

INSPECTION REPORT

BEAL HIGH SCHOOL

Ilford

LEA area: London Borough of Redbridge

Unique reference number: 102855

Headteacher: Ms S Snowdon

Reporting inspector: Mr A Shield
3569

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 6th December 2002

Inspection number: 249957

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Woodford Bridge Road Ilford Essex
Postcode:	IG4 5LP
Telephone number:	020 8551 4954
Fax number:	020 8551 4412
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor A Weinberg
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3569	Mr A Shield	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
16472	Ms C Stormonth	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
4351	Ms J Strickland	Team inspector	English	
1085	Mr J Laver	Team inspector	English in the sixth form	
13619	Mr B Meech	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30996	Ms A Higginbotham	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form	
8552	Mr W Hart	Team inspector	Science	
5241	Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Biology	
19043	Mr D Lewis	Team inspector	Chemistry	
8503	Mr A Allfree	Team inspector	Art and design	
8076	Mr T Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology	
12331	Ms V Grigg	Team inspector	<p>English as an additional language</p> <p>Design and technology in the sixth form</p>	
30743	Mr N Cowell	Team inspector	Geography	
17732	Mr D Martin	Team inspector	History	
10679	Mr M Aston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
14851	Mr G Laws	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4426	Mr T Fitchett	Team inspector	French and German in the sixth form	
25344	Mr F Peacock	Team inspector	Music	
18888	Ms J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
17530	Ms M Cureton	Team inspector	Special educational needs Media studies	The provision for and standards achieved by students with English as an additional language The work of the SEN unit
15576	Mr D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Business studies and economics in the sixth form	

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Ltd
National Westminster Bank Chambers Limited
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset
TA8 1AN

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London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beal High is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 – 18, situated in Ilford in north east London. Students are drawn largely from the immediate residential area, and most, though not all, students come from socially and economically advantaged homes. The school has a reasonable balance of boys and girls, except in Year 7 where there are more boys than girls. The school has been expanding in recent years and is over-subscribed. There are 1566 students on roll, with 331 in the sixth form. At around ten per cent, the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is above average and the percentage of students with special educational needs is average, with 290 students, including twenty-two in the sixth form with identified needs; this represents around 20 per cent of the school roll. Most of these students have learning and emotional and behavioural problems. The school also has a unit for students with autism and social communication difficulties. Altogether 36 students have statements of special educational need. The school is ethnically mixed with significant proportions of students from Asian (Indian and Pakistani), white British and black and other communities. There are 978 students with English as an additional language, and while most are confident English speakers, 116 are at an early stage of English language acquisition and are given extra support.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. High standards are promoted by good, and often outstanding teaching. All students make good progress. The headteacher provides very good leadership and, supported by the senior management team, teachers and all other staff, has created a climate of excellent relationships and very good behaviour. Students have the confidence to achieve well. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, mathematics and science and most other subjects are well above average.
- Good, and sometimes inspirational teaching results in high levels of commitment and motivation from the students.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by her governors, senior team and all other staff, has created a community which values learning, is socially and educationally inclusive, and is racially harmonious.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour, a pride in the school, a sense of responsibility and the personal maturity of students make a very good contribution to learning.
- Very good provision for students with special educational needs enables them to succeed very well.
- The provision for students in the communication and learning department is excellent.
- The excellent personal development of students and relationships within the whole school community is the result of the very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and the very good pastoral and tutorial system.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum

What could be improved

- Provision and standards in information and communication technology to support learning in all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the last inspection in September 1996 has been very good, and high standards have been maintained in test and examination results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE. A-level performance improved markedly in 2002. The quality of teaching has improved and in particular the percentage of very good and excellent teaching is much higher than at the time of the last inspection. Key issues from the previous inspection regarding management, planning and assessment have been well tackled, although the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is still not met.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

In 2002, the school's test results at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. In comparison with similar schools, results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and average in science. Teacher assessments in information and communication technology (ICT) indicate standards were well below average. Although girls do better than boys in English and boys better than girls in mathematics, there are no significant issues regarding their relative performance. Results in all three subjects have improved since the last inspection, in line with the nationally improving trend.

Seventy-one per cent of students gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2002. This performance is marginally down on the previous year, but is still well above the national average. Results since the last inspection have improved. Comparisons against all national measures were well above average, and when compared with similar schools. Students in 2002 exceeded the targets set for them by the school. Those set for 2003 are both challenging and achievable.

In 2002, the average A-level points score was 17.7. This was a strong improvement on results in previous years, where A-level results have been at best average and in some years just below average. Boys and girls did equally well. The improvement seen in 2002 was reflected in the work seen during the inspection where much work was of an above average standard.

In work seen, the standards of students' work in English was above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. In mathematics, science and several other subjects standards were well above average throughout the school. In the sixth form, standards in most subjects were above average. Students' achievements are good, and they make good progress through all years in the school.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are keen to learn and have very positive attitudes which make a powerful contribution to their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Many students demonstrate helpful, thoughtful and sensitive behaviour both in and outside classrooms.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The quality of relationships amongst the whole school community is a strength. Senior students act with maturity and take their responsibilities seriously.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance levels are well above average and there is very little unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	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 has improved since the time of the previous inspection. One in three lessons seen was very good or excellent, and unsatisfactory teaching has all but been eliminated. In the most effective lessons, students' learning is often of the highest quality. Teaching is good in English and in science in Years 7 to 9; it is very good in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11. In most other subjects, teaching is also good and sometimes better.

High expectations, very good relationships, good pace of learning and very effective classroom management characterise much of the good teaching. Planning is usually effective in meeting the needs of all students, although there is a small number of lessons where higher attaining students are not challenged sufficiently. The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is good. In almost all cases, the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching, helped by students' very good attitudes in lessons. Many students confidently take responsibility for their own learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum has good breadth and balance and provides well for students' needs. The range of extra-curricular activities offers very good opportunities for extension and enrichment.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. The school's strong commitment to educational inclusion ensures a sensitive and supportive approach. Students' individual needs are carefully and thoroughly assessed and they make very good progress. There is excellent provision for the students in the communication and learning department.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Very good. Students make very good progress when they are given the support they need, but the support is not consistent and progress is therefore variable.

Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Social development is excellent and there are many opportunities for students to take initiative and responsibility. A strong moral ethic underpins the work of the school and spiritual and moral issues are addressed effectively in a number of subjects. Cultural development and the celebration of cultural diversity are provided very well through good opportunities in the arts and other subjects.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. Child protection and welfare procedures are very good, as is the comprehensive pastoral support provided by tutors and heads of year. The framework for assessment is satisfactory and is being used with increasing effectiveness to monitor progress and set targets. However, this is not consistent in all subjects.

Parents are very supportive of the school and their children's learning. The school's partnership with parents is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The clarity of the headteacher's vision is ensuring a strong sense of shared values and common purpose. She is very well supported by her two deputies and her senior team. Management at all levels is increasingly effective and all are committed to maintaining and improving standards and provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are committed and hardworking and bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. They have a good knowledge of the school's work and are confident in their role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school monitors its performance carefully, and has comprehensive line management and monitoring procedures, in which staff are held accountable for their areas of responsibility. The school is confidently moving towards being a fully self-evaluating school.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is prudently managed, and best value principles are applied wherever possible.

Overall levels and quality of staffing are good; resources are satisfactory. The accommodation is only just adequate to meet the expanding needs of the school, although much has been done to ensure that staff and students work in a welcoming learning environment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What a minority of parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enjoy school and are making good progress Behaviour is good The teaching is good and their children are expected to work hard and do their best The school is approachable and is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students getting the right type and amount of homework Being better informed about progress A closer working relationship with parents

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons | |
|--|--|

Fourteen per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and 36 parents attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting. Parents' positive views are well supported by inspection evidence. However, inspectors do not agree with the concerns felt by a minority of parents. Arrangements for homework are very good. The quality of information parents receive is also very good and has further improved recently with the introduction of the academic review day. The school is responsive to most reasonable issues and addresses them very effectively.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 331 students in the sixth form, 170 boys and 161 girls. This is larger than most sixth forms nationally. Overall there are 193 students in Year 12 and 138 in Year 13. The number of students recruited into the sixth form has been increasing in recent years. There is a good ethnic mix with significant numbers of students from Asian (both Indian and Pakistani), white and black heritages. The school offers a range of AS and A-level courses appropriate to the students' needs. In 2002 most students from Year 11 continued into the sixth form. The minimum entry requirements of at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C are usually adhered to, although there is some discretion if it is felt that a student would benefit from the school's provision.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall quality of provision in the sixth form is good, and it is cost-effective. Standards are above average and improving. Students achieve well. Very good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching in all subjects and mature and responsible attitudes by students have ensured improving standards in 2002. These are being maintained in work seen during the inspection. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The main strengths and areas that could be improved are:

Strengths

- Improving standards promoted by very good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching
- The maturity and confidence of the students and their very good attitudes to their studies contribute strongly to their good progress
- Very good leadership and management are ensuring a committed drive to improve standards and provision further
- The commitment of teachers to the support and guidance of students
- Excellent relationships amongst the students themselves and between staff and students

What could be improved

- The consistency of examination performance in all subjects
- The access to, and use of, ICT to support learning
- The accommodation and resources for some subjects and for sixth-formers' private study.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Although recent A-level results have been below average, standards are improving as a result of good and often very good teaching. Management of the subject at sixth-form level is good.
Chemistry	Good. Attainment varies from year to year and was similar to the national average in 2001. Students make very good progress in lessons and gain better results than expected from their GCSE results. Leadership and management are very good
Biology	Satisfactory. Although results at A-level have been below average, standards are improving as a result of some good teaching and a commitment to improve.
Design and technology	Good. Standards are below average, but students achieve well as the result of good teaching. The lack of computer resources and a dedicated graphics room is affecting standards.
Business studies	Good. Standards are above average and improving as a result of good leadership of the department and effective teaching. Students are achieving well.
Economics	Satisfactory. Standards are average but students are achieving well given their attainment on entry to the course.
ICT	Good. Standards are above average and improving and students are achieving well because of the very good teaching and their positive attitudes.
Physical education	Good. The subject has only recently been introduced as an A-level option. Standards are average, although many students excel at their individual sports. Good teaching is leading to good progress through the course.
Art	Very good. Results have been well above average and students achieve particularly well in art. Good teaching is leading to good progress.
Media studies	Very good. Results at A-level indicate that all students achieve above their predicted grades, some of them well above. Although standards are broadly average, attainment in practical work is often better than this.
Geography	Very good. A-level results are above average and much better than at the time of the last inspection. Teaching is very good, ensuring students make very good progress.
History	Very good. Well above average and improving standards are testament to the very good teaching. The subject continues to be a very popular option.
English	Good. Although standards in the recent past have been below expectations overall, they are now in line with national averages, with students responding well to what is often very good teaching. Leadership and management are good.

French	Very good. Results at AS and A-level are above average and show an improving trend. Teaching is a particular strength and students make very good progress overall. Attainment in work seen is well above average.
German	Very good. While results at A-level remain below average, those at AS level show a significant improvement. Standards in work seen are above average. Teaching is very good and students make very good progress, particularly in their listening and reading skills.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was generally at least good and often better. Some very good teaching was seen in physics, music, sociology and Spanish, where high levels of challenge were leading to good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are sensitively supported by both tutors and subject staff. They appreciate the time given by teachers to support them at an individual level throughout their time in the sixth form. Guidance on sixth-form courses is good and the programme for advising students on careers and future studies is good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The school's ethos and expectations of both academic success and personal development are clearly shared and understood. Examination results are carefully analysed and effective steps taken to improve standards.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of courses and the information about them • The helpful advice and induction arrangements • The quality of teaching and the accessibility of teachers • The help and encouragement to work hard and sensitive support • The range of enrichment activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being kept well informed about progress and performance • The quality of advice for careers and post-school options • The school as a listening and responsive body • Accommodation for private study

Seventy-nine per cent of students responded to the questionnaire and the views are representative. Students are mostly positive and nearly all said that they enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it. Inspectors do not feel that most of their concerns are justified, although concerns about their cramped common room accommodation and unsatisfactory facilities for private study are valid.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Overall standards of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, as measured by the students' attainment in national tests taken at the end of their primary schools, are above average. Higher proportions of students than in most schools enter with expected levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. However, the school admits students of all abilities and the proportion of students with identified special educational needs is about average. There is, in addition, a small loss of the highest attaining students to nearby grammar schools. Overall attainment on entry has been similar in recent years.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the students' performance in English and mathematics was well above average, and in science it was above average. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals – 'similar schools', performance in science was average, in English above average and in mathematics it was well above average. Results in mathematics have improved strongly since 1998, those in science have improved gradually, while English results have been more variable, reflecting the national picture in English. Overall standards in English, mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection, broadly in line with the rising national trend.
3. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2002 was 71 per cent, well above the national and similar schools averages. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to G grades was also well above average. The average total points GCSE score per student in 2002 was 50.7, well above the national and similar schools averages. Based on an average of the four years 1999 – 2002, results have been consistently well above the national average.
4. Students taking GCSE in 2002 achieved exceptionally well, despite the slightly lower results than in the previous year. Progress through the two years of the course as measured by their attainment in Year 9 tests in 2000, was very high in comparison with schools whose students attained similar results in Year 9. Results in most subjects were significantly better than results nationally for the percentage of students achieving an A* to C grade. Performance in mathematics, science, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and sociology was particularly impressive in 2002, with relatively high percentages of students achieving either an A or A* grade.
5. The most significant factor in these high standards is the good quality of teaching, which has a strong focus on maximising achievement for all students. In addition, the very good attitudes of most students to their learning, supported by the overall ethos for learning, promote good progress.
6. The ambitious GCSE targets set for 2002 were exceeded. Targets set for 2003 indicate that these high standards will be maintained. Inspectors judge these targets to be both realistic and challenging.
7. Overall in work seen during the inspection in Year 9, standards were above average, and well above average in Year 11, in line with recent tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results. Most students' achievements are good given their prior attainment on entry and good progress is made through the school.

8. All students with special educational needs make at least the same good progress as the rest, and a significant proportion make very good progress against their targets. Students make very good gains in reading and spelling. All are successfully included in classes with varying levels of support, All students with special educational needs leave school with at least one GCSE, and additional accreditation in numeracy and literacy, history, business studies or ICT. Some achieve a bronze or silver award in the ASDAN transitional award scheme.
9. The progress of students with English as an additional language (EAL) is very good when support is given. For example, a student who had been in the school for three weeks, arriving with minimal English, confidently held a conversation with an inspector. Those at an early stage of language acquisition make very good progress, because it is those students who are targeted for support, along with those in Year 11.
10. There is some variation in the progress made by different ethnic groups of students. Students from an Asian heritage make very good progress, better than students from a white British or black Caribbean background. Students at all levels of prior attainment make good progress. Inspectors found no significant evidence of the different progress of boys and girls. In this respect all students are making good progress.
11. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Given their attainment on entry, students make good progress and achieve well through Years 7 to 11.
12. Standards of literacy are well above average throughout the school. Students speak fluently. With only a few exceptions, students have a secure grasp of standard English when speaking. Listening skills are very high and students often listen with rapt attention to both teachers and their fellow students. Most read fluently. They locate information quickly and bring a critical approach to what they have read. They are good at making deductions from the text and demonstrate these skills confidently in subjects such as history. Most write at length, organise their work well into paragraphs, and use punctuation accurately, although a small number make errors in spelling. Most writing is typified by clarity, good planning and structure and the effective communication of what the pupil knows and understands.
13. In work seen in mathematics, standards are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are very good throughout Years 7 to 11. Attainment is well above average in all aspects of mathematics, although their use of and application of ICT in mathematics is more limited. Standards of numeracy are above average. Most students accurately use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, and many students are very adept at mental calculations. Students are familiar with solving problems mentally and making calculations without using their calculators. Indeed they are encouraged to make estimates before using a calculator. Some effective work was seen with students using graphs and formulae in science, and students confidently and accurately tabulate results and plot graphs. Other subjects in which the confident application of numeracy was witnessed included design and technology and geography.
14. Standards in science are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Students are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11. This reflects the increased focus on examination requirements in Years 10 and 11. Students have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.

15. In other subjects, standards in work seen in Year 9 are well above average in history and geography, above average in religious education, and average in all other subjects except ICT, where they are below average. In Year 11, standards improve in most subjects. They are well above average in history, geography, music and religious education, and above average in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Attainment in art is average and remains below average in ICT. Most students' achievements are good or very good in all subjects throughout the school, although in art they are only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and they are unsatisfactory in the use of ICT in subjects throughout the school.

Sixth form

16. In 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, the results of students entered for AS and A-level examinations were below average. The average points score of candidates entered was 13.7 compared with the national average of 17.4. Results have varied in recent years and dipped in 2001. In 2002, results improved significantly and the average points score was 17.7. Evidence from the inspection indicates that this improvement has been sustained and standards particularly in the current Year 12 are above average.
17. There has been no clear pattern of the relative achievement of boys and girls with boys doing better in 1999, girls doing better in 2000 and both performing equally in 2001. In 2001 students did particularly well in art, French, history and geography, where results were above the national average for these subjects. They did less well in computing, English language (which was a new course in 2001), mathematics, where results are usually much better, business studies and economics, where results were below or well below average.
18. Seven candidates were entered for GNVQ Intermediate in Business and Finance. Six gained a merit and one a pass grade.
19. The school prides itself on open access to the sixth form and has adopted an inclusive policy towards taking students onto courses. Although the entry criteria states that potential A-level students must have five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, all students are interviewed to determine their suitability for the course, and some are allowed in with lower grades. The consequence has been that overall attainment on entry has been below average for several years. Over recent years, A-level performance relative to the students' GCSE results has been satisfactory and value added measures indicate that progress for most students has been at least average. The results in 2002 suggest that progress is now better. This particular group of students had a lower GCSE attainment profile on entry to the sixth form than previous years, and yet their results were the best the school had achieved.
20. Inspectors judge the achievements of most students in the current sixth form to be good. Standards are improving as a consequence of increasingly very good teaching which offers good levels of challenge. In addition, the school has adopted a more rigorous entry policy for the current Year 12 which is likely to lead to higher standards. Retention rates through courses are good, and students rarely embark on courses to which they are not suited.
21. Not all subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection. Of those which were, standards observed in history and geography were well above average for this stage in the course. Standards in mathematics, economics, ICT, French, German and art were

above average, while standards in English, biology, chemistry, physical education, media studies and business studies were broadly what is expected at this stage. Only in design and technology were standards below average. For most students on these courses, their achievements and progress through the course, given their attainment at GCSE are good, and very good in history, geography, French and German. In subjects sampled some very good work was seen in physics, sociology, Spanish and music. Both boys and girls do well, and students from ethnic minority groups achieve at least as well as others.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

22. The attitudes and behaviour of students are very good and have a very positive effect on standards. Students enjoy a high quality school life and feel privileged to have such a wide variety of intellectual, physical and other challenges. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and the ethos is very positive, inclusive, respectful and clearly focused on learning.
23. Students have very good attitudes to learning. Classrooms commonly have a purposeful atmosphere. Most students settle quickly to work, and listen carefully and follow instructions well. They feel confident about asking questions, and relish the challenge and pace of learning. Students work hard and show pride in their work. The most effective teaching encourages excellent attitudes. In an outstanding Year 11 history lesson on Hitler's rise to power, the sharp intellectual challenge of the teaching and excellent relationships encouraged the students to get involved. The teacher made the students justify their assertions and support their conclusions with evidence. The terrific buzz of discussion in pairs was indicative of the way students were really enjoying the challenge of the work.
24. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. On the rare occasions in class where behaviour is not as good, it can be traced back to weaknesses in classroom and behaviour management. Most students show good levels of self-discipline and restraint between lessons in the narrow corridors and stairways. Lunchtime behaviour is also very good and students show considerable patience while waiting for their lunch. Students repay the trust given to them by taking good care of the buildings. There is very little graffiti and litter is not a major problem. Bullying occurs but students themselves said that it is not a significant problem. The number of fixed-term exclusions is average. Although there is a disproportionately high number of exclusions of white students, the school is aware of this and is taking action to support those students with particularly challenging behaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions for four years.
25. Relationships are excellent and are characterised by mutual respect. Staff and students co-operate very well. Form tutors often have very good rapport with students, and students often relate very well to particular teachers. Students are very much at ease with one another. Overall there is strong respect for other people's differences, and students are encouraged to be aware of the impact of their actions. Only a few examples of less thoughtful behaviour were witnessed by inspectors. The successful integration of students from the communication and learning department is a measure of the sensitive and thoughtful approach of students to each other. All students, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language enjoy being with one another in the lively and harmonious school community. Students mix freely and all ethnic groups and faiths are respected and valued equally.

