

INSPECTION REPORT

WALES HIGH SCHOOL

Kiveton Park, Sheffield

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106961

Headteacher: Mr Lawrence Morton

Reporting inspector: Alan Haigh
2630

Dates of inspection: 26th – 30th November 2001

Inspection number: 192421

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Audrey Gilbert
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

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3758	Tony Barringer	Team inspector	English	
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24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	French Spanish	
3937	John Seed	Team inspector	Chemistry	How well are students taught? How well does school care for its students? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wales High School is a much bigger than average mixed comprehensive school, catering for 1530 boys and girls aged 11-19 years. There are slightly more girls than boys and about 300 sixth formers. The school has grown steadily in the past 10 years from about 1100 pupils and is popular and oversubscribed. Ninety-nine per cent of pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds and no pupils speak English as an additional language. About 13 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure that is broadly average. Around 15 per cent of the pupils are on the special educational needs register and about 2.2 per cent have statements of special educational needs; these figures are a little below average. Most of these pupils are dyslexic or have general learning difficulties. The location, Kiveton Park, is a former mining area and is designated as Objective 1 status for regeneration. The socio-economic background is mixed with the majority of pupils from below average circumstances. The school is participating in the Excellence in Cities scheme and provides learning mentors for disaffected pupils and identifies gifted and talented pupils. The school is also a City Learning Centre. Attainment at entry is rising and is now close to average overall but there are fewer than average higher attainers coming into the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wales High is a very effective school providing a high quality education for all its pupils. Standards are above the national average at all stages and pupils achieve much higher than would be expected when prior attainment is considered. The teaching is very good and leadership and management are excellent. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science taken by 14-year-olds are above average and much better than would be expected; mathematics results are especially good.
- The GCSE results are improving more rapidly than results nationally and are above the average for all schools and better than those in similar schools. Consistently strong subjects are French, information and communication technology, mathematics and music.
- The A-level results are especially good in chemistry, computing, economics, mathematics, music and sociology.
- The teaching and learning are very good overall and often excellent.
- The very high quality pastoral support and genuine care shown by all staff for the pupils result in excellent attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour; exclusions from school are exceptionally rare.
- The whole curriculum is of a high quality with a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities in which many pupils enthusiastically participate, supported by the commitment and energy of the teachers.
- The leadership and management of the school are excellent; the aims of the school are achieved very well. The caring ethos is very prominent and pupils' moral and social awareness are of a very high order.

What could be improved

- Results in GCSE art and A-level theatre studies are not high enough.
- Too little use is made of assessment data to help pupils' progress and improve the curriculum.
- Pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary society.
- There is too little sharing of the large amount of very good teaching.
- Attendance is only average, largely because some parents take pupils out of school for holidays.
- Accommodation is not good enough. Several departments have dispersed rooms resulting in inefficiencies; small rooms cramp teaching styles; the shortage of laboratories means there is too little practical science.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996 and has made good improvements since that time. Educational standards continue to rise at all stages and in most subjects and the quality of teaching is now very good. The areas for improvement, identified in the last report, have been carefully and successfully addressed. Information and communication technology is used more widely and generally very effectively. The library stock of books is still too narrow. Younger pupils now take more responsibility for their learning. Teaching and learning are monitored but good practice is not shared sufficiently. More accommodation has been provided but, with the school's increasing popularity, it is now stretched fully again. All statutory curricular requirements are met with the exception of those related to collective acts of worship.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	B	

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

The standards attained by 14-year-olds in English have been above or well above the national average for the past few years. Those in mathematics have been in line with or above national figures. The science results have been similar to the national average recently but fell below it in 2000. When compared with similar schools, as defined by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the English and mathematics results were well above average in 2000 but the science results were below. The mathematics results were well above those in similar schools in 2001 and the English and science results were above that average. Girls have achieved better results than boys in all three of these subjects recently with a gap that is a little wider than the national gap although there was no gap in 2001. There is an upward trend in mathematics results at this stage and a downward trend in science but no trend in English.

The GCSE average points score has been around the national average for several years but in 2000 was better than that in similar schools. The GCSE results improved even more in 2001 and there is a clear upward trend, more noticeable than the national upward trend. In 2000, 49 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes with grades A* to C against a national figure of 47 per cent. The school's 2001 figure of 54 per cent was even further ahead of the national figure. The school's 2001 figure was well above its target of 47 per cent but the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to Gs was two per cent below the target of 92 per cent. The average points score in 2001 was well ahead of the school's target. Strong GCSE subjects include French, information and communication technology, mathematics, music and statistics. Pupils aged 16 also do well in the Intermediate level GNVQ courses in business and in health and social care.

The A-level results have been above or well above national averages in recent years. In 2000 the boys' A-level results were well above average and the girls' results were in line with it. The strong subjects are chemistry, computing, economics, mathematics, music and sociology but results in theatre studies are below average. The advanced level GNVQ results in business are good but those in sport are poor; sixth formers do well in the Intermediate GNVQ courses.

Pupils achieve well at all stages and generally do better than would be expected when their prior attainment is taken into account. The overall observed standards achieved by 14-year-olds are above average, illustrating the clear progress made by the vast majority in their first three years. By the age of 16, the continued progress results in standards that are even further ahead of expectations. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above

average. The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and this is maintained well in the sixth form. The gifted and talented pupils make very good progress, responding well to the very good provision, which is extended by the Excellence in Cities initiative, and high expectations placed on them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are excellent. Pupils know that they are in lessons to learn and show a mature approach to all their tasks, coupled with a clear enjoyment of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is excellent in and out of lessons. School exclusions are rare and there have been no permanent exclusions for many years.
Personal development and relationships	These are excellent. Pupils get on very well together and co-operate sensibly in their tasks. Teachers and pupils also get on very well together, showing clear mutual respect.
Attendance	This is in line with the national average. Punctuality is excellent. Much of the absence is due to parents taking their children out of school for term-time holidays.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching is consistently high and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teaching was good in English for pupils aged 11 to 16 and in mathematics and science was very good for those pupils. There are no subjects in which teaching is weak. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their planning of lessons is very good. The management of pupils could not be better and the relationships between pupils and teachers are first class. Expectations are generally high but not unrealistic - pupils are challenged and respond very positively with genuine efforts and a clear will to do well. The learning of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good at all stages. Teaching methods are usually appropriate but occasionally a little cautious, although many lessons were excellent, particularly in the sixth form. Many were stimulating and demanding much of the pupils. Homework is used well and many teachers give much responsibility to the pupils to plan and organise their work, which they do well, reflecting the trust and responsibility placed on them. Pupils work with interest and enthusiasm at all stages.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	These are very good at all stages. The curriculum is wide, well balanced and meets pupils' needs well. The extra-curricular provision is especially strong.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good. Pupils' needs are identified thoroughly on entry and their progress is monitored closely. Support is appropriate and well organised.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good overall and that for pupils' moral and social development is especially effective. Pupils do not attend an act of collective worship every day and they are made insufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary society.

How well the school cares for its pupils	This is an especially strong aspect of the school's provision. The pastoral system is very effective and pupils' social and academic progress is monitored and supported well. The school shows outstanding care for its pupils.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	These are excellent. The school's educational direction is underpinned by the dynamism, commitment and ability of the headteacher very ably supported by very competent, capable and hardworking deputies and senior colleagues.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	All responsibilities are fulfilled with the exception of those related to a daily act of collective worship. Governors are enthusiastic, hardworking and very supportive; they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is undertaken thoroughly and effectively with much gathering of examination data. Sometimes insufficient use is made of data and clear conclusions are not drawn. The school always strives to improve and shows much capacity for even more progress.
The strategic use of resources	This is very good. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtually all parents consider that the school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. • A very high proportion think their child is progressing well. • Most think the teaching is good. • A high proportion say their child likes school. • The vast majority are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • Most think the school helps their child to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About one in six respondents feel they are not well enough informed about their child's progress. • A similar proportion feel the school could work more closely with them. • One in seven think the amount of homework is not right - too much or too little.

The response to the questionnaire was high and parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with much of the school's work. The inspectors fully endorse the positive views expressed by the parents. Parents are provided with a good amount of information about their child's progress and reports are clear and informative. The school tries hard to work with parents. Amounts of homework do vary, from subject to subject and year group to year group but, overall, are appropriate for the vast majority of pupils.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11-19 mixed comprehensive school has grown substantially in recent years and now has 298 students. There are slightly more girls than boys. The ethnic mix matches that of the main school. There are 17 students on the school's register of special educational needs. Over two-thirds of pupils from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and a few join from other schools. The socio-economic background is mixed but the majority of students are from below average circumstances. The students have achieved well in the main school and their GCSE results are above average. There are no minimum entry requirements for entry into the sixth form. There are GCE AS and A-level courses and also vocational ones leading to intermediate and advanced qualifications. A minority retake GCSE courses that are offered in a few subjects. There are enrichment courses, some of which are compulsory, and a very wide range of extra-curricular activities.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful and cost-effective. Students achieve well and attain above-average standards in public examinations. High standards are being maintained. Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent. Students' attitudes are excellent as is the quality of the support and guidance they receive. They have many opportunities to take responsibilities and to participate in the very wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The leadership and management are excellent.

The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- The A-level results are especially good in chemistry, computing, economics, mathematics, music and sociology.
- Students have very positive and mature attitudes to learning and get on with their teachers exceptionally well.
- The school provides a very wide range of courses, academic and vocational, suiting the needs of all students, with particularly good enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, especially in music.
- The school provides excellent personal support and guidance for all students resulting in a high level of personal and social development and first class support for careers education and further or higher education applications.
- The excellent leadership and management ensure clear educational direction for the sixth form and a full reflection of the school's aims.

