resources specifically matched to the needs of the new AS levels, for example, in modern foreign languages. When new work is introduced, it is done with care so that when students work independently, purposes are clear and the requirements of examination success are well rehearsed. Teachers take time at the start of lessons to recall previous work, to

identify current objectives, and at the end of lessons to check with students whether these have been achieved. In this way, students develop a clear understanding of what they have to learn and why, as, for example, in a very effective Year 13 biology lesson on gas exchange.

42. The range of teaching styles and working methods employed are varied and appropriate to developing learning skills for sixth form students. Only rarely, in a few lessons, are opportunities for collaboration and debate limited. More often, learning is a shared partnership between teacher and students, with many opportunities for students to enjoy the challenge and enrichment of extended dialogue and debate with their peers. Where this opportunity is provided, students' learning is greatly enhanced, as for example in a Year 13 drama lesson on 'A View from the Bridge', and in a Year 13 general studies lesson focused on politics. Lively debate and thoughtful analysis ensued in response to very good teaching approaches, with a high level of engagement by students in the activities. Their articulate and well-structured contributions provided clear insight into the effective attention given to key skills in these, and many other, lessons. There is a well-taught formal structure in Year 12 for developing students' key skills in the three components of communication, application of number, and ICT. The first two of these are also taught well within subject specific courses, but ICT is a weakness in many and consequently its potential for independent research and study is under-used. Where ICT is used as an integral element of A-level teaching, it brings a major dimension to the quality of work taking place, as, for example, in its excellent use in a Year 12 physics lesson on falling objects and terminal velocity.

43. Lessons proceed at a very purposeful pace, frequently with very effective questioning which encourages students' communication skills, tests their knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. Individual support for students is frequently provided to good effect, and is a notable feature of teaching in drama and music. Assessment procedures are good generally, although arrangements vary from subject to subject, and not all provide short-term targets to ensure that students are clear about how their performance relates to the standards expected of them. Homework is well used generally, and is a key feature of the successful work in English, music and French with regular, supportive marking and clear guidance for improvement.

44. Relationships are very good in the sixth form. Teachers are dedicated, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and work hard, not least in tackling the challenge presented by the school's split-site operation. They relate well to students, and provide high levels of support and encouragement. This is highly valued by the students who feel that these qualities are a major strength of the school's sixth form provision. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. They are particularly pleased with the high quality of teaching, the challenge in lessons, and the way they are accorded suitable independence. Teachers expect that students will do their best – students expect that teachers will teach them well – neither are disappointed, and this is reflected in the students' application to their studies and the high standards they achieve.

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

45. This is an inclusive school which provides an equally high quality of education for all of its sixth-form students. However, no provision is made for religious education or for a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form. The study of foreign languages has been strengthened by the school's designation as a Language College.

46. Curriculum provision is very good, and is meeting the wide-ranging need of this very large sixth form particularly well. The school provides 26 Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced Level (A) courses, and Advanced and Intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in Business, and in Health and Social Care. In addition an intermediate level programme exists for a small number of students. Students also follow a general studies course in Year 12, and in Year 13 one period a week is allocated for a core programme led by group tutors. Key skills courses are provided for Year 12 through general studies mainly taught by tutors, supplemented by specialists in the three areas.

47. One afternoon a week is set aside for enrichment activities and include, for example, physical education, Youth Action and a flourishing Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. This provision is

very good, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities is on offer, well taken up by students. In addition to sporting activities the school produces annual dramatic and musical performances; students are highly successful in geography, physics, art and mathematics competitions. A significant number of students is involved in Youth Enterprise projects, which win trophies regularly.

48. Students feel the school expects them to work hard and supports them well to achieve this. They appreciate the vibrant range of enrichment activities, field trip and visits open to them. Many take full advantage of these, others regret that academic demands mean that they can not commit to as many of the extra activities as they would like.

49. The school works very closely with local employers, for example, through the Education and Business Partnership, to ensure that it responds to local needs. Compacts have been established with the two universities in Sheffield to encourage and ensure access to higher education, and strong international links have been forged, largely through the school's designation as a Language College, to create opportunities for exchange visits, partnerships and work experience in continental Europe.

50. Provision for students' personal development is very good, particularly for their social, moral and cultural development. Opportunities occur in most subjects. In biology students consider the moral implications both for and against gene therapy; in psychology they discuss and research ethics, and in economics they examine moral arguments associated with commercial and employment issues; in English, students analysing the use of language in poetry and journalism firmly dissociated themselves from prejudiced and pejorative expressions. Particularly enriching are the opportunities offered to students in modern foreign languages, with an extensive programme of visits to France, Spain and Germany, and in music and drama.

51. Students' personal development is further enhanced by opportunities to play a responsible role in a number of community projects. Many act as 'welcomers' for visitors and patients in local hospitals, or assist in the local hospice. Others supervise in the school's canteens. Students themselves organise regular events to raise funds for specific charities. Since the previous inspection there have been considerable improvements in this area, although spiritual development is less notable, and there is no provision for religious education in the sixth form.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Assessment**

52. Overall, the procedures for assessing students' work are good and in individual subjects range from satisfactory to very good. The marking of work in most subjects is generally thorough and informative and includes a diagnosis of the learning needs of individuals. Present arrangements vary from subject to subject and, although assessments are made on a regular basis, they are sometimes not specific enough about what students need to do to improve.

53. As part of the whole school development plan to develop a fully integrated computerised administration system that includes assessment data, action has already been taken to generate a comprehensive range of student performance data. However, because of some difficulties with software, progress in making effective use of the data has been slower than planned. Existing data is being well used to predict and monitor the results obtained in public examinations. The data is disseminated to department and pastoral heads and includes analysis by gender and ethnicity. Staff training has taken place in using various national packages and using value-added graphs to determine levels of achievement. Heads of subject departments are required to produce subject specific analyses as part of their annual review.

54. The data is being used to determine individual student target grades and these are regularly discussed with sixth form tutors. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress in separate subjects vary, as does the use of the database of student performance in comparing performance with examination targets. Departments still have autonomy in determining assessment schemes and it is recognised that, having heightened the awareness,

usefulness and importance of the available performance data, the next stage is to achieve consistency. Routinely assessed work is not regularly compared with the available data and targets so that the opportunity to identify and then correct any under-achievement is sometimes missed. Short-term, interim target setting and the revision of targets are not generally included in routines. In these respects development is at the embryonic stage and it is recognised that, in order to achieve consistency of provision, monitoring arrangements require a higher profile.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

55. Inspectors engaged in discussions with a considerable number of students, both in planned interviews and in the course of lessons. The views which emerged from these discussions, together with the results of the questionnaire completed by students, are considered to be broadly representative of the sixth form as a whole and the inspectors agree with all of the students' main opinions.

56. Students receive satisfactory personal support and guidance. Induction procedures are good. All students are interviewed prior to joining the sixth form and there is an early formal review in the first term to sort out any potential problems. They are pleased with their choice of courses, and the information and help they were given to select them. Students find that their teachers and tutors are always ready to give them good quality help and advice. However, the role of the form tutor in help and guidance could usefully be strengthened.

57. Form tutors meet with their form for two short registration periods a week. This limited tutorial contact does not enable tutors to help and advise students on day-to-day issues and administration matters as effectively as they could. Some tutors are not always able to make these sessions as they are timetabled to teach at the lower school site. As there are only two registration sessions, the school lacks a central register of sixth form attendance so that an easy check could be made in the event of a building evacuation for safety reasons. The school does, however, appropriately record students' attendance to lessons.

58. Individual students meet with their form tutors for short progress review meetings; these sessions provide a good oversight of each student's progress so that concerns can be identified and suitable support provided.

59. Students whose family or personal circumstances are a barrier to continuing education are very well supported. Students have access to an educational maintenance grant in the sixth form and the school has a well-established Compact arrangement with local universities.

60. Careers guidance is satisfactory. However, over 40 per cent of the students responding to the questionnaire feel that the school does not give them enough information about careers. There are plentiful visits to universities and students are given skilful advice about choices of courses in higher education. Whilst this good advice about higher education courses and applications are appreciated, students feel that the school does not provide enough preparation for the world of work. A significant number would like earlier and more comprehensive information about careers and work-related opportunities. The literature and computerised material on careers are not stored in one place to allow for easy research and much of the formal programme of careers advice is geared towards higher education. Students do, however, have good access to a specialist careers advisor through Connexions'. A smaller, but still significant proportion of students feel that the school does not listen and respond well enough to their views.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

#### **Leadership and management**

61. A post-16 team, led by an assistant headteacher, provides highly effective leadership for the sixth form, with a clear focus, through self-evaluation, on high quality teaching and learning, and maintenance of impressive academic standards. As part of this, the school is developing a closer, more integrated approach to pastoral care and curricular matters, and is producing very helpful and detailed documentation for students and parents. The new performance management strategy is well in place, and the analysis of results against students' predicted outcomes as a



means of judging the value added by the sixth form is developing effectively. However, this would be strengthened by the introduction of a more formal approach to the monitoring of teaching in some subject areas, and a whole-school system of assessment.

62. Following a recommendation from the previous inspection the school's development plan now contains clear, costed priorities for post-16 provision, related particularly to Curriculum 2000. Subject departments contribute to the whole-school plan through individual subject plans.