26. Students' personal development is very good. Most senior students are mature and sensible young people. Students are polite, friendly and confident. They are increasingly taking responsibility for their own learning and they are aware of their own progress. Most use their planners effectively to organise themselves and their homework. There are very good opportunities to take on responsibility and to offer service, and students wear their badges of office with obvious pride. Students carry out these responsibilities conscientiously and responsibly. The HUGS (Helping Us Get Sorted) team are an excellent group who offer support to other students, and have been instrumental in helping to reduce bullying. The BIS (Beal Improvement Squad) team is very industrious and has helped to improve the school environment very effectively. Good citizenship both inside school and in the community is encouraged and the students involved express pleasure and pride in their achievements. The school council is well established and provides a forum for students to raise issues and suggest sensible and realistic improvements with senior staff. Improvements to water fountains, canteen and locker arrangements were brought about in this way. The involvement of students in the wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances social development very well.
27. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. Absence is attributable to genuine illness. Unauthorised absence is below average. Punctuality is very good.

Sixth form

28. Sixth-form students have very positive attitudes to their work and to their school life. Behaviour is very good. Students are hard working, mature and sensible. They ask searching questions and make accurate deductions based on good evidence and logical thinking. They are very co-operative and have very good relationships with each other and with teaching staff. They listen with respect to one another's views and, when engaged in discussion, put forward salient and considered arguments to support their case. Students report that they have more freedom in the sixth form and that they enjoy the more friendly and relaxed teaching style.
29. Students' personal development is very good. They have excellent social skills and most are confident, self disciplined and well motivated young people. They act as excellent role models, commanding respect from younger students. Sixth-formers have many opportunities for responsibility and exercise them impressively. The head boys and girl and prefects are very visible throughout the school. They set good examples and are much respected. Sixth-formers work willingly in many areas of the school, for instance, at parents' evening and at school productions and concerts. They work as classroom assistants offering bilingual support, helping with literacy and numeracy lessons or with students in the communication and learning department. Others are peer mentors for Year 10 and 11 students who need help to organise their work. The development of personal and learning skills is very good.
30. Attendance is above average, and the rate of unauthorised absence in particular is below the national average. All students attend registration and most arrive at school on time.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. The quality of teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11. It has improved since the last inspection. The proportion of very good and better teaching is much higher, and unsatisfactory teaching has all but been eliminated. Around three out of four lessons were judged to be good or better in Years 7 to 11, and much teaching observed was skilfully delivered. One in three lessons was very good or excellent, and in these most effective lessons the students' learning was often of the highest quality.
32. The overall quality of teaching in English is good, and in mathematics it is very good. Much of the teaching in both subjects is very good. In science teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 where a focus on examination requirements is leading to more sharply focused learning. The overall good quality of teaching in these core subjects is ensuring a good foundation for learning in other subjects. Teaching in other subjects is mostly good in all years. However, in art and modern foreign languages teaching is satisfactory; in geography it is consistently very good; and in history and music it is very good in Years 10 and 11.
33. Characteristics of the most effective teaching are high expectations and good pace, very good classroom management, very good relationships, the setting of homework which extends and builds on work done in class, an awareness of the examination requirements particularly in GCSE teaching, effective use of support staff, the encouragement of students to think deeply about the topic, and the fostering of students' independent learning and problem solving skills. Teachers' own very good subject knowledge and understanding enable work to be introduced and developed with confidence. Students' learning skills are good. They are frequently required to take responsibility for their own learning, use deductive and analytical skills and to apply knowledge in unfamiliar contexts to consolidate and deepen understanding.
34. Where teaching is only satisfactory and less effective, it is often because the assessment of progress has not been used to plan for individuals and target setting is not used rigorously enough to enable students to know what to do next. While students are often able to indicate their target grade, they are not always as confident in saying how that target might be achieved. As a consequence, students are not always sufficiently challenged. While much marking is of a good quality, this is sometimes inconsistent even within subjects. In English during Years 7 to 9, science, geography and religious education, marking is not always regular enough or sufficiently detailed to be of help to students about how to improve. Teachers are increasingly confident in their ability to use assessment data to set meaningful targets for individual students, but this remains inconsistent and in a number of subjects learning targets are not set with sufficient precision to enable individual students to progress confidently to the next stage.
35. As a consequence, students' knowledge of their own progress is not as consistently good as other aspects of their learning, although this improves in Years 10 and 11 as students move towards GCSE examinations. Lower down the school, however, the inconsistent approach to the use of National Curriculum levels in different subjects means that students are not so confident.
36. When teachers have regular and planned access to computers, good use is made of ICT to support learning. In music, good use is made of composing software with GCSE students, and in English, GCSE students make good use of computers to present and publish their work. Several subjects make effective use of the Internet to search for information. However, in several subjects access to computers is limited, and while

there is often an expectation that the students will wordprocess work on their home computer, opportunities for this in school are not so common. In design and technology students do not use computers for control and design and statutory requirements in this respect are not met.

37. The teaching of literacy is good, and subjects across the curriculum are making an effective contribution. Most subjects develop the students' use of technical subject vocabulary well. Teachers in all subjects display and refer to key words, and use writing strategies effectively. Many subjects have planned discussions, debates, presentations, and group work thus helping to develop good listening and confident speaking. A feature of the school's work on literacy is the enthusiastic participation of subjects which do not traditionally have a literacy emphasis. Students in art, for example have responded to Van Gogh's painting by writing poetry. In geography, students have been referred to contemporary writers to extend their understanding and range in particular topics. For students entering the school in Year 7 with lower than expected levels of literacy, catch-up classes are held before school on three mornings each week. The classes are well organised and the teaching is effective and well structured. Several sixth-form students help and encourage the Year 7 students.
38. The quality of teaching of EAL is very good. It is based on very good relationships, which encourages students to talk, and not to be afraid to make mistakes. Questioning is thorough, to ensure that students understand. Also, the texts chosen are of actual events, which create interest. Good use is made of those in the school who speak the students' home language, and bilingual dictionaries are available. However, classroom teachers are often not sufficiently aware of how these students can be helped, in engaging them in speaking for example. Also, teachers are not made aware that in the sixth form, those who communicate well may have difficulty in understanding abstract concepts and technical language. There are examples of excellent support, such as in the English department, but this is not widespread.
39. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Several subjects are making a strong contribution to reinforcing and applying numeracy skills in different contexts, but this is not consistent. In mathematics the National Numeracy Strategy has been built into the scheme of work for Year 7 and is in the process of being developed for Year 8. Although numeracy is practised in most mathematics classes, the three-part lesson model, which provides a sharp focus on numeracy skills is not consistently adopted. Work in numeracy is particularly effective in classes with lower attaining students. In many subjects such as science, design and technology, ICT and geography there are some planned opportunities to use and reinforce numeracy skills. In other areas such as history, physical education, and religious education there is evidence of students' work with surveys and spreadsheets, but opportunities to develop numeracy are not planned and are often missed. There is, however, evidence of students' skills in gathering and interpreting data and representing it in charts and graphs in most subjects.
40. It is the high expectations that teachers have of what students can achieve that characterises the very best teaching. Where these are high, students are constantly challenged, the pace of lessons is brisk and the students' learning is very good. This takes place within well-planned and well-managed lessons that take account of the different starting points of each student. For example, in a very good Year 9 geography lesson observed on tourism in Goa, the challenging work set reflected the teacher's high expectations. Much was achieved during the lesson as a result of the varied and imaginative teaching strategies used to involve all students, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. This was potentially a difficult

group to manage, but the teacher's skilled control strategies worked very effectively. Very good progress was driven by the very high teacher expectations that all students will achieve.

41. Very good classroom management is another characteristic of the most effective teaching. Much of this is underpinned by the generally excellent relationships between teachers and students. Where classroom management skills are insecure, as in a Year 9 German lesson observed, the learning was spasmodic and the potential of some competent students not exploited. However, this was exceptional, and in the vast majority of lessons the overall management of the learning is expertly achieved.
42. The teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding lead to a confident approach to the lesson. Many teachers demonstrate an enthusiasm and love of their subject which communicates itself to the students. In one very good Year 8 English lesson during which the students were de-constructing the front page of a tabloid newspaper, it was the teacher's own infectious enthusiasm which led to an animated and committed response from all students. They were alert and well informed, prompted by the good stimulus and guidance from the teacher. The students particularly appreciated the relevance and application of their learning.
43. The students' very good attitudes and positive approach to their learning are important factors in contributing to their good progress. This is supported by the overall school ethos for learning and the often excellent relationships established between teachers and students. In an excellent Year 11 history lesson on Hitler's rise to power, the students' excellent behaviour and commitment to the work underpinned the learning. The teacher set challenging work and there was a sharp intellectual focus to the learning. Probing questions from the teacher and firm handling of either incorrect or vague responses facilitated a high level of discussion.
44. Teaching on GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 is strongly focused on the examination requirements and during the inspection some very effective preparation was being carried out in Year 11 classes for forthcoming mock examinations. Coursework marking criteria are rehearsed and used as the framework for preparing answers. This leads to a confident approach to the examination by most students. However, students are not usually spoon-fed answers, but challenged to think for themselves and work out solutions independently of the teacher. This was particularly evident in an excellent Year 11 science lesson in which the students were revising their understanding of hydrocarbons.
45. Sometimes, as in another good Year 11 science revision lesson on the effect of acid on the rate of reaction, the students' confidence in their ability to think independently needed careful and sensitive support from the teacher. On occasions, students are over-reliant on the teacher for answers or solutions to problems. This was also evident in some lessons observed in design and technology, French and German.
46. Planning is mostly effective in meeting the needs of all students, and teachers use their very good knowledge of individual students to set work adapted to their learning needs. However, there are some lessons in which all students move at the same pace. In one Year 10 English lesson, the students were looking at a short story by Sylvia Plath. Although good progress was made overall, higher attaining students did not respond positively to work which was largely directed at the middle and lower attaining students. Although not widespread, there are occasions when higher attaining students are not challenged enough.

47. Students with special educational needs are well taught in lessons and in withdrawal sessions. Lessons take full account of students' targets and activities are well adapted to their learning needs. Well-trained and highly efficient learning support assistants make a key contribution to the progress of students with special educational needs, both in the mainstream classroom and when students are withdrawn for lessons in literacy.
48. Although a minority of parents felt that homework was not always set according to the timetable, and that too little was set, inspectors found little evidence to support this view. In general, homework is well used to extend and reinforce work done in class, and develops students' research and independent learning skills. Scrutiny of the students' journals indicated that it is usually set according to the timetable. However, some students reported that on occasions, homework is used merely to finish off work uncompleted in lessons.
49. The school's very positive ethos for learning underpins the school's work and the attitudes of students. Learning is at the heart of the school's work, and is immediately apparent. Students move purposefully to lessons and attitudes in class indicate that most students are keen to do well. As a consequence, they work hard, and learn at a good pace. Students' co-operative skills are very good.
50. Teaching in the communication and learning department is good. The department collaborates with a range of professionals and parents to ensure the styles of teaching enable students to make the best possible progress. Teaching is fully informed by a good professional knowledge of how autistic students learn. Very good use is made of symbols and picture exchange cards. There is a consistent approach which is nevertheless sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of all students. Lessons are well planned, frequently on an individual basis. The management of students, some of whom are capable of difficult behaviour, is so good as to appear effortless. Learning support assistants present in the classroom allow for a high level of individual attention, which helps students to learn well. Excellent teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants is a strong feature of all lessons. Students thrive in the structured environment of the classroom and respond very well to the climate of praise which teachers create.
51. In their mainstream lessons, students are successfully placed in classrooms with one or two learning assistants and share in the good standard of teaching enjoyed in the rest of the school. Support in these lessons is sensitively handled, and great care is taken to judge the level of students' confidence and social competence as support is gradually reduced, and in some cases entirely withdrawn.

Sixth form

52. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. During the inspection, all teaching observed was at least satisfactory, and over nine out of ten lessons were at least good. Nearly two in three lessons was judged very good or better. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching is good in English, mathematics, biology, business studies, economics, physical education, art and media studies; it is very good in chemistry, design and technology, ICT, history, geography, French and German.
53. Strengths of the teaching include the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. This expertise enables them to approach the syllabus confidently, pose and answer questions which challenge the students' thinking, and plan lessons and schemes of work which successfully build on prior attainment in a meaningful and relevant way.

The teacher's excellent subject knowledge in one excellent Year 13 history lesson observed, on international relations and the changing interpretations of appeasement, enabled clear explanations of complex ideas to be put across effectively. The way in which challenging material was made accessible by skilful teaching was very impressive and enabled all students to build on their knowledge and confidence. The teacher's high expectations ensured that the students made very good progress in applying new knowledge. The confident approach of teachers to their subject at this level was characteristic of teaching observed in most subjects and is a key factor in students' achievement.

54. Teachers often put points across skilfully and ensure that material is presented in an interesting and relevant way. Consequently, students participate fully in the lessons and make good progress. Students particularly appreciate teaching which encourages them to contribute. In one very good Year 13 geography lesson role-play was used to debate issues surrounding tourism and its impact. The students demonstrated a very good awareness of the conflict of interests and the factors which influenced tourist development. This was very effectively managed by the teacher. Issues were debated within a good framework of understanding and the use of statistics to back up the arguments.
55. In chemistry, the students' understanding is much deeper because they are encouraged to make their own notes. Although the quality of presentation and some of the content is less comprehensive than might be found in some other schools where notes are dictated and copied, the level of understanding is much better.
56. While some teachers adopt good strategies to promote the students' independent learning and their perseverance to solve problems and overcome difficulties themselves, for some students this more independent and self-reliant approach to learning is the biggest challenge of sixth-form work. On occasions, there is a tendency for teachers to over direct the learning, and not allow students to pursue their own thinking and ideas. This was particularly evident in some lessons in business studies, economics and computing.
57. Where teaching is less effective, it is because the assessment of students' progress fails to identify specific learning targets for individual students. As a consequence, the students are not always sure about how to improve. Some teachers set learning targets for the next step, others do not. Another area for development is the consistent use of ICT to support learning. A number of subjects, including mathematics, chemistry and design and technology do not use computers with sufficient regularity to give students confidence in using ICT.
58. Most students adopt a very mature and sensible approach to their studies and to the work set. The excellent quality of relationships between teachers and students helps ensure this very positive approach. The students are keen to do well and succeed to the best of their ability. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson high levels of motivation contributed strongly to the good progress made. Students listened intently and were keen to answer questions, discussing possible answers in a mature and considered way with their neighbours.
59. In discussion, the students praised the support and helpfulness of teachers and their approachability and willingness to offer help at any time. Students also reported that lessons in which their own views and ideas were valued were effective. Students' learning skills are good, and most work hard with good levels of motivation. The commitment and hard work of staff is another key factor in the levels of students'

achievement. Most students take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. Students have been taught good strategies for taking and organising their notes. In general, students' skills in self-study and research are good.

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

60. The curriculum meets the needs of students well and there have been improvements since the last inspection. It makes a good contribution to the standards achieved and prepares students well for further education and adult life. Overall, a good range of learning opportunities is provided including a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities.
61. The range of subjects is broad and balanced in Years 7 to 9. Drama and personal, health and social education, including citizenship, are taught in addition to subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. All students study one foreign language in Year 7 and a second language is introduced in Year 8. Latin is offered in Year 8.
62. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in Year 7 and in Years 8 and 9 it is taught through other subjects. The overall provision for ICT is patchy and unsatisfactory because some subjects are not fulfilling the legal requirement to teach ICT and currently some students in Years 8 and 9 have very little access to ICT. There are also some statutory gaps in the provision for design and technology, as no computer control or computer-aided designing is provided.
63. At the time of the last inspection, planning for progression through subject schemes of work was judged a weakness. Since then, schemes have been reviewed and now meet requirements. The school has implemented the national strategies for learning in Years 7 to 9 effectively.
64. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is good. All students follow a broad and balanced range of subjects that includes a core of English, mathematics, and science. They also take physical education and a short GCSE course in religious education. Not all students choose to study design and technology. There is a wide range of GCSE options, including drama, business studies, media studies, sociology, catering, economics and graphics. The curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements for ICT. A short course in religious education for GCSE is provided. The school caters effectively for those students who struggle to take the full range of GCSE courses by providing a key skills course in which some students have additional help with literacy and numeracy in place of some science. In addition provision is made for some lower attaining students in the form of an accredited Youth Award scheme. The school is actively considering how it might extend its vocational curriculum through discussions within the local community and a review of its 14 to 19 curriculum.
65. Although transfer arrangements with partner primary schools are strong, curricular links are less well developed, except in respect of literacy and physical education.
66. Provision for literacy across the whole curriculum is very good. As a pilot for the borough, the school gave the National Literacy Strategy priority as a major school initiative. Research in local partner schools aimed at bridging the gap between Year 6 and Year 7 helped to inform the school literacy policy. The literacy co-ordinator has worked very effectively with all departments, and all subjects now include literacy

targets and activities in their schemes of work, identifying ways of developing reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. There is an annual literacy week and the school has organised two summer schools, liaising closely with partner primary schools. Students in Year 7 who have not reached the expected Level 4 in their reading and writing are supported with specific additional 'catch up' programmes.

67. Strategies for teaching numeracy in different subjects are good, but are not so well co-ordinated as the literacy programme. A whole school policy is under development and some training has been provided for all staff. Mapping of numeracy across the curriculum has not been completed.
68. The curricular provision for students with special educational needs is very good. In Years 7 to 9, students are supported in class or sometimes withdrawn for specific support towards their literacy targets. In Years 10 and 11, a range of specific or adapted courses is provided which are designed to meet particular needs. Some students study a single science course which is specially designed for them. Others may take a GNVQ course in health and social care, a supported study option or additional courses leading to accreditation in numeracy, literacy, history, business studies, ICT and the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. A highly innovative dyslexia co-ordination programme is already helping students to make progress.
69. Provision for gifted and talented students is at an early stage of development. These students are identified, but there is no specific programme for them and the school relies on subject departments to identify students and meet their needs.
70. The school is strongly committed to promoting educational inclusion and equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum. Provision in this respect is very good. The school's practice is a reflection of its ethos and philosophy which is to ensure that the curriculum needs of every student are addressed. The flexible approach adopted to provide students in Years 10 and 11 with external work placements and courses designed to meet their individual needs is an indicator of how inclusive the school's curriculum is.
71. This is also demonstrated in the careful and sensitive way in which the needs of students with EAL are addressed. Students take part in the full curriculum, both that which is taught and all other activities. Nearly two out of three students speak English as an additional language and 116 are at an early stage of language learning. The school targets additional help and resources on these students. Students are included well in lessons and are generally able to follow the teaching appropriately.
72. The well planned personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) is good and covers all the statutory requirements for sex and drugs education and includes both careers education and citizenship. Much is accomplished by the specialist staff, although the time allocated is too short to cover some topics in depth. PSHE forms an important part of students' personal development and has a high status in the school. Students confirmed how important and relevant the lessons are for helping and guiding them on aspects like relationships, behaviour, health and safety, and study skills. Some very good lessons were observed during the inspection which focused on issues such as racism, soccer violence and capital punishment.
73. The arrangements for careers education and guidance are good. The programme is well planned within PSHE. Students in Year 9 are guided effectively in their GCSE course options, and all students in Year 10 have two weeks' work experience. The school has developed a good working relationship with the careers advisory service.