What could be improved

- The A-level examination results in physics and in theatre studies are not good enough.
- The inadequate accommodation impairs progress in science as some lessons are taught in classrooms and narrows the range of teaching styles in several other subjects.
- The provision of reference materials in the library and sixth form learning centre is inadequate and so students' independent learning is restricted, especially in English and history.
- Several subjects, mathematics and modern foreign languages, for example, make too little use of information and communication technology.

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	Very good. The students attain above-average results and achieve well because of the very good teaching and their own high level of commitment to work. Results are better than would be expected when GCSE results are considered. The subject is very well led.
Chemistry	Very good. Students achieve well and attain above-average standards. Teaching and learning are very good and the subject is very well managed. Students' attitudes are very positive and their relationships with teachers are excellent. Accommodation is barely adequate.
Physics	Satisfactory. Examination results are average. The students mostly achieve appropriately when prior attainment is considered; a minority underachieve. Coursework needs to improve. Teaching and learning are good and management of the subject is sound. Accommodation is not good enough.
Business studies	Good. The standards in AS and A2 courses are average and are improving. The GNVQ results are below average but, based on students' prior attainment, are good. The teaching and learning are good and pupils have positive attitudes to work. The subject is managed well.
Information and communication technology	Very good. The A-level results are well above average and standards observed are similar; the students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are good and students' attitudes to their work are excellent. Management is very good.
Health & social care	Very good. The GNVQ results are above average and students do better than might be expected from their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies. Management is good.
Art	Good. The A-level results are a little below average. Work seen was average but better than would be expected when prior attainment is considered. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to work. The subject is soundly managed.
Music	Excellent. The A-level results are well above average. Students achieve very well. Teaching is excellent and learning is very good. Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary and the management of the subject is excellent.
Geography	Satisfactory. The A-level results are average and standards observed are likewise. Students achieve appropriately. Teaching and learning are very good as are the students' attitudes to the subject. Management is good.
History	Good. The A-level results are above average. The standards observed are average but higher than expected when prior attainment is considered. Teaching and learning are good and expectations are high. Attitudes to work are very good. The subject is managed very well.
Psychology	Very good. The A-level results are average. Work seen was above average and students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. The subject is very well managed within the sociology department.

English	Very good. The A-level results are improving and in 2001 were close to average. Standards observed are average and students achieve appropriately. Teaching, learning and students' attitudes are very good. The subject is managed very well.
French	Good. The A-level results are average as are current standards. Students achieve appropriately. Teaching and learning are good and students have very positive attitudes to their studies. Management is good.
Spanish	Good. The A-level results are average and students' work is at the expected level with students achieving appropriately. Teaching and learning are good. Attitudes to work are very good. Management is satisfactory.

In all other subjects that were sampled, the teaching was good and much was even better. Examples of very good teaching were seen in biology, personal and social education and theatre studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance are excellent. Induction into the sixth form is well organised. Progress is monitored carefully. Careers, college and university advice is excellent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The excellent leadership and management ensure clear educational direction for the sixth form and a full reflection of the school's aims. Standards in departments are monitored closely and high standards are maintained with good attention being paid to areas in need of improvement. The promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent. The provision is cost effective.

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"> • They are taught very well and challenged to do their best. • They find teachers very accessible. They help them overcome difficulties and encourage them to study independently. • The wide range of courses enables them to further their careers aspirations and talents. • They are well informed about the courses. • They enjoy being in the sixth form and participating in the many extra-curricular opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About a third felt they could be treated more like adults. • Around a quarter felt they are not well enough informed about their progress. • A similar proportion felt that there is not enough careers advice. • A similar proportion said the school does not take enough notice of their views.

The inspectors endorse fully and see good reasons for the students' positive views. Sixth formers are given a reasonable amount of freedom and responsibility, increasingly so as their time in the sixth form goes on. Inspectors consider that there is a good amount of information provided for students on their progress, that careers advice is excellent and that the school makes good efforts to consider students' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science taken by 14-year-olds are above average and much better than would be expected; mathematics results are especially good.

1. The standards attained by 14-year-olds in English have been above or well above the national average for the past few years. Those in mathematics have been in line with or above national figures. The science results have been similar to the national average recently but fell below it in 2000. When compared with similar schools, as defined by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the English and mathematics results were well above average in 2000 but the science results were below. The mathematics results were well above those in similar schools in 2001 and the English and science results were above that average. Indeed, the proportion of 14-year-old pupils achieving level 6 or above - which is higher than the expected level - in mathematics in 2001 was in the top five per cent of similar schools.
2. Girls have achieved better results than boys in all three of these subjects recently with a gap that is a little wider than the national gap, although there was no gap in 2001. There is an upward trend in mathematics results at this stage and a downward trend in science but no trend in English. The combined trend for all three subjects was a little below the national trend for the five-year period up to 2000. The science results improved significantly in 2001.

The GCSE results are improving more rapidly than results nationally and are above average and better than those in similar schools. Consistently strong subjects are French, information and communication technology, mathematics and music.

3. The GCSE average points score has been around the national average for several years but in 2000 was better than that in similar schools. The GCSE results improved even more in 2001 and there is a clear upward trend, more noticeable than the national upward trend. In 2000, 49 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes with grades A* to C against a national figure of 47 per cent. The school's 2001 figure of 54 per cent was even further ahead of the national figure. The school's 2001 figure was well above its target of 47 per cent but the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to Gs was two per cent below the target of 92 per cent. The average points score in 2001 was well ahead of the school's target.
4. Strong GCSE subjects include French, information and communication technology, mathematics, music and statistics. Results in these subjects have been significantly above the national average for several years and pupils have achieved far better in them than in most of their other subjects. Pupils have done well in economics and geography recently and do particularly well in statistics. Indeed, for the past two years, all have been awarded A* to C grades in statistics. Pupils aged 16 also do well in the Intermediate level GNVQ courses in business and in health and social care.

The A-level results are especially good in chemistry, computing, economics, mathematics, music and sociology.

5. The A-level results have been above or well above national averages in recent years. The pass rate has been between 90 and 92 per cent over the last 5 years and around 40 per cent of results have been grades A or B. The national pass rate in 2000 was 88 per cent with 32 per cent gaining grades A or B. In 2000 the boys' A-level results were well above average and the girls' results were in line with it. The strong subjects are chemistry, computing, economics, mathematics (including further mathematics), music (including music technology) and sociology. The results in computing were amongst the top five per cent of results nationally in 2000. The advanced level GNVQ results in business are good but those in sport are poor; sixth formers do well in the Intermediate GNVQ courses.

The teaching and learning are very good overall and often excellent.

6. The quality of teaching is consistently high and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. In nine out of ten lessons overall it was good or better and in more than four out of ten it was very good or excellent. There was very little variation across year groups or across subjects. Teaching of pupils aged 11 to 16 was good in English and in mathematics and science was very good. There are no subjects in which teaching is weak.
7. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their planning of lessons is very good. In the most successful lessons, the teachers made the aims clear to the pupils and then recapped at the end to check and consolidate progress. This was illustrated well in a Year 9 mathematics lesson on the angles of polygons. A purposeful approach, clear questioning and excellent learning reflected the high quality planning.
8. The management of pupils could not be better and the relationships between pupils and teachers are first class. The clear mutual respect between teacher and pupils and the fact that a very high proportion of pupils say they enjoy school reflect the skills teachers have in managing pupils. No raised voices were heard in lessons and very few incidents required teachers to reprimand pupils. If pupils needed checking then this was done in a non-confrontational way and pupils accepted correction sensibly.
9. Expectations are generally high but not unrealistic - pupils are challenged and respond very positively with genuine efforts and a clear will to do well. A Year 9 design and technology lesson on soldering was conducted in an atmosphere of industry. The pupils knew exactly what to do and understood the finer details of the techniques used. The crystal-clear instructions and high demands placed on pupils resulted in very good progress.
10. The learning of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good at all stages. Teaching methods are usually appropriate but occasionally a little cautious, although there were many excellent lessons, particularly in the sixth form. Many were stimulating and demanding much of the pupils. An outstanding Year 12 music technology lesson on '*What makes a good recording?*' included an excellent variety of tasks, illustrated the teacher's subject knowledge well, included much practical and discussion work and concluded with a brilliant performance of Brubeck's *Take 5* with the teacher at the keyboard. The students set high personal standards and reached the highest levels of performance and learning.
11. Homework is used well and many teachers give much responsibility to the pupils to plan and organise their work, which they do well, reflecting the trust and responsibility placed on them. Pupils work with interest and enthusiasm at all stages.

The very high quality pastoral support and genuine care shown by all staff for the pupils result in excellent attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour with exceptionally rare exclusions from school.

12. Pupils' attitudes to learning were never less than satisfactory and in nine out of ten lessons with 11-16 year old pupils and virtually all the lessons with sixth formers they were good or better. Indeed in more than eight out of ten lessons in the sixth form, attitudes were very good or excellent. The pupils know they are in school to learn. There was virtually no unsatisfactory behaviour and when pupils did, very rarely, stray away from the norm, the teachers' skills rapidly corrected the situation.
13. The care shown by teachers for pupils is an especially strong aspect of the school's provision and is a major reason for pupils being cooperative and learning so well. The pastoral system is very effective and pupils' social and academic progress is monitored and supported well. Teachers know pupils very well and form tutors have an especially close knowledge of their tutor groups. The form tutors stay with pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 and also teach personal and social education to their forms. Tutors make contact with parents, often by telephone, whenever necessary and potential problems are resolved at an early stage. Pupils and parents find the school planner an excellent means of fostering home-school links.
14. The pastoral care system is organised very effectively and overseen carefully by the deputy headteacher who liaises closely with the very effective heads of years. Much of its success is linked to the clear attention to detail. The number of exclusions from school for poor behaviour has fallen from 31 pupils four

years ago to three pupils in the last year. There have been no permanent exclusions for many years. The school has taken in pupils who have been excluded from other schools.