63. The governors display significant commitment to the school, bring a very wide range of expertise to the role, and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively in all respects and their work is particularly beneficial in financial management. However, statutory requirements are not fully met, as no provision is made for religious education or an act of collective worship in the sixth form.

64. The school's finances are in good order and the budget is very well monitored by the headteacher and the governors, who also ensure that all specific grants are used wisely for the purpose intended. Indeed, the school is very successful in attracting additional sources of funding, for example, the Excellence Challenge in order to make special provision for gifted and talented students in the sixth form. The senior staff and governors work hard to ensure that the school obtains best value and that money is well spent. The sixth form is highly cost-effective, because most group sizes are economic, and still allow for less popular options to be offered to smaller classes.

## **Resources**

65. The match of teachers and support staff in the sixth form is good. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach.

66. Several subjects have inadequate resources to support the larger, and growing, sixth form groups, notably in physics, but there is a good range of equipment for music and business education. There are insufficient ICT resources for students to use computers regularly during lessons in many subjects, although they are mostly able to gain access at other times. Some subjects lack specialist hardware and software, for example for data-logging in biology and for CAD/CAM in design and technology. Most subjects are well provided with textbooks or worksheets.

67. The quality of accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory overall. There are two main buildings used for the sixth form, which contrast sharply. One building is new, and is light, spacious and well appointed. This is a considerable improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Subjects whose teaching rooms are in this building have high quality accommodation. In modern foreign languages, provision is very good, with a very well appointed multi-media centre established. In history, teaching rooms are light and airy, and some very good displays further enhance the learning environment. Accommodation is good in health and social care, music, and business education. Space, however, remains a problem, and the social area provided is too small for the increasing numbers of students in the sixth form. In addition, there is not enough space for the large numbers of students to easily undertake private study.

68. The older building is poorly lit, rather dingy, and is unwelcoming. There are numerous displays by a range of subjects, including art and design, religious education, and design and technology, which are bright and interesting. These make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the learning environment. In spite of the efforts of the school, however, significant problems remain. In psychology, one room is damp, and lack of space means that some of the larger groups are cramped. In physics, the accommodation is poor, and in some rooms there are insufficient proper benches equipped with electricity or gas. In design and technology, there are no facilities for design drawing in many lessons, and the facilities for storage of work are inadequate. In addition to having inadequate space, in economics the rooms do not allow easy access to computers. While the accommodation in art and design is satisfactory overall, two of the teaching rooms are too small for the larger groups.



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

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

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

### ***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
Art and design	18	78	96	39	46	5.1	6.6
Biology	39	72	88	41	34	4.9	5.2
Chemistry	39	87	90	64	43	6.7	5.9
Drama	6	100	93	0	31	3.7	5.5
Economics	17	88	89	29	36	5.3	5.5
English language	18	83	91	22	30	3.9	5.3
English literature	21	100	95	67	37	7.6	5.9
French	15	87	89	60	38	7.2	5.6
Full Design and technology	6	83	91	67	30	6.0	5.4
General studies	102	88	85	49	30	6.1	4.9
Geography	36	83	92	36	38	5.3	5.7
German	7	100	91	100	40	8.9	5.8
History	24	75	88	33	35	4.6	5.4
Mathematics	59	81	87	49	43	6.1	5.8
Music	6	100	93	100	35	10.0	5.7
Urdu	1	100	93	0	56	6.0	6.8
Geology	10	90	90	20	30	4.8	5.2
Psychology	20	85	87	20	34	4.3	5.3
Physics	28	93	88	61	40	7.0	5.7
Sociology	8	88	86	25	35	5.8	5.3
Spanish	7	71	89	57	39	6.3	5.7
French (AS Level)	6	100	78	57	13	3.7	1.6
Mathematics (AS Level)	1	100	62	0	15	1.0	1.5
Music (AS Level)	1	100	84	100	29	4.0	2.4
Sociology (AS Level)	1	100	63	0	7	1.0	1.2
Business (GNVQ)	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	10.5

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and physics. Chemistry and geology were also sampled. In 2001, examination results were above average in chemistry, and average in geology. Two lessons were observed in each of the sampled subjects – standards were above average, and teaching was good in all cases.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Teachers have a thorough command of the subject.
- The proportion of students attaining a grade A or B at A-level is consistently above the national average.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good.

##### Areas for improvement

- Measure progress against short-term individual targets that are agreed with students so that instances of under-achievement are speedily identified.
- Ensure that ICT is used to enrich and support learning.
- Improve monitoring in order to promote consistency of provision, particularly in the sharing of good practice.

69. Standards of attainment in A-level GCE examinations are above the national average, in terms of both the average points scores and the proportion attaining the highest grades. In 2001, half the students gained either grade A or B, with eighteen attaining grade A and eleven grade B. Because eleven students did not attain a pass grade the overall pass rate was slightly below the national average. The students studying mathematics at A-level, typically around sixty in each Year 13 over the last four years, attained similar sets of results in each year, and the relative proportions of male and female students broadly matched those seen nationally. Analysis of the 2001 results indicates that the achievements of students, in relation to their prior attainment, was satisfactory overall, and that a significant number of students performed better in their other subjects than in mathematics. In the last four years an average of nine students also studied A-level further mathematics, and in 2001 five of the eight students achieved a grade A. Over the four years seven out of every ten students attained either a grade A or B. In 2001, the average points score attained by Year 12 students in the new AS examinations was in line with the national average. As in the national picture, the overall results were significantly below usual expectations and performance. The impact of these results has increased the number of students who will not complete the two year A-level course, even though almost one-quarter of students who did not secure a pass grade have elected to repeat the first year of the course. The volume of work required to cover the AS modules in Year 12 has resulted in difficulties in completing the work in time to provide the opportunity for revision and this has adversely affected standards.

70. The standard of work seen in A-level lessons and students' written work is above the national average. The work reflects the standards required for students to attain the highest grades. The achievement of the majority of students is satisfactory and at least matches their prior attainment, which ranges from GCSE grade C to A\*. There is systematic progression in both depth and difficulty and the work meets the requirements of the new course specifications. The quality of students' notes and solutions varies but is mainly of a high standard. A lack of structure and rigour sometimes impedes progress and does not result in good quality notes that will be useful for revision purposes. The clarity of diagrams, particularly in mechanics, is generally good and promotes understanding. Most students are at ease with the statistics and mechanics sections of the course, but students with lower GCSE grades sometimes experience problems with pure mathematics. This is largely because of weaknesses with essential manipulation skills in algebra. The quality of solutions ranges from very high to inadequate, but is mainly at the expected

standard. Marking of students' work is generally confined to periodic review tests, and the use of the assessment of the work is limited because the connection with how well a student is performing in relation to A-level grades is not always clear. For example, the identification of short term individual targets that can be used to speedily identify and help rectify concerns about any under-achievement are not in place. Although assessment procedures lack formality, it is evident that most students make at least satisfactory progress over time. The use of ICT to highlight ideas and heighten understanding of concepts was not evident in lessons or in students' prior work, and is insufficient.

71. Other courses in the subject in the sixth form include re-sit GCSE mathematics and, for intermediate GNVQ students, the application of number as part of their key skills programme. There are two separate re-sit groups with one comprised exclusively of students who have already attained a grade D. Observations indicate that, through the provision of extensive individual tuition over three lessons per week, most are making satisfactory progress towards obtaining a grade C pass in the summer. As in A-level groups, there is no evidence of ICT being used to support learning.

72. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. The subject command of the teachers and the good relationships that have been established between teachers and students are particular strengths that characterise teaching. The combination of these two factors and the positive attitude to study of the students ensure that lessons are conducted at an appropriately challenging level. In very good lessons these factors are enhanced by the teachers' obvious enthusiasm for the subject. For example, all these characteristics were evident in a Year 13 lesson, concluding its work on vectors. The lively, infectious enthusiasm of the teacher helped set a challenging atmosphere in which the students displayed confidence and pleasure in taking part. An imaginative strategy, which required the students to set searching questions for a fictitious examination, was effective in teasing out the finer points of understanding and examination techniques. Students were fully involved in the discussions and displayed high levels of competence and understanding. In less successful, but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, there is an absence of obvious enthusiasm and, because students are not engaged in the exposition, their learning is comparatively passive.

73. Students' attitudes to the subject are generally very positive and in lessons there is strong working ethos. Teachers are approachable and readily available to give generously of their time in providing additional help and support. At an informal level students feel they are informed about their progress, but some students feel they are not given sufficient diagnosis of what they need to do to improve and how their current performance relates to long term targets.

74. The management of mathematics is satisfactory. There is an appropriate match of teachers to the requirements of the various modules in the A-level and AS mathematics courses, and most of this large department is involved in teaching at this level. The monitoring of the work of the department requires a sharper focus so that good practice is routinely shared and issues, such as the early identification of any under-achievement or the wider use of ICT, are effectively tackled.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and facilitates learning.
- Development of students' individual learning skills.
- A high number of students achieve the higher A-level grades.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is under-used in lessons.
- Monitoring of teaching needs to be formalised.
- Resources need updating to take account of new examination specifications.

75. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were average overall. An above-average number of students achieved higher grade passes, but the number of students not achieving a pass was also higher than average. In 2000, fewer students achieved the higher grades, but the overall pass rate was higher. The AS level results for 2001 were above average and were in line with predicted grades. One student achieved 100 per cent both in the examinations and coursework, whilst most students who start the subject take the examinations.

76. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and these standards are achieved because of very good teaching. In relation to their standards at the start of the sixth form, the achievements of students are good. Their very positive attitudes mean that the quality of learning is very good, and students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. There is no significant difference in the achievement of male and female students.

77. Students in Year 13 make good progress in lessons and are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. They are able to answer complex questions on gas exchange in various organisms and showed competence in the dissection of a locust. Another group of Year 13 students demonstrated a clear understanding of the structure and function of the kidney and its importance in the regulation of water content in the human body. Students in Year 12 are able to discuss various types of gene therapy and have a mature approach to the related moral and ethical issues surrounding it. They understand why nutrients are needed by plants and can explain the role of fertilisers in crop production. They are successfully building on work covered at GCSE level in Years 10 and 11.

78. Teaching in biology is very good overall, enabling students to learn very well. Teachers show very good subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of facts. The enthusiasm which the teachers have for their subject is transmitted to the students. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and include a variety of teaching and learning styles to maintain students' interest. Reviews at the end of each lesson help to consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other. There are plenty of opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills through mini research projects, particularly in Year 12, and relevant web sites are displayed around the laboratories. Teachers' expectations are high and they question students frequently during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding. There are pleasant working relationships between teachers and students during lessons so that students feel able to ask questions if they need to. More use could be made of ICT in lessons, although the department hopes to develop this and staff have undertaken relevant training to facilitate it. Marking of students' written work is thorough and appropriately annotated, giving clear guidance on areas for improvement, with good use of praise and encouragement. Assessment takes place through regular testing during and at the end of work modules, and targets are regularly reviewed so that students are always aware of their progress. Students receive individual interviews to discuss their progress and these are more regular for students who are considered to be underachieving. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons, often comprising past examination questions.

79. Students learn very well and make very good progress in lessons because of the very good

teaching, and also because they are mature and highly motivated. Many of them intend to continue with biologically related studies when they leave school. They respond well in lessons and rise to challenges as shown during question and answer sessions and are keen to contribute to class discussions. They work cooperatively together in both theory and practical lessons and help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way. The annual week-long field course has a very high take-up rate. Several students have received bursary awards to undertake mini-research projects at Sheffield University during the summer holidays.

80. Leadership and management of the department are good and the high standards seen during the previous inspection have been maintained. There is a good team ethos within the department. Members of staff support each other and share information and expertise, meeting regularly to discuss departmental issues and review progress. The new head of department has a clear focus and is committed to the continued achievement of good examination results. Monitoring of teaching takes place through informal discussions, but requires more consistency. The head of department intends to formalise it soon. Assessment and record keeping are good. All staff are biology specialists enabling them to deliver lessons with confidence. Accommodation is satisfactory, although two of the laboratories are rather small for the larger groups. Resources are satisfactory but need updating to take account of the new examination specifications, and the department's microscopes are very old. The department receives good technical support although it is insufficient in time allocation.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Results at A-level are very good.
- Students have a good grasp of physics concepts, have good practical skills and overall are achieving well.
- Teaching is always good and sometimes very good.
- Subject leadership and management are good.
- Students have an excellent positive attitude, work well together and show great commitment to hard work.

### Areas for improvement

- Better use needs to be made of assessment results to set clear, short-term targets for improved learning, especially for lower attaining students.
- The organisation of the new AS course needs refinement.
- Accommodation is very poor, and resources need improvement.

81. The A-level results for Year 13 students in 2001 were well above those nationally and represented good achievement given the GCSE results of those involved. Particularly notable was the high proportion of students who gained the highest grades A and B. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Although the physics results have been good over the last seven years they have improved still further in the last two. Results for Year 12 students at AS level were in line with those nationally and were what might have been expected for these students. Around a quarter of students who entered the AS course, usually those with the lowest grades at GCSE, did not complete it which suggests more initial advice for prospective students and help for new students to come to terms with the demands of sixth form work are required.

82. The standard of work of current students is above average. They respond to the effective teaching well. In Year 12, students grasped new concepts well, such as representing waves with phasors. Their assignments on materials show that they have good research skills and can develop their knowledge and understanding from a variety of sources. They are good at applying their existing knowledge to solve problems, such as those involved in investigating gravitational motion. In Year 13, there was evidence that topics previously encountered in Year 11 of the

GCSE course had been forgotten which necessitated the teaching again of the basics of electromagnetic induction. However, the students quickly grasped the essentials of this. Students studying the energy changes in atoms, which produce the spectra they emit when excited, could readily apply the relevant formula and understand the patterns of spectral lines seen. Overall written work is good. Students performed well in the practical work seen and competently carried out investigations.

83. Teaching is uniformly good and sometimes very good, and this is the main reason for the good results. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and theory lessons are broken up into a variety of activities to aid concentration and learning. Staff are particularly good at questioning students and their clear exposition, often of complex topics, is particularly good. The staff have a thorough, confident knowledge of their subject and, in terms of A-level, a good knowledge of how to prepare students so that they achieve the highest examination results. The new AS level course and examinations mean that expertise on the best way to teach these is still developing. A very good learning atmosphere has been established by teachers. Teachers are adaptable to students' needs and are prepared, and have the knowledge and expertise, to completely recast a lesson when a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of students becomes evident. Overall, teachers support students in practical lessons well and this is an improvement on the last inspection, though the size of one very large group means, inevitably, that practical work is difficult and the support of individuals reduced.

84. Learning in physics is good as a result of the good teaching. There are good opportunities for developing independence. A very good lesson on exploring falling objects struck just the right balance between giving instructions as to how carry out the investigations, and allowing students to solve the problems that arose themselves, so developing their thinking. Learning was helped by the frequent use of ICT, both in terms of computers to model physical situations and process results, and by using sensors and digital cameras to make measurements. Some students who find physics difficult would benefit from more structure in the new AS course, where a large amount of knowledge and information is processed, so that there is a focus on those aspects which need learning thoroughly.

85. Marking of assignments is thorough and includes helpful comments. There are good connections made between the examination grading system and marked work. Targets are provided at the beginning of the course but a more thorough target-setting system is required to ensure good individual progress. The provision of short-term learning goals as a result of a discussion of progress would help the less capable students and remove the insecurity some now feel.

86. The response of students to the teaching is very good and they learn well. They work hard and most are interested in the subject. They work very well together in a friendly, cooperative atmosphere. Relationships between students and with staff are very good. The school is particularly good at providing a clear positive direction for its students focused on achieving good academic results.

87. The subject is well led, well managed and is being developed well. The last report noted that teaching needed monitoring more closely and this still needs attention so that the very best practice can be disseminated. The accommodation for physics is poor with damp walls, a lack of laboratory benches and services such as gas and electricity. This has a bad effect on the morale of staff and students and affects what can be taught, especially the amount of class practical work. It thus seriously affects learning. Resources are well used and managed with adequate technician support, an improvement on the last inspection. However, they are insufficient in quantity, older items need replacing and the equipment required for current syllabuses is not all available. The lack of resources was also a concern at the time of the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus was on design and technology which is the only subject in this curriculum area studied in the school.



## Design and technology

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

### Strengths

- Teachers discuss students' work thoroughly with individuals and set appropriate targets.
- Students' case studies are very well written, analytical and well presented.
- Products are well made and have a high standard of finish.
- Students have positive attitudes and enjoy the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Specifications are not sufficiently precise to focus students' design work on solving specific problems.
- Students make little use of computer-aided design and manufacture because facilities and workshop provision are unsatisfactory.

88. In 2001, GCE A-level results were above average and AS level results were well above average. In both examinations students achieved better results than would be expected from their GCSE results. Male and female students achieve similar standards. Overall, the high standards in evidence at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained consistently, whilst the number of students taking design and technology has increased substantially.

89. The standards of work seen of both Year 12 and Year 13 students are above average. In Year 12, students' case studies of disabled access to the Meadowhall Shopping Centre show a thorough analytical approach and are well written. Students make very good use of ICT in their reports to present their findings. The previous experience of students varies between GCSE in electronics, resistant materials, textiles or graphics products, but all take design and technology in three dimensional product design at AS and A-level. Nevertheless, all acquire good knowledge and skills in using wood, metal and plastics. When designing and making in both Years 12 and 13, students' product specifications are often not sufficiently precise to guide their designing and evaluation. Hence research, whilst thorough, is sometimes carried out as a matter of routine rather than being focused on those areas that will help them to understand the design requirements or means of implementing ideas. Similarly, whilst many students create imaginative ideas, their selection, development and evaluation does not always refer to the purposes of the design. Nevertheless, designing is thorough, well presented and final products are nearly always well made. In Year 13, students undertake a broad range of projects including jewellery, furniture and electronic products. The products usually work well, are made to a high standard and are well finished, but little use is made of computer-aided industrial methods because of a lack of facilities. Students give thorough consideration to the social and environmental implications of their designs. Overall, students achieve well in relation to their standards at the end of Year 11.

