

INSPECTION REPORT

BROWNHILLS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Brownhills

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104248

Headteacher: Dr David Cooper

Reporting inspector: Richard Hancock
2715

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 December 2001

Inspection number: 187874

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Deakin Avenue
Brownhills
Walsall
West Midlands

Postcode: WS8 7QG

Telephone number: 01543 452886

Fax number: 01543 370105

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr F N Hodgkinson

Date of previous inspection: 20th May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2715	R Hancock	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9189	J Horwood	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22878	G Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics in the Sixth form	
8002	L G Farraway	Team inspector	English English as an additional language English in the Sixth form	
23498	J M Martin	Team inspector	Science Chemistry in the Sixth form	
11969	J Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
20716	A R Grogan	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography Equal opportunities	
4749	M C Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages and in the Sixth form	
11672	P Harle	Team inspector	Music	
30928	P Eames	Team inspector	Physical education	
20533	D Rogers	Team inspector	Art	
10167	G F Harris	Team inspector	Religious education	
23891	P Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology	

12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education in the Sixth Form	
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The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Brownhills Community School is a comprehensive secondary school for boys and girls of 11-18 in the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall. There are 947 pupils on roll, roughly balanced between girls and boys; of these 96 are in the sixth form. The social and economic background of the pupils is very mixed but there is considerable deprivation in parts of the area from which the school draws its pupils. There are two selective schools in the borough which attract some 6 per cent of pupils each year. Few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and none is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is 21.6 per cent, which is above the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is broadly in line with the national average, but the percentage of pupils with a statement is well above average. The overall attainment of pupils on entry is well below average but is improving. The basic characteristics of the school have changed little since the time of the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The pupils at this school receive a sound education which has some good, and some very good, features. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Pupils are positive about learning and behave well. Overall standards are average, and sometimes above average in comparison with similar schools, but are mostly below average when results are compared with those of all schools. The school has continued to emphasise the community aspects of its work and the governing body has prepared a development plan which clearly reflects appropriate aims and objectives for its future. Although the current headteacher has only been in post for a short period of time it is clear that the school is well led and managed and is giving satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Develops good relationships between all members of its community
- Provides good quality of teaching
- Develops positive attitudes and good behaviour
- Makes very effective provision for pupils with special educational needs
- Provides good levels of care and support for pupils
- Promotes parents' positive attitudes

What could be improved

- The overall standard of pupils' attainment
- The assessment of pupils' work
- The monitoring of pupils' progress
- Provision for information and communication technology and religious education at Key Stage 4

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996 and has made satisfactory and, in some respects, good progress since that time. The quality of the teaching has considerably improved, results in national tests in English mathematics and science have also improved and the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C in the GCSE examination has increased. Staff are clear about their roles in raising standards and have received appropriate training. Most pupils are now clear about their learning objectives but do not always get feedback about how to improve. Improvements are still needed in ICT provision and in provision for religious education at Key Stage 4. Accurate costings in the school development plan ensure that appropriate money is made available for improving the quality of education resources but there are still shortages in some subjects.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	D	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	B	D		

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

At the end of Year 11 in 2001, the overall attainment of pupils in the GCSE examinations was average in comparison with the results of similar schools although it was well below average in comparison with all schools. However, for pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A* - C, the school's performance was above average when comparisons are made with similar schools although it was below average in comparison with all schools. For those pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A* - G, the school was in the lowest 5 per cent for all schools and was well below average in relation to similar schools. The school reached one of its three targets, all of which had been based on an appropriate degree of challenge. In 2001, GCSE examination results in English show that for passes at grades A* - C pupils did better than pupils in similar schools although results were below the national average. Results in mathematics were also above average when compared with the results in similar schools, although, as with science, they were below the national average. The school's best results were in art, music, drama, English literature and religious education. Results were weakest in modern foreign languages, although standards are improving in this department, and in mathematics. The trend of improvement over the period 1998-2001 was in line with the national trend. At the end of Year 9 in 2001, although pupils' overall results in the National Curriculum tests were below national averages, results in English and science were average when compared with those of similar schools and mathematics results were above average. The trend of improvement over the period 1998-2001 was above the national trend, an indication that the school is helping pupils to improve their achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school but higher-attaining pupils could make faster progress in some subjects. An inspection of pupils' work revealed that standards on the whole are higher than those indicated by test and examination results, although there are clear weaknesses in literacy and numeracy in the work of a significant number of pupils which could be one of the factors accounting for the test results not being as high as they might be.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to learn and respond well to good teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils listen well in class and work hard. There are some pockets of misbehaviour. Movement around the building is orderly and civilised.
Personal development and relationships	Good. A strength of the school, positive relationships are at the heart of the school's successes.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school works hard to ensure good attendance.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour help to promote learning. Relationships are based on mutual respect and help the school to function well as a healthy community. Attendance has remained constant over time and levels of unauthorised absence are low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Year 10	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Very 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.

At Key Stage 3, and in Year 10, the quality of teaching is good or better in approximately three in every four lessons, a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The highest quality was in Year 10. In Year 8, the overall quality of the teaching was satisfactory. In the school as a whole there was very little unsatisfactory teaching. Strengths of the teaching lie in the planning, the clarity of learning objectives, specialists' knowledge of their subject and the effective learning activities for pupils of all abilities. These qualities are underpinned by strong positive relationships between pupils and teachers. Weaknesses include some lack of challenge for higher attainers, insufficient use of information and communication technology, marking which lacks helpful feedback, and the limited use of assessment. Teaching is good in English and mathematics. Because of staffing difficulties, and despite some good and very good teaching, teaching is uneven in science. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory but is not as effective as it needs to be because it lacks co-ordination. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. The quality of learning is good. Homework is well used to consolidate learning, pupils have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, and are able to learn how to study independently and in groups, especially in modern foreign languages and physical education. Opportunities for all pupils to learn about the application of information and communication technology are limited. Pupils are not learning enough about literacy to improve their written work in history. Higher-attaining pupils need more opportunities to extend their skills and deepen their understanding. The thinking skills of pupils were clearly enhanced and tested in some lessons in mathematics.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is an appropriate degree of breadth and balance at both key stages. Extra-curricular activities are a good feature, especially in music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school provides a strong supportive atmosphere in which needs are clearly defined and largely met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The social and moral aspects of the curriculum are good but the multicultural aspect is not strong and the spiritual aspect is weak. These aspects have not been planned into the curriculum so they are somewhat ad hoc and not co-ordinated.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Effective systems are in place to support all aspects of pupils' welfare and they are well cared for. However, systems for tracking their academic progress are insufficiently rigorous, particularly at Key Stage 3.

The school works well with parents. It keeps them in touch with developments, reports effectively on pupils' progress, alerts them to concerns and consults them on key issues. Statutory requirements are not being met at Key Stage 4 because all pupils do not get enough opportunities to use and apply information and communication technology. The time allocated to religious education at Key Stage 4 also means that for some pupils the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus cannot be met. The school does not hold a daily act of collective worship. Tutor time is often not well used. Assemblies are very pleasant social occasions but the ones observed lacked depth.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher is guiding the school well and is giving the school a clear sense of direction. Key staff are hard-working and dedicated, carrying out a wide range of necessary duties diligently to help the school to function well on a day-to-day basis.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Members of the governing body take a close interest in the school and support it very well but some statutory requirements are not being met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. At present the school is assembling relevant key data and has outline plans to collate it, interpret it and use it effectively as part of a strategy for raising pupils' attainment.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school plans ahead but there are still some shortages of books and equipment.

The main strength in leadership and management is the commitment to establishing good relationships between all members of the school's community, producing a strong sense of teamwork. The assessment policy is implemented inconsistently across departments and key stages. There is a well co-ordinated staff development programme. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Staff recruitment remains unpredictable, although the school does what it can to retain good teachers. There are issues in some departments as a result of long term absence through illness. Administrative and clerical staff are of high calibre and make an important contribution to the efficiency and ethos of the school. Whilst standards of accommodation in many areas are satisfactory or good, the state of the floor covering in some areas is poor and there is a range of other concerns in several departments. The library is an asset. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are some shortages in several departments. The school has a sound understanding of the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress made by pupils • The high expectations of pupils • The way that pupils are helped to become mature and responsible • The approachability of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no area of the school which a significant number of parents would like to see improved.

The inspection team found that on the whole the school does have high expectations of pupils, especially in relation to their behaviour and conduct. The team also found that, whilst the majority of pupils make satisfactory, and often good progress, expectations can be raised still further, especially in relation to pupils' attainment. The school is helping pupils to mature and to become responsible. It is an approachable school and consults widely. Very few parents felt that pupils do not get the right amount of homework, or that the school does not work closely with them or that they are not well informed about their children's progress. The inspection team considered that homework is being well managed, that parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through the reporting system and that the school works closely with parents. This aspect is a strength of the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11-18 comprehensive school is located in a pleasant new teaching block. It provides a wide range of subjects and vocational courses. There are currently 96 students on roll. Just under half of the students continue to study in the sixth form after Year 11 and some students also join from other schools. The numbers of students on some courses are very small but there are flourishing numbers of students on courses, in English and religious education, for example.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Students receive a sound education in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is especially good and there are appropriate opportunities for students to follow up their interest in specialised areas of study and to become independent. Because of the very small numbers on some courses, curriculum provision is more expensive than in other years, but the majority of students make good progress over time, some achieving considerable academic success, and grow in maturity. Leadership and management are satisfactory, the major strength being the quality of relationships which characterise the sixth form community. The sixth form is cost-effective because the majority of students make good progress as a result of very effective teaching; a number of them make a significant contribution to life in the main part of the school. A secure way forward is being offered to pupils from the main part of the school for whom education after the age of 16 is not a common family experience. The strong attraction of sixth form teaching helps to recruit good teachers which greatly benefits the whole school. The basic requirements are in place to meet the needs of sixth form students but the area lacks a distinctive ethos and more could be done to enliven the day-to-day experience of students.

Strengths

- The quality of relationships
- The quality of teaching is very good
- New attractive accommodation
- Successfully run 'A' Level courses in English and religious education

What could be improved

- Progression from Key Stage 4 courses through to the sixth form
- The opportunities for all students to study religious education and to take part in physical education
- Recruitment and retention of students on courses

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. The modular course on offer is appropriate. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good. The retention rate of students taking courses in Years 12 and 13 is an issue. In 2001 examination results at both AS and A level were below the national average. Standards of work observed were good.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Good teaching results in students learning well overall but small classes make interaction between students difficult and limit learning. There is a lack of high grades at A Level. A Level results were below the national average but in line with students' performance at GCSE.

Religious education	Good. The quality of teaching is good. Results are in line with national averages. Written work in Year 13 shows that students' knowledge and understanding are above average but some Year 12 students have weak presentational skills.
English	Good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and establish good working relationships leading to good quality learning. A' Level results are in line with the national average and are improving.
French	Good. There have been small numbers of 'A' Level candidates in recent years. Standards are good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Teaching is very good.

The overall provision for business education is good. The department offers students AS/A2 level and GNVQ intermediate. In AS/A2 courses, completion rates are high and results match or exceed national figures. They are amongst the best in the school. Students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the business world. Other work was sampled extensively through observations of lessons in German, PSHE, psychology, sociology and key skills. Standards reached were appropriate for the students and the courses being studied. The quality of the teaching was invariably good and the attitudes of the students were mostly very positive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. The academic progress of students is well monitored by teachers of individual subjects. Students who give cause for concern are effectively monitored by the 'Stepping up the Pace' procedure. Advice on careers, on further study, and on personal development generally is satisfactory but could be improved.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Managers work hard to establish a positive set of relationships in the sixth form community. Links between the curriculum of the main school and the sixth form are not strong. There are weaknesses in the provision for religious education and physical education. All students, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to courses, equipment and facilities.

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 accessibility of teachers • The clear, accurate and helpful printed information about sixth form courses • Opportunities for independent study • Opportunities to study courses suited to their talents and career aspirations • The personal help they receive from teachers if they run into difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses outside the main subjects studied • Being treated as responsible young adults • Being well informed about the progress they are making in relation to the qualifications they hope to get • The thorough assessment of their work so that they know what to do to improve it

The inspection team found that teachers readily gave of their time to assist students. The opportunities for independent study are good. There is a wide range of relevant courses and the printed information about them is helpful. Whilst there are some enrichment activities, such as community service and residential courses, the inspection team agree with those students who think they are not varied and extensive. The inspection team considered that students' work is carefully assessed by teachers but that students do not always receive specific guidance on how to improve their work. Whilst their overall progress is monitored, it is not clear that they always get feedback on how their progress relates to future qualifications. The inspection team found that the school strikes an appropriate balance between giving opportunities to students to express independent views consistent with the responsibilities of living in a community with others, but that the school should work with students to keep this balance under review. Students show increasing maturity as they move from Year 12 to Year 13.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - C was above average in comparison with similar schools although below average for all schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - G was well below average for all schools and for similar schools. The pupils' overall points score was average when compared with similar schools but was well below average for all schools. The school set appropriate targets for improving its overall performance in the GCSE examinations and met one of its three targets. These results were very similar to those in recent years and over the period 1997-2001, the trend of improvement has been broadly in line with the national trend. In 2001, the strongest performance was in art, English literature, drama and religious education. The weakest results were in mathematics and French. In 2001, on the basis of average points scored, whilst boys' results were below average, girls' results were well below average. They were in line with the average for similar schools.
2. The proportion of Year 11 pupils attaining passes at grades A* - C in English in 2001 was well above average when comparisons are made with similar schools although below the national average for all schools. Standards have risen over three years and results were much better than in 2000. The significant number of pupils not entered for the GCSE examinations did well in the Certificate of Achievement examinations. English literature results have risen and fallen over time, but in 2001, although only half the year group was entered for the examination, the proportion of pupils attaining passes at grades A* - C was well above the national average. Standards are rising sharply in GCSE drama.
3. In mathematics the percentage of pupils achieving a pass at grades A* - C in the GCSE examination in 2001 was above average in comparison with similar schools but was below the national average. These results were not as good as in 2000. Pupils' achievements in science in terms of passes at grades A* - C for the whole year group were also below the national average but for the 50 per cent of the cohort that did take the examination results were above the national average for the percentage of passes at grades A* - C. A minority of pupils was entered for the Certificate of Achievement in science and all passed, with half gaining a merit award. Over the period 1999-2001, the overall trend in science has been downward.
4. In 2001, there was a significant improvement in GCSE examination results in geography and although boys' results were below national standards, they showed good improvement compared to their results in 1999. Girls' results were close to national standards and again showed considerable improvement from Year 9. The trend in examination results for music has been above the national average, but in 2001 results were lower, reflecting the ability of the group of pupils. Since 1998, PE results have shown a slight improvement, with a rise in the percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades. However, this is below the national average for similar schools and reflects the ability and composition of the group, as only a small number of girls choose to follow this option. In art in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining A* - C grades was in line with national expectations. This maintained the upward trend of improvement in art in recent years.

5. GCSE examination results in design and technology in 2001 were in line with the national average for 2000. Girls' performance remains better than that of boys, but the department has started to address this issue. Pupils who choose to study history normally achieve broadly average grades. In 2000, results were in line with the national average for grades A* - C but were below the national average in 2001. Girls did better than boys.
6. The performance of pupils taking the General National Vocational Qualification [GNVQ] in information technology should enable them to match the performance of pupils in similar schools across the country. However, for over half the pupils no comparison can be drawn, as no monitoring or assessment of their information and communication technology work occurs. French results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were below the national average. They were also lower than most other subjects in the school in 2001 but an examination of current work, including tape recordings from pupils in Years 10, showed that pupils are currently working at national standards. In 2001, German results in the GCSE examination were slightly below national standards for 2000 but were better than for most other subjects in the school. Results have been better than in French because the more able pupils choose to study German. By the end of Year 11, the attainment of pupils in religious education is above the national average. For those on non-examination courses it is in line with the national average. Pupils' achievements in terms of grades A* - C in 2001 were above the national average for 2000. This follows the pattern of the past three years. Results for pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement course were also above average. The standard of the work seen during the inspection was above average in the GCSE examination groups at the end of Year 11.
7. In terms of the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - C in GCSE examinations, the school has moved slightly forward over the past three years, but in terms of the proportion achieving five or more grades A* - G there is no significant improvement, and in terms of average points scored there has been a slight decline. There is also considerable variation in the results of different subjects, inconsistencies and sharp fluctuations in some subject results over time, and some disparities between the overall performance of boys and girls. The indications are that the school is holding its own in comparison with similar schools, and is sometimes out-performing them, but that in comparison with all schools the overall GCSE results are, for the most part, below average and need to be consistently higher. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately at both key stages but higher-attaining pupils need to achieve more in a number of subjects. Whilst the overall standard of literacy is adequate, weaknesses in writing skills sometimes prevent pupils from making the progress they should, particularly in subjects such as history and modern foreign languages.
8. The results of the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that when standards in the core subjects are looked at as a whole, the school's performance in comparison with similar schools was above average for mathematics and was average for English and science. These results were below average in comparison with all schools. The trend of improvement for the core subjects is now above the national trend. In the school as a whole, the progress of the majority of pupils is often satisfactory and in some subjects it is good, but it is an uneven picture. In 2001, data indicates that in terms of their GCSE examinations average points score, pupils did as well as pupils in similar schools. However, when the cohort's attainment at Key Stage 4 is analysed in terms of the cohort's attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 their achievement is below average.
9. The achievement of pupils at Key Stage 4 is best in art, design and technology, history and religious education. In subjects as a whole, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. There are weaknesses in English because achievement in the GCSE examination is hampered by the weak literacy skills of pupils. In science, pupils

consolidate their knowledge and improve their understanding, but for many middle-and high-attaining pupils there is insufficient depth in understanding at the end of the key stage for them to achieve at the highest levels. The needs of higher-attainers are not being fully met in English, design and technology, mathematics, science and art, and in some lessons in geography in Year 7.

10. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievements in comparison with the achievements of pupils in similar schools are average in English and science but are above average in mathematics. In these subjects boys are achieving less well than girls. Achievement is good in art, music and religious education. In design and technology progress is satisfactory but it is lower than it should be where units of work restrict the diversity of outcome of practical work, or where there are low expectations of the quality of finish or range of materials to be used. Progress is satisfactory, too, in geography as pupils acquire geographical skills at a steady rate from Year 7 onwards but the department does not develop written work consistently, a similar picture to history. In some classes in both subjects writing is poorly developed and there are limited opportunities for pupils to write at length and basic errors go unchecked. In French and German pupils do not check their written work carefully enough and the errors students make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards. In subjects as a whole, pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Sixth form

11. The standards reached by students relate to a wide range of diverse courses. Small numbers make national comparisons difficult and unhelpful but students' results in GCSE/GNVQ examinations being retaken or entered for the first time in 2001 were below the national success rate. Again, only small numbers of students are involved in studying for some vocational qualifications and they meet with differing degrees of success. The results of the GNVQ Foundation Level in Business [Part 1] which ran from 1999-2001 shows that over 70 per cent achieved a merit grade which included over 75 per cent being successful in achieving a Level 1 in the Key Skills strand. The overall results for the range of courses in GNVQ Health and Social Care and Business show that nearly 80 per cent of students achieved a full award, just over 20 per cent achieving a merit but none with distinction.
12. In 2000, the students' average points score for those taking A or AS Levels was below average in comparison with all schools. In 2001, the pass rate was above the national average for all schools. However, the small size of cohorts makes helpful comparisons difficult. Nonetheless, the school's analysis of the progress made by the majority of students on the A and AS Level courses shows that it is mostly satisfactory or good in relation to their prior attainment. In comparison with other maintained schools, the school's overall points score in 2001 was below average both for those studying fewer than two A Level courses or equivalent or for those more than two A Level courses or equivalent, based on the 2000 national figures. Standards reached on key skills courses are satisfactory and are good for the communication unit. Results in A Level geography were weak.
13. In 2001, the three students entered for the GCSE English examination all passed, one student obtaining a C grade pass, but the attainment of Year 12 students, studying for the GCSE English examination, is below the national expectation. In the work of these students, there are clear weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure; much of the written work is fluent but inaccurate. A combination of weak reading comprehension and limited vocabulary limits the progress and attainment of some of these students. Overall attainment in the 2001 GCE Advanced Level English literature

examinations was in line with the national average. In 2001, girls out-performed boys. The proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades fluctuates, but there is an overall improvement over four years. Comprehension is sometimes limited by weak vocabulary. There is an extensive range of course work, showing good progress in the development of essay structure, the appropriate use of quotations and the development of reasoned arguments. Higher attaining students undertake research at an appropriate level and have a grasp and appreciation of the language and style of text. Work is well presented and many students word process their assignments effectively.

14. In the year 2001, the examination results at both AS and A Levels in mathematics were below the national average, and due to the small size of the entry it is not possible to compare these results with the results of other subjects within the school. The current standard of written work is good and the quality of the oral work at Year 13 is particularly good. No lessons for the GCSE 're-sit' group of students were observed because of school examinations but this course needs some re-appraisal because a significant number of the students attend only half of the time-tabled lessons for this course.
15. In 2001, examination results in biology were in line with expectation, based on the recruitment grades of the 2 students. In 2000, results were in line with the national average for the 9 candidates entered. In physics, all 4 students entered gained a pass grade, but the small number involved means comparison with national average is unreliable. In 2000, all 7 students entered gained a pass grade, but the average points scored were below national average. Results in the GCE A Level chemistry examination in 2000 showed the average points scored by the students were below the national expectation, but in line with students' previous grades at GCSE. Between 1998-2000 there were 13 candidates for the examination and of these 2 gained grade B and 10 achieved a pass grade. The number of candidates each year is small and caution must be exercised when comparing results to the national expectation. In the AS Level examination, two students gained pass grades in 2001 and 3 students have continued to the 'A' Level course.
16. In 2001, the GCE A Level results in religious education were above average, as they were in 1999. There were no candidates in 2000. There were 9 candidates for AS religious studies in 2001, 8 of whom achieved a pass grade. The standards of the 7 students who are continuing with the A Level course in Year 13 are above average. They are producing written work of a higher quality than their AS results would predict, and have made good progress since taking GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. The 10 students in Year 12 have made a sound start to the AS course. They were seen presenting their findings on an Old Testament narrative which demonstrated useful learning from their research, although their oral presentation skills are still limited.
17. Over the last 3 years, low numbers have been entered for A Level French and results have varied, but they have been in line with the ability of individual students. In general, they have been below the national average for all schools. There were no candidates in 2001, but in 1999 there was a single student, and in 2000 there were 3. There are no students in Year 12. Evidence indicates that current attainment shows that the student is working at a level for an appropriate grade to be achieved at the end of the course.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Most pupils who attend school have positive attitudes. They arrive at school in an orderly manner and approach the school day with enthusiasm. Pupils are well mannered and show courtesy to staff, visitors and to each other when moving around the school. Their attitudes in lessons are largely good and pupils concentrate well and usually work hard.

This is the norm. In a minority of lessons some pupils are occasionally indifferent and unenthusiastic. In particular, there are a significant number of pupils at both key stages who are easily distracted and who slow down progress in lessons. A few pupils also find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential in some lessons in modern foreign languages. In other lessons, especially in art and music, there was evidence of excellent attitudes with pupils very keen to succeed. The school has many effective initiatives in place, for example a range of rewards systems, to encourage pupils to maintain and develop further their positive attitudes.

19. Attendance is similar to the national average with low levels of unauthorised absence, a situation which has been constant for several years. Registration is carried out effectively at the start of each session and there is an efficient system for recording pupils who arrive late to ensure that form tutors receive the information. When pupils do not arrive, form tutors try to establish reasons from their friends to determine if there are any immediate concerns. Registers are returned to the office at the end of registration for data to be transferred into the recording system for monitoring.
20. The overall level of behaviour is good. Both around the school, including breaks and lunchtime, and in most lessons the behaviour is good and sometimes very good or excellent. There are, however, groups of pupils in some classes where behaviour is very challenging. There is a relatively high exclusion rate of pupils and the reasons are carefully monitored by the school. It was recorded in the last inspection report that the school takes in a number of pupils with poor attendance records who have been excluded or transferred from other schools in the area. This continues to be the case and for many pupils the move proves successful; there is clear evidence, however, that several of these pupils continue to be difficult and this has a significant effect on the school's exclusion figures. No bullying or other oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection but there were good examples of pupils helping one another, especially amongst pupils with special learning needs but also in music where Year 11 pupils supervised the choir and in Year 12 where a class virtually took responsibility for its own learning.
21. Pupils form good relationships with one another and with their tutors, resulting in a good working ethos in lessons. In many classes, for example in a Year 7 drama lesson, good relationships had a positive effect on learning as pupils supported each other so well. Pupils are supportive of the tutor system which incorporates both form time and time for individual contact. They show clear respect for each other and this is encouraged through the relationship between tutors and pupils and the personal, social and health education programme. There is no evidence of sexism or racism in the school which is working as a harmonious community. The school has a good system to make pupils aware of what to do if bullying occurs.
22. Opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility are limited in class but where they do exist pupils accept them with enthusiasm. Outside lessons, most year groups have a council which meets regularly and gives pupils the opportunity to learn about decision-making and to express their views. Other responsibilities available include helping in the library and taking on responsibility on a rota basis for tidying up litter. Pupils become involved in many activities, one of the most successful being the choir.

Sixth form

23. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and, in general, most support what it sets out to do and how it does it. There is a clear and distinctive approach to the supervision of study which some students resent but others benefit from. Students clearly show an interest in school life and the majority are well motivated.

24. Students are committed to serving in the wider community and a good number of them benefit from helping pupils in the main part of the school. Whilst many are following courses which allow them to re-sit many of their Key Stage 4 examinations, they also show a sense of pursuing more long-term career objectives and direction. They make good use of the facilities offered by the school but there is a lack of opportunity for them to take part in physical education and the extent of extra-curricular activities is limited.
25. There are no behavioural problems in the sixth form. All students choose to attend and the majority want to learn. They are prepared to take on responsibility and often show maturity, for instance when undertaking presentations in lessons in religious education. Students record their attendance and most are punctual. Where students are poor attenders, staff make good attempts to establish the reasons and encourage improvement. Relationships are very good in lessons and learning directly benefits from the positive attitudes of well-motivated students. In general, there is total commitment but a few students lack confidence as a result of low self-esteem. The school's key skills lessons give good guidance to students on how to adopt improved learning techniques and to determine their effectiveness. Opportunities are taken to involve the Year 13 students in demonstrating methods to Year 12 students. Opportunities are also provided for students to broaden the learning through activities outside school, including charity events. Through both project work and guided activities students contribute to the learning and personal development of younger pupils in the main school. Whilst the school is preparing students well for future life, there are still only limited opportunities for independent learning in some subjects.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. In the main part of the school the quality of teaching is good or better in approximately 3 in every 4 lessons, a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching in Years 7 and 9 is good. The highest quality of teaching was observed in Year 10 where 8 out of 10 lessons were good or better. In Year 8, the overall quality of the teaching was satisfactory, and there was very little unsatisfactory teaching.
27. The quality of planning was one of the strengths of lessons where teaching was good or very good. Teachers are also very clear when describing the learning objectives of lessons, so that pupils are in no doubt as to what they have to study and the part they have to play in the learning. Teachers' specialist knowledge of their subject is good. Many teachers are also skilled at providing work for pupils of different abilities although higher-attainers are not always extended as well as they might be. All these qualities are underpinned by strong positive relationships between pupils and teachers. For the most part, homework is being well used to reinforce learning and to extend knowledge.
28. Weaknesses in teaching include the lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils, particularly in English and mathematics, and limited use of ICT, especially in English, design and technology and history. Insufficient attention is being paid to the development of pupils' writing in history, some marking lacks helpful feedback to pupils, and assessment is not used effectively in all subjects to help pupils to make good progress.
29. Most English lessons are well taught at both key stages and in some cases the teaching is very good and even excellent. The strengths of the teaching are good planning, especially in terms of sequences of lessons over time, the evaluation of pupils' progress as they learn and a good command of the subject which allows teachers to present a stimulating variety of learning activities. There are some weaknesses. Higher-attaining pupils in mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3 are not always sufficiently challenged. Marking is not

rigorous or systematic enough, which means that the feedback to pupils is limited. Pupils in Year 7 with weak literacy skills are not assessed effectively to ensure that their needs are fully met.

30. The quality of the teaching in mathematics is good overall, but it is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, as is the case for English teaching; teachers plan well. Lessons also build effectively on pupils' previous knowledge. Teachers give clear explanations and question pupils well. A weaker feature of teaching at Key Stage 3 is that the higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
31. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3 teaching is good; both the long-term and day-to-day planning of lessons are carefully designed to ensure that pupils' deepen their understanding. In less effective lessons at both key stages, teachers' knowledge and understanding is less secure and they are unable to exemplify their ideas in such interesting ways. In lessons shared by a number of teachers, long-term planning is weaker and the logical development of topics is affected by the group constantly changing teachers. The quality of teaching in ICT is never less than satisfactory and it is mainly good, with some being very good. The overall quality of teaching in other subjects is good.
32. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Often receiving effective support from learning assistants in mainstream classes, the pupils have a very good relationship with other adults. Building on this, teachers and assistants are able to gain the confidence of pupils and then work hard to raise their self-esteem further. In most subjects, work is matched to the specific needs of pupils which enables them to make progress. Occasionally, this aspect is less successful and learning support assistants, in particular, are not always sure of the most effective ways forward for developing the literacy skills of pupils. In larger classes in science, where there is no support, pupils depend on individual attention from the teacher which, whilst generally available, is not as effective.
33. The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. On the whole, homework is well used to consolidate learning. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, especially in English, drama, music and modern foreign languages. They are able to learn how to study independently and in groups, especially in modern foreign languages and physical education. Opportunities for pupils to learn about the application of ICT are limited and at Key Stage 4, in particular, pupils get too few opportunities to see how it can enhance their learning in all subjects. Because there is little systematic learning about literacy in the curriculum as a whole, pupils are not markedly improving their writing and reading skills to make the best use of their knowledge, especially in subjects such as art, history and modern foreign languages. Higher-attaining pupils need more opportunities to extend their skills and deepen their understanding. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to evaluate their own and each other's performances in physical education.

Sixth form

34. The majority of the teaching is good or better and in just under a quarter of lessons it is very good. Especially good teaching was observed in business studies lessons. It is also good in English, where lessons are well planned and have clear objectives based on the teachers' knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects. They are eager to share this with students. They are committed to high standards and expect students to achieve well. The work of students is regularly marked and carefully assessed, and teachers often go to great lengths to

summarise their evaluations of students' work. Relationships between teachers and students are based on mutual respect.

35. Teachers are also largely effective in giving scope for students to become independent. Students are encouraged to find out things for themselves. Teachers use resources well, including objects to stimulate interest, specially prepared guidance sheets, often including well-selected extracts from texts available on the Internet. Students themselves are encouraged to undertake this type of research on topics selected by teachers. Teachers are aware of the examination requirements and are keen that their students grasp the key concepts of the subject, a striking feature of the teaching in religious education. Year 13 students, in particular, apply themselves very well to the work, and are able to question issues searchingly. Very positive attitudes clearly contribute to their learning.
36. In some lessons students could profitably be given more opportunities to conduct research, to choose their own topics for study, to present findings to an audience and to evaluate the work of one another. Low numbers in some groups mean that opportunities for students to learn from one another are often limited and this is an inhibiting factor which sometimes prevents it from developing fully.

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

37. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum to age 16 and offers a full range of courses in the sixth form. The effective use of block timetabling enables subjects to use setting and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment. This works well. A unit for the visually impaired provides effective support for pupils through to A Level and all pupils with special educational needs are especially well provided for and have full access to the full curriculum. The school has strong links with the local community through the Community Association and pupils benefit from the extra opportunities it offers for sport, dance and drama.
38. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, as it includes all subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education, together with a programme of personal and social education and some drama lessons. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed. Intensive work on 'Catch-up' programmes with lower-attaining pupils had recently started at the time of the inspection and is designed to equip pupils with the skills in literacy and numeracy that they need in most subjects, but in the curriculum at large there is currently no systematic attempt to address the literacy needs of pupils. ICT is only taught for half the year to Year 7 and for the equivalent of one term in Years 8 and 9. Similarly, drama is taught for only part of the year and provision is thin. Geography lacks an up-to-date scheme of work and there is limited opportunity for fieldwork.
39. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is just satisfactory as it ensures that all pupils follow a broad curriculum to age 16, including a modern foreign language and technology, but there are some weaknesses in provision. The two thirds of pupils who do not choose it as an option do not receive their curriculum entitlement to ICT and statutory requirements are not being met. By contrast, there is an imbalance in the curriculum for some pupils who are doing too much ICT. The school expects pupils on the GNVQ vocational course in ICT to cover the equivalent of four GCSE subjects in the time allocated to one. Religious education does not have enough time to cover the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The school intends to address most of these deficiencies when the proposals for a new curriculum model are implemented next academic year.