Careers education is well developed within the curriculum and benefits from good leadership and management.

74. The curriculum is enriched by the provision of a very good range of extra-curricular activities, both at lunchtime and after school. Most are well attended. Students take part in regular sporting, music and drama clubs. They are also involved in community activities such as the media studies local radio link in the summertime and via the Youth Action groups. A number of subjects provide opportunities to extend learning through visits. The annual school production is a highlight and involves large numbers of students and staff.
75. The local community is making an increasingly good contribution to students' learning, and additional links have been made with local businesses as a result of the school's commitment to specialist college status.
76. The curriculum for students in the communication and learning department is excellent. It is very well adapted to individual requirements and provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities, which meets the aptitudes and particular needs of classes and individuals. Statutory requirements are fully met. Provision in all years interprets requirements in highly stimulating, very well structured ways, which give students excellent opportunities to learn to communicate as effectively as they can. Curriculum monitoring and the level of co-ordination are significant strengths. The school provides effective educational intervention appropriate to students' individual needs which prepares them to take full advantage of the excellent opportunities the school provides for them to join their peers in mainstream education. The school makes excellent use of the teaching skills of subject specialists from other areas of the school. A music teacher provides creative work with class groups. The department uses specialists in design and technology, modern foreign languages and food technology for those students who are unable to access those subjects alongside their mainstream peers. Speech and language therapy is provided within the department, which promotes the benefits of communication teaching through fundamental activities. Music interaction therapy, delivered in pairs, small groups or individually, helps students to develop social communication and interactive skills. Plans are well advanced for the introduction of supported work experience as students reach Year 11. The school is at an early stage of liaising with specialist course advisers to advise students on the next stage of their education. Links with the main school are excellent and have allowed integration of two students to be successful and permanent.
77. The communication and learning department makes excellent planned provision for students' spiritual development promoting as it does a climate within which all students can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected. The teaching of students to understand and express feelings and emotions are central to the work of the department. There are very good opportunities for moral development in the consistently promoted behaviour policy which students understand and respect. Through it, they understand how not to hurt others and their feelings. Opportunities for students' social development is excellent as they develop pragmatic and expressive language to interact with others. Specific teaching as to how to behave in given situations is a significant strength.
78. The overall provision for spiritual development is good. The teachers and students value reflection, empathy and insight as well as knowledge. This is incorporated into the everyday life of the school, and crosses subject boundaries. For instance, in geography students debate the conflicting interests in the destruction of rain forests. In art, students examine paradoxes when considering works of art and they show empathy in

physical education when observing the performance of other students. The focus on 'fasting' in food technology lessons leads to a better understanding of peoples' beliefs. In religious education lessons, students reflect on different sets of values and beliefs to inform their own perspective on life. During the week of the inspection the end of Ramadan was recognised as an important part in the lives of many. Weekly meetings for Hindus and Muslims form an essential element of the school's ethos.

79. Provision for moral development is very good. In all departments, teachers continually stress the need to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong. In this, they are supported by heads of year and members of the senior management team. An assembly planned by students in a Year 9 class discussed the inequalities evident in different countries. This was reduced to an individual level in a geography lesson where the problems of obtaining medical support for arthritis were examined. In art lessons there is a strong emphasis on respect for individuals, and students are continually reminded of the importance of 'sportsmanship' in physical education lessons. In ICT lessons, students are required to consider issues such as privacy, hacking and the legal rights of the individual. The students themselves raise considerable funds for charity. Teachers are very good role models for their students.
80. A major strength of the school is an emphasis on the social development of students. The excellent provision covers an extensive range of initiatives. Some of these are promoted by the school, some by individual members of staff and some by the students themselves. The involvement of students speaks volumes for the ethos that prevails throughout the school. Relationships are very strong. Teachers and students respect and trust one another. There is a fundamental belief in the rights of each individual. This is exemplified in numerous lessons. For example in history students in Year 9 discuss the issue of conscientious objection. In religious education, students debate with fervour the role of females in the Christian church. Textile students in Year 10 have made clothes to distribute to third world countries. The communication and learning department provides exceptional opportunities for them to contribute successfully to society. Outside lessons, students make outstanding contributions to the varying requirements of the society that the school fosters. There are groups to eliminate bullying and others to promote a positive environment. The development of the school council since the last inspection has been impressive. Students now feel that they are an integral part of decision-making in the school.
81. The school provides very good opportunities for cultural activities. The multicultural nature of the school is reinforced through displays, for example on Black History month and in curricular planning, such as the choice of India as a case study in the geography scheme of work. In religious education there are ample opportunities to explore equality and harmony. In March, the school holds a 'multi-lingual' month. Many students have been offered the opportunity to visit other countries, such as Spain, Italy, France and Germany. Regular recitals, musicals and concerts augment the tours abroad by musicians from the school. Every second year the school choir participates in the Redbridge Choral Festival at the Royal Albert Hall. The school fosters a respect for other cultures and students are taught to appreciate the cultural diversity of Britain.

Sixth form

82. The school provides well for students' wide range of talents and interests by a good range of subjects at AS, A-level, intermediate GNVQ courses in business and hospitality and catering and an AVCE course in business. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection when A-level courses were the only provision. The school now meets statutory requirements for religious education in the

sixth form. In addition to traditional courses, students can take AS and A-level courses in subjects such as sociology, psychology, law, and media studies.

83. This good provision results in the school effectively meeting needs and aspirations of students, building very effectively on their previous qualifications. Sixth-form courses are popular with students. A high level of recruitment is matched by an equally high rate of successful course completion at all levels of attainment. The success of the sixth form is demonstrated by the large number of students who stay on into post-16 education.
84. Students do not have access to a formal programme of key skills. Most students have a limited amount of time allocated to private study which they use well to complete work or get ahead in their studies. In private study time, they have access to computing facilities if needed and have access to reference materials either from the library or individual departments. Students are expected to do a lot of homework. Most respond very well to this demand.
85. Careers education and guidance in the sixth form is good with a strong focus on university and college applications. Individual arrangements are made also for students who want to go into employment and these are currently good. Students have the opportunity to go on work experience during Year 12.
86. In the sixth form, provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school has a clear commitment to the development of its students as caring and thoughtful members of the community. Students in the sixth form play a major part in the daily life of the school. Everywhere you go, sixth-formers are guiding and advising younger students. They treat visitors with respect and are always ready to help. They are encouraged to raise funds for charity and run their own and main school social functions. They also provide an effective 'buddy' system for younger students helping them to settle down in the school. In the wider community they are involved through the Beal voluntary work scheme. The curriculum is also enriched by trips to theatres and art exhibitions as well as visits abroad. Students are encouraged to find work placements that support their career aspirations. Life in the sixth form helps students to become confident and mature individuals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

87. Care systems have improved significantly since the last inspection and are a strength of the school. Teaching and learning are underpinned by a very strong pastoral system that ensures that the tutor knows each student very well. Subject staff also know their students well and show a high level of support and commitment to help them achieve high standards. There are clear procedures to provide very good support for individuals, and the consistent application of policies promotes good attendance and behaviour.
88. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and punctuality are excellent. Registers are consistently maintained and all absences are carefully monitored and rigorously followed up. Heads of year know the whereabouts of their students at all times, and are supported in the community by a highly effective welfare service. Holiday taking during term time is very effectively discouraged and the disruption this causes to students' education is minimised.
89. The policy and procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are outstanding. Students are familiar with the procedures and the high expectations for behaviour. Rewards and sanctions are used effectively to motivate students and praise

slips are highly valued. The school deals very effectively with potential problems as students join the school in Year 7. Problems are identified at an early stage and support systems put into place. The school takes a tough stance on verbal and other abuse to staff: exclusion is the norm and serves as a stern reminder of the consequences of this unacceptable behaviour. The school meets all the requirements to have a racial equality policy and students report that racism is not an issue in the school. The school works hard to achieve a harmonious and inclusive community and has been very successful in this regard.

90. The arrangements for child protection are very good and all requirements are met. The arrangements for students' welfare and health and safety are also very good. When students are ill or injured they receive a high level of care and attention. Most health and safety issues are addressed effectively, but the inspectors brought some others to the attention of the school.
91. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good. Form tutors regularly check the use of homework planners, students' behaviour, attendance and punctuality as well as their progress towards their personal targets. Many students spoke warmly of their tutors and how helpful and supportive they are. Students have high levels of confidence that they would always have someone to turn to if they were troubled or worried. Communication is highly effective and support is targeted where it is most needed. The school goes beyond normal bounds to help individual students.
92. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The results of external examinations are systematically analysed through subject reviews. This makes a significant contribution to the improvement in standards. The whole school assessment policy has recently been reviewed and an academic review day introduced to enable students and parents to review progress and set future targets. Data is analysed by gender and some subjects are making effective use of this information to plan strategies to address any differences in the achievements of boys and girls. In addition, data is also used to analyse the achievements of students from different ethnic groups. No systematic analysis is made of the achievements of gifted and talented students. Assessment was raised as a key issue in the last inspection report and the school has been slow to tackle some of the problems identified, particularly in the consistent development of assessment procedures and in the use of data. Although much data is now produced centrally and the school uses a number of systems to track and predict performance, the procedures adopted by different subjects are inconsistent. In some, for example mathematics, history, design and technology and physical education good systems are in operation to assess and track students' progress. However in other subjects, procedures are not as well developed and therefore less effective in tracking progress.
93. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning overall is also satisfactory. Data provided centrally is available to all departments electronically but not all subjects are using it effectively. There is good practice in mathematics, physical education and history, where detailed analysis of performance and tracking of individual progress is managed well. However, in other subjects there is more to be done to ensure regular assessment is used to help curriculum planning and set precise targets for learning. Much work has gone into improving assessment policy and practice, but the systems remain relatively new. More time is needed before they are fully and consistently embedded in the practice of all subjects.

94. The school takes excellent care of its special educational needs students. Assessment procedures are excellent. A designated link worker provides in-class support for students and their teachers and liaises with parents on an ongoing basis, so all are well informed as to the students' progress. Liaison with partner schools is excellent. The special educational needs co-ordinator is present at a high proportion of annual reviews of students in Year 6, so diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses of most students begin before they enter the school and they have targets to work towards on the day they arrive. Further baseline testing of all students on entry is rapid and reliable. Their targets are simple and easy to monitor so that students can begin to make immediate progress. Student tracking procedures are excellent. Students' progress, subject assessments, and reading and spelling ages are effectively used to give each student in depth assessment and a continuing picture of progress made. This procedure is only constrained by inconsistencies in assessment by subject departments. The learning support assistants make additional and continuous formal assessments of students as they assist in the classroom. They meet the special educational needs co-ordinator regularly for formal and informal interviews. Record keeping is very good. Procedures at annual and transitional reviews are good and fully meet requirements. As result of this excellent practice, students' needs are well known to all teachers and all students are fully included in the lessons and able to make the greatest progress possible.
95. The communication and learning department provides an excellent standard of care for its students. All students have individual education plans which are monitored regularly. Students and teachers are fully aware of all targets, which are highly effective tools to support learning. The department's academic and social profiles are an excellent means of assessing readiness to access supported inclusion into the main school, of monitoring progress and communicating with parents. Additional, well-adapted procedures for assessing progress in academic subjects within the department are being actively considered.
96. The assessment of students with EAL is very good on entry to the school, but after that it is minimal, and depends to a great extent on feedback from staff.

Sixth form

Assessment

97. Assessment is satisfactory in the sixth form with an accurate analysis of GCSE performance helping to inform staff of the potential of students and to set realistic targets for their courses. Guidance is provided on the courses they aim to take in the sixth form and most courses chosen match the students' abilities and aspirations. Students have target grades, and regular testing and assessment provide accurate information on their progress and attainment. Monitoring of progress and marking is variable across departments although most students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
98. The use of assessment information to guide planning is also satisfactory. The school uses GCSE data to predict minimum A-level grades for students, but the data is not used consistently well to monitor the progress of individual students. Some subjects such as mathematics, history and chemistry analyse examination results and other assessment information carefully to review their work and point to areas for improvement. Individual needs are diagnosed and appropriate curricular provision is made for students.

Advice, support and guidance

99. The school provides very effective support and guidance. Students commented that sixth-form teachers and tutors were easily accessible and highly supportive. Many teachers give their time generously. Individual tutors know their students well and support and advise them accordingly. The pastoral team is a strong and knowledgeable group, who show very high levels of commitment to the students.
100. The sixth-form brochure is well written and gives a clear picture of what to expect. Students are provided with good information about the courses available. Most are pleased with the quality of guidance they received when considering the transition in Year 11.
101. The school has sound procedures for monitoring attendance. Although many students felt that the quality of careers advice was inadequate, inspectors judge the provision to be good. There are good links with the careers service and students have access to advice and resources if they need them. Tutors offer good guidance on higher education, and there is good access to reference material on both careers and higher education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

102. Parents and carers have very good opinions of the school, and the school has the confidence of the community it serves. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors and responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive. They note that the school expects its students to work hard and achieve well. They report that their children like coming to school. About one in five parents has reservations about the homework arrangements. A similar proportion thinks that the school could do more to work closely with parents, and to be better informed as to how their child is progressing.
103. The school has effective links with parents. Written information is of a very good quality. The prospectus, both for the main school and the sixth form, is informative and complies with statutory guidelines. Newsletters and the governors' annual report provide further very good quality information. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is very good. Parents come to school in large numbers whenever they are invited to support their children. Attendance at consultation meetings is excellent and is very good for other meetings such as the Year 9 and Year 11 option evenings, school concerts, productions and sports activities. Parents sign the homework planners and use them effectively for dialogue with teachers. School reports are mostly very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where subject comments about progress are detailed and clear about what needs to be done to improve.
104. The school fully involves parents of students with special educational needs in a well-organised home/school learning approach, involving a link worker who liaises effectively on a range of issues. Parents are consulted when students enter the school. Review proceedings of students' statements and the production of their transitional statements involve parents fully. Almost all attend. Parents' views are actively sought and willingly given in the interests of students. Excellent curricular links enable parents to help students with special educational needs at home, which further improves their progress.
105. The communication and learning department works very well in partnership with parents. Good use is made of home-school books and planners. Letters and homework files are sent home to explain homework set. Parents are invited to events

such as prize-giving ceremonies, educational visits, and coffee mornings. Personal communications are sent as necessary, with regard to students' progress or any difficulties. Almost all parents attend annual reviews and the more frequent reviews of progress.

106. The parents of students who have English as an additional language are very supportive of their children. The school takes care to have interpreters available, and the teacher in charge of this area of provision will accompany parents on the academic review days and parents' evenings.
107. Parents make a satisfactory impact on the work of the school. Most lend assistance to their children's learning. A few parents make a strong contribution to the parent-teacher association and funds raised have enhanced the school's resources. However, few parents assist in school. The parents of new students expressed concerns about how little they were involved when their children started school. They felt that the open evening in July was helpful but the gap to the next opportunity to come to school for the academic review was too long. Parents' views are not analysed as part of school improvement and their skills and availability to help are not known.
108. Students have very positive views about life in the sixth form. They like being treated like adults, and are generally very appreciative and supportive of the school's provision for their education. They are particularly satisfied with the way they are taught and challenged to do their best and with the help and encouragement they receive to work independently. In addition, they are very appreciative of the help that is readily available if they encounter difficulties with their work. Virtually all students enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others.
109. The students' questionnaire indicated that a significant minority felt that they were not given good careers advice or kept well informed about their progress. In addition, some felt that the school did not listen to their views. While inspectors support students' positive views they do not agree with their concerns. Good careers guidance is offered, and information about progress and personal support and guidance are very good. Students have good opportunities to express their views, although it is not always possible to respond positively and in a way which the students would like.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

110. Leadership and management are very good. The school aims to ensure that all students achieve their potential and give service to others. These provide a touchstone for the school's ethos and purpose and are very well met. The school community values learning, has a strong commitment to social and educational inclusion, and is racially harmonious. Above all there is a strong commitment not just to maintain its standards, but also to improve and adapt to changing circumstances.
111. The very good leadership of the headteacher has inspired others to work with a keen sense of commitment and loyalty. She leads with a sureness of touch and a clear sense of purpose. In making changes to the ethos of the school to reflect the changing school context, she has skilfully managed to retain the confidence of the staff, governors and community. The introduction of more robust management systems, in particular, has been accomplished very effectively. Her vision is widely shared, and she has the vigorous support of both governors and a strong senior team. Together they are providing the school with confident and determined leadership.

112. The senior management team is experienced and provides the school with authoritative and clear-sighted direction. As individuals they are thoughtful and confident with a secure grasp of their roles and responsibilities. Meetings of the senior team are characterised by an open discussion of what does and does not work. All points of view are valued. The team works effectively together, all making strong individual contributions, and issues are addressed with honesty and clarity. The senior management team is continually evaluating the school's practice and seeking ways to secure further improvements.
113. Management at other levels is good and most heads of department are providing effective leadership of their subject, working hard to maintain high standards and secure improvements in teaching and learning. Some good recent appointments have been made and the open management style of the senior team is reflected in practice at middle management level. Both heads of department and heads of year are offering good leadership of their teams. Line management meetings with senior staff are held regularly and are purposeful and useful opportunities to raise issues and to review the work of their teams. This structured approach to management is welcomed by staff, who feel that their ideas and views are valued. The comprehensive pattern of meetings and working parties contribute strongly to whole school development, ensuring the active involvement of a wide spectrum of staff. Communication throughout the school is very good, and all staff are committed to improvement and to sharing the school's values and ideals.
114. Aspects of the school's work are monitored effectively. Departmental review meetings enable senior staff to monitor standards and provision in subjects. There are plans to include pastoral reviews alongside subject reviews. Detailed and comprehensive analyses of individual subject performance in test and public examinations are used effectively to monitor performance against targets, and are used as the basis for the performance reviews. Governors are also kept well informed, and comprehensive performance and financial data are provided for them to make informed judgements and decisions.
115. The school improvement plan is a succinct document, based on a one-year cycle of review and planning. Whole school priorities are grouped under several main headings and action plans (target sheets) are written to flesh out the detail. Priorities arise from the school's own review process and national initiatives and are appropriate. Resources are identified and where appropriate built into the budget plan. Improvement planning at departmental level is also well established and related both to whole school and subject targets. Overall, the improvement planning process is sharply focused and provides a good framework for maintaining and improving standards.
116. This is a reflective school in which all members of the school community are involved in monitoring and reviewing practice and seeking ways to improve standards. It is increasingly effective as a self-evaluating school. The detailed self-evaluations carried out by all departments prior to the line manager's review meeting are evidence of a school which takes self review seriously and with rigour. All staff are committed to sustaining its high standards and the school's capacity for further improvement is very good.
117. Governors are knowledgeable and hard working, and they bring a good range of experience to the school's governance. They have a strong voice in both the strategic planning and monitoring process. The chair of governors has an effective professional relationship with the headteacher and senior staff. Governors are well informed and have a good awareness of the school's future direction. Discussions in committees

and full governors' meetings are detailed and comprehensive, and the school's work is monitored effectively. Governors are confident in their ability to challenge and question the senior management. Statutory requirements are largely met, although the requirements in respect of collective worship and the teaching of ICT and design and technology are not fully met.