90. Students have positive attitudes to the subject, most having chosen it because they enjoyed it in Year 11 and continue to enjoy it. Hence they work hard and show a good level of independence when researching their case studies and design projects. They take care with their work and present it well. The maturity of their discussions with their teachers is a very significant factor in achieving the high standards of work, and the successful completion of their courses.

91. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good specialist knowledge which they use to support students in a wide variety of projects. The consistent strength of the teaching is the mature individual discussions between teachers and students which ensure that each student is encouraged to achieve the highest standard of which he or she is capable. Teachers do, however, need to focus students' designing more clearly on the purpose of their designs. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and pupils have confidence in, and feel comfortable with, the teachers, who are ready to help students outside lesson times. Students' work is consistently marked and they have clear targets for improvement. Visits are well used to widen students' knowledge of design and technology.

92. The department is well led and managed. Teaching is thoroughly monitored both formally and informally and the teachers support each other in raising standards. Thorough assessment procedures are implemented. The accommodation is cramped, and in one lesson the Year 13 group has to share a small workshop with a Year 11 group. There is no clean area in the workshops where pupils can carry out design work and there is no separate area to store students' work. Overall, the environment is inappropriate for teaching design and technology at sixth form level. There are similarly inadequate resources for computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) to support work at this level. Even though the standards achieved are good, with the good teaching and positive student attitudes, higher standards could be achieved if the facilities were better.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus was on A-level economics, and AVCE in business studies in Years 12 and 13, together with the GNVQ Intermediate in Year 12.

### **Business studies**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students' attitudes are good.
- The curriculum has a very good vocational context.
- Business links are well used.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Teachers' planning.
- More consistent feedback to students on their progress.
- More monitoring of teaching and learning

93. In 2001, results in the advanced GNVQ examination were above average – all students were successful, with three gaining distinctions and one a merit. In the intermediate GNVQ examination in 2001, all were again successful, with more than a quarter gaining merits.

94. In Year 13, standards of work seen are above average. Students are making good progress and are achieving well. They are able to undertake independent research and use their initiative well in visiting companies for interviews with staff. They can use the Internet and their folders contain good examples of ICT and numeracy, including graphs and statistics. Most of the students are good at interpreting the complex criteria as laid down in the examination specification, but lower ability students often need more help from teachers. In some lessons there is insufficient challenge to the students and the tasks set do not stretch the abilities of the more able nor help the less able. In one class the students were not shown clearly enough how the task was related to the specification, and the task itself lacked challenge. Fortunately, more able students were able to work out how the task related to their assignment on customer care. The students are keen to discuss their projects, but at times are not being given enough opportunity to share ideas because the lesson plan is not sufficiently clear to allow for this. Students respond well to the many opportunities for outside experience, as in the case of hearing from a banker about the financial viability of their business plans.

95. Standards of work seen in the Year 12 AVCE business group are average. Students here are making satisfactory progress and are improving their learning skills. They use ICT and develop good ideas for their assignments. They would make more progress, however, if the class were smaller and the accommodation more spacious. The class was observed doing practical work in pairs in a room where group work was difficult because of the seating arrangements. Moreover, the class was too large and of mixed ability and experience, with many having already done the GNVQ intermediate or the GCSE in business studies, so that it was hard for the teacher to attend to the needs of each pair. The good humour and keenness of the students enabled successful

learning to take place in difficult surroundings.

96. In the GNVQ intermediate in Year 12 standards are above average in the work seen. Students are working well and are making more progress than could be expected. They enter with low GCSE grades and are achieving many merits and passes. They are very focused on their extended project, which is a Young Enterprise activity to make a writing board and cushion, in which they have to work out a marketing plan, make the object and sell it within the school. The project develops very well their key skills, as they have to make a presentation with members of industry present, use numeracy to work out the costs and use ICT in their folders. Most of the students are from ethnic minority groups and almost all are re-sitting English or mathematics to enable them to enter A-level or AVCE. As a result of this well organised Young Enterprise project, the students' interest has been gained and they are well motivated towards a career in business. Very few leave the course for work, because most of them are able to combine some part-time work with the receipt of education maintenance allowance, which has had a positive effect for these students.

97. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good business experience and are well qualified as GNVQ assessors. They use very good business links and have taken advantage of the many initiatives with which the school is involved. In successful lessons, they give students opportunities to work together and encourage them to work independently or in pairs on their assignments. In a few lessons, teachers have not planned sufficiently for a balanced mixture of input, discussion and practical work, and the timing of activities is not under enough control. In some lessons, the activity does not meet the needs of all abilities and lower ability students are not helped enough. There is, therefore, a need to share common approaches to teaching and learning, and for more effective monitoring to take place. Teachers can interpret the new assessment criteria, but a more consistent approach to written feedback would help students to know how they were doing. Several students said they found the criteria difficult to understand. More explicit help is required to show them how they can work up towards the higher grades in the specification.

98. Students adopt a positive attitude to the subject, the majority having decided to pursue a career in business. It was noticeable that students, including a good proportion from ethnic minorities, had been influenced by their families because of the work opportunities available in the subject. In this context the intermediate course is an important opportunity which takes students with low GCSE grades to prepare them for advanced study. In the AVCE many expressed the wish to enter higher education, but a minority sought to enter work, for which they claimed the school gave them little careers guidance.

99. The courses make a good contribution to the development of the students' key skills. Students are given extra classes in Year 12 and are accredited in key skills up to level two. Access to computers is good. All students are required to make formal presentations of their project findings, often to an audience which includes local businessmen. The courses also make a valuable contribution to their understanding of social and moral issues, including environmental awareness, which is included as an assignment.

100. Management of business studies is unsatisfactory because responsibility is unclear – at present it falls between an economics department and a GNVQ coordinator. This creates a lack of clarity about the monitoring of teaching, and inconsistent approaches to assessment. Since the previous inspection, results have improved and the industrial links have been extended. There is great potential for development as a centre of excellence in this subject, once the inconsistencies in assessment and monitoring have been ironed out.

## **Economics**

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

### **Strengths**

- Quality of teaching.
- Teachers have good knowledge of economics, and effective presentational skills, with a depth

of knowledge to meet the needs of a wide range of students.

Areas for improvement

- Use of the Internet in the classroom.
- Checking and editing of written work for quality of language.

101. A-level results for economic at the end of Year 13 are average. There is satisfactory value added at the end of Year 13 when measured against standards at the end of Year 11. In 2001, the A-B grades gained were below average, but above for the whole grade range A-E. Students perform as predicted across the whole grade range at both Years 12 and 13. Male students do better than females, but not significantly so. Students gained few A-B grades at the end of Year 12 in the new AS examination in 2001, and their average point scores was well below the national average. Students in Year 12 have no previous knowledge of economics. As a consequence, teachers have to deal with a variety of questions and discuss some of the many economic solutions of a modern economy. The teachers' high expectations are communicated to all students. The style and imaginative use of examples and case studies provides a rigorous grounding for those students going on to specialise in economics.

102. The standard of work in economics is, overall, above average. These improving standards are reached because the teaching is good. Students learn well and know how an economy develops and the trends of growth and decline in both the United Kingdom (UK) and in the European Union (EU). Their ability to evaluate the effectiveness of economic data contributes to their good learning. There is good progress in Year 12 by students who can appropriately identify, collect data and provide a clear analysis of economic trends over time. In Year 13 there is progress in the evaluation of different economic models. Achievement overall is good. Retention rates in both years are good.

103. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students demonstrate good knowledge of economics in relation to the UK and EU economy. Students, both male and female, can use economic analysis including mathematics to measure growth and decline in economic activity. Students are well taught to recognise that unemployment figures are measured and there are different types of unemployment. Students can accurately measure inflation and comment on its significance and they are able to account for recessionary trends. There is a growth in understanding that economic decisions have social implications. The economic and social phenomena of equal pay, private pensions, health care and unemployment are discussed as concurrent themes. Students do their own research using the Internet outside the classroom, although more opportunity should be provided within lessons. Other key skills are encouraged, and the special vocabulary of economics is widely, if not always accurately, used by students. More emphasis should be given to checking students' written work to ensure appropriate use of specialist subject terminology.

104. Standards in Year 13 are above average. There are specific learning objectives which are in line with expectations for this able group of students. There is a breadth and balance across the economics topics which students manage to understand. Students develop cross-curricular skills such as the use of electronic sources to retrieve economic statistics. The gifted students are given additional tasks to stretch them though these are not formalised within lesson plans. Key subject vocabulary is emphasised. However, students do not always spell the terms correctly. Targets are set for the knowledge and skills to be developed. There is comprehensive coverage of introductory economic theory using an extensive range of modern data.

105. Teaching and learning are good. There are sufficient opportunities in most lessons for students to think analytically, creatively or to reason using economic data. Students receive oral and written feedback targeted at improving their work, although this does not focus enough on the accurate use of technical language. Teaching is inclusive, ensuring that all students are challenged and supported effectively, and are fully involved in the lesson, including high attainers and those with a learning need. Group work is well organised, focused and involves all students. All students are expected to be engaged and to contribute through a range of opportunities for participation. Teachers actively teach the whole class or groups throughout the lessons. They communicate an interest in, and enthusiasm for, the subject. The teachers of economics show

an appropriate interest in the two major areas of micro and macro economics. Lessons are planned effectively to develop an understanding of economics as an analytical study of supply and demand. Students are well advised that economics differs from common sense insofar as it seeks to collect objective and verifiable facts about economic behaviour and it constructs empirically based theories. Lessons are structured to allow students in Year 12 with no previous knowledge of economics to approach the subject without being daunted.