40. Provision for personal, social and health education within the school is based on the broad issues of self-esteem, socialisation, school work, jobs, morals and values, health, awe and wonder, and tolerance. The programme is well managed and the content is arranged so as to be appropriate to pupils' needs – for example, the first session in Year 7 is 'circle' time, an occasion when pupils can talk in a supportive atmosphere of trust, on the issue of changing schools and the Year 11 programme includes advice on money management. Issues of drugs, alcohol and sex education are all fully covered within the programme whilst issues of citizenship, bullying and peer pressures are integrated into the content. The subject was initially taught by volunteers who have now through experience and training become specialists in the subject. Monitoring of the teaching is carried out by the co-ordinator who 'drops in' to classes and also examines the workbooks of the pupils.
41. The curriculum time allocated for personal, social and health education is currently limited but is in the process of being increased to embrace citizenship. Whilst the content of the course is good, the delivery of it should be reviewed to ensure that the time allocation is adequate and that the quality of teaching is consistent.
42. A full programme of extra-curricular activities, notably in sport, music and drama, enriches the curriculum. Over 300 pupils are involved in music-making through the school's orchestras, bands and choirs, with the opportunity to take part in concert tours, such as last summer's tour of the Rhineland. The library and ICT rooms are open all hours to pupils and there are a number of subject and interest clubs, such as art and science, as well as extra revision sessions in most subjects before examinations. In Year 10 there is a successful debating society.
43. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. There is a limited input in Year 9 prior to pupils choosing their options, but a full programme is taught in Years 10 and 11. Good use is made of computer program to identify pupils' career interests in Year 10, and pupils were observed successfully presenting the results of their investigations into a range of occupations. All pupils complete one week's work experience in the summer of Year 10 and there are further opportunities for work placements for certain pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form.
44. Brownhills is a community school that has established strong links with its local community and constructive relationships with partner institutions. Regular meetings of the local cluster schools and effective curriculum links with primary schools and departments, including practical help in areas such as music, technology and ICT, promote good working relationships. The school is also involved in teacher training for students from the universities of Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Students benefit from the school's links with local industry and commerce, and from its involvement with the Education and Business Partnership.
45. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory. A significant contribution is made by religious education, where pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to discuss the beliefs and values from a variety of religions. Good opportunities for reflection are given and pupils are encouraged to express their own views and feelings and compare them objectively with others. In music, pupils are effectively encouraged to develop self-awareness and are given a sense of self-worth through composing and playing. In most other areas of the curriculum opportunities are missed to develop a sense of awe and wonder, to offer times of reflection and to be challenged by ultimate questions of existence. Although there are exceptions, form time is not used well either to enhance the curriculum or to raise attainment, and it needs to be urgently reviewed.

46. There is no effective whole-school monitoring of the effectiveness of the school's provision in this area. Year assemblies are very pleasant social occasions and opportunities are given for consideration of moral and social issues but pupils are not effectively engaged or involved in these and the presentation of material is generally unimaginative and unchallenging. Tutor periods are not effectively used and add very little to pupils' spiritual development. The one assembly that stands out in pupils' experience is the whole-school Remembrance Service which was a moving experience for many of them. The school does not meet the statutory requirements for collective worship either in the main school or in the sixth form. These issues were commented on adversely in the previous report and have still to be addressed by the school.
47. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils are being educated in a community where the values of what is right and what is wrong are being reinforced through the day-to-day conduct of its members. The school has strong policies concerning behaviour and the need to promote positive attitudes in the school. These are well set out in the handbook so that all staff are aware of the common values that the school stands for. They are well reinforced by the home/school agreement. There is a good pastoral support system which both encourages good behaviour and addresses any issues concerning poor or anti-social behaviour. Moral issues also form part of provision in English where the pupils discuss the moral stances of authors in literature lessons, and in modern foreign languages where pupils are encouraged to explore the issues of prejudice towards other cultures and countries. Moral issues are central to the curriculum in both religious education and personal, social and health education.
48. Sixth form students are also actively encouraged to consider the moral aspects of life through issues raised in lessons in PSHE and through the encouragement they receive to raise money for philanthropic organisations that rely heavily on charitable funding. In some assemblies students have an opportunity to reflect on major world events. This provision could be strengthened if a comprehensive programme for assemblies were devised which covered moral dilemmas in a systematic and comprehensive way and challenged the students. Students have scope to help others through a wide range of community service placements and to assist pupils in various ways in the main part of the school. Throughout the school, special needs provision exudes a strong and determined commitment to assist pupils whatever their disability.
49. The provision for pupils' social development is good. The school stresses that all members of its community have mutual obligations, and this attitude is emphasised in the behaviour policy, where rewards and sanctions are part of a balanced system of response. Throughout the school day, in classes, in transit from room to room, in social areas at break-times and in the dining areas, pupils have scope to mix freely and easily with one another. Pupils with special educational needs are constantly encouraged to interact with other pupils and adults. The canal boat initiative, whereby a small number of pupils were helped to live in a confined community, was a very successful initiative which characterised the commitment and imagination the school brings to this aspect of pupils' development. It is also well demonstrated in the very successful way visually impaired pupils are helped to be full members of the school community. Provision for music provides especially good scope for pupils to join with others, well illustrated by the 2 Year 11 pupils who take responsibility for a Year 7 choir. In science, socially responsible attitudes are encouraged by the study of global warming and other environmental issues such as the new Birmingham northern relief road. The Year Councils are playing a good part in the social development of pupils, especially in Year 7, but they are not active in all years and this is a limitation in the current overall provision. Tutor time is not always used in a structured way to promote and develop social relationships. Sixth form students are able to congregate in a common room and can take part in a range of events throughout

the school year but there is no structured programme to ensure that social events are frequent, exciting and varied. Pupils undoubtedly benefit from their community service and the residential visits that the school arranges.

50. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have good opportunities to enjoy music and to appreciate art and literature. The library is successful in promoting recreational reading in pupils' leisure time. In most subjects, pupils have some opportunities to understand and appreciate the faiths, culture and lifestyle of other cultures. However, the school does not adequately promote an understanding of the issues raised by the diversity of different communities in Britain today and this aspect needs to be more strongly promoted, even though this was an issue at the last inspection.

Sixth form

51. In the sixth form the school provides a wide range of A Level and vocational courses but the numbers enrolled in some subjects are not enough to make them economic. The statutory requirement to provide religious education for all is still not being met and there are no timetabled opportunities for physical education, other than on examination courses. Staff absence has affected the availability of careers advice for students. The absence of core time for all to attend careers education in sixth form means that not all students benefit. Whilst the sixth form co-ordinator has been generous with his own time, there is a need for a sustained careers and guidance programme of quality so that all students feel fully supported if provision is to become satisfactory.
52. The quality of information and communication technology is varied. Students enter this phase with a wide range of experience but the majority have had no opportunities for the systematic development of their skills throughout Key Stage 4. The recently introduced Key Skills provision, aimed at level 2, is not appropriate for all and is limited in quality. There is no accredited course offered in information and communication technology in the sixth form and no progression for students in design and technology courses studied at Key Stage 4. For these reasons provision is unsatisfactory.
53. The overall provision of business education is good. The department offers students AS/A2 Level courses and GNVQ intermediate. In AS/A2 courses, completion rates are high and results match or exceed national figures. They are amongst the best in the school. Students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the business world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good and are a strength of the school. The child protection officer is fully trained and staff are aware of procedures. The school has a sound approach to health and safety and provides adequate supervision for activities. There is a whole-school policy on health and safety supported by departmental procedures. Risk assessments are carried out for activities, including school trips. Regular fire evacuation practices are undertaken and recorded. The school nurse visits as required, and routine medical matters are dealt with by trained 'first-aid' staff who keep clear records of any treatments. Accident reports are completed and external agencies are involved as required. Routine health and safety inspections are implemented.
55. The welfare of the pupils is underpinned by an effective pastoral system which ensures close tutor/pupil relationships. Pupils transfer to the school from a large number of primary schools with a wide range of backgrounds. There is a good induction process for

pupils which includes the head of Year 7 visiting every feeder primary school to meet the pupils before they join. Through the pastoral system pupils are given good guidance on dealing with school life.

56. The school monitors attendance very closely and has very good relationships with the educational welfare officer who provides good support. Pupils are rewarded for both good attendance and good behaviour through the various rewards available. Both the behaviour and the anti-bullying policy are effective. The school's clear guidelines and expectations on behaviour are well known and adhered to.
57. The quality of careers guidance is good and is well supported by a work experience programme. Pupils' personal development is monitored, mainly through the direct contact of pupil and tutor. Any concerns are identified to the head of year through the referral system, as are pupils' achievements. Pupils with learning needs are monitored closely through the special needs department. There is a daily tutor period for all pupils to allow the development of close relationships and, in general, the pupil will keep the same tutor throughout the school but in the majority of tutor periods observed time was not well used for this purpose. Support for personal development is also provided by the school's personal and social educational programme. A key element in the monitoring of personal development is the record of achievement system where the folders now include copies of pupils' reports as well as achievement data. The tutors' knowledge of the pupils is supported by the referral system and the record of achievement system.
58. The strength of the pastoral system and the care it provides for pupils has clearly been maintained since the last inspection and the majority of concerns raised have been dealt with.
59. The pastoral system for the sixth form is built on the close relationships between students and tutors. Students consider that they have received good guidance when choosing courses for study and that the curriculum provision is appropriate to their needs. Whilst the advice from within the school is good, there is, at present, only limited advice on careers from outside agencies. Procedures for encouraging attendance are again by individual contact and explanation of its importance. There is satisfactory provision of information, advice and guidance provided for students through the tutors and facilities such as the school library. Students also receive clear advice and guidance on sixth form life and 'how to succeed' through the key skills lessons which are well taught. Where students are having difficulties, tutors use a scheme called 'Stepping up the pace' which involves an appropriate degree of increased support and monitoring.
60. The school has a detailed assessment, recording and reporting policy, which includes clear guidance on marking. It requires that pupils should know what they have achieved, and the progress they have made. However, this policy is implemented inconsistently across departments and key stages. Practice in design and technology, ICT, music and art is good because they use National Curriculum attainment levels to provide a skills-based assessment. In the ICT GNVQ course, in Years 10 and 11, a well-documented series of targets helps pupils to track their progress but the progress of many students cannot be assessed because no ICT course is undertaken. In design and technology pupils understand the range of criteria used to assess their progress and, as they get older, they are able increasingly to carry out a self-assessment role.
61. Assessment is weak at Key Stage 3 in English, history and geography and aspects of mathematics because it is not rooted in the National Curriculum attainment targets. Overall, marking often fails to indicate to pupils what they need to do in the short term to improve in the subject. Assessment in mathematics follows a clear department policy for

both informal and formal assessment. However, there is inconsistency in the way work is marked at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, since often no comments are made to help pupils improve. All departments monitor the quality of marking through “booksee” that requires heads of department and senior managers to monitor and review marking policy.

62. On entry to the school, pupils’ performance at Key Stage 2 is used to organise appropriate subject groups based on prior attainment but the school’s use of data related to pupils’ performance during each of the following key stages is limited. Individual departments currently maintain their own records, but, with the exception of the Year 10 database for science, little has been done to centralise information. The proposed appointment of a technician to input data into a central system will facilitate analysis of pupil performance by specific groups or gender. It will also allow staff to plan their teaching to match their pupils’ needs and report more securely to parents. Overall, assessment at Key Stage 3 and Key stage 4 is unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory in the sixth form.

Sixth form

63. Sixth form advice and guidance is based on good relationships. Several students were able to share the way they had benefited from acts of great kindness on the part of staff when they faced particular difficulties. The formal programme of advice and guidance they receive is satisfactory. There is a weekly lesson in PSHE, which follows a wide ranging programme of relevant topics and activities.
64. Standards of assessment and marking are better in all subjects in the sixth form, where students’ progress is closely monitored. After discussions with staff, students set their own targets for improvement. In mathematics, staff comments point to changes that will improve students’ outcomes.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. The partnership between parents and the school is a strength of the school. A home/school agreement is in place and pupils use a homework diary which has to be signed by parents and teachers on a regular basis. Parents’ views of the school expressed through the questionnaires and the parents’ meeting are very supportive – there is general satisfaction. Whilst only 10 per cent of questionnaires were returned, parents did not register any consistent areas of concern. There is general satisfaction amongst parents and students with the sixth form and the provision it offers.
66. The most pleasing aspects for parents are the high expectations within the school and the good progress made by the pupils as a result of the good teaching. Other strong features are the development of maturity of the pupils and the approachability of the school for parents. Individual comments from parents were all considered and the inspection team consider that these are all answered within the earlier sections of the report or are currently being addressed adequately by the school.
67. Communication with parents is another strength of the school. The school produces a regular newsletter ‘Focus’ which is well presented and informative. In addition there are letters and leaflets on specific matters of interest to groups of parents as well as an informative school brochure. Following a parental survey, the school now incorporates the annual reports into the record of achievement folders which are sent home each year – the content of the reports has also been modified following the survey. The reports contain the statutory information but still have a number of shortcomings; targets are not specific enough and parents need more information to allow them to interpret the levels being reached in relation to national expectations. Sixth form students are satisfied with

their reports; they fully understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. The governors' annual report to parents is comprehensive and meets legal requirements, although it does imply more progress since the last Ofsted report than has actually taken place.

68. There is an active home/school association which encourages parental involvement and raises funds as well as organising social events. The school is clearly a significant part of the local community and many adults come into school for sporting and social events as well as for adult education. Whilst this gets pupils used to having adults around the school, there is little direct involvement by adults in lessons. Parents attend meetings in the school to discuss progress as well as any problems if they occur; there are good opportunities for parents of pupils with special educational needs to be fully involved in decisions taken about their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The new headteacher is leading the school well. Showing a respect for what the school has already achieved, he has put in place mechanisms for evaluating the success of current practices and given an indication of the way the school might go in the future, through the development of technology college status. The process is fully consultative and gains strength from the positive attitudes of staff, governors and parents who are committed to taking the school forward.
70. The school has a clear set of aims which are well set out in the prospectus. It is in the process of meeting them. It sets appropriate targets. Underpinning the school's successes is a strong belief in the importance of relationships. There is a bond between members of staff and between teaching and support staff, and between staff, governors and parents. There is a good sense of all working together for the good of the school.
71. The school is inclusive in the sense that no member of its community is prevented from gaining access to all that it offers. Particularly effective is the work of the special educational needs department which is well integrated with the whole school and is greatly respected by the school for all the work it does in helping pupils to overcome a wide range of difficulties in an ethos in which all pupils are respected and valued.
72. School development planning is well established and all departments and the sixth form have been encouraged to prepare plans to help the school to move forward strategically. There is coherence in the headings they apply in planning. Whilst the departmental development plans are basically sound, some lack important detail, such as consistent success criteria, which would prevent fully effective monitoring from taking place.
73. At the heart of the school's self-improvement programme is its performance management strategy, which is becoming well embedded in the structure of the school. This ensures the regular monitoring of teaching and learning and also identifies staff development needs. It influences the successful work the school has undertaken to improve the quality of teaching. Work is also being done on generating individual pupil forecasts, based on the DfES 'autumn package.' Departments analyse examination performance and the results are incorporated in development plans. These help to provide the headteacher and governing body with a knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A continuous process of review and of objective setting is part of the school's programme of self-improvement. Working parties and committees are part of the consultation process and contribute to school improvement and development. The headteacher interviews all pupils in Year 11 to discuss their individual targets, their progress and career plans.