118. The school's budget is very well managed. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly updated with monitoring statements. They monitor the educational impact of spending decisions and have a reasonable understanding of issues related to best value. The school, for example, now manages the catering contract themselves and has set tighter limits to the working of the cleaning contract. Budget planning has been carried out carefully as the school has expanded, and consequent increases in staff and improvements to the accommodation have been carefully managed. Budget priorities are made in the light of the school's educational priorities.
119. The most recent audit of the school's financial systems and controls indicated that all financial systems were well controlled and maintained. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and social inclusion are used well. The school is efficiently administered and it makes satisfactory use of information systems to process data and ensures that information is readily available for governors and staff to manage the school effectively.
120. Management of the provision for special educational needs is excellent. All statutory requirements are fully met. Guidelines for students with special educational needs, issued to all teachers, are of a particularly high standard. Both the school and its governing body are fully aware of their roles in the procedures and responsibilities within the department. The co-ordinator successfully supports the school's success by helping to promote a whole school culture which expects all students to be included in active and successful learning. He initiates and communicates principles of best practice to all staff. The induction, training and deployment of staff are significant strengths. Learning support assistants are well briefed, confident and fully committed to the success of students. Record keeping and teamwork are of a high standard and lead to efficient interventions and curricular continuity.
121. Leadership of the communication and learning department is also excellent, ensuring clear direction for the work of the department. The head of department has created an excellent standard of provision for all students. Teaching and learning are well supported. Governors fulfil their statutory duties in helping to shape the direction of the department and have a clear understanding of the strengths of provision. Staffing is good, with the contribution made by well-trained and highly effective learning support assistants a key strength.
122. There is a good match between the number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff and the requirements of the curriculum. There have been recent difficulties in staffing both English and science but this is now more stable. The school has a very thorough induction programme for all new staff. This includes mentoring and classroom observation. Newly qualified teachers expressed extremely positive comments about the level and quality of support given to them. The school has very good arrangements for the professional development of all staff. The staff development co-ordinator manages this training very well and ensures school and department priorities are promoted. The effectiveness and quality of all training are evaluated and information from external courses is shared appropriately.

123. Overall resources for learning are satisfactory. In some subjects such as English, art, geography, music and modern foreign languages, they are good. Despite considerable recent investment, access to ICT in several subjects, including mathematics, design and technology and science, is limited. However, the overall ratio of students to computers is good at 9:1. Most subjects have sufficient textbooks. The resource centre has many good features including computers and daily newspapers.
124. The accommodation is only just satisfactory for meeting the expanding needs of the school. Much has been done to make the buildings attractive and a welcoming learning environment. The main school building is impressive and all the recent improvements have helped to provide a good learning environment in some areas such as the library, dining room, geography and religious education building and food technology department. However, accommodation for a number of subjects, including modern foreign languages, mathematics, design and technology, ICT and music, is cramped. The design and technology workshops are old and shabby, but are in the process of being refurbished. The indoor physical education accommodation is also unsatisfactory, and was not clean at the time of the inspection. Accommodation for the communication and learning department is excellent.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

125. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The headteacher and curriculum deputy headteacher offer a clear sense of direction and take an active part in ensuring that the sixth-form provision is consistent and adds value to other aspects of the school's activities. The director of the sixth form is a member of the senior management team and is responsible for the head of Years 12 and 13. She knows her students well and has worked to ensure that students in the sixth form act as excellent role models for younger students. Her day-to-day management of the sixth form is very good and she is developing a more strategic role as the sixth form expands.
126. The success of the sixth form contributes to the very strong school ethos of hard work and achievement. Students in the sixth form are treated differently from their younger contemporaries. They have both more responsibility and slightly more freedom, and yet the sixth form is very much connected, and integral, to the success and good reputation of the school.
127. The sixth form aims to promote both academic excellence and personal development. These aims are understood by all. The highly visible and successful presence of sixth-form students contributes to the ethos and reputation of the school as a whole. This is recognised by students, staff and governors and reflected in the standards achieved not just by sixth-formers but by students at all stages in the school.
128. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the sixth form are good. The school has been very well aware of the apparent dip in performance after GCSE, and is continuing to take action to secure improvements. Following the review of examination performance, the implications are followed up by the director of the sixth form and individual heads of department. Data is increasingly being used to analyse performance and plan for improvement, although this remains inconsistent across different subjects. A working party of sixth-form teachers has been doing action research to identify barriers to learning. The impact of this work is beginning to show in the improving standards in the sixth form. Monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out and mechanisms to ensure that best practice is shared are in place. Improvement planning

is thorough and targets are reviewed and set annually in the light of whole school priorities.

129. The governing body is well informed of the performance of the sixth form, and is supported by a link governor, responsible for sixth-form matters. Governors play an active role in contributing to the constant drive to raise standards of achievement still further. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individual departments and ready to intervene when appropriate.

Resources

130. Sixth-form provision is cost effective and the school achieves both high retention and course completion rates. In addition, the improving standards that are achieved along with reasonable average class sizes in the sixth form indicate good value for money. Although there are some small sixth-form classes in design and technology and ICT, for example, the average student teacher ratio in the sixth form is almost 14:1. The school seeks to apply the principles of best value whenever possible.
131. Teachers are well qualified and experienced, and students are supported by the adequate learning resources available. The sixth form accommodation has some unsatisfactory features. The common room is too small for the large number of sixth-formers. Areas for private study are inadequate and cause frustration when students use part of the dining room as it is far away from resources such as computers and the library. The computer room adjacent to the library offers very limited access to students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

132. In order to maintain and improve standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- a) Improve standards in information and communication technology by:
- ensuring that there is a co-ordinated curriculum plan for the teaching of ICT in all subjects, which will enable statutory requirements for ICT in subjects to be met;
 - reviewing the time allocation to ICT in Years 7 to 9 and investigating the possibility of a distance learning programme;
 - improving the assessment and monitoring of students' progress in ICT.
- (Paragraphs: 36, 62, 185, 186, 188, 189)

Sixth form

- b) Work to maintain the improving examination results at AS and A-level by:
- improving some students' confidence in their ability to work independently of the teacher;
 - identifying specific learning goals for individual students and ensuring they themselves know how to improve and move on to the next stage;
 - ensuring the quality of marking and the monitoring of students' progress is more consistently good;
 - using assessment data more precisely to analyse performance and plan for improvement.
- (Paragraphs: 56, 57, 97)
- c) Improve the access to, and use of, ICT to support learning by:
- ensuring opportunities for using ICT to support learning are taken;
 - reviewing the arrangements for access to computers in all subjects.
- (Paragraphs: 131, 249)
- d) Continue to explore the possibilities of improving the accommodation and resources for sixth-formers.
- (Paragraph: 131)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	174
	Sixth form	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		76

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 - 11

Number	7	56	65	41	4	1	0
Percentage	4	32.2	37.3	23.6	2.3	0.6	0

Sixth form

Number	5	39	21	7	0	0	0
Percentage	6.9	54.2	29.2	9.7	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1235	331
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	105	22

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	35	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	290	22

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	978

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	132	116	248

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	105	101
	Girls	105	97	92
	Total	211	202	193
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (85)	81 (85)	78 (80)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (37)	61 (57)	40 (37)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	115	112
	Girls	96	102	100
	Total	189	217	212
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (79)	88 (86)	86 (77)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (23)	58 (59)	51 (36)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	135	103	238

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	88	130	134
	Girls	81	99	103
	Total	169	229	237
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	71 (76)	96 (95)	100 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	50.7 (51)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

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

A-level data for 2001 is being shown since 2002 data is not yet available

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	75	74	149
	Average point score per candidate	13.2 (15.5)	13.8 (15.5)	13.5 (15.5)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18 (18)	17.5 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	71	68	139	4	6	10
	Average point score per candidate	13.3	14.1	13.7	12	11	11.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
380	30	0
2	0	0
114	3	0
8	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
11	0	0
465	9	0
215	12	0
47	3	0
64	0	0
68	13	0
24	5	0
35	1	0
30	0	0
60	4	0
39	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	101.7
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	809

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	21.3

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	5,104,720
Total expenditure	4,899,966
Expenditure per pupil	3,352
Balance brought forward from previous year	212,226
Balance carried forward to next year	204,754

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	32.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	40.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.3
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	1566
Number of questionnaires returned	226

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	45	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	51	7	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	48	8	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	46	18	4	1
The teaching is good.	34	56	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	40	21	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	42	9	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	38	5	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	46	21	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	35	47	10	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	47	6	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	41	9	3	10

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Well above average standards attained in the Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations
- The commitment of the teaching team
- The very good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Further improving systems for tracking and evaluating students' progress
- Identifying and sharing best practice in teaching

133. Students enter the school with above average attainment in English. In 2002, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in English were well above average overall. Although the percentage of students reaching the Levels 5 and 6 has been well above the national average, the percentage reaching Level 7 was only in line with the national average, thereby reducing the overall average points score. Girls have done better than boys although not significantly.
134. All students are entered for both GCSE English Language and Literature papers and results in 2002 were well above average, as they have been consistently for several years. Both boys and girls perform above the national average for boys and girls, and the gap between their relative performances is less than that found nationally. These results are particularly commendable in a school with such a high proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. These students equal and sometimes outperform students with English as their first language. The mutual respect and support shown by both groups is admirable and contributes much to the success of all.
135. Standards seen during the inspection, in classes and in written work, were above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Students' achievements throughout all years are good. The school is working hard to improve attainment at the highest level, so that more students reach Level 7 in English in Year 9 and obtain A* and A grades in GCSE examinations.
136. The quality of students' listening is excellent. They listen thoughtfully and courteously to teachers and to one another. Their speaking skills are equally well developed and are used effectively in group and pair work, though less consistently well in speeches and in play reading. Prepared speeches in one lesson observed, for example, were read rather than spoken and made limited impact. In two lessons where plays were being studied, parts were read aloud in class. Students did much better when a small-scale dramatic performance was expected, and groups were given time and guidance for the preparation of short scenes. Role-play and improvisation are used in some lessons but not consistently and could play a greater part in work generally.
137. Most students read fluently, and are able to locate information quickly. They question and analyse thoughtfully. They are good at drawing inferences. A good range of books

is read in Years 7 to 9 and an induction programme ensures that newcomers are at home in the library, which has an attractive selection of junior and adult fiction. Students read poetry with understanding. Reading provides good themes and ideas for writing, and work in folders and on display shows some very imaginative responses. Factual and imaginative writing are of a high standard with a good range of vocabulary and varied sentence structures. In GCSE work, analytical work is very strong. Students make perceptive analyses and support their arguments with relevant textual references. High standards of presentation and accuracy are expected. They write imaginative poetry, and look at newspapers and produce some lively journalistic experiments of their own. Students are able to write in a range of styles and their extended pieces are fluent, accurate and well organised.

138. The use of ICT is well developed, for publishing and research as well as presentation of work. In a Year 11 lesson, students worked in pairs to explore a variety of websites for revision material. They selected, summarised and printed useful information for the whole class. ICT in English is a particular interest of the head of department and the school has hosted a conference on the subject.
139. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years, and some very good teaching was observed during the inspection. Good relationships between teachers and students, and among students themselves are a strength. Students come to class ready to learn and co-operate. These positive attitudes make a strong contribution to the quality of learning. Teachers care about their students and are enthusiastic about their subject. Shared enjoyment of the work was evident in the lessons observed.
140. In the most effective lessons, very careful planning ensures good use of time and provides for the wide range of learning needs in the mixed ability classes. Where support teachers or assistants are present, liaison and sometimes team teaching are effectively used. However, there is not always adequate support for early learners of English as an additional language and there is a need for the EAL and English departments to work more closely on preparation of materials and strategies for class teachers to use with these students. Good schemes of work and departmental planning take account of the National Curriculum programmes as well as the National Literacy Strategy. The assessment and marking of course work in GCSE classes is thorough and constructive. In all year groups some examples of good, sometimes excellent, marking were seen, which showed students the strengths and weaknesses in their writing. In Years 7 to 9, however, there is not enough regular marking. Teachers tend to adopt a coursework approach, with major writing assignments very carefully marked, but not enough written response to students' weekly writing to establish an ongoing dialogue and monitoring of progress.
141. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen, the weakness in ICT has been very effectively remedied, and management and monitoring strategies have improved. English is also making a contribution to the extra-curricular programme, with annual play productions, a small reading club and a share in organising lunchtime debates. There are two areas for development now. First, the tracking of students' progress by use of data analysis, a technique which should be used by all members of the team. Secondly, the sharing of best teaching practice so teaching is more consistently good.
142. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is good departmental documentation, records are well kept and responsibilities effectively allocated. The head of department brings energy and flair to her work, and she leads a committed and talented team. With their support, the induction of three newly qualified teachers this

term has been very well managed .The department should now be able to look forward to a period of stability and further good development.

Drama

143. Drama is a separate department and is an important part of the curriculum and life of the school. The subject is taught to all students from Year 7 to Year 9 and as an option choice at GCSE, with an increasing number of students now taking it. There were 30 candidates in 2001 and 62 this year. It is also offered as an A-level subject, and the numbers starting the A /AS course have also doubled this year.
144. Three drama lessons were observed during the inspection, in Years 8, 10 and 11. All the teaching was good and one very good lesson was seen. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and good relationships with their classes. From Year 7, students learn the nature, disciplines and demands of drama. By the time they start the GCSE course, those who have chosen it are working confidently, demonstrating good skills in improvisation, role play, drama devising and interpretation of text. Students' readiness to work collaboratively and trustfully is a feature of their learning throughout the school. It is essential in drama and there were excellent examples in the lessons observed. They clearly enjoy their work and it contributes much to their personal and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching is leading to well above average levels of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11
- Very good relationships between students and staff
- Students' attitudes to learning and the very high standards of their work
- Very good leadership and management, with a clear focus on sustaining and improving high achievement

Areas for improvement

- Extending and developing the use of ICT as an aid to teaching in the classroom
- More detailed use of attainment data for setting and reviewing individual student targets

145. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been well above average for the past four years compared to all schools and to similar schools. The National Curriculum Level 8 achieved by ten per cent of students in 2002 confirms the very good progress through Years 7 to 9. GCSE results have been consistently well above average for the past four years. The percentage of students achieving A* to C grades has been over 20 per cent above the national average and the achievement of A* and A grades has been twice the national average. Value added analysis shows students of all abilities making very good progress through Years 10 and 11. Overall there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
146. Evidence from work seen in lessons and students' books indicates that attainment is well above average. Students achieve very well throughout Years 7 to 11. Numeracy skills are developed well through the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Students demonstrate good skills in mental arithmetic and in work without a calculator. In a Year 7 class students were working on arithmetic without calculators with numbers accurate to two decimal digits. They were confident in coming to the front

of the class to explain the position of the decimal point in their calculations. By Year 9 most students of all abilities can work with fractions, decimals and percentages. Middle attaining students work confidently with basic algebra, and for the higher attaining students work in algebra and geometry is of GCSE standard. Skills in investigative work are developed well from Year 7 onward.

147. Work in Years 10 and 11 is of a well above average standard and continues the very good progress from Year 9. In statistics students use cumulative frequency curves to find the mean and inter quartile range. In their investigative work, students of all abilities show good skills in collecting and tabulating data and choosing appropriate charts to display or interpret the information. Students confidently solve equations both algebraically and graphically and some Year 10 high attaining students solve quadratic equations by iterative methods. In Year 11, students have good recall of previous work across the curriculum but with a few surprising lapses in arithmetic. Overall the evidence from both Years 10 and 11 reflects the well above average GCSE results.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There has been a good emphasis on developing teaching strategies in the department and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and there is much confident and effective teaching. The department uses assessment data to monitor progress and teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students, including those with special educational needs. Student/teacher relationships are very good and lessons are well planned and well organised to match students' needs. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of strategies and activities to maintain students' interest and concentration. For example, in a Year 10 class students worked in small groups of five or six to solve a sequence of 'dungeon and dragon' style problems that tested most of their recent work. Students were clearly motivated by the exercise and a judicious combination of support and challenge from the teacher sustained a high level of activity throughout the lesson.
149. In all years students are taught in groups based on their prior attainment. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds but in the classes seen there was no discernible difference in progress related to ethnic background. Support for students with special educational needs is good. The groups in which they work are small with appropriate and well-managed in-class support. As a result these students also make very good progress. A lower ability Year 7 class were working in the computer room using LOGO to research regular polygons. In this lesson the additional support from a learning support teacher and from a member of the computer support staff were central to the very good progress and the high standard of work produced by students. In a few lessons there is insufficient variety in the activities and students spend too long working without a break on routine examples. Although students work conscientiously and get good individual support from the teacher in these lessons, enthusiasm and concentration wane before the end of the lesson. Very little work exploiting ICT was seen during the inspection and the department lacks appropriate resources in ICT to support teaching in the classroom.
150. The department is very well led and managed. There is a clear focus on sustaining and improving the very high levels of achievement through continued development of the curriculum and teaching strategies. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and all the issues raised then have been addressed. Lesson planning is better and teaching has improved. Progress over time is evaluated, but use of assessment could be improved to set more detailed specific targets for students and to keep these targets under review.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very good management is ensuring that appropriate priorities for development have been established
- Teachers stress the development of students' thinking skills
- The teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is leading to confident teaching and the promotion of high standards
- Teacher's good planning of relevant topics motivates the students

Areas for improvement

- Investigative work especially in planning and evaluation and data-logging
- The use of ICT to support learning

151. Standards in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2002. Compared with similar schools the results were average. Since the previous inspection standards have improved although slightly more slowly than the national trend. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above the national average and that of similar schools. Results have continued to improve every year. Science attainment now compares well with other subjects in the school. The single award science results have improved well in the last year.
152. Attainment in work seen was above average in Year 9, and students achieve well given their attainment on entry. Students have a good understanding of scientific concepts and the uses of science in their everyday lives. In some practical tasks they quickly spot relationships, for example in the words of a Year 8 student, 'the further you get from the centre the less weight you need'. However, in more formal investigative work even higher attaining students rarely apply and use the data and information from preliminary experiments. Mostly they work from the teachers' plans. There is too little extended instructional and informative writing, and students do not sufficiently use abstract ideas, for example to give the reasons why metals expand.
153. Attainment in work seen in Year 11 was well above average. Students use theories, patterns in data and models to make predictions and to solve problems. Students collect data and process it very well using mathematical techniques. They are, however, less confident in evaluating the data collected, the procedures used and their sources of information. They understand commercial processes such as baking and current issues such as the use and misuse of finite resources like crude oil. Students' achievement is very good through Years 10 and 11. Most make very good progress because teachers use methods to make students think and probe more deeply for understanding. However, some middle attaining students are over reliant on the teacher especially in coursework. Although the quality of relationships between teachers and students is generally very good, progress is more limited when relationships are not so secure. The use of ICT to support investigations is underdeveloped.
154. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are characterised by very good subject knowledge and understanding and high expectations. Class management skills are very good. There is much effective use of resources, good demonstrations and probing use of questions which encourage the students to think more deeply and to make predictions. In an excellent Year 11 lesson about oil, the teacher discussed concepts such as fractional distillation and viscosity, and enabled the students to understand and take exam questions

thoughtfully and cheerfully in their stride, through the creative use of chocolates and spaghetti! In another very good Year 10 lesson excellent relationships and an imaginative approach ensured very good progress was made. With good use of humour and effective use of language, the teacher compared the bonding possibilities in a mixture of chemicals to 'the meeting of eyes across a crowded room'. Teaching is very well focused on examination requirements. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to develop students' investigative skills through planning and evaluation. Students are rarely involved in self-assessment. Marking by teachers is often too vague to bring about immediate improvement.