106. Leadership and management are very good. There is built in time for regular review of self-assessment of students' knowledge, skills and understanding. There are identifications of clear objectives or what students are expected to achieve in a lesson. There are precise indications of the key subject vocabulary to be developed. Teachers outline the focus for the development of each lesson including main tasks and activities for students and the time these should take. A wide and relevant coverage of economics is well managed. Topics include opportunity cost and the problem of choice, financial institutions, consumer protection, location of firms, taxes and spending. Questions, carefully placed, explain the economics behind everyday events and test students' understanding of the major issues.

107. Good improvement to economics has taken place since the last inspection. There is a firm basis of factual knowledge of economics. Students are well supported to thoroughly learn their material. The quality of written communication is assessed accurately. The teachers present theory, policy and institutional arrangements, clearly and authoritatively over the whole of the basic economics spectrum, and there is depth of coverage in both micro/macro economics.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

There was no focus subject but key skills courses at levels 2 and 3 were sampled. Standards are broadly average for the qualification. Two lessons were sampled and both were satisfactory. The teacher ensured that students acquired sufficient relevant skills to support their work in other subjects with clear exposition and positive individual support in practical computing.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

This subject was not sampled.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on AVCE Health and Social Care.

### Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good, which facilitates learning.
- Resources are good.
- Small group sizes enable students to work together and share ideas effectively.

#### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient time is allocated for formal staff meetings.
- Increase work-related experience for students.

108. The results for GNVQ advanced health and social care were above average in 2001, with two-thirds of the students gaining a pass with either a merit or a distinction. The results have improved yearly since the last inspection with the numbers of merits and distinctions increasing each year.

109. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, and students in both Years 12 and 13 are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Year 12 students working on assignments on research perspectives in health and social care have covered a range of topics such as drugs, sex education and teenage pregnancy, and have obtained information from many sources, for example, newspapers, the internet, and health centres. They have prepared questionnaires which ask searching questions but which are sensitively designed with regard to any ethical issues. Year 13 students studying child development gave good oral presentations to the class. Their material was well prepared and they are well aware of the theories of child development put forward by people, such as Skinner and Piaget, and of the different stages of childhood. Students in both years have well developed independent learning skills.

110. Teaching is good, enabling the students to learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well aware of the course requirements, so they are able to help and advise students on their coursework assignments. They encourage them to undertake personal research and make use of local facilities. There are strong links with local nurseries, hospitals and care homes where some students undertake work experience. Good use is made of visiting speakers such as a school cook, a hypnotherapist and a cerebral palsy sufferer. Students are encouraged to help each other and share ideas, which is facilitated by their small group sizes. Teachers encourage class discussions and take care to ensure that all students become involved and contribute to lessons. There is a friendly working relationship during lessons so that students are not afraid to express their own ideas. Marking is thorough and adheres strictly to the criteria laid down by the examination board for the internal assessment procedures. Each student is provided with an assessment feedback sheet for each unit of work, which clearly details areas for improvement. The nature of the course means that most of the students' written work consists of their research assignments. These are well presented and those awarded the higher grades show greater clarity and depth of thought.

111. Students learn well and are very motivated. They are responsive in lessons and interested in the wide variety of topics covered. Retention rates are high, with most aiming for a career in the health or care services, and students appreciate the relevance of the work they cover in the course. They take a pride in their written work, as shown by their coursework assignments which indicate that they explore a wide variety of avenues when undertaking their research work. They work cooperatively together, help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way. During class discussions they show respect for each others' views and ask sensible questions.

112. The department is well led and managed and the head of department is keen to continue to

improve results. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and the department has been congratulated by the external moderator for its high standards. There is a good team ethos amongst the staff who are all experienced and well qualified, and undertake regular in-service training. There is insufficient time allocated for formal staff meetings in which to review progress and discuss departmental issues. Students would benefit from more work-related experience, and the head of department appreciates this and hopes to address the issue soon. The accommodation is good. The subject is well resourced and the main teaching room is well equipped with computers. The attractive displays are informative and support teaching and learning well.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus was on art and design, music and drama.

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result.
- ICT and photography are very well used to support and extend students' work.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' cultural development.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Experimentation with materials is not bold or exciting enough.
- There is a lack of a sense of urgency in some lessons.

113. In the A-level examination in 2001, results were well below average. Results are usually much better, however, and they normally vary between average and above average. The sharp fall in 2001 results reflects the weak prior attainment of those students. In the AS level examinations, results in 2001 were average, and students did as well as expected overall. Very few fail to complete the course, and retention rates are very good.

114. The work of current students is above average. Their achievement is good, considering their average attainment when they enter the sixth form. They make good gains in their observation skills, and produce crisp and accurate drawings from natural objects, such as seashells and leaves. These show above average skills in the use of pencil, and use the full range of tones to represent light and dark. Composition skills improve at a good rate, and Year 12 students learn to analyse the shapes and forms seen in a variety of starting points. As a result, they produce bright and interesting pieces, which reflect the sinuous lines and fine textures seen in plant forms. In Year 13, students produce oil paintings on canvas, which are well composed and show a considered use of colour. These successfully evoke the light and spacious atmosphere of modern architecture. In both Years 12 and 13, photography and ICT are used constantly to analyse the environment, to investigate the effects of light and shade, and to explore and manipulate images. As a result, the work of all students shows good levels of personal development, and their very thorough visual research is a strength of the work. Students are encouraged to experiment, and investigate a variety of materials in their lessons. However, their work tends to be rather careful and considered, and there are times when their approach to experimentation could be bolder, broader, and more exciting.

115. Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and because of this they give good individual advice to students. This is a strong feature of all the teaching seen. Relationships between teachers and students are good, students listen carefully to the advice, and the work develops into a wide range of outcomes. This approach also promotes good attitudes and behaviour. In one Year 13 lesson, the teacher went from student to student, encouraging them to develop more abstract images, for example, from the shapes seen in common vegetables, such as onions and peppers. Good advice was also

given on how to balance the colours in a composition, so that one colour did not dominate. Considerable time was spent with each student, discussing how his or her work could be improved. This produced good levels of personal interest and involvement, work was modified immediately under the guidance of the teacher, and learning was good. A good range of materials is also available in lessons, and students can work in collage, charcoal, watercolour, and acrylic or oil paint. They can also take photographs with digital cameras, or use computers. This helps students develop a variety of skills, and contributes to the diversity of ideas and outcomes seen. At times, however, there is a lack of a sense of urgency in lessons, and the pace slows. This restricts learning to a satisfactory level on these occasions.

116. Students are encouraged to investigate the world of art and design, and there are visits to galleries in London and Paris, in addition to those in the locality. A good range of artists and art movements are studied, including the work of Kandinsky, Georgia O'Keeffe, and the Surrealists. The art of other cultures, for example, African Mask-making, is also used to inform students' own work. In addition, there is a strong sense of the value of art activity communicated through the work of the department, especially in the frequent individual discussions, which are a feature of the teaching. As a result, the subject makes a very good contribution to students' cultural development.

117. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The quality of teaching and learning is now good, and students now make good progress. The subject is well led and managed, and the monitoring of teaching and learning is an established practice, though this is on an informal basis at present. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, though some of the rooms are rather cramped for the larger classes, which are a result of the increasing popularity of the subject.

## Drama

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

### Strengths

- Standards are high and examination results are well above average.
- Teaching and learning in the subject are very good.
- Students' commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the subject enhance their learning at every stage.
- Numbers opting to study the subject at this level are increasing.
- Extra-curricular activities provide excellent opportunities for the students to extend their experience and involvement in the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures do not involve the students sufficiently, or make fully effective use of target setting.

118. In 2001, examination results were below the national average - all students passed A-level drama, although grades were low compared to previous results. Over the previous three years the department had a very good record, when examination results were consistently high, and the average points score was significantly better than other subjects in the school. In the AS level examination in 2001, with a large group of students, 23 of the 24 students passed the examination including 12 achieving the highest grades A and B. A majority of students achieved better results than they were expected to. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by male and female students. Considering that several students start the course without a GCSE in drama, and bearing in mind the increasing numbers coming from other schools, this represents very good achievement.

119. Lesson observations and other work during the inspection confirmed that standards are well above average. The department is maintaining the high standards achieved at the last inspection and during the intervening years. In terms of better teaching, greater provision and increased numbers choosing to take the subject at this level, improvement since then is very good.



Students acting skills are of high quality. In Years 12 and 13, students act with sensitivity and imagination. Written work demonstrates how well they understand the concepts and conventions of drama and the theatre. Practical work shows how they are able to translate these concepts into highly convincing interpretations of their chosen texts. In a lesson in Year 13, for example, students rehearsed scenes from 'A View from the Bridge'. Even though this was done to improve continuity between the scenes using effective movement and lighting, the standard of acting was compelling. The quality of written work including essays, reviews, portfolios on, and stage design for, a variety of plays is above average standard at least, several being of a very high standard.