The whole curriculum is of a high quality with a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities in which many pupils participate with much enthusiasm, supported by the commitment and energy of the teachers.

15. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good at all stages. All statutory curricular requirements are met with the exception that pupils do not attend an act of collective worship every day. The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 16 meets all the National Curriculum requirements and includes religious education for all. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The time allocations to the various subjects are sensible and the arrangements for modern foreign languages are appropriate. All pupils follow discrete courses in information and communication technology and use these skills well. The setting and banding arrangements work well.
16. The curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds is wide and well planned. There are good vocational courses in addition to the National Curriculum subjects and pupils can choose from six GNVQ areas. There are opportunities for the most able to be extended. The most able mathematicians, for example, can take a GCSE statistics course. Some Year 10 pupils are sensibly disapplied from the National Curriculum modern foreign languages requirements to take a *lifeskills* course.
17. The sixth form curriculum is exceptionally wide and caters well for the needs of the high proportion of 16-year-olds who choose to stay at the school and the small number who join them from other schools. The curriculum responds very well to the local circumstances and prepares students thoroughly for employment or college. In addition to 20 or more GCE AS and A2 courses, there is a good range of intermediate and advanced level GNVQ courses, which cater for about one-third of the sixth formers. Students follow a key skills or a general studies course. There are good enrichment opportunities.
18. Pupils have many opportunities to join in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Sport and music are very strong. Sixth formers are required to participate in a wide range of sporting and other enrichment activities on a Wednesday afternoon. The Year 10 pupils undertake three weeks' work experience and sixth formers can participate in work placements abroad. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is popular. Pupils and students make many visits to museums, art galleries and theatres and about 700 are involved in residential experiences each year. Staff are very generous with their time to facilitate this wide range of activities and pupils and parents expressed strong appreciation of the teachers' commitment.
19. The quality of the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils' needs are identified thoroughly on entry and their progress is monitored closely. Support is appropriate and well organised with a clear and appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. All pupils have very good access to the full curriculum.

The leadership and management of the school are excellent; the aims of the school are achieved very well. The caring ethos is very prominent and pupils' moral and social awareness are of a very high order.

20. The leadership and management of the headteacher and other key staff are excellent. The headteacher and his senior colleagues work very effectively as a team. The school's educational direction is underpinned by the dynamism, commitment and ability of the headteacher very ably supported by very competent, capable and hardworking deputies and senior colleagues. The sense of direction is particularly clear and staff and governors work well together to ensure success. The attention to detail is a clear factor in the successful management.
21. The school's mission statement and aims are witnessed well in the everyday life and many successes of the school. The school promotes the pupils' moral and social development especially well. The caring ethos is very prominent and underpins the effectiveness of the school. The intended mutual respect between all members of the school's community is achieved very well.

22. Communications are very clear and all staff, teaching and non-teaching, contribute well to the smooth running of the school. The school is a happy place with a united staff all striving for the same goals. Staff attendance is very good. The team spirit is high in departments and the quality of middle management is strong.
23. The governors are well informed and have a sound grasp of what is happening in school. They have an appropriate level of involvement with a good balance of support and accountability. Their role is effective but not heavy-handed. They fulfil their statutory role well but acknowledge that the requirements for collective worship are not met.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Results in GCSE art and A-level theatre studies are not high enough.

24. The GCSE art results were significantly below the national average in 1999 and 2000. They improved a little in 2001 but remained well below average, although all those entered obtained a pass grade. The A* to C rate of 44 per cent was about 20 per cent below the national average. Pupils do less well in art than they do in most of their other subjects.
25. The A-level results in theatre studies were very low in 2000. None of the seven candidates was awarded a grade A or B and two were unclassified. Similar, below average, results were obtained in 2001.

Too little use is made of assessment data to help pupils' progress and improve the curriculum.

26. The school gathers and analyses a vast amount of useful data on pupils' and students' performance. This data is presented clearly, often in attractive tabular and colourful diagrammatic forms, but important and simple conclusions are too rarely highlighted. Some teachers have difficulty interpreting data and so make too little use of what is available. As a result, too little use is made of the data to further promote pupils' progress.

Pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary society.

27. The overall provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils do not, however, attend an act of collective worship every day and they are made insufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary society. Many subjects have multi-cultural aspects to their curriculum but these are often incidental and opportunities to prepare pupils and students for life in multi-cultural South Yorkshire in particular and Britain in general are missed.

There is too little sharing of the large amount of very good teaching.

28. One in eight lessons observed were excellent and a further one in three were very good. Teaching is monitored and support is often provided for teachers, especially those who are recently qualified. However, there are too few ways of ensuring that teachers share the vast amount of expertise, for example, by peer-observations of lessons.

Attendance is only average, largely because some parents take pupils out of school for term-time holidays.

29. The overall attendance figures are average; the rate of unauthorised absence is, however, about half the national rate. About a half of the authorised absence arises from parents taking their children out of school for term-time holidays. This deprives pupils of their entitlement to schooling and significantly hinders their progress and that of others as teachers have to go over work missed by those who were absent.

Accommodation is not good enough. Several departments have dispersed rooms resulting in inefficiencies; small rooms cramp teaching and learning styles; the shortage of laboratories means there is too little practical science.

30. The last inspection highlighted problems of overcrowding and the insufficiency of the accommodation. Significant improvements have been made and a large, new, attractive and spacious classroom block has been built. However, the school's popularity has continued to increase and the numbers are much higher than they were.

31. Several subjects have inadequate accommodation and these include English, mathematics and science. Rooms are not close together and equipment has to be transported away from the main subject base, thus wasting time and causing much inconvenience. Some rooms are too small for the large groups - occasionally mid 30s - being taught and the range of teaching approaches is consequently restricted. Science laboratories are not adequate in number or quality. Science lessons are often taught in classrooms and so the amount of practical work done is insufficient.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to sustain the current improvements and further the very good quality of education provided, the governing body and senior staff should now:
- a) Improve the GCSE results in art. (See paragraph 24)
 - b) Make better use of the assessment data on pupils' performance by ensuring staff fully understand the data and conclusions arising from the information. (See paragraphs 26, 54)
 - c) Extend the opportunities to make pupils more aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary society. (See paragraph 27, 50)
 - d) Enable more sharing of the large amount of very good teaching by a programme of mutual observations. (See paragraph 28, 67, 77, 85)
 - e) Endeavour to make all parents aware of the value of the education provided so that they will not take their children out of school for family holidays in term time. (See paragraph 29)
 - f) Further improve accommodation by upgrading and extending laboratory provision and providing better and more conveniently located teaching spaces for all departments. (See paragraphs 30, 31, 85, 93)

Sixth form

- Improve the GCE examination results in physics and theatre studies. (See paragraphs 24, 33)
- Further improve accommodation by upgrading and extending laboratory provision and providing better and more conveniently located teaching spaces for all departments. (See paragraphs 69, 77, 85, 93)
- Increase the library stock, especially reference materials. (See paragraph 70, 140, 150, 157)
- Make more use of information and communication technology in all subjects, especially mathematics and modern foreign languages. (See paragraphs 40, 75, 100, 164)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	56
	Sixth form	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	7	18	25	6	0	0	0
Percentage	13	32	45	11	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	10	25	36	8	0	0	0
Percentage	13	32	46	10	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 [enter Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1232	298
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	169	30

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	232	17

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	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.0
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	107	139	246

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	71	58
	Girls	121	109	82
	Total	176	180	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (72)	73 (65)	57 (54)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (35)	39 (43)	18 (20)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	69	42
	Girls	120	103	80
	Total	183	172	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (66)	70 (67)	50 (58)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (37)	39 (46)	26 (23)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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
	2000	112	131	243

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	47	100	103
	Girls	72	125	131
	Total	119	225	234
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (47)	93 (92)	96 (95)
	National	47 (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	39 (38.4)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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	13	100
	National		N/a

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
	2000	44	34	78

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	19.7 (20.2)	16.3 (19.4)	18.1(19.8)	2.5 (1.8)	5.0 (2.5)	3.4 (2.2)
National	17.7 (17.7)	18.6 (18.1)	18.2 (17.9)	2.6 (2.7)	2.9 (2.8)	2.7 (2.8)

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	24	83
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	2
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1513
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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)	100.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	516.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	18.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	4,039,136
Total expenditure	3,979,098
Expenditure per pupil	2,626
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 22,740
Balance carried forward to next year	37,298

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	26.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1500
Number of questionnaires returned	608

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	51	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	46	2	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	57	3	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	13	2	2
The teaching is good.	42	51	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	46	15	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	32	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	47	13	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	46	45	2	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	47	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	39	4	1	7