155. Leadership and management are very good, and the recently appointed head of department has made a strong impact since his appointment. Appropriate priorities for further improvement have been adopted, and the monitoring of standards and teaching is increasingly effective. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The consistently good and sometimes very good teaching in lessons and the decision to share this good practice to raise standards
- The breadth of the curriculum, which promotes the students' interest and provides opportunities for them to work in two and three dimensions
- The good understanding the new head of department has of the strengths and weaknesses in the department which is helping in the process of planning improvements

Areas for improvement

- To raise the standard of GCSE results to the well above average standards seen at the last inspection
- Improve the planning of the curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 so that all students have a similar learning experience, and are better informed about how well they are doing
- Improve the standards of drawing by ensuring that this aspect of teaching and learning is more effective
- Ensure that all students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, use computers as a tool to make art and manipulate visual images

156. In 2002 GCSE results were a little above average with girls doing better than boys. The number of students who gained grades A* or A was in line with the national average. When compared with their other subjects students did better in art. Comparisons with attainment in similar schools show that students at this school did slightly better indicating that achievement is satisfactory.

157. When students enter the school attainment in art is well below average. By the end of Year 9 students have made good progress and attainment overall is a little above average. During Years 7 to 9 students use a good range of materials and work in both two and three dimensions. Standards vary between these activities. For example attainment in ceramics and three-dimensional work is above average, seen for example in the imaginary palaces project where hand-building techniques are very good. Drawing skills are less good, seen for example in sketchbook work where drawings from observation are frequently superficial and the use of line and tone below average. Students with special educational needs achieve well and there is no significant difference between the attainment of students from different ethnic backgrounds.

158. In the work seen of students in Year 11 standards reflect the teachers' predicted GCSE grades, which indicate there may be some improvement on the 2002 results. The sketchbooks of the highest attaining students contain lively collections of ideas well linked to major projects. For example, one student has a good collection of still life drawings, which are well used as starting points for bigger paintings. All students work in this way, but drawing skills are overall below average. In the sketchbooks of many students, if the superficial decorations were to be removed, little of substance would remain. Painting skills too are below average with even the highest attaining students showing below average ability in the use of paint to describe form. Work in three dimensions is better, for example in the personal space project where the theme of figures within space is explored. Similar weaknesses were seen in the work of Year 10 students, although the recent sketch book drawings made in preparation for large paintings of personal objects show a higher level of skill in both observation and representation.
159. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection examples of good and very good teaching were seen particularly in Years 7 to 9. For example in a Year 9 ceramics lesson the very good teaching of hand-building techniques raised standards and meant that students used them confidently. Lessons are well planned and often with a good introduction which set clear targets, as in a Year 10 lesson where the good introduction helped students to understand that changes in eye level affect their visual perception of a room. Where teaching is less good teachers are not clear enough about what students are to learn. For example, in a project where students make paintings of jungle scenes the approach does not emphasise enough learning about different ways of seeing the world. The teachers of Years 7 to 9 are responsible for devising the details of the curriculum within an overall agreed framework. This means that students taught by different teachers do not necessarily cover similar work. The effect is that students' experiences differ too widely. Teachers give plenty of informal information about how well students are doing which is a good feature of their work. The formal assessment methods used in Years 7 to 9 do not inform students well enough about how well they are doing in relation to the National Curriculum nor is there a formal method of setting short-term targets for improvement. Students enjoy art; they work well in lessons and willingly enter into discussion about their work and, with few exceptions, lessons proceed in an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation.
160. The art department makes a good contribution to the cultural development of students through the work done in class, the displays of art about the school, and by the visits to galleries such as the Tate Britain and Tate Modern. Teachers often refer to the work of artists to help learning but the examples chosen are predominantly from a western tradition and do not reflect the cultural diversity of the students in the school. Students are often asked to research information about artists using computers but there are not enough opportunities for students to use computers as a tool for making and manipulating images, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
161. Overall management is good. The head of department has been in charge since September 2002, and in a short time has assessed the position of the department and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Such plans as the sharing of the good and very good practice in teaching are an indication of how it is intended to address weaknesses. GCSE results have declined in last two years. Indications are that the new head of departments' clarity of vision supported by a team of teachers who have the capacity to improve, will raise standards to the well above average level seen in recent years and at the time of the last inspection.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The thoughtful planning that has been carried out to introduce the subject
- Teaching and learning are very good. Strategies have been developed across the curriculum to enable students to develop skills of enquiry and communication
- The school encourages students to be involved in a wide range of activities both in and outside the school
- The scheme of work provides many opportunities for students to become informed citizens

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and evaluation procedures and the training of staff
- Currently written work is too limited
- Time allocation does not allow topics to be explored in depth

162. Overall, students are achieving above expected standards by the end of both Years 9 and 11. They are attentive and show positive attitudes in class. They have only recently started their courses, but they are making good progress in gaining skills, knowledge and understanding in this new subject.

163. Students show a developing knowledge of the need for rules and order in society and are beginning to identify where conflict may arise, and how these situations can be avoided, whether it be in the family, society generally or in school, for example issues associated with bullying. In one excellent lesson, Year 8 students produced work of high quality on issues involving football violence. In another lesson Year 10 students showed how they can think about issues from a variety of standpoints when they were discussing punishment for criminals. In a Year 11 lesson observed, good progress was made in understanding about the laws relating to social and moral issues such as abortion. Students are learning to express their views clearly on a range of issues. They speak confidently, and debates are lively and explore issues thoroughly as a result. They are prepared to offer views as well as considering the opinions of others. Their written work, however, is rather brief, and as yet does not fully explore the complexity of the issues they study.

164. Teaching and learning are very good overall with some excellent teaching. Teaching styles at present particularly promote debate and discussion building on students' strengths in speaking and listening. In one lesson students were developing writing skills by preparing a newspaper article on football violence. The majority produced work of high quality in the lesson. Teachers involved are secure in subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. A very good learning environment is created in most lessons. This is a new subject within the curriculum and assessment arrangements are tentative and still at the planning stage.

165. The provision in lessons, across the curriculum and in the daily life of the school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. There are separate lessons in citizenship within the personal, social and health education programme. Unfortunately students only receive one lesson a fortnight which restricts the amount of time which can be given to topics. There is some planned coverage of topics in other subjects such as religious education, history, geography and English. In these subjects opportunities have been identified in schemes of work to stress and develop aspects of the subject

which have an impact on the development of an informed citizen. The school and year councils give students an insight into how change is achieved responsibly, and members are careful to represent the views of all students, even if they hold opposing views themselves. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, for example participation in Youth Action and the Beal Improvement Squad, make a substantial contribution to the subject, especially in promoting students' involvement in community-based activities.

166. The subject is well led and the hard working co-ordinator has prepared a good curriculum framework and appropriate materials for teachers. This work builds upon the social education programme which has been in place for many years. The audit carried out has identified many opportunities to develop enquiry and communication skills across the curriculum. As the subject becomes established procedures for assessment and monitoring and the evaluation of teaching and learning will need to be established. These are understandably at the planning stages at the moment. This also applies to the further professional training of teachers in the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards in GCSE examinations are good
- Teaching is of a good quality and teachers have high expectations
- Staff are effectively managed and work well together

Areas for improvement

- There is urgent need to establish the use of ICT, including computer aided designing and making, throughout all years
- Not all aspects of the programme of study for Years 7 to 9 are covered

167. In 2002, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed that 84 per cent of students gained Level 5 or above. These results are well above the national average level and continue a rising trend over the last few years. However, work seen during the inspection does not meet this high standard, and these assessments do not reflect standards as seen, as they are based on an incomplete coverage of the programme of study. Students come into the school with a low level of attainment, but by the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of students is in line with the national average, and some are above, but not to the extent which the teacher assessment figures would suggest. Students' achievements are good through Years 7 to 9.
168. GCSE results for 2001 show that 61 per cent of students gained A* to C grades compared to 50 per cent nationally for all schools. In 2001 the best results were in catering, where almost all students who were entered gained A* to C grades. The unconfirmed results for 2002 improved, with 66 per cent gaining A* to C grades. Results in catering were slightly below the previous year, but those in other areas improved. The majority of students attain results which match their ability. Standards achieved by students currently following examination courses are likely to continue the rising trend as a result of clearly focused teaching and improved schemes of work.
169. In work seen in Year 11, attainment is above average and students achieve well. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls or those with English as an additional language or those from different ethnic groups. Students with special educational needs also achieve well. Students do particularly well in practical

work in food technology lessons where they handle ingredients and equipment with confidence. Some effective work was seen in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson where students produced good design ideas for mechanical toys following clearly structured teaching. In a Year 10 food technology lesson, students were able to apply the skills learnt in the preparation of other food products to the making of sweets. In all specialist areas, some students produce coursework of a very high standard.

170. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students make good progress because of the good teaching and preparation. Much of the teaching was well planned, involved a range of teaching styles and proceeded at a brisk pace. Teachers have high expectations and the students respond well to the challenges set. Although teachers are beginning to develop effective strategies for developing literacy, numeracy and other key skills, these have not been planned for in schemes of work and lesson plans. The use of ICT to support learning is very limited, mainly because of a lack of resources. As a result, statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9 cannot be properly covered. There is an urgent need for the department to plan and implement ways in which computers can be used to enhance students' learning of design and technology, especially computer control. Students in all years should have opportunities to use computer-aided designing and making, as well as other aspects of ICT.
171. Leadership and management are good. The heads of the two departments have made good progress in developing the subject since the last inspection. The fact that there is not one overall co-ordinator has not inhibited progress. A good system of assessment and record keeping has been set up, although there are some differences in detail between the two departments. More use could be made of assessment information when planning subsequent work. Teachers in both departments work well together, and are committed to the care and welfare of all students. Schemes of work have been improved since the last inspection but there should be a re-consideration of the balance of teaching design skills as opposed to making skills, within the available time. Although many tasks develop essential skills, opportunities for open-ended design and make tasks are limited. In addition, homework is not well used to encourage the students to prepare designs at home, so that more practical work can be done in school.
172. Some practical lessons in food technology are rushed, with insufficient time for a group evaluation at the end of a lesson. This is because one single hour lesson does not provide enough time. Resources for the subject are adequate. Rooms used for food and textiles are of a good standard, are bright and attractive and are used well. In craft design and technology, while one room is quite good, two of the workshops are shabby and fail to present an attractive image for the subject, despite the best efforts of the staff to create attractive displays. The mobile classroom used as a workshop is too small for the size of groups using the room. There is still no dedicated room for graphics as was mentioned in the last report. However, the school has worked hard to secure funding to improve the department's accommodation, and workshops are currently undergoing refurbishment and remodelling.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Relationships are very positive, students behave well, work hard and achieve well.
- Teaching resources are good and work very well planned.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to reinforce learning of essential subject vocabulary.
- Strategies to facilitate revision of earlier work.
- Strategies to extend experience of mapping and graphical techniques as already planned
- Marking needs to give students and parents more information about how to raise standards
- Assessment and recording of students' progress needs to be more comprehensive.

173. Standards at GCSE in 2001 were well above those found nationally, and although results in 2002 were lower there has been an improving trend since the last inspection. All students entered gain graded results and a very high proportion gain the higher grades. Girls do better than boys. Well above average standards are achieved at the end of Year 9.

174. In Year 7, on entry, students' skill and knowledge base is average. Students are quickly introduced to geographical concepts and terminology related to land use in their study visits to areas near the school. They use numeracy skills well in audits of traffic flow and environmental quality. They learn how to interpret maps and photographs and annotate geographical field sketches.

175. By Year 9 standards are well above those found nationally, and students achieve very well through Years 7 to 9. Students have good literacy skills and write good descriptive geographical accounts of imaginary visits to New Delhi and to a tea plantation. Lessons cater well for the needs of both higher and lower attaining students. Students in Year 9 use ICT well to research natural features and record human data around maps of countries to be studied. They show an awareness of economic and social differences between developed and less developed countries and can interpret topological maps representing wealth differences. In Year 10, students preparing for GCSE make good progress in response to challenging teaching and varied, interesting, active and well-resourced lessons. Students identify factors encouraging the development of out-of-town retail areas and the social and moral issues involved.

176. Year 11 students make good progress about issues of ecological damage and conflicting interests of the indigenous people and forestry and oil companies working in equatorial Ecuador. Following some fieldwork in Porlock Bay, students produced some high quality work which combined coastal erosion theory with the practical testing of hypotheses, for example by measuring and classifying beach pebbles affected by longshore drift. Students work very well in groups, express themselves with increasing confidence, and draw well on earlier learning.

177. Teaching is consistently very good and characterised by interest, pace and rigour. Students are made to work hard and expectations are very high. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject. They use questions skilfully to check understanding, and always give clear explanations of important ideas. Relationships and behaviour are very good and students' work shows care and effort.

Work is well resourced and activities within lessons are enjoyable and very varied. Students with special educational needs are well supported by learning support assistants and by the careful preparation of work. Lessons are planned with the needs of bilingual students in mind, including those needing support with learning English, ensuring that they learn very well. Plentiful opportunities to learn and consolidate work orally in groups, pairs and especially through role-play are very effective and lead to very good and inclusive learning. Good use is made of ICT to support learning, and relevant homework is set effectively to extend learning. Students particularly value the department website, which they can access from home, and which offers them very good support in their studies.

178. To raise standards further teachers need to reinforce learning of essential vocabulary, facilitate revision of earlier work and extend students' experience of graphical and mapping techniques. Marking needs to be improved to give students and parents more information about attainment and expectations and include advice for making work better. The assessment, monitoring and recording of students' progress is not yet sufficiently developed. The department works well as a team, developing and sharing best practice. Leadership and management of the subject is very good, and there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The improved standards at GCSE, particularly the increased numbers of students attaining the very highest grades
- The popularity of history as an option choice
- The shared commitment of the history department to improvement and to innovation
- The quality of teaching, in particular the use of the enquiry approach

Areas for improvement

- To make effective use of the assessment data being collected in Years 7 to 9

179. The students' performance at GCSE over the past three years has been well above the national average and has particularly improved at the very highest grades of A* and A. In 2002 student performance was still well above the national average despite having fallen from the impressive results in 2001. This is the result of the very good teaching by a strong team of history teachers. The subject is a very popular option choice and boys and girls are achieving similar standards.
180. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work confirm that the standards of work being achieved by students in the current Years 10 and 11 are also well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement over the two years of the course for all students, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. What all students can do well is to describe historical features such as the reactions to the Treaty of Versailles. Middle and higher attaining students are able to analyse and then explain complex historical issues such as whether the treaty was a fair settlement of the First World War. Students are particularly good at using historical sources such as cartoons to explore the attitudes of people at the time and teaching focuses on helping students to support their arguments with accurate historical detail. The relative weakness in the work of lower attaining students is their failure to clearly explain their ideas, something that teachers recognise and work on by providing many opportunities for discussion.

181. The standards of work achieved by the students in the current Year 9 are well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Students of all abilities demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding, such as Year 8 students' written explanations of the causes of the English Civil War. Students demonstrate an increasing ability to understand the motives of people such as why Bert Stevens joined up in 1914 and why later on in the First World War some men were conscientious objectors to fighting.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Strong features of the most effective teaching are the good relationships between teachers and students. Teachers' planning is a strong feature, both of individual lessons and of a series of lessons. For example in a Year 10 lesson the teacher deliberately presented pairs of students with conflicting interpretations of the Treaty of Versailles. This then led to a good discussion and good learning as they were helped to see both sides of the argument. The very best teaching is also characterised by very sharp questioning which forces students to refine their thinking and to more carefully explain their ideas. At GCSE the teachers' knowledge of the syllabus enables them to prepare students very well for their examinations; the focus on giving students the historical information and then forcing them to think very hard about it is very good practice. Students enjoy this challenging teaching, as did the students in a Year 11 lesson who considered four very difficult sources concerning the reactions to Nazi power in Germany in the 1930s and 40s. The relative weakness within teaching is where the teacher's explanation lacks clarity or focus.
183. The leadership of history is very good. There have been a number of very good improvements since the last inspection, most notably the improved examination results from the increasingly high numbers opting for history at GCSE. Other improvements have been made to the system for assessing students' work in Years 7 to 9 and the department is now beginning to make effective use of this information. The current schemes of work, particularly at GCSE, give effective guidance to all those teaching history and specify the expectations for student attainment at each level of ability. Other significant improvements have been made in the use of ICT, in the provision of suitable activities and materials for lower attaining students and in developing the literacy skills of all students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Enthusiastic and effective teaching is leading to good achievement, particularly at GCSE
- Access to ICT resources in the library and elsewhere outside formal lesson time is good
- Students use the computing and Internet resources responsibly

Areas for improvement

- The allocation of time devoted to ICT in Year 7
- Training for teachers to use ICT effectively in all subjects
- The implementation of a plan to ensure the progressive development of skills across all subjects in Years 8 to 11
- The assessment and monitoring of students' progress

184. Standards obtained in the two GCSE courses (Information Studies and ICT) are above average, with 94 per cent of students gaining grades A* to C in 2002. Achievement by Year 7 students in specialist ICT lessons over the short time that they had been in the school is good given their wide range of levels of prior attainment on joining the school.
185. Teacher assessments of students at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are well below the national average overall. This matches the level of work seen during the inspection. Low standards are a result of too little time being devoted to ICT in Year 7 and the lack of co-ordinated provision for students in Years 8 and 9 in other subjects. Only lower attaining students in Years 8 and 9, who are not studying a second foreign language take a key skills course in ICT. Most others have a patchy experience of ICT in subjects across the curriculum. However, students' overall achievement through Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, given the patchy experience they receive. In Year 7, students are able to investigate problems associated with a fictitious village using simple ICT tools such as wordprocessing, spreadsheets and a database. Key skills students in Year 8 can interrogate a database of home accidents and test simple hypotheses. In Year 9 students can design a questionnaire and use presentation software to create a promotional display for a new product. Higher attaining students show more independence in the way they work and complete tasks faster than other students but are not always sufficiently challenged by the tasks or software available. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where students were able to create regular shapes using Logo as part of a mathematics lesson. Higher attaining students were focusing more on their manipulative skills in ICT rather than on those requiring mathematical thinking.
186. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 11, other than those achieved by GCSE students, are average. The Key Skills ICT course does not run throughout Years 10 and 11 and does not on its own fulfil National Curriculum requirements. Although students achieve good results in this limited course, they are not given the opportunity to reach higher levels of attainment which they should be acquiring through a co-ordinated cross-curricular programme. As a result, students' achievements overall through Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory. Although students in English, history, physical education and geography cover some aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT through project work, this is neither co-ordinated nor progressive.
187. The quality of teaching and learning in specialist ICT lessons throughout Years 7 to 11 is good. High expectations and a good pace which strongly motivated the students were all features of lessons observed. Students make good progress in most lessons and strenuous efforts are made to ensure that the lower attaining students and those with English as an additional language achieve maximum benefit. Teachers are aware of the possibility of students without access to computers falling behind, and provision is made for them to use the extensive school facilities after school or in the lunch break. In GCSE groups, teachers show a good level of planning and preparation and are well organised. Clear objectives are set and there are good opportunities for students to work both collaboratively and independently. This was evident in a Year 11

lesson observed where students were accessing the Internet to answer questions relating to aspects of the 1998 Data Protection Act.

188. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in most subjects is unsatisfactory and, in some subjects, not compliant with statutory requirements. The exceptions observed were in geography, history and English, but little use is made of ICT in both mathematics and science. The English department is collaborating with the ICT staff to develop skills in publishing for different audiences and to use ICT to support creative writing and the art of précis. There are well-considered plans to develop the use of ICT across the curriculum further as training for teachers concludes during this academic year.
189. Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. Much has been achieved since the last inspection, but progress on a number of issues remains unsatisfactory. While the monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the discrete ICT classes, it is unsatisfactory when ICT is used across the curriculum. A systematic approach for assessing students' ICT work in other subjects is yet to be implemented. Statutory requirements for ICT are still not being met. While there has been considerable investment in upgrading the quantity and quality of ICT resources, this has not been matched by effective planning of the curriculum. Technical support is of a high standard.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students are prepared very well for tests and examinations
- High levels of comprehension
- The commitment to learning by students, particularly on examination courses
- Good or very good teaching in half of the lessons

Areas for improvement

- Sharing, and learning from, the best practice in the department
- Resources for reading
- Opportunities for extended writing
- More rigorous assessment systems, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- The use of new technology and authentic materials

190. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate standards well above national averages. The percentage of students who obtained GCSE A* to C grades in their GCSE examinations was well above the national average in 2002. The proportion of A* and A grades is significantly above average for both boys and girls. In these examinations, 60 per cent of the year group was entered for French and 11 per cent for German. Students do slightly less well in French than in their other subjects.
191. Following a radical diversification of language provision, students now study French or German in Year 7, with Spanish or Latin offered as a second language in Year 8. In the current Year 9 the second language is German or Latin. Approximately one fifth of the year group does not continue with the study of a language in Years 10 and 11.
192. Despite the levels of attainment indicated in teacher assessments, standards in the current Year 9 classes are variable, but overall in line with what is expected. Students' achievements are satisfactory. The levels achieved are very closely linked to the quality

of teaching in each class. In both languages, most students know basic structures and have assimilated a suitable range of vocabulary. The most competent students are using irregular verbs and can use the perfect tense. All students can express likes and dislikes using simple phrases that they have memorised. They appreciate the need for agreement between subject and verb and adjectives with nouns. In listening they pick out key words. Most teachers are showing students how to respond to questions, but there is uncertainty when they have to initiate a dialogue. Accents are generally sound, but become anglicised when reading aloud from a text. In writing, there are insufficient opportunities to explore language, particularly in the lower sets. There is a heavy concentration on practising a specific construction but not enough emphasis on using the skills acquired in structured or imaginative writing. The strongest element in both languages is comprehension, where students are able to use inference and contextual clues to good effect. The progress of students with special educational needs is variable. Those in Year 8 are making very good progress, but expectations dip in Year 9 so that progress is only satisfactory. The timetable structure does not help, since students are sometimes withdrawn for extra literacy support and one lesson is taught by a non-specialist. Students from Asian backgrounds perform particularly well. Their serious approach to all aspects of learning ensures that they make good progress.

193. Standards begin to rise quite rapidly in Year 10, and overall standards are above average in Year 11. At this stage most students achieve well. Most students who choose to continue with their study of a language show a real desire to learn. They often have a very mature approach, helping out teachers if explanations are unclear. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 French lesson conducted at a brisk pace, where the students' contributions had a significant impact on learning. In lower sets, some students are submissive, and show little zest for learning. Nevertheless, high standards are achieved by most students in all areas of learning. There is still some uncertainty when conversations move away from a standard format. Extended writing often follows a formula. Students then produce accurate language. When teachers are more ambitious, much more exciting writing materialises. For example, Year 10 students produce imaginative fairy stories. One writes about 'le lutin mauvais qui a été amoureux de la fée'. The stories of such students show their ability to express ideas, and use idiom: such as 'Il a eu la gueule du bois'. In Year 11, imaginative language bursts through in 'Projets d'avenir' and subjects such as 'A day in the life of a working mother' provide opportunities to use a full range of tenses and vocabulary in interesting ways. The writing in German is more mundane, with lots of practice in letter writing and translation from German into English. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress.
194. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Inspection evidence shows that composition skills still require greater emphasis in Years 7 to 9 and that higher attainers have yet to be stretched in all classes to fulfil their potential in both speaking and writing. Standards in German are now more variable than at the time of the last inspection.
195. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Planning is thorough and all teachers tease out previous knowledge to support current learning. The overriding focus in many lessons is on requirements for unit tests or public examinations. Teachers provide detailed guidance to support students through these. When this predominates, fewer opportunities exist to manipulate language. The heavy concentration on course book material is sometimes a limiting factor. The scarcity of up-to-date reading matter, authentic texts, videos and software is leading to a relatively narrow diet. In the most effective lessons, teachers judge the pace extremely well. They know when to move on to the next phase of the lesson and use different approaches throughout the lesson. In

a very good French lesson in Year 8, the teacher used the overhead projector to stimulate interest, then moved on to a 'sondage' to extend speaking skills with the requirement that students used complex sentence structures. In a Year 8 lesson for students with special educational needs the value of strong relationships allied to a sense of fun, produced systematic gains in learning. In another Year 8 class, the story element (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs) left students enraptured. The teacher's use of diagrams and drawings – with appropriate asides – also helped to enliven the lesson. Some teachers approach lessons with lower sets more tentatively. It is rare for students to create any form of disruption, although some girls in a Year 9 German class were persistently inattentive. In less effective lessons, questioning often revolves around a few students and teachers talk too much, frequently using English. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, learning was spasmodic, and the potential of competent students was not realised. The department does not set specific targets for students with special educational needs. Homework is set regularly and enhances learning, particularly in GCSE classes.

196. The students play a leading role in the success of many lessons. They have a desire to learn and their enthusiasm is infectious. Choral repetition of key words is almost always accurate and clear. Many students ask questions when they are unsure or wish to extend their own knowledge. For instance, students in Year 10 were keen to understand the change in accents that occur in verbs like 'préférer' or why the teacher kept saying 'bonne idée.' In Spanish, students from the sixth form and Years 10 and 11 support one another in a successful mentoring scheme.
197. The new schemes of work are systematic and helpful. However, they are not yet tied in to a rigorous assessment system. This has been identified as a key area for development, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Some teachers provide solid information to help students to improve, but some mark in a cursory manner.
198. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New routines are being established through the revised management framework recently introduced. The head of department is now supported by three heads of subject, and teamwork is developing. Examination results are analysed thoroughly. The impact on standards is satisfactory with the capacity for consistent improvement clearly evident. Some classroom displays are informative and some exhibit students' work. Classrooms are carpeted and acoustics good. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to France, Germany and Spain. Twenty students recently visited Pompeii. There are burgeoning pen-friend links with the Vallée du Loir college.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The department has very good examination results
- The teachers' very good subject knowledge
- There are excellent opportunities for students to make music together.

Areas for improvement

- ICT opportunities are being missed through lack of equipment
- Year 9 assessments would benefit from moderation using exemplar material chosen from students' work

199. The 2002 teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 are above the national average, with girls doing better than boys. Inspection evidence, however, indicates that attainment is in line with the national expectations and recent teacher training is now helping to ensure that assessment levels are more accurate. The attainment of students in GCSE examinations is well above average and this represents very good progress over time for the wide range of students, including those with special educational needs, who choose to do music as one of their options. Trends in the GCSE results have remained well above average over the past three years due to skilled teaching and the commitment of students.
200. The standard of work seen in Year 9 was in line with the national average. Students' achievements are good, given the attainment of students on entry in Year 7. Students make good progress in improvising, composing, singing and appraising their work through Years 7 to 9. Standards of students in Year 11 are well above the national average, and their achievements are very good as a result of the very effective and motivating teaching. Higher attaining students in particular are making very good progress as a consequence of good planning and high expectations. Many students play instruments and sing to a high standard in the many extra-curricular activities run by the department. There is very little difference between the achievement of boys and girls, and students of all ethnic backgrounds make similar progress.
201. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully and learning objectives are made explicit, so that students know what they have to do to meet their targets. Students in Year 7 know the musical elements well and confidently devise their own four-bar compositions. Year 8 students sing with enjoyment and are able to discuss musical concepts such as imitation, tempo and dynamics. Higher attaining students in Year 9 successfully improve their songs and perform them with accuracy to their peers. However, lower attaining students need more help and support. Homework is effectively used to support the work that is being done in the lesson. Students have limited access to ICT and this is holding back standards, particularly in compositional techniques. Work is assessed regularly and performances are recorded. There is good use of musical language in lessons with key words and assessment levels being used and displayed in the music rooms.
202. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11. This is largely due to the high expectations of the teachers and high levels of motivation on the part of the students. Year 11 students talk confidently and enthusiastically about their work. Their instrumental and singing skills are good, in many cases encouraged by the teaching provided by visiting instrumental teachers. In one excellent lesson observed, the students were preparing for the forthcoming mock examination. They demonstrated a very high standard of playing and an awareness of audience and venue. Critical listening and appraisal skills are good. Students are competent in their use of computer software for composing, arranging and editing their work. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is effective.
203. There is a very good range of extra-curricular musical opportunities, and many students take advantage of these to develop their musical skills in different contexts. Several students take part in local and national events and the annual concert tour

abroad is much valued. The music department makes a very strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

204. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teaching is monitored regularly and good practice shared. Development planning is well considered. However, ICT resources are inadequate to allow routine access for all students and particularly those in Years 7 to 9. The accommodation is adequate although cramped at times and there is a wide selection of learning resources, including library books and CDs. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE results over the four previous years have been in line or above the national average
- Teaching is good so students make good progress
- Assessment procedures are very good
- Students' attitudes are very good
- Leadership and management of the department are good
- Provision of extra-curricular activities is very good

Areas for improvement

- Ensure continuity of teaching in order to improve attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Schemes of work to promote planned opportunities for teaching the evaluative strand of the National Curriculum, literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Improve the cleanliness of the gymnasium and sports hall
- Provide another indoor facility in order to accommodate the increasing number of students

205. GCSE results in 2001 were well above national averages for grades A* to C and students' results, compared with other subjects in the school, were on average a little higher. Provisional results in 2002 were lower with 66 per cent of students attaining A* to C grades and 33 per cent attaining grade D. The proportion of higher grades has gradually risen since the last inspection, when it was in line with the national average. Students' achievement over time is good, in relation to their average attainment in physical education at the end of Year 9.

206. The present GCSE students are attaining above average standards. The presentation of written work of higher attaining students is very good. They draw detailed diagrams and organise their files very effectively. Most students use ICT to produce graphs, tables and charts to illustrate their analytical investigations into athletic performance. This course work is very well planned and structured. Initial marking by teachers gives students clear indications of how they can improve. The majority of Year 11 students have a good knowledge of the circulatory system and they are able to answer examination questions accurately with an understanding of how much information is required for each question. Students are divided into three ability groups for theory lessons and this allows lower attaining students to work at an appropriate pace and level.

207. Students in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes attain above average standards. Several students in Year 11, both boys and girls, perform to an exceptional standard when playing basketball. Most students in the Year 10 trampoline group are

able to perform basic bounces, some with half turns, and link movements into a simple routine. Students' analytical and evaluative skills are not well developed and there is a lack of guidance in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in the schemes of work.

208. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is average. This represents good progress because students' attainment on entry, in Year 7, is below average. This is the result of students' lack of experience in some areas of the National Curriculum before joining the school, for example in basketball, netball and gymnastics. Boys in Year 9 understand and are able to perform basic rugby moves but when playing in a small game their skills lack speed and consistency. Year 8 boys co-operate very well to plan group sequences in gymnastics, but many boys lack body tension and control in their movements. A minority of Year 9 girls do not have secure footwork when playing netball and many lack speed about the court. In basketball, boys and girls are developing good shooting, dribbling and footwork skills and their attainment in this activity is above average. Students have good knowledge of health and fitness and are able to warm up and stretch independently and effectively by the end of Year 9. Students gain this knowledge in their fitness lessons and through teachers' insistence on warm-up activities at the start of every lesson.
209. A few individual students and teams achieve very high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, basketball, netball, cricket, dance and football. The attainment of these talented students is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the very good opportunities offered by their teachers. The numbers of students who attend extra-curricular activities and the increased numbers taking the examinations demonstrate the very positive attitudes and involvement of students in the subject.
210. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall, and this promoted good learning in the majority of lessons. In the most effective lessons, students benefit in their learning because a wide variety of challenging tasks are set and very good relationships have been established with students. Students of all levels of prior attainment make good progress because teachers divide the whole group into smaller ability groups and students work on appropriate tasks with others of similar ability. One boy from the support unit was excellently integrated into a basketball lesson and two students with special educational needs were well supported in a theory lesson. All made good progress because of the support and dedication of the teachers and learning assistants. Teachers go over previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the students. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give students a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. This is particularly effective with students who are at the early stages of language development and ensures their progress is similar to that of others in the group. In less successful lessons, teachers focus on students' performance skills and managing the activity rather than including an observation and feedback task. The department develops literacy skills in their indoor lessons where key words and objectives are frequently displayed but ways of developing numeracy and ICT are not as regularly used. Schemes of work do not yet reflect these initiatives or include any reference to risk assessment.
211. The head of department was absent at the time of the inspection. However, her good leadership continues to be upheld by the acting head of department. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The number of lessons in which teaching is good or very good has increased and the attainment of students is now higher in Years 10 and 11. Very thorough assessment procedures have been developed to link with National

Curriculum levels. Very good links are being developed with local primary schools by the acting head of department. The indoor facilities have not been cleaned adequately, and at the time of the inspection they were dirty, dusty and the floor surfaces were unfit for barefoot work. The room most used for theory lessons does not have any computers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- High standards in the full GCSE course
- The good quality of teaching and the very secure subject knowledge of teachers
- The very good input into students' personal development
- Positive attitudes shown by a significant number of students

Areas for improvement

- Marking is not always regular and some teachers do not give adequate written guidance to help students to improve their work
- While religious education levels are now used there is a lack of consistency in their use and in methods of recording data
- There is very limited contact with the wide range of faith communities in the area of the school

212. In 2002 GCSE results were well above the national average. Girls attained at a higher level than the boys, but the boys' results were above the national average for boys. Over the last four years standards attained have been consistently high and above national averages. In 2002 results achieved in the short GCSE course, at the higher A/B grades were below the national average. In previous years, when fewer students were entered, results were much higher.

213. By the end of Year 9, attainment is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents good achievement in relation to students' standards on entry to the school in Year 7. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of books show that a significant majority can think about the topics they are studying and they are aware of the significance of symbolism in religion. They possess good knowledge of the beliefs, values and traditions of worship of the major world faiths. Students display empathy and understanding of the reasons for religious practices and are always prepared to offer opinions and listen to their peers respectfully. This was observed in lessons on how Buddhists tackle suffering and the changing attitudes to women in Christianity. Significant numbers of students take pride in the presentation of their work.

214. Lesson observations and scrutiny of books show that attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the national average for those students following the full GCSE course. Current students are achieving well in relation to their predicted grades. They can carry out research tasks and write in a variety of formats. They have good speaking and listening skills. This was seen in a GCSE lesson, when they were examining Christian and Islamic viewpoints on stewardship of God's world. By the end of the short course GCSE standards overall are below the national average. Students are only making satisfactory progress and not achieving the much higher standards of which they are capable. Books show a good knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and concepts, for example, religious values and beliefs associated with the nature of truth and spirituality and the attitudes of Muslims and Christians to the protection of the environment.

215. Teaching and learning overall are good with some very good practice. Lessons are well planned and teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. Expectations are high and teachers use an appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies to assist learning. A good example was observed in a lesson when a stilling exercise was used to link imagination with creativity. Clear learning objectives are set and attention is given to meeting individual needs. Students are expected to think and develop enquiry skills. They respond well to this approach and a significant majority are willing to offer their opinions and answer questions. Learning is also aided by the fact that students are attentive and sustain their concentration in lessons. Relationships are good and students respect the views of their peers and teachers. Speaking and listening are encouraged and a range of extended writing tasks is provided. Some books, however, have not been marked up to date, and while some teachers provide detailed and helpful comments to assist students to improve the quality of their work, this is not consistent practice. In the best lessons students were challenged and opportunities given for group discussion work. In a lesson examining the role of women in Christianity very good use was made of a television comedy to develop understanding of changing attitudes. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make equal progress to that of other students. Learning over time is only satisfactory in the short GCSE course. In a very small percentage of lessons teaching was less than satisfactory and this was the result of lack of clarity in explanation, slow pace and weaker classroom management skills.
216. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and teachers work very well as a team. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and there is now much greater coherence in what is being taught and in the assessment of students' work. Religious education levels have been introduced and recording of assessed data is carried out. Procedures currently lack consistency and this restricts the effective use of data. The department is well resourced and has created an effective learning environment, but very little use is made of local faith communities to widen students' appreciation of different religions. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although the low amount of time allocated to the short GCSE course is adversely influencing the standards achieved. Religious education makes a very significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There has been good improvement since the last inspection both in standards and students' achievement. While some monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out the department would benefit from sharing best practice more widely.

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 AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	9	44	62	0	15	0.9	1.5
Biology	4	25	52	0	2	0.5	0.8
Geography	1	100	74	0	6	2.0	1.2
French	1	100	78	0	13	2.0	1.6

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	47	83	87	32	43	4.7	5.8
Biology	34	88	88	21	34	4.6	5.2
Chemistry	41	85	90	32	43	5.2	5.9
Design and technology	7	100	91	14	30	6.3	5.4
Business Studies	18	100	92	6	32	3.8	5.5
Economics	10	60	89	30	36	3.6	5.5
Computer Studies	28	71	86	14	23	3.4	4.6
Sports/PS Studies	11	82	92	18	25	4.5	5.1
Art and design	10	100	96	80	46	8.6	6.6
Communication Studies	32	100	93	16	31	5.2	5.5
Geography	6	100	92	50	38	6.3	5.7
History	24	100	88	38	35	6.4	5.4
English Language	18	83	91	11	30	3.7	5.3
English Literature	15	80	95	47	37	5.1	5.9
French	5	100	89	80	38	8.4	5.6
German	3	100	91	33	40	6.7	5.8

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. Physics was also sampled. Two physics lessons were seen. As a result of very good teaching students made very good progress. Excellent relationships and high levels of challenge are ensuring that students are learning in a very good atmosphere.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good
- Students are well motivated, work hard and have good relationships with their teachers
- The subject is well managed and good practice is shared effectively

Areas for improvement

- The AS results could be improved
- The development of the use of ICT to support learning

215. A-level examination results in 2001 were below the national average. 83 per cent of students entered achieved a pass grade and 32 per cent achieved an A or B grade. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 2002 the results improved marginally with 89 per cent achieving a pass grade and 29 per cent achieving an A or B grade. There was no significant difference in the performance of students of different ethnic origins. In the AS level examination in 2002, 76 per cent achieved a grade and 22 per cent an A or B grade.

216. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average and better than recent examination results would indicate. Much work seen was of a high standard and results in 2003 are likely to improve further. In Year 13 students' good algebraic skills enable them to cope with the demands of the differentiation and integration parts of the course. The clarity of diagrams in mechanics is good and indicates good levels of understanding. In Year 12 students also understand the early stages of differentiation and integration. In statistics, students answer probability questions confidently. Students are making good progress because of the effective and supportive teaching. Boys and girls do equally well.

217. The quality of teaching and learning is good and in some lessons very good. Lessons are well planned, and the pace at which the work is undertaken is well matched to the needs of individual students. In the most effective lessons teachers asked probing questions to involve the students themselves in solving problems. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They give clear explanations and relevant examples where appropriate. For example, in a Year 12 statistics lesson the teacher used the example of three subjects some of the students were studying to construct a Venn diagram. The clear diagram and good discussion helped the students' understanding and ability to solve probability questions. Year 12 students were able to draw force diagrams because of clear practical demonstration and explanation. In a Year 13 pure mathematics lesson the teacher's concise derivation of the integration by parts formula together with a step-by-step example gave students very good guidance on using this method of integration. They were then able to practise the method successfully themselves. Teachers adapt well to students' needs in lessons. In a Year 13 lesson,

the teacher adopted a seminar style to the lesson to maximise confidence building for weaker students in the group.