120. Students learn very well because they are very well taught. Teaching is very good indeed. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for drama and the theatre. As a result, students greatly enjoy the subject, developing a passion and commitment to it, both in lessons and in the excellent possibilities offered by their extra-curricular theatre company 'Blank Slate'. Teachers have very good subject knowledge as was shown particularly in a Year 12 theory and assessment lesson, when students were given help with their portfolios and received back recent written work. The handout materials were of good quality and the teacher was able to bring the students' attention effectively to important points within them. This session indicated that teachers' overall planning is detailed and effective, a feature also evident in the departmental documents. Teachers use a variety of strategies and methods in the classroom to help students develop their skills and understanding. Particularly effective was a challenging Year 12 lesson, when in pursuit of greater understanding of character, students were hot-seated after presenting their devised monologues for characters in Chekhov's 'The Three Sisters'. In this two way process of unprepared question and answer, students were helped to refine their understanding of Andrei, Natasha and Olga. In a very worthwhile evaluation session at the conclusion of the lesson, several students admitted to being provoked to further insights by the questions they were asked. Evaluation is a feature of every lesson. For example, in a lesson on 'A View from the Bridge' by Arthur Miller in Year 13, students evaluated their work continually through trial and discussion. In another group in the same year, students, anxious about the length of their performance of 'Ladies in Waiting' by Emily Fox, were able to improve the timing through trial and discussion and very good support from the teacher, without the necessity of removing further dialogue. This was enhanced by very good relationships evident between students and with their teacher, marked by considerable trust on all sides. Every student's opinion is valued as much as the teacher's, and respect for each other is very evident. Students are committed to and passionate about drama and the theatre. Their excellent attitudes are evident not only in the standard of work but in the time committed to rehearsing out of school hours.

121. Learning at this level is also enhanced by excellent extra-curricular provision including the students' own theatre company. All aspects of production are handled by students including, on occasions, the role of assistant director. This allows students to develop their skills in differing contexts beyond those found in the classroom. The work of this student company is recognised locally and they have appeared at the Crucible Theatre as part of arts and international festivals. They have also appeared in national press, television, radio, and have visited America. The list of productions since 1991 is impressively long, and the plays performed are demanding.

122. The leadership and management of the department is undoubtedly the drive behind their success. The head of department is very ably supported by a team of teachers who work together successfully on A and AS level courses. Standards are moderated between all four to ensure consistency of teaching and learning. A recently introduced review sheet to enable students to monitor their progress and understand what they have to do to achieve well shows potential, but students are not sufficiently involved in their assessments at present, nor sufficiently in setting appropriate targets for improvement. Assessment otherwise is good. It is accurate and the procedures are well disseminated to the whole team.

### **Music**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The examination results at AS and A level are very high.
- Teaching and learning are very good.

- Students' attitudes are excellent and this enhances learning at every stage.
- The high standard and range of extra curricular activities enhances the quality of the provision and provides sixth form students with the opportunity to direct musical activities.

#### Areas for improvement

- While students' work is assessed thoroughly, there is need to involve them more in the process.

123. In the AS level examination in 2001, all students achieved a grade between A and C. This represents very good achievement, particularly as not all students did GCSE music prior to starting the course. In the A-level examination in 2001, results were particularly high with all students achieving Grade A. The average points score was higher than all other subjects in the school. Results have been consistently above average over the last four years representing very good improvement since the last inspection when sixth form students were judged to attain only moderate standards. Proportions of male and female students differ from year to year but there appears to be no significant variation in the standards they achieve. Good numbers choose to study music, currently ten in Year 12 and six in Year 13, and these include students who opt to come from other schools. Most students who start the course take the examination.

124. Standards seen in lessons and in work scrutinised during the inspection are well above average at both AS and A level. Listening skills are well above average and these pervade the remainder of the course. Students have a very good understanding of historical and stylistic matters, and in listening tasks are able to apply a wealth of knowledge to back up their keen ears. Students play a variety of instruments to a very high standard, both individually and in excellent extra-curricular activities in a variety of styles. The standard of string playing is particularly high. They compose music in a variety of styles and, although standards are variable, they use their awareness of sound effectively. Standards of counterpoint and harmony are good overall with exercises in sampled work showing growing confidence and good progress.

125. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In the two lessons observed teaching was good and very good. In the choir and orchestra attended by all the sixth form students as an essential part of their course, teaching and direction are excellent, resulting in a very high standard of performance. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, and both are practising musicians. As a result, they are able to relate the practical and theoretical in ways that enable the students to deepen their understanding of the musical processes involved in performance and composition. Research done for a higher degree by the head of department has had a profound effect on the teaching of listening. As a result, students have a heightened awareness of sound which is affecting all areas of their study. Aural warm-ups using their voice and use of aural memory and inner hearing allow the students to sensitise their listening before they start their tasks. In a lesson using Mozart's piano sonata in Eb, students answered a variety of questions well, recognising technical and structural features of the music and using correct musical terminology. Some students are good transcribers of music and in the lesson were able to write down the opening bars of the melody correctly from memory including the chromatic inflexion. Detailed aural work was given to the classes in both years to extend their listening and ability to work independently. During the teacher's absence, students in Year 13 were critically analysing 2 different performances of 'Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man' as a group. In a very well prepared lesson in Year 13, students' responses when listening to Vaughan William's 'Three Shakespeare Songs', were impressive. After one hearing, and with just the words as a framework, most students recognised many features of the music. Most of the students recognise the chromatic shift from F to E and with the teacher's guidance sort out the added notes of G and Db which give the piece 'Full Fathom Five', its distinct flavour. They also recognise the distribution of the voices well and can describe the vocal effects employed to enhance the mood and atmosphere of the song.

126. Lessons are very well planned to cover the required examination specification, and departmental documents show the very good range of methods used throughout the course to develop students skills, knowledge and understanding. Students start composing in Year 12 by writing for their own instrument. They then compose for their own and a colleague's instrument. This very good strategy enables the students to exploit a readymade stock of expertise and performers. Students as a result develop good practical awareness of sound and technical

expertise in composing for these instruments, which is done without the aid of the computers. In sampled compositions in Year 12, one high attaining student wrote confidently for a variety of media, including voice, clarinet, string trio and piano. This work, and that for harmony and counterpoint, contains many helpful comments from the teachers. Although grades are not displayed on this work, students have regular one-to-one assistance from their teacher. There is good evidence from sampled work that teachers give appropriate tasks to extend each student according to their ability. Students make good progress with these aspects of their work as a result. Students' work and progress is well monitored and good records are kept by the teachers, but students are not actively involved in monitoring their own progress or in target setting.

127. Students are very well motivated and enthusiastic about all aspects of their course. They appreciate the regular individual support that they receive from the teacher especially in harmony and in composition. They very much enjoy and are totally committed to producing high standards of performance in extra-curricular music making, and are appreciative of the extended range of styles introduced more recently. They are given opportunities to organise and lead their own groups and this has resulted in the formation of Barber Shop singers and Soul Collective among others.

128. The department is very well managed and organised. Teachers have worked closely together to improve much of the provision for the sixth form during the last few years. The head of department has an excellent vision for the development of the subject and has made a good start on monitoring standards. A Lottery grant was sought and won for the development of jazz in the school, and Excellence in Cities funding has supported the development of jazz for talented musicians. Excellent use is made of expertise within the city of Sheffield. Jazz and string groups are coached by local experts with excellent results.

## HUMANITIES

The inspection focus was on history and psychology, with work in geography, sociology, and government and politics also sampled. Examination results in 2001 were above average in sociology, were average in geography, and were below average in government and politics. Altogether, four lessons were seen across the three sampled subjects. Standards were above average in each, and overall, teaching was good.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good, and they have well-developed learning skills.
- Accommodation and resources are very good

#### Areas for improvement

- ICT is insufficiently used.
- Moderation of students' work requires improvement.
- Lower attaining students need support in examination technique.

129. Results in the A-level examinations, although showing improvement from the previous year, were below average in 2001 because seven students did not achieve a pass grade. Students did less well in history than in their other examinations. Female students' results were at the national average, but males did less well. However, results in the 2001 AS examinations for Year 12 were slightly above average for both males and females, and those students are improving on their AS performance in the current Year 13.

130. Standards in work seen in Year 13 are higher than the examination results would suggest and are above average. Students are making good progress and achieving well. They have developed very good skills of analysis and interpretation of historical documents. Their written work and oral response are very good, and they are able to speak fluently about historical issues. In one lesson students were given a range of documents about the accession of Mary I in 1553, many of which were contradictory. They were able to unravel the precise chain of events and to arrive at valid conclusions. They enjoyed the challenge of this task and showed great enjoyment of the historical process. Students are able to comprehend the exact vocabulary of issues in the 16<sup>th</sup> century because the words and ideas are very well reinforced by effective displays. There is evidence of the application of a literacy policy, but numeracy and ICT are as yet undeveloped. Work in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is very well resourced with good textbooks and handouts which have been gathered over a long period of time, giving the students a very good resource base for their studies.