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

33. The A-level results have been above or well above national averages in recent years. In 2000 the boys' A-level results were well above the boys' national average and the girls' results were in line with theirs. In some subjects, groups were so small - three or fewer students - that comparisons with national data are inappropriate. The strong subjects over recent years are chemistry, computing, economics, mathematics, music and sociology but results in theatre studies are below average. In 2000, the computer studies results were very high - in the top five per cent of results nationally. The results in biology, geography, psychology, physics and sports studies were average that year and those in art, English and history were below average and those in theatre studies were well below. The 2001 results in biology and physics fell below average but the English results improved significantly with literature being above average.
34. In the work observed the standards in the A-level groups were generally above average. This was particularly evident in chemistry, business studies, information and communication technology, mathematics, music and psychology. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of their chemistry work, demonstrated well in a Year 12 lesson on types and structures of crystals. Year 13 students showed a good grasp of the fundamental concepts underlying developmental psychology. Standards in art, English, French, geography, history, physics and Spanish were in line with the course requirements. Students achieve well overall and in the vast majority of subjects, usually doing better than would be expected when their prior GCSE attainment is taken into consideration.
35. The advanced level GNVQ results in business are good but those in sport are poor; sixth formers do well in the intermediate GNVQ courses. Observed standards in health and social care were above average and students achieved well in these lessons. The excellent practical skills shown by the Year 12 students following this course to intermediate level complemented their high-level knowledge and understanding of first aid techniques.
36. The sixth formers who have special educational needs make good progress. The courses they follow are geared well to their needs and sensitive support enables them to get the most out of their studies. The gifted and talented students make very good progress, reflecting their especially positive response to challenging work and very good teaching in the vast majority of subjects. A group of five Year 12 further mathematicians coped particularly well with the calculus of trigonometric functions. A similar group of Year 13 students showed a clear grasp of the geometry of conic sections.
37. The students do well in their sixth form studies, mostly attaining good external examination results and achieving more highly than would be expected. Their success is a clear reflection of their very positive attitudes to work and the very good teaching provided.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

38. Students carry forward from the main school their excellent attitudes and behaviour and develop them further as they mature. Students' attitudes and behaviour were excellent in more than four out of ten lessons and at least very good in over eight out of every ten. They were never less than satisfactory. Pupils have very positive and mature attitudes to their work and relate to their teachers exceptionally well. These attitudes and high-quality relationships result in good achievement and very good progress for the vast majority of students.
39. No sixth form student has ever been excluded. Their excellent behaviour and personal development are enhanced by a refined and very effective support system. Students work hard in lessons, take homework very seriously and always try their best. Students' own views of their sixth form experience are very positive. They report that they enjoy the work and feel challenged by it. These views are fully endorsed by the inspection team.

40. The development of students' personal and learning skills is generally good. It is not sufficiently helped, however, by the inadequate library book-stock. Several subjects, notably business, health and social care, mathematics, modern foreign languages and psychology make too little use of information and communication technology in their work but many make good use of the Internet. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory and punctuality to lessons is excellent. The retention rate in all the courses offered is high with very few students leaving their courses prematurely.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

41. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Nine-tenths of the lessons seen were at least good. Almost a half were very good or excellent. This high quality teaching is distributed well across those subjects on which there was a particular focus during the inspection and also those where a small number of lessons were sampled. Specific details of teaching in subjects are reported in the final section of this report.
42. Two key characteristics of the teaching feature prominently across all subjects. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject and with clear informative exposition make it comprehensible to all students. They also know each student exceptionally well and the teacher-student relationships are excellent. This enables teachers to manage lessons very well indeed and maintain high levels of students' interest, concentration and effort. Students respond in a most mature manner to the high expectations.
43. The overwhelming majority of lessons are well planned and they are almost always conducted at a suitable pace. These characteristics were much in evidence in two excellent music lessons. The teachers continually challenged the students throughout and involved them in a range of activities. In one of the lessons the teacher initiated mature discussion on the use of microphones and excellent progress and learning took place.
44. Teachers do much to develop students' independent learning skills. A history lesson and a chemistry lesson were very successful because the students had done much research - some using the Internet - in preparation for the lesson. The teaching of key skills is effective. Lower attaining students in leisure and recreation studies analysed data and produced appropriate conclusions. The teacher had successfully used a video to promote this development. Information technology skills are well developed by many teachers. Students are given information and communication technology opportunities in some subjects and they also practise their information and communication technology skills in the independent study areas. They are encouraged to use the Internet.
45. Personal and social education is taught very well. In one lesson, Year 13 students became well aware of the moral issues relating to the use of animals for research on drugs and cosmetics. They were required to contribute in discussions and take the opposite stance to their own views.
46. There were a few lessons where teaching was satisfactory rather than good or better. The reasons for this included inefficient use of time, too slow a pace, not enough use of visual aids for lower attaining students, over dominance by the teacher and not enough questioning to check that the more reticent students had understood the work. A strategy which could address these few weaknesses would be to provide more opportunities for teachers to observe each other.

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

47. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. The school provides a wide range of more than twenty AS-level and A2- level courses and a good range of vocational courses in the sixth form, and students have an open access to those courses. The range of opportunities extends from the successful GNVQ hospitality and catering course run last year for students with modest GCSE results, to the very challenging demands of A-level subjects, such as further mathematics, and the AVCE examination.

48. About two-thirds of students take up mainly academic courses, with a third taking mainly vocational courses. All students take a study skills course in Year 12, preparing them to become effective independent learners. All study religious education once a week and develop their personal skills through a weekly personal and social education lesson. Students receive strong enrichment to their studies through sport, community and leisure activities on Wednesday afternoons.
49. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum are very good. Courses match students' aspirations and potential well, building sensibly on their prior attainment. The guidance provided ensures that they choose courses wisely. The curriculum is very responsive to local circumstances. There is very good equality of opportunity, reflecting fully the school's aims. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs is of a very good standard.
50. The provision for the students' personal development is very good. Provision for their moral and social development is especially strong. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are fostered well but there is no daily act of collective worship. There are many opportunities to participate in cultural activities but students are made insufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary British society.
51. Students are given a full range of opportunities to take responsibility. There is a prefect system; students help teachers to run the school community on a day-to-day basis. Students take sports practices, they write and perform plays, and many do paired reading with Year 7 pupils. Many students undertake a work placement for half a day a week, and have undertaken working links in Finland and Sweden and exchange links with Romania. Those studying French undertake work experience in France. Students are involved with many activities to raise money for charities. Their personal and academic progress are closely monitored across both years and they are given good careers advice, directing them to further or higher education or into employment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

52. There is a clear assessment policy, which provides detailed information to departments against which their own policies are formulated. Before they enter the sixth form there is a thorough evaluation of students' needs to ensure that realistic yet challenging targets for possible AS/A2 level attainment is set for students. Targets are also set for subject departments.
53. In the vast majority of subjects, students' work is regularly assessed against external examination criteria. Students are kept well informed about how well they are doing. Sixth form managers have an overview of this process and where students are underachieving, early action is taken to provide support and help. The process is also used to congratulate those who are doing well. This information is shared at appropriate times with parents and carers.
54. At the end of the academic year, the previous AS and A-level results are closely analysed with strengths and weakness within subject areas being identified. This information is used well to monitor the work of departments and to review the curriculum. Much data is collected and analysed well but conclusions are not always explicit enough. Whilst all subjects can identify students' achievements in relation to individual targets, not all are yet adept enough at identifying individual strengths and weaknesses or at setting attainable individual targets to raise satisfactory achievement to good achievement.

Advice, support and guidance

55. The quality of the support and guidance given to students is excellent and is acknowledged and much appreciated by them. There is a comprehensive programme of induction for Year 11 pupils who wish to join the sixth form. Some personal and social education lessons in the spring term focus on what the sixth form has to offer and the commitments expected. Pupils and their parents are also well informed about college and employment opportunities after the age of 16. Senior members of staff interview each individual before he or she embarks on a course; this underpins the high retention rates on the courses. Further interviews take place before students embark on their Year 13 courses.

56. The form tutors play a key role in monitoring the academic progress, personal development, attendance and punctuality of each student. There is very good liaison between tutors and the subject teachers. Established procedures quickly detect any concerns or worries. Appropriate action is taken which may sometimes lead to joint discussions with students and parents. The high quality relationships are such that students will readily discuss with their tutors any concerns they may have. As they progress through the sixth form, students are given increasing responsibility to take control of their own learning. They spend less of their private study time under supervision.
57. The quality of the careers education and guidance is excellent. Each member of a team of sixth form tutors and senior staff is a counsellor to a small number of students, usually four or five, to guide them on applications to further or higher education or employment. External careers advisers are also available for consultation. Each student's career aspirations are considered so that they can be allocated to a member of the team who has a particular expertise in that area. Many staff are available to give guidance following publication of examination results.
58. Much care is taken to ensure that there is appropriate support and guidance provided for students with special educational needs. The school's special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with both the individual students and the departments to ensure that needs are met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

59. The school works very well with parents. The response rate to the parental questionnaire was well above average - about 40 per cent - and many parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school and its work. Parents confirmed these views at a meeting attended by 39 of them. Ninety-nine per cent of those responding to the questionnaire said they thought the school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. The inspection confirmed this to be the case. About ninety-five per cent feel their child is progressing well and a similar number said the teaching was good. Again this very high level of satisfaction was consistent with the inspectors' views. More than ninety per cent said their child likes school. The vast majority feel comfortable approaching school with their problems.
60. About one in six respondents feel they are not well enough informed about their child's progress. A similar proportion feel the school could work more closely with them. One in seven think the amount of homework is not right - too much or too little. Parents are provided with a good amount of information about their child's progress and reports are clear and informative. The school tries hard to work with parents. Amounts of homework do vary, from subject to subject and year group to year group, but, overall, are appropriate, especially in the sixth form.
61. The sixth formers who replied to their questionnaire (about 70 per cent) expressed some very positive views about the school but also had some reservations. They consider that they are taught very well and challenged to do their best. They find their teachers very accessible. Teachers help them overcome difficulties and encourage them to study independently. The wide range of courses enables students to further their careers aspirations and talents. They say they are well informed about the courses and that they enjoy being in the sixth form and participating in the many extra-curricular opportunities.
62. The students' reservations fell into four areas. About a third felt they could be treated more like adults. Around a quarter felt they are not well enough informed about their progress. A similar proportion felt that there is not enough careers advice. A similar proportion said the school does not take enough notice of their views.
63. The inspectors endorse fully and see good reasons for the students' positive views. Sixth formers are given a reasonable amount of freedom and responsibility, increasingly so as their time in the sixth form goes on. Inspectors consider that there is a good amount of information provided to students on their progress, that careers advice is excellent and that the school makes good efforts to consider students' views.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

64. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. The overall management and directing of sixth form studies are undertaken most conscientiously and efficiently. Two equally competent and hardworking deputies ably support the director. One of them has a particular responsibility for monitoring the recruitment, progression and retention of students.
65. The aims of the sixth form are clear, complementing and extending those of the main school. All of them are successfully addressed. The development plan has clear targets that include raising standards, increasing staying-on rates and further improving the cost-effectiveness. It is also planned to find out more about the level of students' satisfaction.
66. There are enough teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is a very good match of qualifications and expertise of teachers with the subjects they teach. The school does not experience recruitment problems partly because of the very effective planning which enables vacancies to be advertised early.
67. Regular reviews of the performance of each department are carried out. A performance management policy has been successfully implemented throughout the school in accordance with statutory requirements. Teachers' lessons are observed regularly but there are too few opportunities for colleagues to observe each other teaching and consequently the large amount of very good practice is not being shared. Much successful professional development takes place, however, meeting whole- school, departmental and individual needs. Teachers attending external courses pass on their experiences to colleagues at departmental meetings.
68. The funding of planned developments is carefully considered before implementation. This is evident in the costings of the improvements now being made to the sixth form learning area. The income generated by the sixth form students is slightly less than they cost in terms of teacher periods used and consequently the main school subsidises the sixth form by a small amount. Steps are being taken to address this. Nonetheless, the sixth form is cost effective.

Resources

69. There has been some improvement to the accommodation since the last inspection, but overall it is still only just adequate, largely as a result of the increased number of teaching groups following the introduction of AS levels. Both Year 12 and Year 13 have designated study areas, which provide adequate accommodation for private study. Their common room is too small, however. Teaching space is inadequate in science, where there are not enough laboratories for all classes to be taught practical work. The spread of English and mathematics teaching rooms across the large site leads to inefficient use of resources that often have to be carried some distance. Some rooms used for teaching business studies and mathematics are small and some have no natural light and poor ventilation. Accommodation for music and health and social care is very good.
70. The overall provision of resources is satisfactory. Most subjects have at least satisfactory resources. There are very good resources in music. Students have easy access to good information and communication technology facilities, some designated for their sole use. The provision of books in the library and learning centre is very poor, notably for English and psychology, and restricts the students' independent learning. The school has set aside funds to improve this provision, now that a security system has been installed.

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

In the inspection, 14 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS level courses Year 2000

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Computer studies	2	100	72	0	13	3.00	1.72
Mathematics	5	80	63	40	17	2.60	1.56
Other sciences	5	40	74	0	24	0.80	2.00

GCE A level and AVCE courses Year 2000

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	7	100	96	29	45	5.43	6.42
Biology	9	100	88	33	37	5.11	5.28
Chemistry	15	100	91	60	48	7.33	5.87
Communication studies	7	71	93	0	30	1.71	5.42
Computing	9	100	84	89	23	8.44	4.57
Economics	5	100	89	80	41	8.00	5.41
English language	12	32	90	17	29	4.00	5.19
English literature	14	28	91	14	36	4.14	5.90
French	3	100	91	0	39	3.33	5.74
Design and technology	3	100	92	33	29	6.00	5.37
General studies	16	94	85	44	28	5.63	4.85
Geography	9	89	92	22	37	5.33	5.73
History	8	88	89	13	34	4.50	5.43
Mathematics	27	100	89	44	45	6.52	5.99
Music	1	100	93	0	35	6.00	5.72
Physics	22	73	88	32	41	5.09	5.72
Psychology	14	93	88	21	35	4.86	5.34
Religious studies	2	100	91	0	35	4.00	5.57
Sociology	17	100	88	47	37	6.59	5.46
Sport/physical education studies	6	83	91	33	25	4.67	4.99

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**. The students attain above-average results and achieve well because of the very good teaching and their own high level of commitment to work.

Strengths

- The recent A-level results have consistently been above the national average and in some years well above.
- Students have a good all-round grasp of their work with particular strengths in algebra.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Expectations are high, progress is monitored well and examination preparation is thorough.
- Teachers and students get on very well together and a sense of purpose, success and enjoyment features in most lessons.
- Strong, dynamic and capable leadership results in a good team spirit in the department.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology in mathematics lessons.
- A small amount of the teaching is too dependent on textbooks and so lacks spontaneity.
- The teaching of some large groups of students with a wide range of ability is sometimes focused at the middle, to the detriment of high and low attainers.

Standards and achievement

71. The GCE A-level examination results in all recent years have been better than the national average and in several years they have been well above average. In 2001, half the students were awarded the highest grades, A and B, and all but one passed. All the further mathematicians were awarded the highest grades. In 2000, almost a half the single mathematicians achieved the highest grades and all passed. The vast majority of those starting the course continue to the end. The 2001 AS results for Year 12 students were disappointing and a little below average with several students being unclassified, with the first module letting many down. Most will re-sit the exams this year.
72. The standards of work observed are generally above average and often well above. The Year 13 students have a good grasp of algebra, adding and simplifying algebraic fractions and making significant progress in the application of a range of techniques such as sketching graphs, solving equations and applying iterative processes. They cope well with partial fractions and have a wide mathematical vocabulary. Students used statistical notation well and understood which technique to use, illustrating their sound knowledge of Poisson and Binomial distributions of data.
73. The Year 12 students are only eight weeks into their course but have already made significant progress. A small group of further mathematicians learned to solve first order differential equations and recalled earlier work confidently. All the students tried new work with assurance, learning well from their mistakes and showing a secure grounding in the basics of calculus. The progress of a small number of students in groups of 20 or more, where the range of ability is wide, occasionally suffers when the work is directed at the middle of the range. They pester their teachers, however, if they are unsure about the work and some use the lunchtime 'open' workshops that are on offer every day. The pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in the main. The gifted and talented also do well.

Quality of education

74. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Much was excellent and none was unsatisfactory. There are many strengths but the high quality of relationships between teachers and students is a major factor in helping students to do so well. Teachers have very secure knowledge of the work. They check pupils' progress regularly and carefully - questioning is good and usually well focused on individuals - and they

provide excellent examination revision material. There is a regular emphasis on teaching examination techniques but this is always based on ensuring that pupils understand the work.

75. Although a good range of approaches is used, there is very little use of information and communication technology in mathematics lessons. Pupils use calculators, and occasionally graphical calculators, well but do not use spreadsheets in their work on iterative processes. The teachers prepare lessons well and their explanations are clear and interesting although occasionally over-long. The teachers are readily available to help students, in or out of lessons, with any problems or concerns they have. Marking is sound overall and much is detailed and very helpful. The teachers give much responsibility to the students, for example in selecting the homework they do, and the students respond very sensibly to this. Teachers use praise well. Notes are given regularly but occasionally these consist of the teacher dictating what is in the textbook and so the spontaneity of the work is lost and pupils' interest is not gripped.
76. Students learn very well. They show a very high level of commitment to their studies and, in the main, enjoy the work. They get on well together and show much respect for their teachers. They are alert, bright and keen to achieve well. Many arrive at lessons before the expected time and some lessons started early. Work is organised well and most show much pride in their success. They ask relevant questions and show a determination to understand the work, even when they find it difficult.

Leadership and management

77. The leadership of the subject is strong and dynamic. There is a clear sense of purpose in the department, which operates very much as a team. The commitment to and capacity for continuing improvement are strong. Management is good; documentation is clear and well presented and analysis of examination data is undertaken thoroughly. There is too little sharing of good practice by teachers observing each other. Nonetheless, newcomers to the large department are supported well. Some lessons are taught in rooms well away from the main departmental area, resulting in some inefficiencies and a reduction in a departmental identity.

Sciences

78. The focus of the inspection was on chemistry and physics but biology and electronics were also sampled. The A-level results in biology in 2000 were in line with national averages but in 2001 they were below recent averages. In both years the majority of students achieved as expected or better in relation to their performance in the GCSE examinations. In the two lessons seen the Year 12 students took great care and skilfully manipulated apparatus when identifying an enzyme. They had a very secure knowledge of enzymes and the properties of large molecules as a result of the very good teaching. By the end of the lesson Year 13 students were able to describe using the correct terminology how blood glucose levels are controlled. The teacher ascertained their prior knowledge and by skilful questioning and lively informative exposition further extended their understanding of the topic. Students benefit from the interactive CD-ROMs produced by the department. They use them most effectively to catch up on any missed work, consolidate knowledge and understanding and to practise answering examination questions. In electronics, examination results were well below average in 2001. Students generally did less well than expected considering their GCSE results. In the two lessons observed, students worked maturely showing a keen interest for the subject. Students learnt well in both lessons as a result of good teaching arising from careful planning. In one lesson, Year 12 students were given the opportunity to develop their independent learning skills through working on their projects, which contribute to about a third of their AS level total mark. This project work enabled students to develop well their ability to design, using systems software, cost, using the Internet to find prices, and to test the resulting electronic circuits. In the other lesson Year 13 students learnt well how fibres are used in communications to transmit signals. The approach in this lesson was for students to measure the refractive index of Perspex before moving on to the idea of critical angle.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- A-level results have been well above average in most recent years.
- Students have very positive attitudes and achieve well.
- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and make it interesting and comprehensible.
- The subject is very well led and managed and students' performance is carefully monitored.