218. The students work hard and are committed to achieving high standards. They co-operate well with their teachers. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of questions which test the students' understanding. The challenging nature of some of these written questions helps to develop the students' capacity for independent learning. Homework is set regularly together with tests and examination questions. The tests and examination questions are marked in a sufficiently detailed way to help the students make progress in their understanding. Some students use graphical calculators but there is little other use of ICT. Students are aware of their progress and predicted grades and recognise and appreciate the support given by the teachers. Relationships between the students and with the teachers are very good.
219. The sixth-form work is well managed. Staff co-operate in the planning and work well together under the good leadership of the head of department. Teachers know individual students' strengths and weaknesses well. The curriculum for sixth-form mathematics is well planned and meets the needs of the students. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory. All the issues in the last report have been tackled.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The quality of marking is encouraging good progress
- The head of department is keen to develop a management role and to improve progress
- High quality relationships between teachers and student create an atmosphere in which learning thrives
- Effective channels of communication encourage a good sense of teamwork

Areas for development

- Standards in A-level examinations
- Increased levels of intellectual challenge and application for higher attaining students
- Students' skills in explaining hypotheses and in justifying experimental method
- Sharper identification of learning targets for individual students from charting their progress specifically in biology

220. A-level results in 2001 were below average at grades A and B but in line with national figures at grades A to E. Standards, overall, were average, as they have been since 1998. The average points scored by boys were very slightly higher than those of girls. The number of students studying biology in 2001 increased to almost double that of 1998; only a small proportion did not achieve a pass grade. In 2002, results at grades A to E were better than the previous year. Only two students failed to pass the examination. However, results at the higher A/B grades were lower than in 2001. AS results, overall, were average in 2001. In 2002, results improved slightly. However, the number of ungraded candidates was significantly high. As a result, the department is now demanding a higher entry requirement for the A-level biology course.
221. Standards of work of the current Year 13 are broadly average. Students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE grades. The progress they make is linked to the quality of teaching. For instance, students were seen to make very good progress in calculating features offspring would derive from their parents with special characteristics, because

they were constantly involved in explaining ideas about co-dominant genes themselves. Analysis of their investigations into sand dune ecology shows that the best work makes hypotheses explicit, conclusions consistent with results and, good, critical evaluations. Generally, there is competent application of statistics when investigating a relationship between density of marram grass and the age of sand dunes. On the other hand, several students have difficulty clearly justifying their choice of apparatus and methods used to control variables. There is scope for developing skills of argument.

222. Students in Year 12 were only a little way into their course at the time of the inspection. Currently, achievement is satisfactory. They are successfully moving on from their GCSE work into new areas, when their teacher's knowledge about what they now need to learn is strong. Students made very good progress in learning more about the activities of enzymes as they deepened their knowledge about ripening fruit. This happened because their teacher deftly built upon their questions and answers as they considered the industrial manufacture of fruit juice. The quality of learning was further enriched by their keen drive to learn and test the theory. However, the depth at which topics are treated varies between teachers. Analysis of work illustrates that students have good opportunities to learn about scientific method. Skills of planning are developing but need more emphasis. Students also need to penetrate more sharply fundamental ideas about biology when explaining their hypotheses.
223. Teaching is good overall, although the quality of teaching seen ranged from very good to satisfactory. This is reflected in the quality of students' learning. Very good teaching used specialist knowledge well in asking perceptive questions and making interesting explanations. In these lessons, students were constantly involved in brisk and lively exchanges with their teacher. Together they generated enjoyment in the subject. For example, everyone enjoyed watching a Year 13 student explaining the features a chick would have as a result of a mating between birds with startlingly different feathers. Learning thrived in this happy atmosphere. The student cemented his understanding by having to explain his ideas to a very interested class. Year 12 students made significant strides in their learning about investigative methods, because their teacher effectively used her assessment of their previous performance in planning a successful lesson. Again, all done with good humour. High attaining students, however, are not sufficiently intellectually challenged. Learning is further impoverished for some students by narrow teaching methods, too little use of imaginative visual examples and repetition of ideas similarly dealt with earlier. Generally, lessons too rarely have an interesting ending with enough time to think about what has been learnt. Marking is constructive and consistent. The best practice is a strength. It gives students clear indications about how well they are progressing and, in encouraging further progress, gives them cause for thought. Checks that students act upon comments that help their improvement need to be made by all teachers.
224. The subject is well led and managed by a temporary head of biology, only recently in post. Nevertheless, there is a strong commitment to quickly improve standards. New biology teachers are supported well. Key initiatives, in numeracy and individual support for students, currently underway, have already had a positive effect upon their achievement. Communication within the department, through the fortnightly 'Biology Bulletin' for teachers and notice boards for students, makes a strong contribution towards raising standards. The department is beginning to actively evaluate its own performance, although it is not yet used to identifying specific learning targets, in biology, for students. It also has yet to consistently chart the progress of individuals based upon the GCSE points score they achieved in science and, across the teaching groups. Although not generously resourced, the curriculum is enriched through visits to high profile exhibitions and by residential field work in Wales.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers promote very good learning, based on developing the ability of students to think critically about the subject, evaluate evidence and solve problems
- Very good relationships between students, and between students and teachers, mean that lessons are a voyage of discovery in which all those present share as equal partners
- The school has chosen an excellent course, and has supplemented it with additional activities where necessary to meet the needs of students

Areas for improvement

- More use of detailed lesson planning would help teachers to support all students and especially those who find the subject difficult, or who are especially able
- Teachers should work with students to improve the quality of written communication, to help them to write better notes on their work, and do justice to themselves in examinations
- The department should extend the range of opportunities to use ICT to help students to learn even more effectively

225. At the beginning of Year 12 standards are slightly below average. Students make good progress so that their results in AS and A-level examinations are in line with national figures. Nearly all students gain an A-level grade at the end of two years, and about a third gain the highest grades, A or B. Their results are also better than expected from their GCSE grades in a range of subjects. The number of students choosing chemistry has varied considerably since the last inspection, but the department has taken steps to improve motivation and there are clear signs of improving results. Very few students drop out of the course. They say that they enjoy their lessons and feel that they are making good progress.

226. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average, higher than recent examination results. This is because of the increasingly very good teaching and the commitment to work hard shown by all students. Students achieve well through the course. In lessons, learning is very good, and students make very good progress. A new course has captured their interest, and teachers use very good material from other courses to help students to gain a real insight into the subject. Superb work was seen in lessons in which students were coming to an understanding of how standard electrode potentials can be used to make predictions about test tube reactions, for example. Very good discussions with the teacher, both one to one and collectively, mean that understanding improves quickly and achievement is very good.

227. Teaching overall is very good, and one excellent lesson was seen. Teachers base their lessons on the excellent principle that very good understanding of the ideas behind the subject makes learning facts easier. Students make their own notes, which makes them think carefully about the subject, and evaluate carefully the evidence they are collecting in order to solve problems. Teachers are very supportive and create a partnership which leads to an atmosphere of mutual support and enthusiasm for the subject. These features are inherent in the new course which is based on the relationships between the uses of chemistry in all our lives, and the underlying ideas which provide the basis for understanding. Teachers have an infectious enthusiasm for their subject and can answer questions from students very well, making a good teaching point from even the most unexpected ideas. This was seen in a very good

lesson where students working on redox reactions of vanadium discussed the reasons why transition metal compounds, though brightly coloured, would make poor dyes. And in an excellent lesson on aromatic compounds, students were challenged to think carefully about how an understanding of reaction mechanisms helps them to explain unusual reactions.

228. In their written work, students also show their good understanding in the problems they solve. However, their skills in writing notes which will help them to study for examinations are generally underdeveloped, and working on these skills would materially improve their ability to gain the best grades. Some excellent use of ICT, by a group of Year 12 students working on reaction kinetics, showed how presentation skills can be improved, but use of computers is an area which the head of department has rightly identified as an area for development.
229. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The new head of science has already produced a very good handbook and skilfully communicates his approach to learning to his staff. Very good schemes of work are in place, based on a new course which is taken by all students. He has worked with colleagues to draw up a development plan which identifies appropriate areas for improvement, including the need to support the most able students. Students themselves enjoy the subject and feel that they are well supported. The new course, very good teaching with a common approach, and enthusiastic staff mean that the subject is well placed to build further on the good progress made since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management, which gives a clear direction to the subject
- The quality of teaching which leads to good achievement by students
- Visits which extend students' understanding

Areas for improvement

- The department does not teach computer-aided manufacture, the use of which could help to raise standards
- The inclusion of design and technology as an option in Years 10 and 11, results in too few students with the required background from which to draw Year 12 students

230. Provision in design and technology caters for 15 students in Years 12 and 13 who take graphics at AS and A-level, and two Year 12 students who take hospitality and catering GNVQ.
231. In the 2001 and 2002 AS examinations, all students gained an A to E grade, but no students gained an A/B grade in 2002, which is a decline from 2001. In the 2002 new A2 examination, all students gained a pass grade, but no student gained a high grade. They nevertheless achieve well. For example, in the A2 examination, half the students achieved above their predicted grade, while the others achieved that grade. In the hospitality and catering course, results have declined from 2001, when all students gained a merit, but the very small numbers who sat the examination are too small to be

statistically significant. These students also achieved well. Students from different ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language achieve well.

232. Standards overall in work seen are below average. Standards in graphics are average in Year 13. In Year 12, although the standard of work produced is average, the amount of work produced by most students is insufficient and results in a level of attainment that is well below that expected. In addition, not all students took a graphics course at GCSE, therefore many have a low base of skills. Year 13 graphics students have good research skills. For example, an investigation into roller coasters covered all aspects, including the underlying physics theories. Their work is well presented, and they make good use of ICT. For example, one student is developing a website for prospective entrants to the school. Their making skills are sound. Standards are above average in hospitality and catering. Students plan, make and evaluate well. For example, a well thought out contingency plan was prepared when catering for a Halloween dinner.
233. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. All teaching is based on very good subject knowledge, and an enthusiasm for the subject, which transfers to the students. Lessons are well planned, which results in much being covered. For example, in one imaginative lesson, the workshop was transformed into a wooden stick workshop, where students had to produce a finished product. Through this they learnt quality assurance and control, as well as stock control in a practical way. Questioning is very good, probing to make students think around a problem. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson, when the purpose of a leaflet holder was explored, until the student realised the deficiencies of his original design. Teachers facilitate students' independent learning, which is essential for their success.
234. Students' attitude to learning is positive in Year 13, and in the Year 12 hospitality and catering class. This leads both to increased productivity and improved performance. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, areas that had been discussed the previous day had been seriously considered by the students themselves, and changes made to designs. However, many students in Year 12 graphics have a negative attitude to learning. Although they participate well in lessons, they do very little at home, and this has a serious effect on the amount of work produced. Their independent learning skills are currently weak. However, the attitude of one Year 12 student was exemplary when his catering partner was not present. He quietly and confidently changed the original plan, and produced a well-presented lunch for inspectors on time!
235. The design and technology subjects of graphics and food operate as separate departments. They are both well led and managed, but the lack of liaison means that best practice is not shared. In both areas, there is a very clear direction for the subject, exemplified in the development plans. Assessment is detailed and comprehensive. Visits, such as to a carrier bag factory, add considerably to students' understanding of manufacture. The department does not have the equipment for computer-aided manufacture, which would assist students in their making skills. The department also does not have a designated graphics room, which was noted in the last report. This is a basic facility to enable the students to reach high standards.

BUSINESS

The focus was on the A-level business courses; however, one GNVQ intermediate class was sampled. The department offers both the AVCE advanced and the GNVQ intermediate courses. Standards are above average and students achieve well. In the lesson observed the teaching was very good with students making very good progress in their learning. Very good evidence of independent learning was observed with students systematically working through a break-even analysis exercise. Strong support was given to individual students to support their understanding and progress.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching, planning and the organisation of lessons are good
- Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive
- Marking is comprehensive and supports further learning
- The department is well led
- A-level standards are rapidly improving and achievement is very good

Areas for improvement

- Share good practice in teaching and learning in order to create more opportunities for independent learning

236. A-level results in 2001 were well below the national average. However, this was during a period when the department was experiencing staffing difficulties, and continuity of students' learning was interrupted. Nevertheless, all students achieved an A to E grade. In 2002 results improved significantly with 61 per cent achieving A and B grades and students achieved better than was expected. This was the first full year of the new A-level course and the department almost doubled its student intake. The AS results for 2001 and 2002 also confirm that standards are now rapidly improving, in both years, 53 per cent of students achieved A and B grades and all secured an A to E grade in 2002.
237. Standards observed in lessons and in written work are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Given the students' attainment on entry to the course, this represents good student achievement. It further confirms that the improvement has been maintained. The understanding of business concepts by Year 13 students is good; in particular they show a good knowledge of the institutions of the European Union and the advantages and disadvantages of the single currency. They are also able to calculate effectively the various investment appraisal methodologies. However, a few students need additional teacher support to interpret the impact of the results on a company's future policy.
238. Teaching is good overall with some very good features and all students learn well as a result. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and the lessons are planned very carefully. Good examples of skilful questioning were observed and many students were challenged to develop their answers and consequently their understanding of the topic. All students were involved throughout the various aspects of the lesson. In one lesson observed the students learnt, through working effectively in pairs, different investment appraisal methodologies. Not all learning is sufficiently challenging however. In one lesson observed, the summary discussion was led by the teacher and too little was expected of the students in reviewing and consolidating what they had learnt. In other lessons, the students had very good opportunities to develop their understanding

through practical case study interpretation. This good practice needs to be more actively disseminated throughout the department to ensure that students fully develop good independent learning skills.

239. Marking is rigorous and diagnostic and it follows the examination criteria very closely. As a result the students have a good idea from early in Year 12 of what they need to add to improve their work. These improvements were put in place after the 2001 results and have had a positive impact upon standards since then. Overall the students have very positive attitudes towards business studies and they work very well together.
240. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress by successfully introducing the new AS and A-level syllabuses, by increasing the numbers studying the subject and by improving overall standards. Much of this is due to the good leadership and management of the department. A well-qualified and enthusiastic team of teachers has been recently established and this has underpinned the improvement in examination success. The level of resources is good and the majority of teaching takes place in well-appointed rooms with good access to computers that are well used for coursework. Students are encouraged to read widely from broadsheet newspapers and specialist business magazines.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject
- Students' attitudes are very positive
- The course meets the students' aspirations very well

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies to be more varied
- Further opportunities to encourage independent study
- Improve standards at A-level
- Develop a consistent assessment strategy across the subject

241. In 2001 A-level results were well below the national average. However, the 2002 results improved with almost all candidates achieving a pass grade, although numbers achieving the highest grades remained below average. The AS examination results in 2001 indicated an improving picture with 32 per cent achieving an A or B grade and this improved still further in 2002 with nearly one half of students achieving an A or B grade. Most students achieved satisfactorily given their attainment on entry. Since the introduction of the new syllabuses, the numbers studying economics have increased. Students do better in economics than other subjects.
242. Standards in work seen in both Years 12 and 13 during the inspection were at the national average and match those in the most recent examination results. This represents good achievement for the current students so the improvements begun in 2001 with the AS examination are continuing. Most students have a good knowledge of topics such as oligopoly, retail price inflation, real wages and command economies. However, they were not so confident in using or interpreting a kinked demand curve. They are able to use economics terminology and can apply what they have learnt to data response material. Over time the current students make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of concepts and applying what they have learnt to the real world. In some lessons students are involved with their own learning

through the handling of data response material and are able to develop their understanding by working effectively with other students. They are very positive towards the subject and in recent years there has been a very good match between student aspirations and the course with the majority of students continuing their economics studies at university.

243. Overall the teaching in the department is good although there are some shortcomings. The teachers have a good knowledge of economics combined with a high level of enthusiasm that supports good learning. However, in some lessons learning is too directed by the teacher, with little involvement of the students themselves in the learning. Too often, for example, notes are merely copied from the board, as was observed in a Year 12 class, when students' understanding of the different types of economy was limited by the over-directive teaching. Greater opportunities for independent learning need to be provided both within and outside the classroom to reflect the wide range of students now studying the subject. Some use of ICT as a research tool is evident in the students' work. This should be encouraged more so that students become more confident as independent learners. Students receive good preparation for the examinations and opportunities are given for them to practise data responses and to interpret case-study material. Teachers have a good knowledge of the examination requirements thus contributing to the improvement in standards. At present there are slightly different methods of assessment within the team, with some including self-assessment opportunities and other teachers following different practices. There needs to be a review with a common approach adopted throughout the team so that students know how to improve their performance across the subject.
244. Economics is managed within the business studies faculty and a teacher in charge has been appointed within the last year. He has made a good start in reviewing subject procedures and in developing more effective methods of teaching and learning. However, there is still much to be done in widening the range of teaching methodology and in providing wider opportunities for the students to learn more independently. There are good practices within the department, particularly of assessment in vocational courses, which could be disseminated more widely. The new syllabuses have been introduced successfully and clear improvements have already been made. In addition, GCSE economics has been introduced and there has been a good take up. This initiative should provide a good basis for A-level recruitment. The main economics classroom is a temporary hut that does not provide a very attractive learning environment and is somewhat isolated from the other classes. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- The improving trend in results at A-level
- The extensive knowledge which teachers have of the subject
- Relationships between students and teachers
- Very positive attitudes which the students have towards their studies

Areas for improvement

- Further encouragement of independent learning

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better monitoring of students' progress• The provision of a vocational ICT course |
|--|

245. Results at A-level have improved each year over the last three years and are now above the national average. The most recent results at AS level, although at the national average, are lower than the previous year.
246. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and on the school network confirms that standards are overall above average and achievement is good. In general, students do well on those parts of the course which are concerned with their own abilities in using software tools. They are confident in creating and testing data systems based on relational databases, work begun in Year 12. Their confidence was again evident in discussions about the practical applications of queuing theory in programming and floating point binary coding in the design of modern computers.
247. Most of the students observed showed interest, enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject. When they are working individually on programming or coursework, they help each other, and discussion, sometimes with their teacher, is common. These discussions are always relevant to the work and contribute to quality of learning. Most of the students can continue working on their computers at home and are able to transfer files by e-mail between school and home. Those without this facility have access to the school computer network but not in a dedicated sixth-form area. All students reported learning resources available to them within the school to be satisfactory.
248. In all the lessons observed, teaching, with only one exception, was very good. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, including first-hand knowledge gained outside the educational environment. Continuity and progression are both strong qualities in lesson planning and in the shared teaching of different modules within the course. When students are working individually, teachers make good use of their time, discussing coursework with students. The design of the computer rooms used for sixth-form ICT teaching are not conducive to the use of computer projectors or interactive whiteboards, which on some occasions could have been used to enhance a teacher's explanation of a particular concept, for example, queuing theory.
249. In most respects, the subject is well led and managed. More attention could be paid to tracking students' prior attainment from Year 11 through the sixth form in order to monitor individual students' progress and identify possible underachievement. Little employment of the school's extensive ICT resources is made by teachers and students in other sixth-form subjects, apart from extensive use of wordprocessing. For students in the sixth form, not following an academic ICT A-level course, there are no vocational or ICT skill-acquiring courses to support their chosen courses in science, mathematics or the humanities.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Students' achievements are good in relation to their GCSE results
- Teaching is good and teachers use interesting and varied ways to help students to progress
- Students are very positive about the courses and they have very good relationships with their teachers
- Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities is very good

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of the majority of students
- The monitoring of students' files is not regular or thorough enough
- The provision of networked computers in the department
- Further analysis of results and assessment data to establish students' achievement and to improve curriculum planning

250. Results at A-level were average in 2000 and 2001. Provisional results in 2002 were similar. In 2001, students achieved well in relation to their previous learning. No students attained the higher grades at AS level in 2002 but there was a direct correlation between students' attainment at GCSE and their final grades. The number of students taking examinations reduced significantly between the AS and A-level course in 2002. The department felt that unexpected changes in staffing had disrupted students' learning.

251. The standards attained by the majority of present Years 12 and 13 students are average. Their achievements are good. They attain high standards and have a very good knowledge of the sports in which they participate, for example cricket, basketball, football and athletics. Students in Year 13 do not use specialist vocabulary confidently in either their written work or in discussion but they are able to extract information accurately from a variety of sources. About a fifth of students in Year 12 are working at the highest levels of attainment. Students are successfully moving on from their GCSE work and showing greater depth of knowledge and understanding about skill acquisition. A few are very competent basketball players with consistently accurate shooting skills. Students in both years work extremely well together on group tasks, for example when analysing issues relating to women in sport.