131. In Year 12, standards are also above average. Students are making good progress and are already showing very good learning skills. They enter with high grades in GCSE, and current work shows that they are enhancing those grades. In studying the Reformation in England, they are able to understand the complex vocabulary needed and can interpret the difficult documents relating to the medieval church. In one group, students were able to arrive at a balanced view of abuses in the church by a fair analysis of the conflicting interpretations from modern historians. Lower ability students and one from an ethnic minority made satisfactory progress in this difficult task because the materials were well organised and they were given extra help by the teacher.

132. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have built up considerable knowledge of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, enhanced by taking student groups to conferences given by subject experts. Planning is good and teachers set high expectations, with challenging tasks which evoke an enthusiastic response. All the teachers are highly qualified, and keep up-to-date with current historical writing. They are also now harmonising their respect for scholarship with more attention to examination technique, which has already produced much improved results in the AS examination for 2001,

which were slightly above average. Teachers have developed more consistent assessment since the previous inspection, and a start has been made in moderating work, although more needs to be done in this respect. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the new A-level requirements, which enhances students' learning.

133. Students have very good attitudes to the subject, and to the sixth form in general, many having recently been attracted to the school because of its reputation for good results and maturity of approach to students. Students have a clear idea that they want to take history at university, or as a subsidiary to law or economics. A small number also take A-level government and politics, in which good teaching has produced results which have been consistently above average for many years.

134. The subject develops very strongly the students' key skill in communication. Whilst the students are numerate and use ICT in general, there is no specific application within the syllabus they follow. More development could be attempted. The main contribution of the subject to their skills is in their ability to read and interpret complex documents, put forward a coherent argument, and write well about it.

135. Management of the subject is good and procedures are in place for the effective monitoring of teaching and learning. To raise standards further and to produce consistent results, the department needs to continue to improve examination technique and support particularly for middle to lower ability students. A review of the choices open to students, as several of them have requested, would be helpful in broadening the range of historical enquiry by introducing more recent social and economic history, as well as the existing syllabus.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching, with strong subject knowledge and effective questioning to support learning.
- Level of cooperation and mutual help and support amongst students.
- Effective use of terminology relevant to psychology.

### Areas for improvement

- Writing skills, particularly paragraphs to aid rapid comprehension, essay planning and notetaking.

136. In 2001, A-level results in psychology were below average, with fewer students gaining the higher A-B grades than is the case nationally. Overall, the average points score for all students taking AS/A2 courses was average. The proportion gaining grades A-B at AS level at the end of Year 12 was average. Female students did significantly better than males. High expectations are communicated to all students. There is satisfactory value added in the results obtained. Students in Year 12 have not met the subject before and have to learn quickly the quality of language required, and cover the scientific analysis and interpretation of data.

137. The standard of work in Years 12 and 13 is overall above average, and is higher than previous examination results would suggest. This is because the quality of teaching has improved and now is very good. Students' attitudes and their ability to communicate effectively and confidently contribute to their very good learning. Their ability to give clear descriptions of scientific research also supports their progress. Coherent and well balanced reports and essays reflect good progress from Year 12 to 13. Achievement overall is good. The retention of students studying psychology is good.

138. The standards reached in Year 12 are above average. Students have a good knowledge of psychology and can appreciate the importance of scientific research in the study of behaviour.

This was well covered in a lesson on the scientific status of psychology. Students show an interest in psychology and have positive attitudes to it. Most students listen attentively to teachers and to each other. They answer questions willingly using subject specific vocabulary. The written and graphical work is well presented and students concentrate hard even when the work is demanding.

139. Standards in Year 13 are also above average. There was a very good Year 13 lesson on biological explanations which offer a determinist, reductionist and mechanistic explanation which is oversimplistic. However, the teacher explained that there are positive aspects to this oversimplification, and ensured that students understood these, such as, increased control in experiments and clear explanations of causal relationships. Students are making progress, show initiative and can plan and organise their work without direct supervision. All students respond positively to suggestions for improving their work. Most homework tasks are completed conscientiously. There are clear expectations for higher attaining students and extended tasks are provided. A few students receive extra support though there are few modifications or simplifications of tasks or activities. Better matched materials would stretch the higher attaining students and help the lower attainers. The level of extra support provided is excellent. Little use is made of electronic sources in the classroom.

140. Teaching and learning are very good in both Years 12 and 13. Expectations of the level of work and students' commitment to hard work are high. There is a productive working environment. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They and their students use subject specific vocabulary correctly. Teachers explain lesson objectives to students and students understand what targets are being addressed. Under-achieving students are counselled. Lessons are well structured. A variety of activities is used so that pace and momentum are maintained. Group work is purposeful, focused and well paced. Routines are established which support independent learning. Students know what they need to do to improve their performance.

141. Leadership and management are very good. The teacher in charge monitors teaching, learning and students' written work. A variety of strategies is used to identify clear objectives for what students are to achieve in a lesson. Teachers outline the purpose of each lesson including the learning tasks and activities for students. Homework assignments are clearly set out. Deadlines for the completion of work are set and teachers ensure that appropriate support is given to enable these to be met. Some work, however, is returned late by students. Purposeful plenary teaching normally ends each lesson. This helps students to consolidate key aspects of the lesson. Teaching is inclusive, ensuring that all students are challenged and supported effectively and are fully involved in the lesson including high attainers and those with learning needs. However, due to large groups some students are disadvantaged when needing extra support.

142. There has been good progress over time. Psychology has not been previously inspected. Students are now actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of psychology resources including Internet access. Before embarking on any piece of research, students search through the published literature to see what has been already written about the area of work. They are taught to be systematic in their search of the library, archives or Internet. A great deal of time is spent helping students prepare for examinations. More time is required to improve writing skills. Additional learning experiences are obtained via visiting speakers, and these external visitors reinforce many of the important lessons with regard to observational methods in psychology.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focus was on English literature, French and Spanish. Lessons were also sampled in English language, English language and literature, and German. The examination results in 2001 for German were well above average, whilst for English language they were well below average. The combined language/literature course is new, and there are no previous results. In the sampled lessons seen, standards were above average in the combined course, and were average in English language, with good teaching and learning in both. In German, students' attainment was well above average in response to very good teaching.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Results in the A-level course in English literature over the past three years have been well above the national average.
- The achievement of students is very good; they are highly motivated and have good habits of study and scholarship.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have high levels of expertise and communicate their knowledge with authority and commitment.
- Students' work is carefully assessed, providing very good support for their further progress

#### Areas for improvement

- Improving consistency of written expression for students with English as an additional language.
- The attainment of male students in the English language course.
- Wider use of ICT.

143. Provision in English caters for around 140 students. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English literature and in English language and literature, in its first year of operation, and an AS course in English language. Several students pursue a combination of two courses. Retention rates in all courses are very good. There is also a GCSE course in English for around 30 students aiming to improve their previous performance.

144. Standards in A-level examinations in English literature in 2001 were very high; two-thirds of students gained A or B grades, more than double the national average. Over the past three years the trend has steadily improved. Particularly notable is the performance of male students, all of whom gained grades A or B in 2001. In both 2000 and 2001, male students' results were better than those of female students. Approximately twice as many female students as male students take the course. Results in English language were below average in 2001. Male students outnumber females on this course, although the results of female students were significantly better, being in line with the national average. In 2001, the average points score of the Year 12 students in the new AS examinations were above the national average for English, and in line for English literature.

145. These high standards of attainment were reflected in work observed during the inspection. Students have well developed critical skills and are confident in identifying features of texts of different genres and relating these to social and historical contexts. Students in the A2 literature course examined features of Gothic writing and clearly understood concepts such as transgression, reversion and possession. They were able to identify and appreciate the symbolism of the writing, discussing power and control and the fascination of terror and horror in this genre. Standards of debate are high, and most students have a rich vocabulary which enables them to express themselves eloquently. A group of students in Year 12 convincingly adopted the language and conventions of the Venetian court in a mock trial of Othello, showing thorough knowledge and understanding of the text. Students' good analytical skills were employed effectively in their study of poetry by Carol Ann Duffy, recognising nuances which implied differences in social status. In both written and oral work, students are quick to support their

observations and opinions with appropriate textual references. Displaying the open-mindedness and tolerance which is a feature of the ethos of the school, students readily dissociated themselves from sensational, prejudiced expressions discovered in their study of different forms of journalism and recognised its ironical use in another poem.

146. The achievement of students on both AS and A2 courses is very good. All students have gained higher grades at GCSE and are fully committed to maintaining their levels of success. They are well supported by careful marking and assessment of their work which ensures they know how to improve further. Students who speak English as their second language achieve equally well. Almost all are at an advanced stage of language acquisition and express themselves fluently. At times their written work is flawed by stylistic inconsistencies, as when speech idioms replace writing conventions, and this requires further attention.

147. The quality of teaching and learning are very good in all courses. The teaching of literature is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable and well prepared, providing very good examples of commitment and scholarship. Students' strengths and weaknesses are well known and expectations are high. Teachers are authoritative and enthusiastic, and encourage students to share ideas, express and discuss opinions, and contribute findings from their research. Imaginative strategies, such as the mock trial of Othello, ensure that students become quick-thinking and learn to justify their observations from their research and from their knowledge of the text. In one excellent lesson, incisive questioning enabled Year 12 students to link the language of "Standing Female Nude" to the different economic and social status of each character and led one student to observe that the use of slang expressions had a de-humanising effect. Students undertake a variety of activities, including individual presentations, group assignments, discussions and assessment of each other's work. Occasionally too much time is allocated to a single activity, with some resultant loss of pace.