Areas for improvement

- Some students are reticent in class and are not always sufficiently questioned to check understanding.
- There is not enough dissemination of the very good teaching that takes place.
- The accommodation is barely adequate and many lessons are taught in rooms lacking laboratory facilities.

Standards and achievement

79. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were well above national averages. All 15 candidates gained a pass grade and almost two-thirds gained A or B grades. Almost all achieved grades that were at least as good as or better in relation to their performance in the GCSE examinations in 1998. During the previous three years the GCE A-level results have been above average, particularly for the proportion gaining the higher A and B grades. The number of candidates has been between 10 and 25. There has been no significant difference in the performances of boys and girls. Students have performed significantly better than they have in their other subjects. In 2001 the results were in line with recent national averages.
80. In the work seen during the inspection standards were above average in both Year 12 and Year 13 and most students achieved better than expected when their prior attainment at GCSE is considered. During this first term the Year 12 students have acquired a good knowledge and secure understanding of atomic structure and bonding and they apply the concepts very well when explaining periodicity and characteristics of different types of crystals. Their practical skills are developing well, in particular those of planning, interpretation and evaluation. Their note taking skills are well developed and they have the numeracy skills enabling them to handle the types of calculations required of them so far.
81. Year 13 students competently interpret mass spectra and apply their understanding very well to infrared spectra. They accurately name and write structural formulae for isomers. The previous work of two lower attaining students showed some lack of care in calculations and in the use of correct units. By the end of one lesson observed, students calculated lattice enthalpies using the Born-Haber cycle - a task requiring extreme care in the use of units and energy quantities. In another lesson Year 13 students applied their knowledge and understanding of covalency, delocalisation and inductive effects very well when predicting the basic nature of amines. A particularly gifted student is making good progress and is given extra tuition at lunchtimes.

Quality of education

82. Teaching is very good overall. Two features of the teaching are particularly outstanding. The teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and make it comprehensible in a lively and informative manner. They also know each student extremely well and establish excellent relationships based on genuine mutual respect. This promotes confidence and eagerness to fulfil the teachers' expectations. Students do not need any reminders regarding concentration and effort. In all of the lessons seen objectives were made clear. The planning was very good. The exposition was lively and informative and time was used most effectively. In an excellent lesson, Year 12 students had done much independent work beforehand, with some using the Internet and so they came very well prepared. The teacher promoted class discussion ensuring that all were participating. They willingly contributed and the teacher sensitively corrected misconceptions and gave further explanations aided by effective use of models. All students were kept busy throughout with much sensible discussion and cooperation in groups.

83. Interest and concentration levels are very high. Students benefit greatly from the teacher's very good knowledge of examination board requirements while, for example, practising past examination questions. This was a strong feature in several lessons. Teachers mark work promptly and write informative comments. Very occasionally teachers do not always question the more reticent students enough to check that they have understood the work.
84. Students' attitudes are positive and the quality of learning is very good. They often arrive to lessons before the bell and are always well prepared. They are fully attentive, concentrate extremely well and are very interested. They cooperate very well in groups and help each other considerably. Most contribute their ideas confidently. They are careful and skilful when using apparatus and observe the necessary safety precautions well.

Leadership and management

85. The subject is very well led and managed. The four teachers are well qualified and experienced and work closely as a team. Two teachers are involved in teaching each group and as far as possible they each teach those parts of each module where they have a particular expertise and liking. The assessment procedure is very good and students' work is assessed thoroughly and regularly. Much use is made of the information in monitoring progress and setting individual targets. There is regular monitoring of the teaching and marking. There are not enough opportunities for teachers to observe each other teaching and so benefit from each other's expertise. There is a clear commitment to raise standards further and to make more use of information technology which is not used sufficiently yet. The department benefits from the high quality support from the hard working and well-organised technicians. There are enough resources but the accommodation is barely adequate. It has not been improved since the last inspection and numbers of students have risen significantly. Some of the laboratories do not have emergency mains cut-off and electrical 'trip' devices installed in them. Many lessons are taught in rooms lacking basic laboratory facilities. As a consequence teachers and technicians have to transport books, resources and equipment. This is not an efficient use of their time.

Physics

Overall the quality of provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The subject has sound leadership and management.
- Teachers are experienced and have very good knowledge and understanding of physics.
- The teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Too many students do not achieve the A-level grade they should, based on their GCSE results.
- Much of the work is not close enough to the examination board's requirements, particularly with respect to coursework.
- The amount of testing in order to improve students' recall and understanding is insufficient.
- Accommodation and basic equipment are not good enough.

Standards and achievement

86. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were in line with the national average in terms of average point scores but below the national average in terms of pass rates. The 2001 results were not as good and were below recent national averages. The A-level results for the last two years show a marked decline from 1999 when they were above the national average. A significant number of students, across the whole ability range, do less well than they should given their performance at GCSE. Although results vary from year to year, there is no significant difference in those for male and female students.
87. In 2001 Year 12 took the new AS course. Comparison with previous data is not possible because this is a new course. In relation to their GCSE results students did as well as might be expected. The subject is popular and the number of students choosing to study physics is steady with no significant difference

since the introduction of the new courses. The number of students who have opted not to study physics to A2 level in Year 13 is relatively high but generally reflects their low attainment at GCSE. These students found the subject too difficult. They have taken advantage of the new approach to sixth form studies to concentrate on subjects where they are likely to have greater success.

88. The standard of work observed was average. Through careful lesson planning by the teacher, Year 13 students learnt well how to use the exponential formula to calculate the amount of substance present after a given amount of time during a radioactive decay. The lesson began with a quick review of their half-life graphs from the previous lesson and then moved swiftly on to A2 level work using clear explanations backed up by some carefully selected calculations.
89. The students in Year 12 are achieving much as expected although their recall and understanding of a recent experiment to measure Young's modulus was quite sketchy. Eventually, by the teacher using relevant everyday examples, students were able to understand well a range of technical terms - ductile, stiffness, strength and strain energy. In general students' notes are variable in quality, some being poorly presented, an area for improvement. Students make satisfactory progress overall.

Quality of education

90. Teaching is good overall, and students learn well. The principal features of teaching are the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of physics, good planning, and a wide range of methods and resources used to aid learning. Teachers provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop their basic skills of communication, numeracy and information and communication technology. Teachers give students too few tests and consequently the progress of the relatively low attaining students is not monitored closely enough.
91. Students learn well because the teachers use effective questioning techniques, which make them think very carefully about the topic. Good lesson planning helps to make potentially dull material interesting. This is particularly valuable when the work to be covered does not lend itself to experiments or demonstrations.
92. Students show high levels of interest. They work well together when setting up their experiments. A key feature is the excellent relationships they have both with each other and with their teachers.

Leadership and management

93. The head of department has sound leadership and management skills. He works closely with his colleagues so that the courses are well planned and the examination boards' syllabus is well covered. The head of department has recently and belatedly been to the board's training course for coursework, as the school is in dispute with the board after the unfavourable moderation of its coursework. The accommodation for the teaching of physics is unsatisfactory. Rooms are too small and too much teaching takes place out of laboratories. Resources for the teaching of the information and communication technology aspects are good but there are significant shortages of basic equipment.

BUSINESS

The focus was on Business Studies. Two lessons were observed in the advanced Business Studies (AS and A2), and three lessons observed in vocational Business (AVCE) double award.

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Provision of resources for learning is good.
- Assessment in vocational business is effective.

Areas for improvement

- The two subjects need to work more closely to share good practice and to avoid unnecessary duplication of resources and management of teachers.
- There is a need to continue to develop schemes of work to include planned teaching activities, including information and communication technology, and wider use of business and industry, to support learning on both courses.
- Marking and assessment in advanced business studies (AS/A2) need to provide targeted advice for improvement.

Standards and achievement

94. Business studies was examined for the first time in 2001 at AS level, and 84 per cent of the students attained grades A-E, with 16 per cent attaining a grade B although no A grades were attained. The majority of students intend to retake the module examinations in 2002 to improve grades. In vocational business (AVCE) in 2000, 77 per cent of students attained a pass or higher result which is below the national average; girls attained better than boys with all of them achieving a merit or distinction, and this is well above national averages. In 2001, attainment fell with half the students attaining a pass or higher. Girls attained better overall but a number of students either left the course or did not complete all their units for accreditation. Students taking the vocational business course have a much lower average GCSE point score than do students taking other advanced level subjects either in the school or nationally, and this is reflected in their final attainment. However, a significant number attain better grades than predicted by their earlier attainment. There is no national data yet available with which to compare 2001 results in either course.
95. Standards of work in lessons of Year 13 AS and Year 12 A2 students are above average; students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Students have good knowledge of business finance and respond well to questions on profitability and liquidity ratios, although many are unable to describe gross profit margins. They make effective links with prior experience and knowledge of local industry to apply their knowledge to a case study. Students have a good understanding of up-to-date developments in the business world - a small group of students discussed the effects of cartels sensibly. In Year 12 students make too little use of opportunities for collaboration, but the majority of students state possible pricing strategies to given case studies and the most able identify the need for further information in order to make informed responses on appropriate strategies and tactics.
96. Standards of work in AVCE lessons were above average. In Year 13, students have a very good knowledge of customer service and many use knowledge of company policies gained from work experience and part time employment and make informed suggestions for actions in their case studies. Students confidently present issues to the whole group and make effective use of their communication skills. In another unit of work some students demonstrate weak knowledge of the power base in relationships between head office and its local stores. In Year 12, students developed their ideas in a lively discussion about discrimination in employment, and with the support of their teacher they become less subjective, taking on the views of an employer. There is a strong emphasis on improving written and verbal communication skills in AVCE and many students use word processing well to enhance their coursework. They research from the Internet but several lack skills in selecting only the most relevant information.