74. The governing body is very committed to the school. Through its curriculum links and in other ways, it has developed a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. It shares the headteacher's vision for the future. It understands the need for training and has set up its own effective programme for this purpose. The governing body is broadly fulfilling its statutory duties but there is still no daily act of collective worship; religious education is not part of the programme for sixth form students; provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 does not meet the demands of the Agreed Syllabus; and ICT is not taught to all pupils at Key Stage 4. The governing body plays an important part in behaviour and discipline issues through its pupils' welfare and discipline committees. The sites and buildings sub-committee meet on a regular basis. Governors receive regular detailed written reports from the headteacher who has also briefed them on the school's aims and ambitions for the coming year. Governors are attached to each department so they can get to know a key area of the school, and they report on developments. Governors are also closely involved with the community aspects of the school.
75. Senior staff play a key role in helping to ensure the success of the school. They are hard-working and shoulder many responsibilities. In some cases these are so numerous and so burdensome they are in danger of preventing the pursuit of excellence in key areas of the school's work. The school is aware of these pressures, for instance in relation to the collection of data, and is in the process of appointing a manager to oversee this important aspect of the school's performance. Elsewhere in the school, some members of staff carry heavy responsibilities, managing departments as well as year groups. Year heads and subject co-ordinators play a key role in helping the school to function effectively. Some policies, such as those for assessment and literacy now need to be strongly promoted and co-ordinated so that they have a powerful impact on raising standards further.
76. Grants are used well to help the development of the school. Staff induction procedures, including a mentoring system, are well established. There are good links with both Birmingham and Wolverhampton Universities for initial teaching training placements resulting in some good teaching appointments. Staff development is well organised and co-ordinated. Staff recruitment, as with the national picture, remains unpredictable, although the school is being as 'creative' as it can be to retain good teachers. The school is still not fully staffed and there are staffing issues in a number of departments. In geography and textiles long-term illness is causing problems. There is still some non-specialist teaching in mathematics and science, although the school has done much to reduce this since the last inspection. There are three non-specialists in the mathematics department. In science there have been five new members of staff since Easter, including two newly qualified teachers and one non-specialist. With the exception of the head of department, all those who had responsibility have left and areas of delegation remain a concern. Administrative and clerical staff are of high calibre. They have clear roles and responsibilities, are well trained, use new technology well and make an important contribution to the efficiency and ethos of the school.
77. Whilst standards of accommodation in many areas are satisfactory or good, the state of the floor covering in some areas is poor. In physical education, there is no permanent base or storage for examination work. In geography, rooms are small and cramped. Accommodation in religious education is inadequate and there is insufficient space for the storage of three-dimensional work in art. Among other deficiencies, the special needs department lacks a room or a space where confidential discussions can take place; computers are located in a corridor; the shabbiness of some rooms does little to enhance pupils' self-esteem. The school has identified a wide range of buildings and site issues in need of development in a report issued by the headteacher in August 2001.

78. Learning resources are inadequate in some curriculum areas. Design technology has no computer-aided manufacture and no computer-control equipment. There are insufficient numbers of textbooks in mathematics, except in the sixth form. The distances separating religious education rooms make for inefficient use of resources. More textbooks, readers and computer programs are needed in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
79. The school's finances are well managed. Auditors' reports have been complimentary about the school's systems and procedures. Governors are closely involved in the allocation of the budget. The school is undertaking extensive audits of the needs of its partner schools as part of its preparation for bidding for technology college status. Budgeting takes account of an adequate contingency, and efforts are made to secure best value from purchases and repairs and maintenance work. Expenditure on pupils is slightly higher than the average for maintained schools with sixth forms. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average and in some recent years has been well below average. They make progress in the school, although standards are still below the national average by the end of Year 11. On this basis, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.
80. At the time of the last inspection the leadership of the school was regarded as successful in meeting a number of its aims – the promotion of a caring community; good relationships at all levels; strong community aspects. Areas of management which needed attention included: the monitoring, evaluation and support of teaching and curriculum development; subject development plans; improved focus in staff development plans; definition of roles; more detail in action planning; and the development of middle managers. To a large extent the qualities have been maintained and appropriate further improvements made.

Sixth form

81. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The sixth form is clearly seen as an extension of the main school. Students are provided with an environment which gradually helps them to adjust to the idea of independence through the supervised self-study sessions and opportunities for home leave. All staff know the pupils well and good relations exist between all its members.
82. The school offers a wide range of academic disciplines and vocational courses. Students are very well taught. They are encouraged to become independent and to have a sense of responsibility through work experience and community service. The small number of students on a number of courses is a weak feature. Not only do they not make use of a major investment of time, money and energy but they do not allow for interaction between students and this restricts the quality of learning. Weaknesses include the lack of religious education, the weak provision for physical education for all students, the lack of progression from Key Stage 4 in the areas of design and technology and in information and communication technology and the arrangements for collective worship, all areas for development recognised by the school.
83. The system for monitoring the work of students causing concern is an effective one. The overall progress of students is reviewed at regular intervals. Support systems are in place. Extra-curricular activities are appropriate in range but not rich and exciting and a number of students are disappointed by this provision. The sixth form gives back to the school the benefits of students' maturity. There are good instances of students helping pupils in the main part of the school. Although some courses are expensive to run, for the most part students do make good progress and often achieve well and make a positive contribution to the main school. The presence of post-16 provision in the school attracts staff of calibre. The sixth form gives satisfactory value for money.

84. The development plan for the sixth form is wide-ranging and identifies a number of appropriate key priorities but lacks financial detail. Success criteria are also very generalised and will need to be more detailed if monitoring is to be effective. It is not clear how the responsibilities of the two managers will be divided to ensure that all the tasks can be accomplished.

Resources

85. There are sufficient resources for supporting teaching and learning in this phase and some subjects, such as religious education and modern foreign languages, are making especially good use of a wide range of artefacts. All departments have free access to photocopiers and they are extensively used. The new headteacher, senior management team and heads of department have constructed a very detailed technology college application which outlines a four year development plan with specific targets for raising attainment linked to resources and improvements to sites and buildings.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards further the headteacher, staff and governors now need to

- (1) Raise the overall attainment of pupils at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 so that it is consistently in line with national averages in all subjects and, wherever possible, exceeds them, by:
 - ensuring that all departments apply the school's assessment policy so that pupils are fully aware of their levels of attainment and what they have to do to improve [paragraphs 96, 124, 133, 141, 142, 147, 170]
 - ensuring that the progress of all pupils towards specific learning targets in all subjects is rigorously monitored [paragraphs 95, 109, 157]
 - equipping all staff to work effectively and systematically to address weaknesses in pupils' basic skills, especially those of literacy and numeracy [paragraphs 90, 91, 95, 101, 112, 117, 130, 138, 144, 146, 152, 161]
- (2) Ensure that the school meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 for all pupils to study ICT and religious education [paragraphs 98, 108, 142, 147, 155, 157, 161, 166, 179, 182]

The following, less significant, issues should also be considered for action:

- (1) Provide for a daily act of collective worship of quality and strengthen the spiritual and multicultural aspects of the curriculum [paragraphs 45, 50]
- (2) Ensure that all learning support assistants receive appropriate training in how best to develop the literacy skills of pupils [paragraph 32]
- (3) Improve the quality of form time [paragraph 57]
- (4) Improve accommodation for work with pupils with special educational needs [paragraph 77]
- (5) Provide appropriate levels of resourcing for mathematics [paragraph 110], design and technology [paragraph 134], modern foreign languages [paragraph 165] and religious education [paragraph 183]

Sixth form

- (1) Establish close links between the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form curriculum [paragraph 52,133]
- (2) Ensure that students have opportunities to study religious education and to take part in physical education [paragraphs 51]
- (3) Effectively promote the sixth form so that it recruits and retains more students [paragraphs 11,12, 14, 15]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 10	133
	Sixth form	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 10							
Number	3	25	73	31	1	0	0
Percentage	2	19	55	23	1	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	7	25	7	0	0	0
Percentage	0	18	64	18	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 Years 12 –13 as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7–Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	851	96
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	184	5

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	45	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	183	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	89.37
National comparative data	90.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.51
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001 [2000]	100 [65]	82 [69]	182 [135]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37 [15]	44 [28]	47 [25]
	Girls	59 [43]	62 [44]	51 [34]
	Total	96 [58]	106 [72]	98 [59]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 [44]	58 [54]	53 [44]
	National	64 [63]	66 [65]	66 [59]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 [18]	33 [26]	21 [15]
	National	31 [28]	43 [42]	34 [30]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37 [19]	41[24]	48 [27]
	Girls	57 [46]	54[41]	52 [41]
	Total	94 [65]	95 [65]	100 [68]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 [51]	52 [50]	56 [52]
	National	65 [64]	68 [66]	64 [62]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 [15]	23 [20]	26 [18]
	National	31[31]	42 [39]	33 [29]

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001 [2000]	97 [78]	63 [64]	160 [142]

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	36 [26]	74 [57]	90 [70]
	Girls	24 [26]	49 [53]	58 [61]
	Total	60 [52]	123 [110]	148 [131]
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 [37]	77 [77]	93 [92]
	National	48 [47]	91 [91]	96 [96]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30.2 [32]
	National	39 [38.4]

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	Na

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	18	32

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.2	16.3	14.5	N/A	0	0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14
	National	78.6

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	924
Any other minority ethnic group	14

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	162	4
Other minority ethnic groups	9	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	627.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	22.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	2455848
Total expenditure	2537240
Expenditure per pupil	2863.70
Balance brought forward from previous year	163737
Balance carried forward to next year	82344

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.8
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

	10%
Number of questionnaires sent out	947
Number of questionnaires returned	99

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	48	6	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	40	1	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	41	8	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	46	15	0	2
The teaching is good.	38	55	4	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	45	12	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	5	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	45	14	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	40	45	5	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	49	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	38	8	2	12

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Improving test and examination results
- Good quality teaching
- Development of speaking and listening skills
- Extra-curricular activities, particularly in drama

Areas for improvement

- Further development of assessment procedures
- The teaching of the basic skills of writing in Years 8 and 9
- Improving provision for lower-and higher-attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented
- The management of reading in Year 9 and the development of drama and ICT

86. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are affected by the high proportion of pupils entering the school with literacy levels well below the national average. The proportion of Year 9 pupils attaining the expected and higher level grades in the Key Stage 3 tests in 2001 was below the national average but there has been a slight rise in the numbers achieving these grades over the past three years. Girls do better in these tests than boys and pupils did better in the English tests than in mathematics, but not as well as in science. This year, pupils did as well as pupils in similar schools. Standards in the classroom reflect these test results. Although attainment is below national expectations, by the end of the key stage, most pupils make satisfactory progress. A reason for the rising standards is the effective support for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make good progress and most attain standards commensurate with their capabilities.
87. All pupils study drama in Years 7 to 9, sharing time each term with other subjects. As a consequence, time is limited and attainment and progress in the development of performance skills are restricted. By the end of the key stage, attainment is in line with national expectations.
88. The proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving a pass at grades A* to C in English in 2001 was below the national average but standards have risen over three years and there is a significant improvement over 2000. The GCSE literature results have risen and fallen over time, but in 2001, although only half the year group was entered for the examination, the proportion of pupils achieving a pass at grades A* to C was well above the national average. Twenty-nine pupils were not entered for the GCSE examinations and, of these, eighteen entered and passed Certificate of Achievement examinations. Half gained Grade 2 passes. There was a significant rise in the proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade passes in drama in 2001, well above the national average. There is a trend of sharply rising standards in GCSE drama. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 4 and by the end of the key stage attainment for most pupils is in line with national expectations.
89. Most pupils make good progress in the development of speaking and listening skills and attainment is above national expectations by the end of both key stages. The development of speaking and listening skills is a feature of teaching in English and drama. Most pupils speak clearly and confidently and are able to substantiate their answers with evidence from texts. Lower-attaining pupils try very hard, reply in short phrases and

sometimes slip into the vernacular, but the majority use standard English for most of the time. Teachers encourage concentrated listening and accurate response. For example, teachers encourage whole-class discussion of poetry, plays and stories. In Year 10, pupils listen attentively to short stories on tape, making notes as they listen and use them effectively in class discussion. The school has a successful tradition of participating in school debating competitions and this is built on sound class teaching throughout the school. For example, pupils prepare oral presentations on subjects such as euthanasia and fox-hunting and are encouraged to evaluate their progress. Pupils speak clearly and articulately and argue convincingly in their well-structured talks.

90. Attainment in reading is in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Strategies for developing reading skills in Years 7 and 8 are very good and pupils make good progress. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good; these pupils make good progress. The provision for lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 has yet to make an impact on pupils' progress. The reading competitions stimulate extensive reading. Teachers use the library time effectively to support pupils' reading. The library provision is very good; there is an excellent range of non-fiction reading books for pupils of all abilities. Progress in Year 9 is much more limited. Reading is not managed for this year group and although higher-attaining pupils continue to make good progress, most average and lower-attaining pupils do not. Many do not read outside English lessons and by the end of Key Stage 3 there is a significant gap, particularly in pupils' reading comprehension. This affects overall standards in Key Stage 4, where lower and some average attaining pupils read fluently but find difficulty with the vocabulary and general understanding of GCSE literature texts. The management of reading in Year 9 is an area for development.
91. The quality of pupils' writing is below national expectations by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. A strength of writing in both key stages is the development of style and clearly-structured writing. Pupils are given good opportunities to write in a wide range of forms. In Year 7, pupils write diaries, stories, describe holidays and complete research projects into famous people. By Year 9, some pupils have anthologies of their own poems and are beginning to write critically about books and plays. On the whole, writing is well organised, neatly presented and handwriting is fluent, legible and joined. A weakness that affects the quality of writing in both key stages is poor spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. There is no continuous and progressive programme of basic skills teaching throughout Key Stage 3. The recently introduced National Literacy Strategy in Year 7 begins to address the issue but has yet to make a significant impact on standards. As a consequence, the gap between the higher-attaining pupils and the average and lower attaining pupils increases year by year. Most pupils' attainment in the GCSE English and English literature examinations is impeded by weak basic writing skills. The provision of a basic skills programme is an area for development.
92. The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is good in Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stage 3, all the teaching is of a good standard with some very good and some excellent teaching. In Key Stage 4, all the teaching is satisfactory, three quarters is good and some is very good. The quality of teaching in drama is always satisfactory and sometimes is good.
93. A feature of teaching is very good planning, not only of individual lessons but sequences of lessons, so that pupils are constantly building on previous learning. For example, from a general understanding of the play *Macbeth*, Year 9 pupils moved on to a closer examination of the character and then the language of the play. The active involvement of pupils through an effective balance of oral and written tasks throughout lessons provided pupils with a variety of stimulating activities that contributed to their learning. For example, in a challenging lesson, pupils considered how the use of non-standard English in a novel

was used to determine the personality of a character. The teacher arranged a series of activities. These included a class discussion about how the clothes we wear signal the social occasion, pairs of pupils creating dialogues between people of different classes, re-writing one of the character's speeches in standard English and a summary of the ways in which his speech identified his character.

94. Teachers take trouble to explain the learning objectives and how they are to be met as the lesson proceeds, thus empowering pupils and enabling them to take some responsibility for their learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers evaluate progress in learning as the lesson proceeds. For example, in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were preparing melodramas, pupils and teacher discussed performance skills as the lesson proceeded and how body language and clarity of expression contribute to communication with the audience. Most teachers have a good command of their subject, establish good working relationships and choose imaginative and creative approaches to teaching. This encourages pupils to have the confidence to take risks and try out ideas in a secure learning environment. For example, the creation of a safe learning environment was crucial to the success of a lesson where pupils presented their prepared speeches to the class. Learning was enhanced in this lesson by the constructive whole-class evaluation that followed.
95. Not all aspects of teaching are equally successful. For instance, in some lessons tasks are set which are not appropriate for the capabilities of pupils. In this way, teaching does not always provide opportunities for all pupils to learn equally well. For example, lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 have the opportunity for additional literacy support, but are not sufficiently well assessed for appropriate work to be provided. In mainstream classes, higher-attaining pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging tasks. This is particularly the case in some mixed ability Key Stage 3 classes, where there is often insufficient appropriate work to stretch the higher-attaining pupils. A further area for development is the inconsistent quality of marking. Most teachers provide positive comments about pupils' work but do not correct mistakes of spelling, punctuation and sentence structure rigorously enough. Nor do they insist on pupils' correcting mistakes they have noted. The approach to marking is not systematic enough and the strategies employed are insufficiently varied.
96. There have been improvements in the development of procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress since the last report. For example, the school is providing teachers with National Curriculum levels from key stage tests and there are reading tests in Years 7 and 8. A satisfactory procedure for predicting future attainment levels has yet to be devised. The department assesses pupils' written work at the end of each unit in Key Stage 3 and at the end of each assignment in Key Stage 4 and sets individual targets. These procedures have yet to be applied in a way that effectively identifies the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and groups. Once this is in place, teachers will be able to plan teaching and learning in the light of such an evaluation, set skill-based targets for pupils and report more securely to parents.
97. The good support provided by parents enhances teaching and learning. Parents regularly help with the library and some parents and governors help with individual reading. Parents support visually impaired pupils in school.
98. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in Key stages 3 and 4 and for the most part provides equal opportunities for all pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is being developed to meet the requirements of the curriculum changes. For example, the integration of the National Literacy Strategy will provide a basis for the further development of basic skills teaching in Key Stage 3. The current provision for drama is

limited and the timetable organisation affects the continuity and progression of teaching. The reorganisation of the timetable and the integration of drama into the English department will provide the opportunity to improve provision. The last inspection report highlighted the limited provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Access to computers remains limited and the further integration of ICT into the English curriculum is an area for development. Homework is set regularly and is generally appropriate.

99. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the study of English. For example, in year 7, pupils make a sensitive response to poems, writing their own experiences of regret. Pupils discuss moral issues in speaking and listening activities and share their thinking in group and class discussion. There are missed opportunities because there are no guidelines to ensure a consistent standard of provision. Provision for personal development is good in drama lessons, where improvisations are based on social and moral themes. For example, pupils explore the nature of gangs and bullying. There are very good extra-curricular activities provided with opportunities to perform in plays, visit the theatre and watch visiting theatre groups perform.
100. The department is well managed. Departmental planning is appropriate and reflects the aims of the school. There are sufficient resources and they are well organised. The monitoring of teaching and the development of the curriculum and assessment procedures are areas for further development. There has been an improvement in examination results since the last report. Improvement overall is satisfactory.
101. In the school as a whole, standards of literacy are sufficient to support learning in most subjects. Basic writing skills and reading comprehension are sufficient for most pupils to make satisfactory progress. Most subjects provide pupils with planned opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding through discussion, debate and extended speech and most subjects provide opportunities for independent learning through research. There is no consistent use of common strategies to support literacy, such as providing lists of subject-specific words and frameworks to support writing. There is a language policy in the staff handbook but it is not being systematically implemented and it also needs bringing up to date. There is effective support for specific groups of pupils, for example pupils with special educational needs, pupils arriving in Year 7 with one grade below the expected level, and for Year 12 and 13 students. The effective reading scheme in Years 7 and 8 and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy provide additional support for literacy. An appropriate start has been made with the recent appointment of a literacy co-ordinator and the continuing programme of staff in-service training. An area for development is the need to agree a whole-school policy and an action plan for its implementation.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- The positive attitudes of the pupils
- The organisation of pupils to promote effective learning
- The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT
- Provision for higher-attaining pupils
- Provision of more textbooks to help self-study and revision
- More rigorous monitoring of marking to help pupils know what they have to do to improve

102. The attainment of the pupils on entry in this subject is well below the national expectation. There are a significant number of pupils who enter the school with standards of numeracy that require support. These pupils receive good help through the 'Catch-up' lessons offered to them in Year 7.
103. By the end of Year 9, the test results show that for the year 2001 the attainment of pupils was below average nationally, but was above average when compared to similar schools. The trend in the results at this key stage has been upwards since the last inspection. By the end of Year 11 for the year 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* - C in the GCSE examinations was below the average nationally, but was above average when results are compared with those of similar schools. However, the results were not as good as in the previous year. This is partially explained by the fact that the prior attainment of the 2001 cohort of pupils was lower than that of 2000. The department is at present trialling a modular GCSE examination course with one set of pupils in the current Year 10 to see if this will produce better results.
104. The work seen during the inspection at Key Stage 3 showed good progress being made by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. For example, in Year 8, high-attaining pupils can do reflections in axes, whilst those of lower attainment reflect in lines of symmetry. Similarly, in Year 9, high-attaining pupils can do maximum and minimum areas using decimal places, whilst pupils of lower attainment are finding areas of simple shapes to two decimal places. At Key Stage 4, the progress of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils can draw graphs very well, and use instruments to do constructions of loci. The range of work seen during the scrutiny of the exercise books at Key Stage 4 included statistics, trigonometry and algebra. At both key stages, there was no difference in the response between the girls and the boys.
105. The attitudes of pupils to the subject are good. They generally work hard and stay on task throughout lessons and their work rate is very productive. The behaviour of pupils is good and this contributes greatly towards enhancing the learning. The only instance of poor behaviour observed in a lesson was dealt with in an effective and firm manner by the teacher without any detriment to the work of the other pupils in the room.
106. The quality of the teaching overall is good, but it is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The good teaching occurs through good planning, building on pupils' previous knowledge, clear explanations of what the pupils are expected to do and good questioning. For example, in Year 9, in a lesson on volumes of prisms, the teacher required pupils to recall the areas of quadrilaterals and circles and then extended it through to prisms. In Year 10, when calculating the areas of triangles with low-attaining pupils, the teacher first recalled the area of rectangles and used the idea of length and breadth to move to base and height. However, at Key Stage 3 the higher-attaining pupils could well have been given the choice to proceed to the more challenging questions in an exercise rather than spend so much time on the routine examples.

107. The quality of the learning overall is good, and reflects the good teaching already described. In a Year 8 lesson on the probability of obtaining heads or tails when tossing a coin, pupils were asked 'What do you expect?' and 'What would happen if more results were available?' The pupils showed that they had learnt that with more outcomes the nearer you get to the correct probability. The thinking skills of the pupils were clearly enhanced and tested in the lesson.
108. The curriculum is good and is inclusive of all pupils. The recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is already having a good effect on pupils in Year 7 by demanding the pupils' active participation in lessons. Although ICT is embedded in the curriculum, pupils are not being afforded sufficient opportunity to use it. Whilst there were examples of it being used, *Omnigraph* for shape and space and the *Smile* program for handling data, this is not sufficient to be of any significant benefit to the pupils. The department has no computers of its own and finds access to the school's computer facilities difficult. Homework is regularly set and is relevant to the work being done. It is marked but the marking is not always consistent with the department's policy and rarely gives guidance as to how the pupils might improve the standard of their work. A monitoring process has not adequately addressed this lack of adherence to the marking policy.
109. The work done by the head of department reflects the school's aims and values. There is a good department handbook for the teachers and a good scheme of work, in which using and applying mathematics is an integral part. A project on thinking skills at Key Stage 3 is running alongside the scheme of work and is proving to be of benefit to the pupils. The head of department has inculcated amongst the teachers a shared commitment to the improvement of pupils' attainment nationally. Good use is made of the organisational arrangements for teaching the pupils in sets according to their prior attainment and this benefits all the pupils, especially those with special educational needs. The head of the department observes each teacher in the classroom at least once a year and scrutinises exercise books on at least two occasions per year. This latter process is not rigorous enough, otherwise the inconsistency in the marking of books would not be present. A subject development plan is in place and reflects the school's objectives. However, it is not costed to any significant degree other than expressing the term 'time'. This omission needs to be addressed on any future development plan. There is a named governor linked to the department to whom the head of department reports from time to time, but this is a rather *ad hoc* arrangement.
110. Accommodation is good, and the rooms contain good displays of pupils' work. The number of textbooks which are available to the pupils is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient for the pupils to have one each in class and there are none for them to take home to use for homework and to revise for external examinations. The scrutiny of the pupils' exercise books showed that, despite putting summaries of the work in their books, this is not sufficient in itself for a significant majority of pupils to revise purposefully at home for examinations. The lack of textbooks is a contributory factor towards the below-average standards of attainment in national tests.
111. Since the last inspection, pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 has been good, and the national test results have shown an upward trend throughout; the quality of the teaching has improved; work with pupils with special educational needs has been enhanced. The department has still to challenge those pupils capable of high attainment; the monitoring of assessment procedures is still not satisfactory; and, although, the range of teaching styles has improved, particularly with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, the department has not been able to take significant advantage of new technology in its work.

112. The school has a numeracy statement approved by the governing body but no development of this statement has taken place and yet a significant number of pupils arrive at the school lacking the confidence to tackle problems involving numeracy without having to approach others for help and assistance. There is a good understanding and practice among the teachers of mathematics of when and where to use mental skills for calculations, for example in Year 7 when checking their answers to solving equations by substituting back into the original equation. Calculators are used sensibly when the size and complexity of the numbers demand their use. For example, in Year 8 in the lesson on the probability of obtaining heads or tails when tossing a coin, the teacher was able to engage the pupils in very large number of throws and use calculators to work out the probabilities.
113. During the inspection, pupils' numeracy skills were being drawn on in modern foreign languages for calculating weights, money and train times; in design and technology in electronics for calculating electric current and in food studies for estimating the size of containers for recipes; in art, use was made of numeracy skills when pupils worked on geometric grids and scaling drawings; in history they were brought into play for plotting graphs of deaths in the Great Plague of 1665; in physical education for measurement in athletics; and in music in connection with rhythm, pattern and pulse. The school is undertaking a complete audit of the contribution of numeracy to the work of each department which should provide the basis for ascertaining the level of numerical capabilities required from pupils in all subjects. A scheme could then be developed which should support how numeracy skills are taught, developed and practised across the school. At the time of the inspection, the head of the mathematics department was about to attend a course to help to deliver such a numeracy scheme at the future planned in-service training day for all staff.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Use of assessment to track pupils' progress and to provide targets
- Good progress by pupils with special educational needs
- Good teaching at Key Stage 3, especially benefiting higher-attaining pupils
- Commitment to improving teaching further to improve standards

Areas for improvement

- Standards at Key Stage 4
- Long-term planning, especially if groups continue to share teachers
- Increase in time allocation and more use of specialist teachers
- Improve the image of science in the school to overcome disenchantment

114. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in science is well below the national expectation. Their understanding of scientific ideas, their practical skills and, particularly, their readiness to learn, are weak. In 2001, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 were below the national average at both Level 5 and Level 6. However, the number of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was in line with that of pupils in similar schools and for Level 6 and above it was slightly above the national expectation. These results have shown improvement over the period 1999-2001, due to the introduction of a more challenging syllabus in 1999 and more rigorous revision procedures. Teachers' assessments show that pupils' practical skills develop at a better rate than their theoretical knowledge. This reflects the attention given to improving these skills and pupils' confidence over this key stage. The attainment of boys and girls is similar.

115. The department provides a variety of courses to match pupils' needs but, in the GCSE examination in 2001, results in science overall were below the national expectation. In 2001, approximately half the pupils were entered for the double award in science and although the percentage of candidates achieving a pass at grades A* - C was above the national average this was on the basis of a much lower entry than normally takes this examination in secondary schools. Lower-attaining pupils are entered for the single award in science and their results were below the national expectation. The results of boys and girls were similar. Over the period 1999-2001, the overall trend has been downward. A minority of pupils was entered for the Certificate of Achievement in science and all passed, with half gaining a merit award. In an effort to improve standards, the number of teachers responsible for each teaching group has been reduced from three to two, but pupils are still under-achieving.
116. Pupils are divided into teaching groups on entry to the school on the basis of their prior attainment so that teachers can match the work provided more closely to pupils' needs. Some pupils have poor literacy skills and effective extra support is provided for them and for those with other special educational needs. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils gain a sound understanding of a wide range of scientific concepts and develop good investigative skills. Year 7 pupils, studying factors which affect the rate at which jelly babies dissolve, understood the idea of fair tests, but had difficulty translating this into a planned investigation. Their manipulative skills were also very weak. In Year 9, high-attaining pupils could confidently discuss how rockets overcome the force of gravity and showed concern over its effect on returning astronauts. Middle and low-attaining pupils showed a weaker grasp and their understanding was more superficial. A number of these pupils found difficulty in setting up a series circuit and, for the weakest pupils, understanding of the way in which heat energy travels was at a very basic level.
117. It can be clearly seen in the pupils' work at Key Stage 4 that the knowledge they have built up at Key Stage 3 is being consolidated and their understanding improved, but for many middle and high-attaining pupils there is insufficient depth in understanding at the end of the key stage for them to achieve at the highest levels. In Year 10, average pupils understood the interrelationship between breathing rate, pulse rate and the amount of exercise taken, but they were unsure of the composition of air and did not understand how this was maintained. A computer-simulation exercise enabled pupils to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of the wire and its resistance and good learning resulted, but some pupils were not clear how the experiment would be done practically. High-attaining pupils were able to set up an investigation to find the change in gases evolved by different groups of beans, but found it difficult to identify the causes of change. Pupils' records in Year 11 showed that many pupils have only a superficial understanding of scientific concepts and that there is insufficient rigour in the approach to their work. Those taking the higher level course often have insufficient detail in their notes to enable them to be secure in their understanding. Pupils' numeracy skills are appropriate for the work they do in science, but at Key Stage 3 opportunities to use these skills are limited. ICT is used appropriately for data collection, simulation exercises, and for research through the Internet.
118. Many pupils at both key stages have a positive attitude to their lessons and enjoy the work they do. In many classes pupils collaborate well and persevere until they have completed the work set. However, there are numbers of pupils at both key stages who are easily distracted, have a short concentration span and can become disruptive. These pupils demand skill and patience on the part of the teacher to keep them on task and this results in a disproportionate amount of teaching time being lost in some lessons.

119. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and at Key Stage 3 it is good. Some examples of very good practice were also observed. Overall, where teaching is particularly effective, both the long-term and day-to-day planning of lessons is carefully designed to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding and are challenged in each lesson. Topics are developed logically and include interesting extension material. A wide variety of teaching approaches is used, including purposeful short practical tasks, video clips and probing questions, so that teachers can assess the pupils' level of understanding. In these lessons, specialist teachers have very good expertise in their subject and use this to extend pupils' learning. They have high expectations. For instance, lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 benefited from good planning which enabled them to work carefully and slowly in groups to compare the conduction of heat through different metals. Good learning resulted from their discussion with each other. In Year 8, high-attaining pupils were encouraged to discuss their results from an investigation into dormant and respiring beans. The teacher dealt skilfully with the complex ideas the pupils raised and improved depth of understanding resulted. In less effective lessons at both key stages, teachers' knowledge and understanding is less secure and they are unable to exemplify their ideas in such interesting ways. In a class shared by teachers, long-term planning was weaker and the logical development of topics affected by the group constantly changing teachers, but each continuing with the work started by the previous teacher. Pupils became confused. Teachers appear to have lower expectation and lessons lack challenge. In these lessons pupils' behaviour is more challenging and they become easily distracted. In some lessons, there is little active participation by the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress in small classes where learning support is available. In larger classes where there is no support, pupils depend on individual attention from the teacher which, whilst generally available, is not as effective. Teaching time at both key stages is marginally low, resulting in some teaching being rushed. This has a negative impact on standards. Plans are in place for it to be increased next year.
120. Assessment in class is generally effective with teachers making good use of probing questions to find the extent of pupils' knowledge. Homework is set regularly and marked in sufficient detail to enable pupils to improve standards. At both key stages, tests at the end of topics and the assessment of investigative skills provide pupils with an understanding of their progress, but individual targets are not yet in place.
121. The management of the department is sound. Long-term absence and recent changes in staff have resulted in all posts of responsibility, other than of head of department, being held by newly appointed teachers. This department is committed to raising standards through a review of the teaching methods used, more clearly structured teaching and by improving the monitoring of pupils' work and target setting. The head of department already has effective measures in place to track pupils' progress. The department is well supported by three qualified technicians who enable the provision of practical work to be a feature of the department's approach to teaching. Since the last inspection, standards have improved at Key Stage 3 but there has been less improvement in standards at Key Stage 4.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching
- Strong emphasis on good drawing and painting skills
- Critical studies are used well to inspire and enhance art education

- Strategies for raising attainment by the end of Year 11

Areas for improvement

- More attention to the development of basic literacy skills in written work
- More use of ICT
- More opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own work and that of famous artists

122. Strategies for raising attainment by the age of 16 are firmly in place and had a very significant impact on GCSE examination results in 2001 when the proportion of pupils gaining passes at grades A* - C was in line with national expectations. This maintained an upward trend of recent years. By the end of Year 10, pupils are making good progress and many reach standards expected for their age. Drawing and painting skills are well developed. Research is often extensive. Pupils' knowledge of artists and art movements is broad and influential in their work. They are encouraged to work independently and pursue individuality. Compositions inspired by the theme 'Fragmentation', with its strong emphasis on observational skills and experimentation, and the imaginative, colourful work based on 'fauves' are good examples of what pupils are able to achieve at Key Stage 4.
123. Whilst no data is available to indicate levels on entry, by the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments of pupils show that they are broadly in line with expectations. The more structured and sequenced approach to the teaching of the course and the strong emphasis on drawing and painting skills are having a positive impact on standards. Many pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of technical vocabulary and a sound range of drawing and painting skills. Their work is based on research, with regular homework that supports the development of their skills, for instance in the colourful, skilful and extensive work on portraiture in Year 7, and the mixed media responses to 'Conflict' in Year 9. The design briefs set in the sixth form are challenging and students' attitudes are very positive and enthusiastic. There is evidence of high productivity in research and experimentation in both art and textiles. Results in art at A Level fell below national expectations for the first time in recent years. Results in textiles at A Level continue to be above national expectations.
124. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and relate well to pupils' needs. The range of strategies they use has a positive impact on the quality of learning. Classes are well managed and lessons well planned. Learning outcomes are most successful in those classes where expectations are high in terms of quality, output and pace. Working relationships are good. The use of assessment to inform teaching, with regular informative and diagnostic marking, contributes to progress and target setting. It is less effective at Key Stage 3, where more could be done to involve pupils in evaluating their work. Except in the sixth form, the end-of-lesson review is not used effectively enough to identify progress and areas for development. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make good progress, but more effective strategies need to be developed to extend the higher-attaining pupils.
125. The extent of written work increases significantly as pupils move through the key stages and provides good opportunities for pupils to think through their ideas and to express considered opinions. Whilst homework and course work are regularly marked, more could be done to assist pupils with the improvement of their spelling and punctuation. The department has created its own web-site and there are now more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology as a method of enquiry but its use as a medium for creativity as part of the taught courses needs to be developed further. Whilst