148. Students' work is thoroughly marked. Extended pieces are annotated throughout by constructive comment and followed by a critique providing helpful guidelines for the further refinement of personal style. Targets are set for all students and there are regular opportunities to discuss progress on an individual basis. Relationships within the department are very good and students appreciate the willingness and availability of teaching staff for help with difficulties encountered. Students are equally appreciative that they are permitted to make independent decisions about their particular needs, without the intrusion of unnecessary intervention.

149. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. The department is accommodated in a suite of rooms, some of which are barely large enough for the groups involved. The condition of these rooms is drab, and good quality display is limited. The supply of textbooks and equipment such as video players is satisfactory. Access to ICT is unsatisfactory. The department has one computer, available for use by both staff and students. Students have good access to standard reference books. Students' experience is enriched by theatre visits, and workshops with poets and playwrights are a regular feature.

150. The leadership and management of English are good. Staff work together effectively, sharing ideas in an informal manner in order to maintain high standards. In this way new and less experienced teachers are well supported. There is, however, no formal monitoring of teaching. Coursework is assessed on a collaborative basis. Teachers attend all in-service training offered by the relevant examination board. The range and relevance of courses are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet students' needs. The development plan needs expanding to encompass all aspects of the department's provision.

151. Since the previous inspection improvement has been very good. High standards have been maintained, with numbers of students subscribing to the course increasing steadily. The quality of teaching has become consistently good. In order to improve further the department should explore ways of further refining the written expression of some students who speak English as a second language, and of raising the attainment of male students in the English language course.

## **French**



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

Strengths

- Examination results and current standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Develop a more consistent marking policy.
- Improve the use and analysis of performance data to set more subject-specific individual targets for students.
- Increase the use of ICT in lessons.

152. A-level results in French were well above average in 2001 and were similar to results in the previous two years. A very high proportion of students achieved the higher grades A or B, and the exceptional performance of one student placed her in the top five students nationally. AS results in 2001 were also well above average, with a very high proportion of students achieving grades A or B. Retention rates are very good.

153. Numbers studying French in the sixth form are higher than in previous years and standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good and students have very good attitudes, which ensures they learn at a fast rate. Students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is very good.

154. Standards in Year 13 are well above average and students are achieving well. They develop their language skills to a high level, and speaking and writing are particularly strong. Work experience in France undertaken by the majority of the students last year has contributed significantly to their high achievement in speaking. Their command of structure and knowledge of vocabulary is such that they can speak and write confidently and fluently on a wide range of topics and issues. They express their ideas and views clearly and succinctly and they can defend their opinions. They show very good understanding of challenging texts and tapes and readily engage in lively discussion of matters arising from materials studied.

155. Standards in Year 12 are also well above average and students are achieving well. They build successfully on their achievements at GCSE and progress is good in each language skill. They show good understanding of tapes and texts on moral, social and cultural issues and can identify and discuss the main points with some success. Speaking is strong, not least because students have regular conversation practice with the French assistant, which builds up their confidence to participate readily in discussion. Essay writing on topical themes is developing well as students learn to put forward their ideas and to argue their case, using a richer variety of expressions and more complex language. Their level of accuracy is quite high.

156. Students' very good attitudes contribute significantly to their good achievement. They are highly motivated and work very hard because they are very keen to do well. A good number intend continuing their study of French at university. Those interviewed said they found the work both challenging and enjoyable. They particularly appreciate the advice and support teachers willingly provide and they say the very detailed supportive comments they receive on their work really help them to improve. However, they would prefer a common marking policy to be used across all modern foreign languages, and for targets set to be more subject-specific. They sometimes use the Internet for research and the multi-media room's excellent facilities to develop their listening skills, but their use of ICT in lessons is still rather limited.

157. Since becoming a Language College, the school has increased the range of extra-curricular enrichment activities on offer and provision is now very good. Students' participation is high because they see the value in terms of gains in both academic and personal development. For example, sixteen Year 12 students are looking forward eagerly to their forthcoming work experience in Normandy which, for some, will be their first ever visit to France. Year 13 students

visited Paris last autumn to research their coursework assignment based on the occupation of France during the Second World War.

158. The quality of teaching and learning in French is very good. The teachers' very good subject knowledge is a major strength. Teachers work extremely hard and are totally committed to maintaining very high standards. They have very high expectations regarding students' level of achievement and students learn at a very fast rate. Well-chosen, stimulating resources are used to present new language and to trigger discussion and debate in which the students' active involvement is high and language skills are developed well. Students have very good opportunities to work independently to solve problems and share ideas. They are thoroughly prepared for all aspects of the external examination.

159. The subject is very well managed and improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The accommodation and quality and level of resources are now very good. The large team of teachers works closely together to plan lessons and to share ideas and good practice. However, formal monitoring of teaching and learning has only recently been introduced and the practice needs to be developed further. Some work is needed to achieve a more consistent marking policy and the analysis and use of available data needs to be more rigorous for setting targets and tracking progress.

## Spanish

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

### Strengths

- A-level results are above average.
- Standards in Year 12 are above average.
- Teaching is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve AS results and raise the proportion achieving the higher grades.
- Marking and assessment practice needs to be more consistent.
- Integrate the use of ICT into overall planning.

160. A-level results in Spanish in 2001 were above average and were higher than in 2000, reflecting the steady improvement over the past three years. The proportion achieving the higher grades A or B was well above average. Four out of the eight students entered achieved grade A passes and the exceptional performance of one student placed her in the top five highest achieving students in the country. At AS level in 2001, students did not achieve as highly as predicted in relation to their GCSE results. Although the six students entered achieved passes at grade D or above, the proportion achieving the higher grades A or B was well below average. The results reflect weak performance in the Aspects of Society written paper, due largely to staffing difficulties that affected the continuity of students' learning throughout the year.

161. Only one student in Year 13 chose not to continue to A2 level and numbers in Year 13 have risen to seven with the inclusion of one re-sit student and one recent transfer. Standards of work in Year 13 are now average, but are rising quite quickly now that staffing difficulties have been resolved and good teaching is targeting those areas of weakness identified at AS. Students have made up much lost ground from last year, particularly in their knowledge and use of grammar, and their achievement is now good. Writing is more accurate, though the language used is not yet sufficiently varied. However, the most able students use more sophisticated phrases and attempt more complex structures with increasing confidence. Students show good comprehension of spoken and written material. When they respond orally to questions, pronunciation is good and the most able students can sustain a lengthy exchange of information and ideas with the teacher, though, in general, students need to develop their answers more fully.

162. In Year 12, numbers taking the AS course have increased dramatically. Ten students

transferred from other schools, bringing the current total in the class to twenty. Retention on the course has been high. Standards are already above average, and all students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE starting grades which for a small number of students were relatively modest. The students have made significant gains in understanding and using grammar structures correctly. They can speak and write with increasing confidence on matters such as marriage or the environment, drawing well on new phrases and structures from tapes and texts they have studied to express their views. Some high attainers speak and write fluently and can present and defend their arguments well. Regular conversation practice with the Spanish assistant helps students develop their oral skills further.

163. Attitudes are very good. The students are well motivated and are prepared to persevere even when work is challenging. Those interviewed said they value the individual support teachers give and how well they are helped to become independent learners. However, they indicated that some aspects of marking, assessment and target-setting could be improved for them as learners by providing them with more guidance for improvement. They participate well in the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer, for example, the recent sixth form Spanish intensive study day, hosted by the school and attended by over one hundred students from across the region. There is good support for the Madrid visit later this year to carry out research on the Spanish Civil War in preparation for written coursework. However, students do not have opportunities for work experience in Spain.

164. Teaching and learning in Spanish are good. Some lessons are very good. Teachers are fluent and their subject knowledge is very good. They are committed to raising standards further and they work very hard. Challenging texts are well used to develop comprehension skills, to introduce new topic-related vocabulary and to study and practise specific language structures. The clear focus in teachers' planning on grammatical accuracy is ensuring that students have a firm understanding of how the language works so that they are well prepared for the written examination. This was clearly demonstrated in a very good Year 12 lesson on the environment. After a brief review of key vocabulary, the students were introduced to a lengthy authentic article about the recycling of rubbish in Spain. As a preliminary to aid comprehension of the actual text, students first worked independently through a worksheet to familiarise themselves with essential new words, then worked through and discussed in pairs a challenging comprehension exercise. When they finally settled to read the text, students were able to identify the main points and to discuss use of language, including the subjunctive. As a final activity, students worked in groups on a sentence building activity to practise using the subjunctive. By the end of the lesson, most students showed a good understanding of the rules for using the subjunctive and were producing complex and accurate sentences of their own. Teachers have good access to ICT facilities but opportunities for students to use them to support their learning are too infrequent because they are not yet built into the scheme of work. Marking is often of high quality with well written supportive comments that help students learn quickly from their mistakes, but this good practice is inconsistent across the department.

166. The subject is well managed and improvement since the previous inspection is good. Since the new appointment to the department this year, there is good sharing of ideas and practice and moves are already underway to firm up and formalise existing policies and practice, particularly in relation to monitoring and assessment.