Quality of education

97. Teaching is good overall and the majority of students learn well as a result. The teachers' knowledge is strong. Most effective teaching uses a range of short activities both to maintain pace and develop learning. There was good use of targeted questions at the start of a lesson to review previous work and identify current levels of understanding, which were then well developed. In both courses there is good use of real world business examples, albeit from secondary sources, to strengthen knowledge. Case studies enable students to apply that knowledge to develop deeper understanding, although overall the ongoing use of the local wider business community is under developed. In AVCE, the high level of individual support for weaker students enables them to make sound progress and where teachers facilitate students' collaboration in group work, their understanding improves. Less effective teaching lacks sufficient stimulus during the introductory session and students are reliant on their teacher to provide information and maintain momentum. When the use of general questions evokes only a superficial response, there is insufficient probing to induce deeper thinking. In some lessons too little time is devoted to review and the consolidation of learning.
98. Much of the written work for AS and A2 students takes the form of structured questions and case studies as required by specific modules, and there is little extended writing. Marking of tests and other written work is carried out regularly, but it is not always clear how well students have performed. In the AVCE course, the students' performance is tracked effectively as they progress through examinations and portfolio work. The assessment of students' assignments is excellent; teachers state exactly what has been achieved and what can be done to improve. In particular, there is strong support for communication skills, for example, spelling, grammar and the layout of business documentation. Target setting is based on the teachers' prior experience of sixth form work and this underpins predictions of attainment, but is not sharply focused on specific areas of learning in day-to-day work.
99. In both courses students learn well. They are attentive, make good effort at all times and respond well to their teachers. They make good progress as note takers, but overall lack opportunities for independent learning. In group work, students are enthusiastic and support each other well in AVCE, and every student makes a contribution to class discussions. Collaborative work in pairs by Year 12 AS students is not sufficiently developed. In Year 13 the most able A2 students are more reluctant to answer questions and voice their views until prompted by their teacher. The majority of AVCE students use the Internet well for research and enhance presentation of coursework using word processing.

Leadership and management

100. The two business courses are managed separately and individual management within each course is good with clear vision. Some teachers contribute to both courses and thus experience different management, systems, accommodation and resources for each course leading to unnecessary duplication. Schemes of work for both courses are developing in line with new course specifications and these show topics with timings, and also teaching responsibilities for different teachers, but schemes do not yet fully identify the range of teaching activities to encourage more effective learning. There is too little planned use of information and communication technology to support learning. There is a good range of support materials for each course in classrooms and in the school library, and students have access to information and communication technology in the sixth form study area. Vocational students benefit from a three-week block of work experience but they lack the ongoing opportunity to learn independently from wider access to business and industry in support of their assignment work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on AS- and A- level computer studies and AS-level information technology, but the Year 12 key skills information technology was also sampled. Students worked well in this session, achieving above average standards and demonstrating good attitudes to independent study.

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

Strengths

- Results are well above average.
- Confident and effective teaching helps students to build up their knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students and excellent attitudes to learning among students.
- Very good committed leadership and management.
- Progress of students is very carefully monitored and targets very well used.
- The subject is popular and a high percentage of students continue to study it at higher education.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve key skill students' level of independence and organisation of their work.

Standards and achievement

101. The proportion of A and B grades in A-level computer studies examinations has been consistently well above average for the past three years. In the same period, all students have achieved A to D grades. Performance in the 2000 examinations was excellent, with almost all students gaining A to B grades apart from one who gained C. These results were well above the national average and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. In relation to their GCSE results, students did better than expected. Results in 2001, for which no national data is available, show a good percentage of A or B grades. Results are now better than they were at the time of the last inspection. No external results are available for AS-level examination.
102. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files in Year 12 in both computer studies and information technology was above average. The majority of students' files are well organised to provide information to support subsequent work or revision. Most students have covered suitable amounts of work for the one term spent in the subject. The standard of work of the higher attainers in the Year 13 computer studies course is well above average. The very detailed and extended projects, based on local organisations, contain considerable depth of research, planning, designing, implementing and testing. Evaluation of work is well expressed with good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the complex database systems created. The work of average attainers is also good, although not of such a rigorous standard. Students improve their note-taking skills as the course progresses. All students have a good grasp of the technical vocabulary. The analytical skills of Year 13 students undertaking information and communication technology at AS level are above average. Higher attainers cover the course criteria in great detail. The files of lower-attaining students are poorly organised for supporting future work.
103. Students' achievement is good. It reflects the high expectations that teachers have of students' work. Students move between applications on the computer with ease and use a variety of systems with casual confidence. Project work is a strength of the work in the department, with students developing good research skills. They understand how organisations use information and communication technology. Most students talk fluently and in depth about real uses of information and communication technology systems that they are investigating and creating for use in local businesses as well as for examination work. Students are good at ensuring that their designs fully meet the needs of the intended user.

Quality of education

104. All students show a great deal of interest in and a very high level of enthusiasm for the subject. They are doing well as a result of effective teaching that demands much of them. When working individually on computers in lessons, they are good at helping each other. Discussions that relate to the work are common, particularly in Year 13. This contributes to good learning. Students approach their work with maturity. The email facilities are well used to transfer work between home and school. The ratio of computers to students is well above national average and access to resources is good.
105. The teaching is good overall. Teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures confident teaching at a good pace in theoretical lessons. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives that are shared with students. In a Year 12 lesson on the difference between a business and a personal letter, good use of the overhead projector sustained the pace of the lesson. Well-focused questioning probed students' understanding and sustained their interest. In a Year 13 class, students were asked to explore the criteria for successful implementation of a computer system in relation to their major project. Good effective support by the teacher for the individual students meant detailed program checks were carried out successfully. Teachers match tasks closely to the needs of individual students. This, together with students' overwhelmingly positive attitudes, ensures that effective learning takes place. Teachers are very clear about examination requirements and alert students to them through very good individual feedbacks. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent. In a few cases, students rely on the teacher almost too readily, rather than working things out for themselves.

Leadership and management

106. Good teaching and learning result from the subject's leadership that is of high quality. The department is energetically and enthusiastically led and managed. There is a commitment to continuous improvement and a focus on building on what has already been achieved. The team of teachers is well qualified and effective. Courses are very well planned and effectively managed. The detailed schemes of work have clear objectives and strategies for assessment that are shared closely with students. Students are expected to have planned their work well and agree deadlines with their teacher. Progress is very regularly assessed to a high standard and monitored against agreed deadlines. Discussions with students reveal how well aware they are of how they are doing in the courses.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

107. The inspection focused on the intermediate GNVQ course and the AVCE course in health and social care. Two lessons of the AVCE course in leisure and recreation were observed and although attainment in these was below average, pupils achieved well and showed good attitudes to their work. The quality of the teaching in the lessons in that course was good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Strengths

- Attainment by students is above average.
- Strategies for assessment are particularly effective.
- Teaching is good; in particular, work is matched to students' needs through individual support for them.
- Students have good access to a wide range of resources and opportunities for work experience.

Areas for improvement

- There is a need to continue to review and develop schemes of work to show a range of teaching activities and use of information and communication technology to support effective learning.
- Students' independent learning skills are not sufficiently well developed.

Standards and achievement

108. Overall, standards are well above average. Attainment by students in advanced vocational health and social care has remained above national averages for many years with all students achieving a pass standard or better. Students enter the course with much lower average GCSE scores than do students entering other academic courses within the school or nationally and the number of students attaining merit or distinction level is well above predictions based on prior attainment. The current students are the first to experience the new course and those who have performed less well than anticipated in the unit tests will be retaking some tests in January to improve grades. Several students progress from the intermediate course into the advanced course. Attainment in the intermediate GNVQ in health and social care has also always been above national averages with all students attaining at least a pass.
109. Attainment in lessons is above average and most pupils achieve much higher standards than would be expected. The Year 13 AVCE students made satisfactory and sometimes good progress in developing knowledge of theory and applying this in new contexts. Students summarise information from a wide variety of given sources and many make good use of word processing to present work more effectively, but overall they are strongly reliant on teachers for the provision of information, and several lack independent learning skills. In assignment work, students prepare their action plan to support them in meeting deadlines. In their externally assessed topic, students make satisfactory progress in discussing the health issues brought about by alcohol misuse. The Year 12 AVCE students are more able than many in previous years and their coursework shows they are developing good skills of note taking. Intermediate students do not always find the theoretical aspects of the course easy, but in a role-play on resuscitation, they developed their confidence in carrying out the procedures and demonstrate their competence confidently to teacher and their peers. Students with special educational needs make good progress.