- the work of famous artists is used to inform and stimulate creative thinking, opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and that of other pupils could be used more effectively.
126. Art is very well managed by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist. Teaching and learning outcomes are monitored through class visits, and an assessment database for all year groups is maintained in the department. There are thorough, well-resourced schemes of work for all year groups. These include cultural themes and links with other departments. Methods of assessment have been revised and are applied consistently and effectively across the department, although feedback to pupils in Key Stage 3 needs improvement. A good range of extra-curricular activities is organised across the year groups, including work with an annual artist in residence. Improvement since the last report has been good. There is a strong team spirit and a commitment by all to raising standards.
127. Leadership and management of the subject at sixth form level is good. There is effective support and target setting. Finished work shows boldness and originality of response. Drawing and painting skills are very well developed and students have good independent learning skills. Research output is prolific in many cases, in both art and textiles. The paintings in response to the mannerist and cubist themes are good examples. There are good displays of work in the department and public areas of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- Organisation and team spirit
- Baseline assessment in Year 7 and procedures for monitoring pupils' progress

Areas for improvement

- Use of targets to motivate pupils, especially higher-attainers
- Development of the systems and control aspect of the curriculum
- Development of vocational and post-16 courses

128. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average but they make steady progress and, although by the end of Year 9, Key Stage 3 assessment results are below average, current work shows that standards are improving. By the end of Year 11, the department's overall GCSE examination results in 2001 were in line with the national average for all maintained schools, as were the pupils' average point scores. Pupils' achievements in terms grades A* - G are also broadly in line with the national average. Pupils do significantly better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects. Although achievement in the different specialist areas varies a little across the department.
129. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work varies widely but is close to national expectations. Pupils work safely with a range of materials, tools and processes. They can produce simple mechanical toys, prepare a wide range of healthy eating foods and make Christmas decorations containing electronic circuits. They have had some access to Computer Aided Design (CAD), but no access to Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM). Basic skills in graphics are not readily transferred to all other units of work and pupils' design work is sometimes superficial. Whilst basic sketching and CAD are underdeveloped, pupils' standards of ICT skills in manipulating stored images in publisher type software are well developed and effectively applied. Pupils' skills in design are generally in line with their making skills and by this stage pupils have developed a good

understanding of the design process. Some product evaluations are superficial but are sometimes improved by the application of simple frameworks for evaluation.

130. The overall standard of work seen by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory for pupils of most abilities. They understand the design process. Their folders are well organised and show examples of well-planned and evaluated research and an effective consideration of cultural and environmental issues. Some pupils are aware of the needs of the user or client. Graphic skills are again not consistently applied across different specialisms, and pupils do not know what is meant by a 'busy' page of sketched and annotated ideas. The department has started to help the development of literacy by providing lists of available key words, although this practice is not consistent. Standards of evaluation vary, although increasingly they are related back to the initial specification, and where writing frameworks exist they improve pupils' understanding of the required breadth of product evaluation. Pupils can measure accurately and manipulate data in graphical representations of survey results, but the department has not yet fully incorporated the aims of its numeracy policy into lesson practice. Pupils' folio work is enhanced by opportunities to use ICT desk-top-publishing facilities and they are also starting to make use of powerful design software such as *Pro-desktop*.
131. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and is good at Key Stage 4. Even so, pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 is lower than it should be, where units limit the range of practical work, or where there are low expectations of the quality of finish or range of materials to be used. The skills learned in Key Stage 3 are generally being applied in Key Stage 4. Pupils of all abilities make similar progress, but the department has not identified and challenged the highest achievers or developed a programme for enriching their experiences. The department has put some effort into the development of systems to monitor pupils' progress, starting from the baseline assessment of pupils, and is beginning to use the results to target individuals and groups, and to inform planning.
132. The overall quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Lessons are generally well structured, and teachers use a range of teaching styles and available resources. ICT is used to enhance the quality of presentation but its use and range of applications are not well co-ordinated. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is good and contributes to pupils' learning but, in textiles, some Key Stage 3 pupils have been denied the opportunity to do practical work because of the absence of specialist staff. Schemes of work represent the requirements of the National Curriculum, but need to be further reviewed in the light of the available national scheme of work. Teaching in food is partially limited by the availability of workstations in both food rooms. Teachers provide good guidance for what is required of pupils for project work in Years 10 and 11, and their work is most successful where progress is closely structured and monitored. Teaching is best when good use is made of ICT, and where examples of pupils' work and exemplar products are used to stimulate interest and discussion. Teachers give pupils few opportunities to engage in extended intellectual debate. The appreciation of industrial practices is developing well.
133. There is good access to ICT facilities, although not much use is made of the Internet for research purposes. Although there is a range of appropriate design and technology courses in Key Stage 4, there are currently no vocational courses, nor is it possible to take a design and technology course in the sixth form. Relevant homework is set and marked regularly, but marking practice and target setting vary in quality. The assessment and monitoring of pupils' work has developed well, and continues to be refined in the light of experience. The department's excellent breakdown of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum level descriptors should be further developed to reflect individual units of work in order that pupils can better monitor their own progress and fully understand at what

level they are working. Support for pupils with special educational needs is well deployed and utilised.

134. Leadership and management of the department is good and staff work well together. The head of department has started to monitor teaching and learning and to make use of available data to monitor pupils' progress. Resources are satisfactory and generally match the requirements of the curriculum. The deficiencies have been clearly identified, but the department does not currently have computer control or Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM) facilities to comply fully with the systems and control element of the National Curriculum. Accommodation is generally adequate, except for food rooms and their location. There are no significant health and safety concerns. The school develops links with industry and the world of work.
135. Since the last inspection, standards have risen, although the performance of girls is still significantly better than that of boys. The design process is now better understood by pupils, and lesson pace has improved. Assessment and target setting for individual pupils are developing rapidly, and the monitoring of pupils' progress has been effectively introduced. Pupils now more clearly understand what they need to do to improve.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge
- Relationships in the classrooms
- Girls' standards are near the national average

Areas for improvement

- The level of pupils' attainment
- The use of assessment to inform pupils about their progress
- More use of ICT

136. Although the attainment of pupils when they enter the school varies widely, overall it is below national expectations. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment as reflected in the proportion of pupils achieving passes at grades A* - C in the GCSE examination is close to national expectations. On the whole, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 9, attainment is just below national averages and represents good achievement. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of achievement increased in 2001 which shows that the higher-attaining pupils are being extended. Girls' attainment is better than that of boys and is very close to national expectations. The gap between girls' attainment and boys' attainment is greater than is found nationally.
137. Pupils are taught in groups formed on the basis of pupils' prior attainment but teachers also take care to ensure that the work is suitable for pupils of different abilities and that tasks are modified to suit the range of abilities in different sets. This helps to ensure that lower-attaining pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Although some lower-attaining pupils were extracted from half-lessons for 'Catch-up' sessions in mathematics, teachers ensured they were incorporated into lessons quickly on their return.
138. Pupils acquire geographical skills at a steady rate from Year 7 onwards. They are expected to use correct geographical vocabulary but the department does not work in a consistent way to develop the writing skills of pupils. In some lessons, there are limited opportunities for pupils to write at length and they are only required to describe

geographical patterns and processes. Higher-attaining pupils were not extended by these activities. In others, where extended writing was used to give pupils an opportunity to explain human and physical processes and how their interactions might lead to the development of geographical patterns, attainment was much higher.

139. In 2001, there was a significant improvement in results. Although the performance of boys was below national standards, they showed good improvement compared to boys' results in 1999. Girls' results were close to the national average and again showed considerable improvement from Year 9. Progress for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. In the 2001 GCSE examination pupils did as well as they did in their other subjects and almost all pupils who entered achieved a pass at grade G or better. A small number of pupils who study geography in Years 10 and 11 gained a Certificate of Achievement. Altogether, this indicates satisfactory attainment across the range of abilities. Inspection evidence confirms that levels of attainment are close to national standards. Some of the work seen in both years, especially coursework, is good and is well presented. The preparation of coursework included the only extensive use of ICT witnessed, but it was only used by the more confident and capable pupils. The work that pupils do in class and at home follows similar high standards of presentation and uses the full range of geographical skills.
140. Standards at AS and A Level have fallen in recent years and are well below national expectations. Numbers taking the subject are small and the prior attainment of students varies widely from year to year but the current standards in Year 12 indicate that the students have the potential to produce good results.
141. The quality of teaching and learning is good and some is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of this subject and communicate it well. Explanations are clear and skilful questioning makes pupils think. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and a good knowledge of their abilities. The tasks set for a class of low-attaining pupils in Year 9 were imaginative and led pupils through a difficult text to construct a comparison of north and south Italy. Homework is appropriate and is set regularly. Teachers praise pupils when appropriate and they respond well. Relationships are good. All work is marked conscientiously, often with helpful comments to direct pupils toward improvement. However, assessment is not linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grade descriptors. Teachers' knowledge of National Curriculum level descriptors for Key Stage 3 is more variable. Where this knowledge is sound, good learning tasks are set to ensure that pupils make good progress. For example, in one Year 8 class, pupils needed to explain the reasons for a particular geographical pattern but, in another lesson, the same pupils were only asked to describe the geographical pattern. Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the GCSE and A Level examinations and communicate these clearly to their pupils.
142. Management and leadership have been affected by the long-term absence of the head of department but other staff have made a good contribution to its day-to-day running and ensure that pupils receive good quality teaching. Although they have a strong commitment to improving provision and raising standards, they have other responsibilities within the school and this inevitably limits the contribution they make to the development of the department. There is still no current scheme of work and the range and extent of planned fieldwork activities is limited. The restricted amount of time for the subject in Year 9 reduces the opportunity to promote the subject and recruit pupils to the GCSE examination course. There is currently a lack of strategic leadership to focus on the development of geographical education, with the result that the response to initiatives, such as the development of ICT and the development of assessment and target setting linked to level and grade descriptors, has been uncoordinated. Consequently, although there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection, improvements are still

needed in each of these areas.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management with good teamwork
- Well-structured examination courses, supported by a wealth of teacher-produced resources
- Good relationships that promote pupils' application to work

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures to monitor progress more accurately at Key Stage 3
- More variety of activities within lessons to involve pupils more actively in learning
- Further attention to developing pupils' literacy and extending their writing

143. Standards in history improve as pupils progress through the school and are average overall. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is below average, reflecting the difficulties many pupils have in writing accurately and at length. They make satisfactory progress between the ages of 11 and 14 but standards are still slightly below average at the end of Year 9. Pupils who choose to take the subject for a GCSE qualification make good progress and achieve broadly average grades. In 2000, the results in history were in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* - C; pupils performing as well in history as in the average for all their other subjects. Girls did better than boys. This year's cohort was the first to take the examination on a new syllabus and although there were double the number of candidates compared with the previous year the results were below the national average. At A Level, results were slightly below average in 2000. Only 2 students sat the examination in 2001 and both achieved grade B.
144. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 are below average, largely as a result of the weak literacy skills of pupils. There is a wide variation in the standard of written work, even in the higher-attaining groups. The most capable pupils in Year 9 are able to use historical facts well to write detailed newspaper reports on the sinking of the Titanic but many pupils do not develop their writing at any length, or support it with sufficient reference to historical facts. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress in small classes. For example, in one Year 9 lesson, the teacher's careful selection of sources and staging of tasks helped pupils to put together a letter from a soldier on the western front during the Great War. Pupils have difficulty in explaining the causes of major events such as the First World War. They can use historical sources competently to extract information, but few are able to evaluate the reliability of sources. Higher-attaining pupils showed understanding of the nature and purpose of propaganda in their study of posters on the suffragettes and wartime recruitment. Project work in each year shows that pupils are able to organise historical information and present it well. A particular feature of the department is the high standard of work produced by some pupils in response to the annual modelling competition which produced an attractive display of Roman artefacts and medieval castles.
145. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly in line with the national average, which represents good progress by most pupils. This is achieved by effective teaching that structures pupils' work in detail, assesses and monitors it carefully and reviews progress thoroughly at the end of each unit of work. The small sample of work available in Year 11 indicated average attainment. This is confirmed by the standards Year 10 pupils are achieving in their first term on the course. Attainment is high in the top set, where pupils'

files are thorough and their essays and tests show good understanding of such matters as the Versailles treaties and the reasons for the failure of the League of Nations. They are responding well to their teacher's high academic expectations of them, completing in one lesson a careful analysis of six disputes involving the League and judging its success in handling them. The setting arrangements allow lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs in particular, to progress at the right pace, benefiting from thorough teaching which pitches the work at the right level and reinforces learning through careful questioning. Their written work is still at the level of finding specific answers to comprehension questions and they are beginning to understand the critical points being made in political cartoons of the period.

146. Students in Year 13 have already achieved average standards in their AS examinations and are making good progress to maintain this level on their A2 courses. They keep good files of their work, supplemented by teacher handouts and study guides. Their essays are not reaching the highest grades, partly due to style but also because they do not substantiate their arguments in sufficient detail. They do not show enough evidence of wider reading and rely too much on the course handouts.
147. Overall, teaching is good. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and consistently good on examination courses. Teachers, including non-specialists, plan their lessons effectively and manage their classes well to ensure that all pupils are able to concentrate and apply themselves to their work. Some lessons in Key Stage 3 place too much emphasis on teacher direction and not enough on a variety of activity, which will allow pupils to learn in different ways. ICT is not being used sufficiently to support learning although new developments for this have been planned. More attention needs to be given to developing pupils' writing, and particularly to planning historical essays explaining cause and effect. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but they are not using the criteria for all five skills areas in the subject's attainment target to assess pupils' learning accurately and set targets for progress to higher levels.
148. At GCSE and A Level, the teaching is geared to the examination requirements and the rigorous course structure ensures detailed coverage of topics and good development of skills in answering historical questions and analysing evidence. The teachers use their command of the subject and expertise to good effect in preparing candidates for examinations. Detailed planning and rigorous assessment of pupils' work is enabling them to achieve well. The fine balance between ensuring that pupils are well prepared and running the danger of 'spoon-feeding' them is sometimes tipped the wrong way. There is room for more exercises that require pupils to use their own initiative and show their independent understanding.
149. The management of the subject is good and there is a healthy focus on improving standards, using mentoring of student teachers to bring in new approaches and on extra-curricular activities and visits to enrich pupils' appreciation of history. The two principal teachers manage to carry heavy pastoral responsibilities without impairing their effectiveness as subject teachers, helped by good teamwork in the department. The unsatisfactory teaching found at the time of the previous inspection in Key Stage 3 has been eliminated and satisfactory progress has been made in developing the curriculum in Years 7 to 9, as well as introducing new examination courses. Further improvement requires renewed emphasis on learning and assessment in Key Stage 3 and more scope for independent learning on the examination courses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY [ICT]

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

Strengths

- The subject knowledge of specialist staff
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils
- The use of assessment in lessons

Areas for improvement

- Standards at both key stages
- Leadership and management
- Provision at Key Stage 4 and the application of ICT in all subjects

150. The overall standard of work is below that expected of pupils aged 14 years. The majority of pupils come into the school with low levels of ICT skills. By the time they reach the end of year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding remains below the national average. Overall, there is very little difference in the performance of boys and girls.
151. For the pupils taking the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in Information and Communication Technology, their experience should enable them to match the performance of pupils in similar schools across the country. However, for over half the pupils no comparison can be drawn, as their use of information and communication technology is too limited for effective assessment to take place.
152. The majority of pupils who enter the school in Year 7 have a basic knowledge of computers and have experienced some aspects of word processing, desktop publishing and use of the Internet. Throughout Key Stage 3, they improve their skills and begin to become discerning users of information and communication technology. Pupils in Year 7 can produce *Power Point* presentations, combining the features of the software with imported images to create an electronic portrait of themselves. Higher-attaining pupils animate slides effectively and are aware of the impact of simplicity. Those attaining at a lower level are aware of the importance of background and font colours in making the slides easy to read. Pupils with special educational needs, whilst managing the software well, have some difficulty creating accurately written copy. However, most can, and do, make use of the spell-check facility. In Year 8, pupils combine skills of research and presentation, creating newspapers, using information downloaded from the Internet, edited to suit their purpose. The lower-attaining pupils have some problems making accurate searches because of their poor spelling. Key words are often not recognised by the search engines used. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate good editing skills. Group working in most lessons is productive as pupils adopt mature attitudes co-operating and collaborating to their mutual benefit. In Year 9, pupils consolidate their skills further, moving information between applications and using features such as *mail merge*. Although by the end of Year 9, levels achieved remain below national average, pupils make satisfactory progress. The majority of pupils are appreciative of the support provided by their teachers.
153. Pupils in Year 10 demonstrate a commitment to the demands of the GNVQ course. All pupils make use of their knowledge and understanding of hardware and the standard software to generate the required evidence for their course folders. Those likely to achieve merit or distinction level awards work with accuracy, conciseness and clarity. They show a greater understanding of layout and the problems of using multiple fonts in documents. Their evaluations distinguish clearly the good and bad features of their

coursework. They identify where improvements can be made and compare their outcomes with commercially produced examples. Pass level performances lack the range of examples and are less effective in their comparisons and evaluations. The Year 11 work seen indicated a good average standard with most pupils making competent use of the hardware. Research using a range of information sources was evident. Average attaining pupils were able to analyse their work and reach conclusions using research evidence to support their argument. Overall, the work is well presented which is the result of good teacher guidance. The teacher assessment is accurate and provides good developmental comment that enables pupils to access their highest possible grade.