252. Teaching is good overall with some very good features. Lessons were always well prepared with a wide range of activities that motivated and challenged students of all abilities. Very good opportunities are given to students to learn independently both in the practical element and in theory lessons. Teachers' subject expertise is very high. Occasionally, expectations are too high for Year 12 students who need more structure and less complicated tasks. The marking of students' tests, assignments and essays is good, and provides students with information about how to improve their work. However, students' files are insufficiently monitored to ensure they provide students with a high quality learning resource for the future. Students benefit in their learning from the images provided by a video camera. Teachers use these to reinforce previous learning and to show examples of students' performance. The teaching base has no

computers. This limits how some topics are taught and has a negative effect on students' learning. However, it is clear that students are expected to use the Internet to assist in the production of projects and homework. Students are very positive about the subject and spend time in the department helping with clubs and matches and assisting younger students. This helps their learning and gives them time to understand and apply the theoretical aspects of the subject in the practical situation.

253. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The head of department has successfully introduced A-level courses and members of the department have attended professional development courses relating to the examinations. The department has not analysed and compared previous results, prior attainment and students' views in enough depth. Many students participate in extra-curricular activities, some going on to achieve very highly in sport. Students report how much they value the courses because they provide an accreditation linked to their proposed careers in sports science, for example.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design and media studies, but music was also sampled. All students who have taken A-level music in the past three years have passed the examination, several with good grades. Very good teaching was observed and students were making good progress.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Well above average results at AS and A-level which reflect the thorough understanding the teachers have of the requirements of the course
- The very good and improving teaching is targeting weakness and raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all teaching is consistent in the way it challenges students to respond more directly to the visual world when developing ideas

254. In 2001 results at AS and A-level were well above average with students doing significantly better in art than in their other subjects. Over time well above average standards have been maintained, with both male and female students doing equally well. No national statistics are yet available for 2002 but standards have been maintained at both AS and A-level.

255. The achievement of AS-level students in work and lessons is good and the standard of their work reflects the potential indicated by their GCSE results. Students show the capacity to develop ideas and a growing ability to pursue independent lines of enquiry. Students on both the AS and the A-level courses have generally lower standards of drawing than would normally be expected. In conversation with students they show a good appreciation of this weakness recognising the big difference between copying and the skills associated with observing and responding directly to the visual world. One student working on a theme of isolation talked intelligently about her determination to work more from observation and the impact better teaching had had on this aspect of her work. Of the five students currently following the A-level course the majority are reaching their potential.

256. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good with aspects being very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of the requirements of the examination, which is reflected in the well-structured courses they offer. In some AS lessons very good investigative skills are promoted, seen for example in the white still-life project which challenged students to think about colour and tonal relationships. Skills of analysis are evident in the destructuring landscape project, with students interpreting their findings using different approaches. This well-structured approach helps to build the confidence of students and encourages the development of independent learning skills. There are occasions where teaching is less good and where students resort too readily to copying from photographs or the work of other artists. This work is not challenging enough and narrows opportunities for learning. Similar tendencies have been evident in the work of some A-level students but very good teaching has recently ensured that students are challenged more to respond directly to visual world. The contribution to learning promoted by the study of artists' work is very good. This aspect of the course is well supported by visits to galleries such as the Tate Modern. Students are able to talk intelligently about this aspect of their course and to make connections between their own work and that of others. For example one student working on a theme of film was able to discuss the work of Pop artists and relate it to her own work. Students show real interest in their work, which is evident in their ability to discuss what they do in a mature and articulate way. They have a good understanding of their course and can say how they are to meet its requirements. They feel well informed by their teachers about how well they are doing and they are helped to set targets for further improvement.
257. Management is good. The new head of department who has been in charge since September has quickly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses in the work of students and is being effective in restructuring aspects of the course to address weaknesses and raise standards. The department had a tradition of high standards at advanced level study, which was seen at the last inspection, and which is being maintained.

Media Studies

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and better than expected
- Good leadership and management are providing a good level of provision for students
- The high level of knowledge and technical resource available to students gives them good opportunities
- The high quality curriculum provides strong cross-curricular links which aid learning

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of teaching and assessment

258. A-level results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average. In 2002, they improved with a higher proportion of A and B grades. All students have achieved grades A to E for the last three years. Girls do better than boys. Very few students fail to complete the course. The average GCSE points score of students on entry to the course is the lowest of all subjects in the sixth form. All score above their expected grades, and a few of them well above.
259. The standards of work of current students are above average, and their achievements are good. Practical examples of film-making and trailers show a competent and

sophisticated standard of editing and sure narrative flow. Practical work on magazine layout shows sensitive photography and aesthetically pleasing layout of a professional standard. Independent learning is a strong feature of all achievement.

260. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are already achieving better than expected. They already have a good grasp of the process of editing film in order to achieve exciting and dramatic effects. A firm group of key concepts and specialist language helps them in the analysis of media texts. Students are already capable of constructing a radio advertisement aimed at a local target audience, showing good knowledge of the codes and conventions of the form. Working scripts for this work are appropriate and thoughtful, using sound of professional quality. Independent research is already well developed.
261. Teaching is inconsistent, but good overall. In the best lessons, technical expertise is of a high order, and resources of impressive quality are very well used. When the teaching is less successful, teachers do not give enough help and advice to students in order to improve the quality of their writing. Not all students fully understand the way their work is marked, although all are left in no doubt as to what they must do to improve their work. Students learn well. This subject is a powerful motivator. The best learning occurs independently when students are given an excellent level of practical support. Students' work is conscientiously prepared according to the accepted conventions of the research paper. They use books, ICT and surveys very well.
262. The subject is very well led and managed. The high quality curriculum reinforces extra-curricular links with its involvement in school musical and dramatic productions, talent show cases and student magazines. The department organises and supports 'Radio XL' which broadcasts annually to the people of Redbridge for a whole week during July. Careers in the media have been made possible for students through the valuable practical experience this affords. This successful department continues to maintain a high profile within the sixth-form curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and history, but sociology was also sampled. In sociology standards are similar to national averages and improved in 2002. Teaching in the lessons observed was good and teachers have good subject expertise. Students' challenging questions are very effectively used to extend their knowledge and understanding. Relationships and attitudes are very good.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good leading to above average results and very good achievement.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Lessons have a clear structure and are very well planned and resourced.
- Students work hard and enjoy their studies; relationships and conduct are very positive.

Areas for improvement

- The development of systems already begun to track students' progress.
- The library provision does not adequately support sixth-form study.

263. In 2001, when comparison can be made with attainment nationally, A-level results are above average, and much better than at the previous inspection. In 2002 one quarter of A-level students gained the higher A/B grades, the remainder attaining C/D grades. There is a trend of improving attainment at A-level. Standards at AS were much higher in 2002 than the previous year with half the students attaining the higher grades. Students at both AS and A2 examinations exceed their minimum target grades in geography. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by students of different gender or ethnicity.
264. The observation of students in lessons and analysis of samples of their work show that standards are well above average. Students achieve very well. They show good knowledge both in physical and human geography, and understand flows of energy and nutrients within ecosystems. Using map and photographic evidence they are very good at identifying glacial landforms and use annotation skills very effectively to locate examples of erosion features in the Bannau Brycheiniog area. Coursework on counter urbanisation in Cambridgeshire shows that able students attain the highest possible marks by demonstrating the fullest range of competence in data collection, research, analytical, graphical and writing skills. Students use studies of local areas such as Gants Hill to provide comparative bipolar analysis figures. Independent study standards are high and very good use is made of ICT. They work with confidence on their own, collect information from a variety of sources and form sound judgments from the data.
265. All teaching is very good. Lessons have a clear structure. Resources, whether in the form of text, maps or the students' existing knowledge, are used very effectively. Internet sources are employed very well to provide relevant, topical and interesting information, statistics, photographs and articles to challenge and extend all students. All teachers show very good subject knowledge, not only through what they say, but also in how they check students' learning and give effective support to slower learners and those with special educational and language needs. Assessment tasks are carefully marked and students are given guidance on how to improve. However, day-to-day marking is a weakness and not enough attention is paid to recording progress during the course. Assessment practices, students say, do not provide them with realistic targets and they are not always sure how well they are doing. Numeracy skills are developed well, for example by plotting changing population data for the world's twenty largest cities and relating this to latitude. Geography makes a very important contribution to the development of students' moral, social and cultural learning. Economic, political and social awareness are developed very well by case studies of decision making such as that surrounding the Mt Pinatubo eruption in 1991.
266. Students learn very well. Boys and girls alike display very positive attitudes and conduct, work equally hard and relate very well to both peers and teachers. Relationships and the mutual support of students and teachers ensures learning can proceed at a very good pace. Students are highly motivated to succeed. They enjoy the subject and speak highly of the quality of support and encouragement they receive from teachers. Fieldwork opportunities, such as the Year 12 study of glaciated uplands in Powys, are a very important factor both in attracting students to continue their studies in geography, and in improving understanding of geographical theory. Almost all AS and A-level students are participating in an additional fieldwork opportunity to study ecosystems, volcanic landforms and tourism impact in Lanzarote. Students can talk authoritatively on the aspects of the course they have studied. There is good growth in geographical maturity both in oral work and in writing, particularly during Year 13.

267. Work in the subject is led and managed very well. Teachers are highly motivated and work as a very effective team focused on helping their students to achieve high results. The good sequencing of topics and themes in the scheme of work and the quality of the case studies contribute significantly to the very good teaching and learning. Resources are now very good and very good use is made of new technologies to enhance teaching and learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

History

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

Strengths

- The popularity of history as an option choice
- The shared commitment of teachers and students
- The very good quality of teaching which is leading to above average results and very good achievement

Areas for improvement

- To raise student attainment at the very highest grades through an increased focus upon the assessment objectives

268. Students' performance in the A-level examinations has been above the national average for the past three years. There was a dip in the number of candidates achieving the highest grades in 2001, although in relation to their prior attainment these candidates did very well. Similarly in 2002 fewer students gained the highest grades. This was due to these students achieving significantly lower grades in just one unit of the course. The department have done everything possible to investigate this anomalous result. Students' performance in the new AS examinations has been similarly good. The numbers attaining a pass grade have been above the national average. However, the numbers attaining the very highest grades has been below. The department are very aware of the reasons for this and are now more focused upon the assessment objectives of the examination syllabus.

269. The quality of work of the students in the current Years 12 and 13 is well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for all students. The increasing numbers opting for the subject at both AS and A-level are eloquent evidence of the quality of the history provision. History is a very popular option choice and students enjoy their history lessons. They are very committed to their work and welcome the opportunity to study their own individual interests through coursework. They are able to offer convincing answers to historical questions such as why Sir Robert Peel changed his attitude to Catholic Emancipation. They have made some use of ICT in their researches but still require greater breadth to their reading beyond the core texts.

270. The teaching of history is very good. Strong features of the lessons seen are excellent teacher knowledge and planning. For example in one Year 13 lesson the teacher divided up various historians' interpretations of the policy of appeasement between the different pairs of students and asked them to select evidence to support those interpretations. Skilful questioning ensured that even the weakest students were able to make valid points and this built their confidence. Another excellent feature is the way in which teachers give students the historical knowledge and then force them to think hard about its meaning and significance. Lessons have a strong atmosphere of intellectual challenge which the students respond to.

271. The head of history, together with his team, are strongly supportive of their students, which the students readily appreciate. There is a shared commitment to do well. Teachers freely loan their own resources and give generously of their time to respond to students' questions, including by e-mail. Schemes of work have been written for the new courses, resources are being developed and teachers are effectively sharing teaching ideas. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English, French and German but work in Spanish was also sampled. Spanish is offered at both Year 12 and Year 13, the quality of teaching is at least good and sometimes very good and students of Spanish make good progress. Attainment levels are at least in line with average expectations in both Year 12 and Year 13.

English

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

Strengths

- Good and sometimes very good teaching is leading to good progress
- Students have positive attitudes, contributing to the good learning observed
- There is good leadership and management of a developing department

Areas for improvement

- Continuing to raise attainment and improve achievement
- Improving the use of assessment as a means of setting targets and raising attainment

272. A-level results in 2001 were variable. Although the percentage of students attaining a pass grade in the literature examination was below the national average, the percentage achieving an A or B grade was well above the average, a trend also reflected in the unvalidated 2002 results. The 2001 results in English Language were well below the national average both in terms of pass grades and the percentage of those attaining the higher grades, and the results worsened in 2002. The poor results in language can be attributed largely to the fact that students beginning this course before 2002 had below average standards in English at GCSE Level. Also the language course was taught by less experienced staff and it has traditionally attracted a larger percentage of boys than the parallel literature course. These boys have achieved at a lower rate than the girls.

273. Current standards are average and improving, better in literature than language. Standards of the current Year 12 students are also in line with national expectations. A major reason for the improvement in standards, especially in English Language in Year 12, is that the ability level of students beginning the sixth-form courses is now considerably higher, and the department has successfully targeted the sixth form as an area in which to raise attainment. The current standards represent good achievement for many students, including the gifted and talented. However, some lower attainers make unsatisfactory progress in improving their writing skills, and basic technical errors in their writing reduce the quality of their written work.

274. By Year 13, the majority of students on the language course make good progress in developing the technical skills of language and in improving their ability to recognise and critically analyse the use of language, for example when examining issues of gender and power. Students studying literature make good progress in developing skills of

critical analysis. They are able to make an informed personal response to a range of texts, and improve their ability to compare how writers use imagery and other devices when studying texts such as *Wuthering Heights* and *A Room With a View*. Students learn how to substantiate their arguments with appropriate textual references when studying texts such as Carol Anne Duffy's poetry, although lower achievers still rely upon unsubstantiated assertion. A particular strength of many students is their capacity for independent and group study, for example when preparing presentations for the class.

275. The overall quality of teaching in English is good, with some very good teaching observed in lessons during the inspection, resulting in good learning by most students. There are several characteristics of the very good teaching. Most significant is the due attention which teachers give to developing students' independent learning skills, as observed in a Year 12 lesson in which students engaged enthusiastically in a debate on the subject of madness in *Hamlet*. Having set up the debate well, the teacher was able to stay in the background, and students made good gains in confidence, speaking skills and analytical skills. As a result, they increased their overall understanding of the play as well as their personal development. Teachers make students substantiate their arguments with evidence, as observed in a Year 12 language lesson in which students increased their understanding of various presentational devices used in radio trailers, partly due to the teacher's increasingly focused and challenging questioning. Teachers also concentrate on improving students' awareness of key terminology and explain how they can improve their examination performance. Both these features were seen in a Year 13 lesson on First World War poetry in which students practised their analytical skills by discussing poems with contrasting emotions. The teacher gave very sound advice to students on how to compare the poems and improve their assessment grades. Students enjoy opportunities to debate, and their very positive, forthcoming attitudes in lessons help them to make good gains in understanding.
276. Leadership and management in English are good. The department has adapted well to the demands of relatively new courses, and has broadened the curriculum with the introduction of a language course at A-level. There is good professional development for teachers. The use of ICT has improved, particularly as a means of research. The department pays considerable attention to developing literacy skills, and this has been very effective particularly in encouraging confidence and good debating techniques. The use of assessment data is underdeveloped; although students do have target grades, there is little analysis of student performance in relation to their prior attainment in English, and targets for improvement are often insufficiently precise.
277. At the time of the last inspection A-level results in English were well above the national average, and currently they are more variable. However, there have been several positive developments: the overall quality of teaching and assessment has improved, whilst student attitudes remain very positive. The department has broadened learning opportunities by introducing an A-level course in English language and has adapted to the demands of syllabus changes with increasing success. Therefore, overall there has been good progress since the last inspection.

French

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching with pace and variety
- Students make very good progress in speaking and listening and have a good grasp of grammatical structure
- Very positive relationships between students and teachers
- Marking of work provides clear guidance on how students might improve

Areas for improvement

- To further encourage productive use of French by students in Year 12

278. Results at AS and A-level at grades A/B are above average and show an improving trend over recent years. At grades A/E results are consistently above the national average. In work seen the attainment of students in Year 12 is in line with what would be expected at this point and is well above average in Year 13. In Year 12 students are developing a sound grasp of grammar and their listening and reading skills are good. Whereas they speak with attention to good pronunciation they do not readily initiate the foreign language. Written work is satisfactory. In Year 13 attainment levels are particularly high. Students have a high degree of fluency, use the language with confidence and cope well with a wide repertoire of vocabulary through which they are able to discuss and give opinions.
279. Teaching is a particular strength and is very good. Lessons are purposeful and well paced. Teachers use French consistently throughout the lessons and expect their students to understand and respond. Challenging questions and a strong emphasis upon students' grasp of structures are features of these lessons. Lessons are well planned and time is very well used. Explanation and presentation are always very clear and lessons begin and end with an appropriate review of work covered. The very positive relationships established between teachers and students have a strong impact upon students' motivation.
280. Students make very good progress across the language skills. In Year 12 they are growing in confidence to use French for communication and are beginning to apply knowledge of grammar to correct their written and spoken language. In Year 13 students are able to expand their language, re-phrase where appropriate and confidently question each other with a high level of oral skill. Attitudes to learning are always very positive, students take a mature approach to their studies and are willing to listen to advice.
281. The subject is well managed through a designated head of French. Monitoring of the provision is generally informal but there is evidence of regular collaboration between teachers to ensure consistency and standardisation of assessment which are facilitated through scheduled time within the timetable. The subject budget is managed efficiently and there are adequate resources to meet the requirements of the courses, including provision for students' independent learning and research.

German

Overall the quality of provision in German is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching which includes much praise and encouragement
- Students make very good progress in comprehension skills and grasp of grammar
- Very good relationships established between teacher and students

Areas for improvement

- Improve students' use of the foreign language
- Continue to focus upon increased accuracy in writing

282. Results at AS and A level at grades A and B show a mixed picture but recent results at AS are above average and this is a significant improvement. At A-level, grades A and B results are slightly below average although grades A to E results are above the national average. In lessons the attainment of students in Year 12 is above average, particularly in the receptive skills of reading and listening. Written work is closer to the average as students grapple with achieving greater accuracy in grammar and construction. When prompted, students speak well and with good pronunciation but many still lack the confidence to use German for their own purpose. At present there are no formal lessons in German for Year 13 students.

283. Teaching of German is very good. The teacher is an excellent linguist and her enthusiasm has a strong effect upon the motivation and interest of the students. The heavy emphasis upon grammar and constructions is providing a very good support to the transition from GCSE to sixth-form work and the practical guidance being given is having a very strong impact upon the progress of students. German is used consistently for classroom communication and instruction and lessons are well structured providing a range of opportunities for students to experience and use the language. The teacher has a very positive relationship with the students and marked work provides a useful commentary on how students might improve their work.

284. Students are making very good progress. This is particularly evident in their grasp of grammar and their ability to extend their vocabulary and deduce meaning from unfamiliar text. They are willing to ask questions when they don't understand, make notes for themselves and contribute in group activities. Students have a very positive attitude to their learning and clearly enjoy their studies.

285. The subject is well managed through a designated head of German. Whereas monitoring of the provision is largely informal there is evidence that teachers meet regularly to review their work, share ideas and ensure consistency in methodology and assessment. Resources are sufficient, not only for the core requirements of the course but also to provide supplementary material for students to learn independently and conduct their own research.

286. The overall allocation of time for languages in the sixth form is a matter of concern. Whereas it is adequate for French, the clash of timing in German affects continuity for some students across the two-weekly cycle and the present allocation for Spanish is inadequate and likely to hinder progress in the longer term. Whilst the allocation of foreign language assistant time is welcome the shortfall of time for Spanish would benefit from an increase in language assistant provision.