154. Teaching in the discrete information and communication technology lessons is satisfactory and mainly good. There is also some very good teaching. In the best lessons teachers explain clearly what has to be achieved. They use their good subject knowledge to guide pupils in their problem solving, and to enable pupils to have a greater understanding of the subject. Teachers manage the pupils well, even the most challenging, supporting individuals to good effect and promoting the use of information and communication technology as a tool. Teachers monitor the academic progress of pupils, identifying underachievement and developing support programmes. In less effective lessons, planning was weak, the pace was slow, questioning was ineffective and the teacher did not establish the level of the class at the beginning. On occasions, insufficient preparation resulted in a lack of extension work and, ultimately, in time being wasted.
155. Overall, the management of the subject across the school is unsatisfactory. Responsibilities are unclear and there is a lack of cohesion in the strategic planning. The cross-curricular provision is inadequate in both key stages, resulting in pupils failing to receive their full entitlement. The school does not meet the statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. Within the disjointed management, there is some effective provision. At Key Stage 3, although control technology is weak, the curriculum meets requirements. The accredited course at Key Stage 4 is effectively organised and taught, although the time allocation, for half of those taking it, is well below that recommended. Resources do not match the national average, although staffing and accommodation are adequate to meet the current curriculum arrangements.
156. Since the last inspection, standards at Key Stage 3 have improved slightly and the trend is upward. Areas of weakness, for example in the area of control, remain. Although assessment has improved at Key Stage 3, the problem remains at Key Stage 4 because cross-curricular arrangements are still unsatisfactory.
157. Cross-curricular provision is unsatisfactory. The lack of co-ordination impedes pupils' progress. There is no monitoring or assessment of information and communication technology outside the discrete lessons in either key stage. Whilst pupils receive reports on their progress in Key Stage 3, only those pupils taking the GNVQ course receive reports at Key Stage 4. Information and communication technology is written into the plans of some subjects, for example mathematics, English and design and technology. However, it is not strongly represented in all subjects. Good use is made of specialist software in music, imagery in art, and limited computer aided design in design and technology. In English, pupils in Year 7 use computers to research and present their biography, a project that links with art and discrete information and communication technology. Pupils make appropriate use of the technology to enhance the presentation of their work.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- Team leadership
- Visits to France and Germany where pupils learn to use their languages

Areas for improvement

- More careful checking of their work by pupils to avoid basic errors
- Greater use of paired work
- Greater use of French and German in lessons
- Planned opportunities for reading

158. Almost all pupils begin to study French or German in Year 7 and they continue with this language until the end of Year 9. Some pupils also study the other language in Years 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue with French or German. Some pupils study both languages in Years 10 and 11. In all years, a few are disapplied from studying a modern language. The department has suffered from staffing difficulties in recent years, and this has had an adverse impact on standards but it is now fully staffed with specialists.
159. National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that standards in French in 2001 were below average. In GCSE examinations French results were also below average in both 2000 and 2001. In 2000, standards were lower than in similar schools and lower than in most other subjects in the school. However, there are better prospects for results in 2002. The only AS level student in 2001 gained grade A. There were no A Level candidates in 2001. Performance in lessons in Years 7 to 10 showed pupils working at national standards. Examination of pupils' written coursework and tapes in Year 11 indicates that they also are working at national standards. In Years 7 to 11 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking, and writing, and weaker in reading. When listening to French words on tape, Year 9 pupils were able to say whether the final letter of each word would be sounded or silent. When speaking to other pupils in Year 8, pupils could describe the hair and eye colour of different people. Year 10 pupils could read a French menu and understand the items offered for different courses. Year 9 pupils were able to write sentences based on a French person's diary. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background or ability.
160. National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below average in German in 2001. German GCSE examination results were slightly below national standards in 2000 and in 2001. Results were lower than in similar schools in 2000, though they were better than most other subjects in the school. However, current evidence indicates that standards are improving. German results have been better than those in French because more of the able pupils elected to study German. The AS level students in 2001 gained middle grades. There were no A Level candidates in 2001. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 7 to 10 showed most pupils working at national standards. Examination of pupils' written coursework and tapes in Year 11 indicates that they are above national standards. In Years 7 to 11 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking, and writing, and weaker in reading. Year 9 pupils were able to listen to a German tape, and pick out individual items of lost property. Year 7 pupils could say what they ate and drank at break-time in school. Year 12 students were able to read texts about tourism in Austria and understand detailed information. Year 10 pupils were able to write a dialogue between a waiter and a customer ordering a meal.

161. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing in French and German. However, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling which prevent them from achieving higher standards because they do not check their written work carefully enough. Girls usually achieve better results than boys. Pupils do not have regular reading sessions. The time which pupils spend using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing contributes to their literacy skills, although these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Teachers have incorporated numeracy activities into schemes of work and use them successfully in lessons. At present pupils have limited access to computers.
162. The overall quality of teaching of both French and German is good and is leading to an improvement in standards. Pupils are achieving well and making good progress. Teachers are proficient in the foreign language, have good accents, and project their voices clearly. They use the foreign languages for most of the lesson to develop pupils' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points, but some use too much English. They plan a well-organised sequence of activities, which involve the pupils in their learning. They exploit overhead projectors and other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally very good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and some teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs; this improves listening and speaking skills, and develops confidence in the pupils. However, some teachers should use pair work more. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and displays are needed in some classrooms.
163. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and meets their needs well. Teachers manage classes effectively and give pupils a variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, role-plays, videos and class surveys, which extend and consolidate their learning. Teachers ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress.
164. Almost all the pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good throughout the school. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential.
165. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils in French and German. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team to produce resources for effective learning, including very good revision booklets for the GCSE examination courses. The department lacks textbooks, readers, computers, and a white board in one room. Some windows are broken and cannot be opened; the rooms are too hot, and this has an impact on standards. Visits to France and Germany encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of the foreign languages by teachers, not enough pair work and reading, the lack of resources, and the errors pupils make in written work are preventing them from achieving higher standards.

166. The department has made good progress in relation to the issues raised in the previous report. Higher-attaining pupils are speaking and writing better. Teachers have developed improved teaching strategies, share lesson objectives with pupils, and give them more feedback. Teachers now have job descriptions and delegated responsibilities. However, pupils still do not have enough opportunities to use ICT.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Working relationships with and between pupils
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour
- Extra-curricular activities
- Instrumental teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- Attainment target moderation and links with Key Stage 2
- Lack of prioritisation in the music development plan

167. By the end of Year 9, the attainment of pupils is in line with the national average. The trend in GCSE examination results over a number of years has been above the national trend but in 2001 results were lower, reflecting the weaker ability of the cohort of pupils. Few pupils have taken A Level courses but since 1998 every pupil has passed. The quality of extra-curricular music in a wide range of choral and instrumental forms is exceptionally high, and around 35 per cent of pupils take part in these activities. The high standard of quiet singing by nearly 150 pupils in a rehearsal of music for the Christmas concert was very moving.

168. Teaching and learning are both good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Only instrumental teaching was seen at Key Stage 4, and this was very good. GCSE examination results and recordings of compositions and performances indicate that teaching at Key Stage 4 is at least satisfactory. The characteristics of good teaching included thorough preparation and well organised planning linked to target setting. Clear criteria for success are shared, and this helps pupils to evaluate their own work. Relationships with pupils are excellent and leads to a mutual delight in music making. Teaching through vocal work is excellent and makes good use of the expertise of the teacher. Pupils respond to the sense of excitement with equal vitality and enthusiasm. They learn by listening, by analysis, and through experimentation. They develop their skills well through the support of good teaching, working in ensemble, and, above all, by making music.

169. The response of pupils is good at Key Stage 3, excellent at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Pupils enjoy the enthusiastic teaching, and even some potentially difficult pupils in classes in Year 9 responded very well to the teacher's initiatives. Pupils in Year 7 arrive at lessons keen to learn and full of enthusiasm. A combined class in Year 8 showed an almost tangible sense of delight in their performance. Year 11 pupils take responsibility for running the junior vocal choir, and older pupils often attend rehearsals with younger pupils to provide active support. The music area is always full of enthusiastic and happy pupils.

170. The music curriculum follows the national scheme of work and is being progressively refined to match the specific needs of this school. Its strengths lie in its vocal and multicultural content. ICT in music is satisfactory at all levels and software includes score-making and sequencing systems. The option system at Key Stage 4 results in music groups being small, and often not containing many of the school's recognised musicians. The nature of curriculum content and delivery gives full access to all pupils. Assessment in music is carefully thought through, and includes a significant proportion of self-assessment work based on set criteria. The new attainment target system for identifying levels of achievement is in place, but needs further refinement to improve comparability both within the school and across key stages. Leadership is very good, and management efficient. However, the development plan needs to make more use of priorities if it is to be an effective working document.
171. Pupils of all abilities have full access to the curriculum and attain well. Many illustrations of this were seen during the inspection, such as the satisfaction of 2 Year 7 boys with special educational needs whose sense of self-esteem was enhanced by a successful recording of their own effective composition based on the theme of a haunted house. Pupils in 2 able Year 8 classes worked together well to produce good quality two part singing, and the smiles of pleasure on the faces of many pupils was a testament to both the high quality of the singing, and their own recognition of what they had learned and achieved.
172. Some good recordings of Year 11 compositions and performances were heard, as well as an excellent minimalist style composition using a Caribbean stimulus from a Year 13 student. Pupils with special ability in music are fully extended by the instrumental teaching system and by the extra-curricular work in music. More than 10 per cent of pupils receive lessons from the Authority instrumental teaching service, which is free, and standards are high. Since the last inspection, progress has been satisfactory. Links with Key Stage 2 have improved, but there is scope for further development in the area of attainment targets. Development planning has improved, but priorities need to be clearly defined.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Shared commitment to improve
- Pupils of all abilities show an eagerness to learn and work well together
- Lessons are well structured with a range of activities that build up knowledge and understanding

Areas for improvement

- The development of assessment linked to national levels of attainment
- The use of targets and self-evaluation to help pupils to take responsibility for their own learning
- Opportunities for sixth form students to take part in physical activities

173. When pupils enter the school their standards in physical education are below average but they make steady progress and by the end of Year 9 most are achieving standards in line with the national average. The work of pupils in Year 10 indicates that the majority are at the right point of development for achieving the appropriate national standards by the end of Year 11. Since 1998, results in the GCSE examination have shown a slight improvement, with a rise in the percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades. However, this is slightly below the national average for all schools and reflects the ability and composition of the group, as only a small number of girls choose to follow this option.

Provision for studying physical education at examination level has increased with the introduction of AS and A Level GCE courses.

174. The majority of pupils of all abilities make good progress. Boys in a Year 7 rugby lesson showed their competence in tackling and were able to place the ball with precision to retain possession and girls in a Year 10 netball lesson devised and organized group practices and recognize rule infringements when umpiring games. A mixed group of pupils in a Year 8 hockey lesson were able to show competent dribbling skills and the beginnings of the use of the reverse stick dodge.
175. Teaching is often good and sometimes very good. Teachers are well qualified to teach a range of activities. They know their pupils well and show excellent knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. With all lessons continuing at a good pace and in well-considered stages, there is plenty of opportunity for pupils to acquire skills. The quality of learning is nearly always good. The majority of pupils respond positively and are eager to participate. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated. Pupils arrive promptly to lessons and bring appropriate kit. Most show an interest in their work and apply themselves to the given tasks. They understand the need to warm-up and stretch before beginning each activity. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to evaluate their own and each other's performances. Good relationships are a strong feature of all lessons and pupils show good social and co-operative skills.
176. The department has made some progress since the last inspection, despite the loss of two specialist staff. It is now at full strength, with some support from non-specialists who assist in the teaching of basketball and hockey. The good subject leadership and the positive attitude of all members of the department promise further development. A range of extra-curricular activities is available and a dance day for pupils in Year 7 has already been planned. Links to the community are well established and allow talented pupils the opportunity to play sport at a higher level. Visits by a team of girls in Years 7, 8 and 10 to local primary schools means that the quality of the work being done in sports acrobatics can be demonstrated. Good equipment and both indoor and outdoor facilities provide adequate areas for activities. Problems with the sports hall roof, however, need immediate attention if the teaching of the subject is not to be affected. There is also a safety concern about the use of the outdoor netball courts as additional parking areas during functions. This, together with unrestricted access for pupils, means that the poor surface can become slippery and unsafe. Teaching of the examination courses in physical education would benefit from a designated classroom base.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Examination results at GCSE and A level
- Teaching at all key stages
- Contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour

Areas for improvement

- Time allocation at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form
- Accommodation and resources

177. There is a wide variation in pupils' attainment in religious education on entry to the school but overall it is below average. Pupils make good progress and by the time they reach the end of Year 9 their attainment is average. By the end of Year 11, the attainment of pupils on the GCSE courses is above the national average. For those on non-examination courses it is in line with the national average. Overall results for GCSE examination grades at passes A* - C in 2001 were above the national average for all schools. This follows the pattern of the past three years. Results for pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement course were also above average.
178. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity are average. They know the main facts of the life of Christ and some of the teachings and miracles associated with his ministry. Their understanding of the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus to Christians is below average. Pupils' skills of information gathering and evaluation are average. Pupils make good progress between Year 7 and Year 9. They consistently add to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the major world religions. They are developing skills of evaluation and interpretation, although they still find difficulty in distinguishing between fact, opinion and belief.
179. The standard of the work seen during the inspection was above average in the GCSE examination groups at the end of Year 11. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity is above average. They are able to apply the teaching of Christianity and Islam in particular to a range of social and moral issues. Their skills of evaluation and interpretation are above average and they are able to express their own views clearly and to listen to alternative views and form their own well-thought-out conclusions. The attainment of pupils in the non-examination groups at the end of Key Stage 4 is average, due to the lack of time given to the study of religious education, which forms part of the general personal and social education course. As a result, the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus cannot be met. Whilst pupils' skills are being developed, their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world religions remains no more than average. Pupils on the GCSE examination courses make consistently good progress between Year 10 and Year 11 but the progress of pupils on the non-examination group is only satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and the higher-attaining pupils also make good progress. This is seen in the high number of A* and A grades obtained at examination level in the subject.
180. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and in some cases very good. Pupils are keen to learn and show a high degree of interest in the subject. They show respect for one another and are prepared to express their views but also to listen carefully to what others have to say. They work together well and help one another. They are developing independent learning skills and are able to take work away and, using their information technology skills, produce project work of a high standard. Good examples of this were seen in a Year 8 topic on Rama and Sita and a Year 9 project on world weddings.
181. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and in some lessons is very good. Teachers show imagination and use a variety of activities so that pupils' interest in the work is sustained and the needs of all pupils are being met. In a Year 8 lesson pupils had constructed their own Hindu shrine and Christian Church and this brought a sense of 'reality' to the subject under discussion. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and so pupils are confident when asking and answering questions to deepen their understanding of quite complex issues. In a Year 10 lesson on the basis for moral behaviour, pupils felt able to respond with their own views without fear of being judged for their opinions. They were also able to listen to other views and change their own where

necessary. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and so they respond well by working hard. The management of pupils is very good so that little time is wasted. Lessons have a good pace and so pupils never become bored. The use of contemporary video clips and practical demonstrations ensure that the teaching is down to earth and relevant to pupils. The restricted space in the current classrooms limits the use of drama within lessons. ICT is used well within the department but there are no computers available in the classrooms and this limits the effectiveness of the technology.

182. The leadership and management of the department by the head of department are very good. There are good schemes of work and a very good, positive atmosphere amongst the staff working within the department. The effectiveness of the provision is hampered by the lack of time allocated on the timetable at Key Stage 4 and the lack of accommodation specifically allocated to the department. No basic religious education is offered in the sixth form.
183. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. GCSE examination results are now above the national average. At A Level the top grades feature strongly in the latest results. There continues to be a wide range of activities used by teachers to motivate pupils. The school, however, has failed to address the issue of lack of time at Key Stage 4 and the provision for pupils' basic entitlement to religious education in the sixth form which seriously weakens provision. The resources allocated to the subject are basic; capitation allowance is inadequate and so modern textbooks are still insufficient for a department running GCSE examination, Certificate of Achievement and the popular A Level courses.

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

In the inspection, five subjects 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
Biology	1	-	52	-	2	-	0.79
Mathematics	1	100	62	-	15	1.00	1.51
Music	1	100	84	-	29	2.41	1.00

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	12	83	96	25	46	4.33	6.57
Biology	2	100	88	50	34	6.00	5.25
Business studies	14	100	92	29	32	5.43	5.50
Chemistry	1	-	90	-	43	-	5.90
English Literature	23	100	95	26	37	5.48	5.91
General Studies	12	92	85	25	30	4.50	4.91
Geography	8	50	92	-	38	1.25	5.74
History	2	100	88	100	35	8.00	5.45
Mathematics	3	67	87	-	43	3.33	5.80
Music	1	100	93	100	35	8.00	5.74
Other Social studies	6	100	87	50	34	6.00	5.30
Physics	4	100	87	-	40	3.00	5.67
Religious studies	5	100	92	80	38	7.20	5.84
Sociology	6	50	86	-	35	1.00	5.32

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate GNVQ	5	80	66.5	20			

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

Five subjects were inspected in detail but a wide range of courses was sampled, including lessons in PSHE.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The modular course on offer at A Level
- The teachers' knowledge and understanding are good

Areas for improvement

- The retention rate of students in Year 12 and Year 13
- Alternative organisational arrangements for the teaching of the small groups of pupils at these levels
- An alternative method of teaching the Year 12 GCSE examination candidates to cater for their individual needs.

184. The inspection covered a one-year AS course and the A2 course offered by the school – the students take 3 modules in each year covering pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. In addition, the department runs a 're-sit' course for the GCSE examination which students may re-enter in either the autumn or summer terms.
185. In the year 2001, the examination results at both AS and A Level were below the national average, and, due to the small size of the entry, it is not possible to compare these results with the results of other subjects within the school. The retention rate of students in these years is unsatisfactory.
186. The standard of work seen during the inspection in lessons and in the scrutiny of the written work was good. The quality of the oral work at Year 13 was particularly good; the students have a good understanding of what they were doing on the use of the double angle formulae for solving trigonometrical equations in revising examination questions in calculus, sequences and series. In Year 12, it is a little more variable; students contributed well when binomial distribution was being taught, but others had difficulty with transferring skills previously learned, for example to the division of polynomials.
187. In lessons, the teachers work hard with the students and the teaching is good. The teaching is well planned and the lessons have very clear objectives. The students make considerable efforts to understand the work. The progress of the students is good because the teachers know the capabilities of their students and use this effectively in their planning.
188. No lessons for the GCSE examination 're-sit' group of students were observed because of school examinations. However, from discussions with the department, it is clear that this course needs some re-appraisal. A significant number of the students attend only half of the timetabled lessons for this course, and they lack a commitment to it. The lessons are focused on work to do with trigonometry, data handling, using and applying mathematics.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Good teaching resulting in students learning well.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and very good relationships with the teacher.
- New sixth form laboratory provides a good learning environment.
- The programme of extra-curricular activities being used to raise profile of chemistry.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of high grades at 'A' Level
- Small classes make student interaction and debate difficult.
- Lack of minimum entry grade to AS course is unhelpful to the progress of the more able student.
- Teaching schemes do not include opportunities for use of ICT and extended writing.

189. The inspection focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled. In biology, examination results in 2001 were in line with expectation, based on the recruitment grades of the 2 students. In 2000, results were in line with the national average for the 9 candidates entered. Two lessons were observed and in both the teaching was good. In one, reinforcement of the precise meaning of words used in examination questions helped the student to improve examination technique whilst at the same time effectively revising content in a tutorial situation.

190. In physics, all 4 students entered gained a pass grade, but the small number involved means comparison with national average is unreliable. In 2000, all 7 students entered gained a pass grade, but the average points scored were below national average. Two lessons were observed. In both, teaching and learning were at least sound. In one, each student had prepared a presentation about a specific radioisotope and its uses. During the lesson each student could contribute, which resulted in their gaining a secure understanding and a wide range of examples.

191. In the GCE A Level chemistry examination in 2000, the average points scored by the students were below the national expectation, but in line with students' previous grades at GCSE. In 2001, there was only one 're-sit' student, but he did not gain a pass grade. Between 1998 and 2000 there were 13 candidates for the examination and of these two gained grade B and 10 achieved a pass grade. However, the total number of candidates each year is small and caution must be exercised when comparing results to the national expectation. In the AS examination, 2 students gained pass grades in 2001 and 3 students have continued to the A Level course. The policy of guided choice into the sixth form results in below average results in chemistry.

192. Standards of work seen in Year 12 are good. At this early stage in the course, students are consolidating their Key Stage 4 knowledge before applying it to new situations. Students' records showed that learning of new ideas associated with atomic structure and bonding was at an appropriate rate and in appropriate depth. In class, students were able to plan an investigation to find the amounts of each product during a reaction involving indigestion mixture. They needed some help to use word and symbol equations to show the reactions involved. In a Year 13 class, a student was able to discuss reactions involving oxidation and reduction of transition metals in terms of electron transfer and

balance equations appropriately. The record of work shows well-planned teaching resulting in good learning. There have been limited opportunities for extended writing and research and there is no evidence of ICT being used to extend learning in science. In both years, reinforcement of the mathematical skills used in chemistry is being taught effectively.

193. The quality of teaching is good and students learn well. The teacher has good subject expertise and this enlivens teaching with everyday examples to interest students and extend their ideas. By using clear and logical development of complex concepts, the teacher enables the students to grasp the new ideas presented to them. Year 12 students have some difficulty in recalling previous work and time has been made available to revisit this before embarking on new ideas. By careful planning, the teacher is able to include short practical tasks to reinforce learning and to use a wide variety of approaches, including short and longer practice questions and group discussion to make lessons interesting. Using the Internet to research the structure and function of painkillers also proved an effective approach. Lessons are brisk and note-taking is kept to a minimum. Students consolidate their learning through a programme of structured questions completed in private study periods and assessed in tutorial sessions. This enables students to have a clear understanding of the progress they are making.
194. Students are learning at an appropriate rate and are enthusiastic and hard-working. They have a mature approach to their studies and respond well to learning opportunities. In Year 12, some pupils find it difficult to respond clearly to oral questions, but by Year 13 they are much more confident. Due to the small class size it is difficult to engender student interaction and meaningful debate.
195. A recently appointed teacher in charge of chemistry is currently revising teaching specifications with a view to improving learning and increasing challenge. There is commitment within the department to improve monitoring of students' work and to use target setting to raise standards. There is already an extensive programme of visits, and other extra-curricular events in an initiative to raise the profile of chemistry.

HUMANITIES

Religious studies

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

Strengths

- Above average standards
- Good teaching and learning
- Very positive student attitudes
- A well-managed and resourced department

Areas for improvement

- Improve oral presentation skills of Year 12 students
- Provide religious education for all sixth formers, to comply with statutory requirements

196. The GCE A Level results in 2001 were above average, as they were in 1999. There were no candidates in 2000. There were 9 candidates for AS level religious studies in 2001, 8 of whom secured a pass grade. The school was disappointed with the AS level results, which awarded students grades at least one grade lower than those achieved by the same students in other subjects; they await the outcome of a challenge to the results.

197. The standards of the 7 students who are continuing with the A Level course in Year 13 are above average. They are producing written work of a higher quality than their AS level results would predict, and have made good progress since taking GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. They can write in detail, for example on key beliefs and practices in Buddhism, showing good knowledge and understanding.
198. There are 10 students in Year 12, who have made a sound start to the AS course. They were seen presenting their findings on an Old Testament narrative which demonstrated useful learning from their research, although their oral presentation skills are still limited.
199. The department is very well staffed for teaching at this level, with 3 specialist teachers, one of whom is newly qualified. The lessons seen were at least satisfactory: teaching is mostly good, and sometimes is stimulating. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and use appropriate teaching methods. They use resources well, including stimulus objects and handouts; the latter include pages from web-sites – students are encouraged to use the Internet as well as the school library for research. There is a good emphasis on independent learning; students are expected to research topics suggested by their teachers. Teachers are aware of the examination requirements and are keen that their students grasp the key concepts of the subject. They have very high expectations of their students who respond by working well. Year 13 students, in particular, apply themselves very well to the work, and are able to question the issues intellectually as well as entering into the more experiential aspects of Buddhist meditation. Their learning is enhanced because lessons are well planned and taught at an appropriate pace, and the students themselves relate very well to their teachers and the subject. These very positive attitudes clearly contribute to their learning.
200. Lessons are well resourced, with course books and handouts, and a well-stocked section in the library. The unusual combination of papers chosen (Old Testament and Buddhism) creates a challenge. Students are following a rich, if divergent, curriculum. Other sixth formers do not have any provision for religious education, as legislation requires, but the minority who choose to take this course are receiving an enhancement to their personal development as well as studying a good academic discipline. The subject is well led and managed and has progressed well, not least in terms of results, since the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The English department offers GCE AS and A2 courses, a GCSE examination course and Key Skills courses in Years 12 and 13. There are 13 students following the GCE A2 course in Years 13, and 19 students following the AS course in Year 12. There are 16 students following the GCSE course in Year 12 and 36 students taking the Key Skills course across the 3 terms in Year 12 and 4 students following the course in Year 13.

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

Strengths

- Good quality teaching
- Students' positive attitudes
- Good progress
- Key communications skills lessons support literacy

Areas for improvement

- Provision for extra-curricular activities

201. In 2001, 3 students entered for the GCSE English examination and all passed, two students obtaining a C grade. The attainment of Year 12 students, following the GCSE examination English course, is below the national expectation. For some of these students there are weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure; much of the written work is fluent but inaccurate. A combination of weak reading comprehension and limited vocabulary limits the progress and attainment of some of these students. The Key Skills in Communications course (level 3) provides effective literacy support for students' main subjects.
202. Overall attainment in the 2001 GCE A Level English Literature examinations was in line with the national average. Although slightly lower than in 2000, twice as many candidates took the examinations. In 2001, girls out-performed boys. The proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades rises and falls, but there is an overall improvement over four years.
203. The standard of work seen in lessons and in samples of work is in line with national expectations. Most students have a good knowledge of the literature texts being studied and articulate their views clearly. Students listen carefully to each other and respond appropriately. For example, in a Year 12 class, students demonstrated a good knowledge of the plot and main characters in *King Lear*, but only the higher-attaining students were sufficiently confident to begin to explore the themes of the play. Comprehension is sometimes limited by weak vocabulary. For example, some students found difficulty with the language of the poem *Ode to Autumn*. Once the language was understood, they were able to provide sound interpretations of some of the imagery. There is an extensive range of coursework, showing good progress in the development of essay structure, the appropriate use of quotations and the development of reasoned arguments. Higher-attaining students write from a secure base of extensive personal research. They have a secure grasp and appreciation of the language and style of the texts being studied. Work is well presented and many students word process their assignments effectively.
204. The quality of teaching is always good and is sometimes very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, form positive working relationships and plan lessons appropriately for the aptitudes of their students. When these qualities are combined with high expectations, learning is very effective. For example, Year 12 students have studied the novel *Knowledge of Angels*, and explored the role and significance of the prologue. Students used their extensive knowledge of the plot and characters to begin to establish links between the events and characters in the narrative and the imagery of the prologue.
205. Students work very hard. Their commitment contributes significantly to their learning. Most are well prepared for lessons, listen attentively and respond appropriately. Students enjoy the English course. They appreciate their teachers whom they find very supportive. They are given clear evaluations of their attainment and progress. Most are up to date with their work and believe that the homework given is appropriate. Most students believe that there are insufficient opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities and that they should have some say in the choice of texts from the syllabus.
206. The management of English in the sixth form is good. Teachers monitor progress and assignments are marked assiduously. There are opportunities for extension work for higher-attaining students and encouragement and advice for lower-attaining students. The curriculum coverage and assessment procedures meet the requirements of the examination boards. There are sufficient resources.

French

The quality of provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership by the co-ordinator for sixth form French.
- High expectations and very good teaching
- Excellent resources, especially those from the Internet
- High attainment and very good achievement by the year 13 student, who has been to France a number of times

Areas for improvement

- Try to increase group sizes: the single candidates in French in recent years have not been able to do pair work nor have discussions with other students
- Encourage students to visit France and Germany to improve their confidence, speaking and listening skills

207. The focus of the inspection was on French, but work in German lessons was also sampled. German is as popular as French, and sometimes has larger teaching groups. There were no A Level candidates in recent years, but 3 students took AS level in 2001 and gained average grades. One AS and one A2 lesson were observed; one was good and the other was very good.

208. Over the last 3 years, entries for A Level French have been low. Results have varied, but they have been in line with the ability of individual students. In general, they have been below the national average for all schools. There were no candidates in 2001, but in 1999 there was a single student, and in 2000 there were 3. It was only possible to see 2 lessons with a Year 13 student during the inspection. There are no students in Year 12.

209. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in the student's file during the inspection showed that the student was expected to achieve grade A at A2 in 2002, as a result of hard work. The French accent and intonation are good. The student has a good understanding of the general meaning of spoken and written French, and can identify important details from what has been heard and read. The student expressed views and opinions clearly and could write on different topics with good accuracy, using a variety of structures and tenses. A wide range of vocabulary related to transport, health, and other topics has been developed. The student has good research skills, and downloads current information from the Internet. She has the news headlines from a French newspaper e-mailed daily to home, which develops reading skills and the student's overall knowledge of France and world issues.

210. Overall, the teaching of French in the sixth form is very good. Both the lessons seen were very good. The teacher's expectations were high, and the student achieved very well. The lessons had clear aims, which were achieved by the end on both occasions. They were very well planned to both challenge and interest the student and exploit the department's excellent resources. In the first lesson the student was given a text about new bus lanes in Paris, and this led into discussion about the use of cars and attitudes of drivers. A listening exercise required the student to summarise the advantages and disadvantages of the metro in Paris. This was done successfully in terms of advantages but the student had never been on the metro and could not pick out the disadvantages, although she tried very hard. In the second lesson an interview with young people about the high number of road accidents in France encouraged her to express her own opinions very effectively. All these activities were good practice for examination questions. The teacher gave encouragement and help if the student could not understand parts of texts or tapes. If she

gave synonyms or explanation in French, the student was quick to confirm that she had understood. The lessons went at a brisk pace, but the teacher ensured that the student had sufficient time to complete the tasks. Teachers give the student opportunities to use her imagination; she wrote an interesting assignment about her ideal job. She has also written an essay about adolescence related to a novel. These varied tasks have helped her to practise and develop her language skills very well.

211. The student has a mature approach to her work and organises her time well. She writes plans before writing her essays, and does appropriate research to consider topics in depth. She has been given good advice on how to develop her skills. She makes good notes on grammar points and on the topics, and can use the information to discuss ideas with her teachers. She is keen to speak in class, and seeks help if she lacks vocabulary to make her point. She has good research skills, uses dictionaries and other reference material well, and can exploit information technology well. She is responsible, and uses private study sessions and free time in school to do her work. She watches French films on television. She shows great enthusiasm in class, and is pleased with her course in French. She puts in far more effort than the average student, and is being rewarded by making very good progress. She has very good relationships with the teachers.
212. The teacher who co-ordinates French in the sixth form is very thorough and well organised. She gives students an overview of the AS and A2 courses, and they know what to expect in the months ahead and on a daily basis. She consults with the two other teachers who are involved, and they agree who will deal with which topic. The teachers have good knowledge of the course requirements, and mark work according to the examination criteria. They share these with the student, so that she knows how to improve. All teachers are keen to find interesting and stimulating resources.