Quality of education

110. The teaching overall is good. Teachers have strong knowledge of their subject and use a range of teaching skills that enables effective learning. Students benefit from specialist teaching, for instance, there is a child care specialist, a biologist, a sociologist and psychologist as well as a trained nurse lecturer who all teach units well suited to their teaching specialism and enable students to reach high standards. All lessons have clear aims and several have introductory activities to stimulate interest, and most lessons finish by effectively establishing what the students have learned. There is a high level of individual support for the weaker pupils and extra challenge for the most able. There is a good range of resources and external visits, although sometimes this provision anticipates students' needs rather than providing opportunities for students to learn independently.
111. Standards of behaviour, attention and motivation are very good in all lessons. There is too little discussion and whole-class involvement in some lessons, when teachers provide all the input and only the most able students respond to general questioning. Students worked enthusiastically during a quiz on health and social care terminology and this high level of motivation was maintained throughout the introduction of a new topic on barriers to health and social care and their preparation of notes. Intermediate level students are especially attentive when they have an opportunity to participate in practical activities. Health and social care students benefit from one day each week of work experience in a wide range of placements and this ensures good support for the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Leadership and management

112. Teachers of health and social care are well qualified. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. All teachers, including those whose first teaching responsibility is in other departments, are managed by an enthusiastic head of department who ensures that all are well informed of developments within the subject. Formal lesson observations have begun, along with informal monitoring of lessons and work in order to maintain standards. Assessment procedures are excellent. Students benefit from progress reviews with a personal tutor, assignments are assessed thoroughly and written feedback covers what has been achieved and, importantly, what students can do to improve further. Several teachers are developing schemes of work since the introduction of new AVCE courses and these include teaching

responsibilities, but some units do not fully identify the range of teaching activities needed to encourage more effective learning. There is too little use of information and communication technology to support learning during lessons, although some students use the Internet for research and enhance presentation of coursework using word processing. There is a very good range of support materials for each course in teaching rooms and in the school library.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Overall quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Good choice of courses at post-16 in art.
- Good attitudes of students and their commitment to work.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching of drawing is not good enough.
- Quality and range of sketch book work need to be better and wider.

Standards and achievement

113. The number of students who have taken the A-level examination recently is small. Because of this, annual national comparisons are not reliable. A more reliable indicator of attainment is the average over the last four years. This shows that attainment is below average and has not improved since the last inspection. The numbers of students who gain the higher A and B grades is also below average. The results in both 2000 and 2001 follow this pattern. In all of the last four years all students who have taken the A-level examination have passed - which is above the national average. The school evaluates its results against the potential of its pupils - this shows that students make good progress. As yet there is no national comparison data for the 2001 AS-level examination. All the students who took the examination passed, with two thirds gaining the higher A and B grades. More female than male students follow the A-level course; females do a little better but not significantly so.
114. The work seen in lessons and in students' folders shows that attainment is average, which is a little better than recent examination results indicate. The improvement in overall standards is largely a result of the introduction of the photography option, which has added breadth to the curriculum. Students who have recently started the A2 course show the ability to respond to briefs with a degree of individuality and personal interpretation. The best work is when students combine media creatively when producing finished pieces, for example, the work of one student based on the observation of fossils. The Year 12 students show a similar willingness to work in different media, for example, currently work is being successfully done in a ceramics collage and a range of two-dimensional media.
115. All students are encouraged to research and develop their ideas through drawings and sketchbook work. Where this is done well, for example, in the recent work of Year 13 students investigating a theme of flowers, drawings are made from direct observation and provide a suitable basis for further work. All students of both Year 12 and 13 and of all levels of attainment too readily resort to copying from books and photographs. Such work presents too low a level of challenge and results in lower standards. For example, two students in Year 12 did good observation drawings of leaves and mushrooms that show a good understanding of form, texture and colour, together with a deepening understanding of the essential qualities of these objects. When these are compared with the copied work done by the same students the standard of work is lower than it should be. Most make sound progress and achieve well.
116. Students following the photography option show increasing levels of skill in the use of both chemically based and digital image making. They research themes well and show an increased awareness of the importance of composition and the quality of light in photographs. This is shown, for example, in one

student's photographs on a theme of jewellery. All students make good connections between their own work and that of others and as a result their understanding of art within a wider context is broadened.

Quality of education

117. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In all lessons there is a good underlying methodology with an appropriate emphasis on research and the development of ideas. The best teaching and learning are seen in the development of a range of media skills focused particularly on finished work. A good feature of teaching is the review process that encourages students to evaluate their own work and through group discussions helps them to see how work might be improved. For example, one student working on a painting of a flower theme was encouraged to rethink the structure of the painting's composition. The effect of this was to raise standards.
118. Much of the teaching is a response to the individual needs of students. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, work was being reviewed and students were provided with good quality advice about how work might be improved. One student, whose finished piece was not as closely linked to preparation work as it should have been, was challenged to think about how this link might be more closely established. Skills, particularly those associated with the acquisition of craft skills such as ceramics and photography, are well taught and this makes a good contribution to improving standards. Observation drawing and ways of encouraging a more diverse approach to the investigation of initial ideas are not well taught. The result is that standards in this aspect of the course are not as high as they should be.
119. In all lessons, students are well motivated and show both a mature approach to work and good levels of independence. As a result, levels of creative effort and productivity are good. There is also substantial evidence in folders of the commitment of students to work outside lessons and this makes a significant contribution to progress.
120. There are good procedures for assessing students' work. These are related to the examination criteria and are effective in informing students about how their work is marked and helps to set targets for improvement. The school reviews and evaluates its examination results effectively with the result that individual students are provided with clear targets for their attainment that are largely realised in art.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management are sound. Teachers work well as a team. Effective management decisions have been taken to broaden the curriculum, for example, to include photography. The effect of this has been to increase the number of students following an art-based course in Year 12. The department however has no clear strategy to deal with the pressure on facilities if similar levels of recruitment continue. Since the last inspection attainment has remained the same. The curriculum has been broadened and the strong learning ethos described in the last report is still an essential element of the work of this department.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The leadership of the department is excellent.
- A- and AS-level results in music and music technology examinations are excellent.
- The quality of teaching, overall, is excellent.
- The department makes a huge impact upon the life and ethos of the school.
- A carefully considered development plan traces where the department is going.
- Girls and boys are equally attracted to music courses in the sixth form.

There are no areas for improvement

Standards and achievement

122. The numbers of students taking examination courses have been very low in recent years and comparison of results with national figures is unsafe. However, results have been excellent. In recent examinations

in music and music technology at AS and A level, all pupils gained results above the national average. One student who gained a B in A level music technology achieved very well as he had not taken the GCSE course: he gained C and E in his other two subjects.

123. The standards of work of students currently studying music and music technology are excellent in Year 12 and are very good in Year 13. Students progress very well and achieve highly. The nine students following the AS music technology course have a profound understanding of the techniques of recording, being able to successfully transfer theory to practice. In one lesson observed, they gave a perceptive critical analysis of recordings made by members of their course, then proceeded to develop the discussion points by performing Dave Brubeck's *Take 5* as a class ensemble. The practical performance standards of the four students in Year 12 taking the AS music course are exceptionally high. One student, who plays the clarinet and piano, and another, who plays the oboe and recorder, are both planning to take a performing diploma of one of the colleges of music before they leave school. The other two, a singer and a percussionist, are both very accomplished musicians. Students on the A-level music course in Year 13, studying elements of chromatic harmonies in Nineteenth Century orchestration, have a secure grasp of difficult concepts of the use of augmented and diminished chord structures in the music of Brahms, Schumann and Wagner, and make accurate analyses when score reading. The student in Year 13 studying music technology has produced a portfolio of compositions, written on the computer, which are highly original and well constructed.
124. Students have excellent attitudes to their music studies. They are intelligent, polite and mature young people who recognise that they are receiving instruction of very high quality, and they respond to that by demanding high standards of themselves. Levels of debate and group discussion, in all of the lessons observed, were of a very high order.

Quality of education

125. Teaching is excellent and this is the principal reason for the high standards of students' attainment. Members of staff within the department share the teaching of all groups. They are all very experienced and well equipped to teach the challenging elements of both the music and music technology courses. Lessons are meticulously well prepared and the maximum use is made of a wide range of resources. Theory is closely linked to practice in all aspects of the curriculum, and this makes lessons attractive, and ensures total concentration by the students. Members of the department take a deep personal interest in the progress of each student and take great care to recommend which type of course the students should follow. They make a great effort to develop the individual skills of the students, either through the more academic music course or the challenging music technology course. Students learn very well making much effort and showing a very high level of interest in their work.

Leadership and management

126. The music department is dynamically led and managed. The head of department has only been in post for just over a year, but has clearly made an outstanding contribution to developing the department and to raising the status of music in the school. In the sixth form, he is enabling students to gain high standards and is attracting both boys and girls to the courses, notably through the introduction of the music technology course. He has overseen the establishment of the new music technology studio, which will further enable students to develop their interest. He has extended the provision of extra-curricular activities and has produced a stunning school performance, including leads by sixth form students, of Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, a production still talked about in the most glowing terms by students and parents.

HUMANITIES

127. The main focus was on geography, history and psychology although a little sociology was observed. The A-level results in sociology were well above average in 2000 and even better in 2001. The small amount of sociology teaching observed was good and students achieved well displaying very positive attitudes to their work.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Student attitudes are very good.
- The department is effectively led and managed in many respects.
- All the teaching observed was good or better and contributed directly to the progress being made by students.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enriches the quality and range of students' learning.
- The residential fieldwork provision in Year 12 is of good quality.
- There are good review procedures that involve self-evaluation by students.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology is not yet fully incorporated into students' work.
- Student reviews do not focus sharply enough on learning goals or identify strategies for improvement.
- Marking does not identify targets for improvement clearly enough.

Standards and achievement

128. In the 2001 GCE A-level examinations the majority of students achieved their predicted grades although a significant minority underachieved. Results were below the recent national averages. Overall, over the previous three years results have been close to the national average and the majority of students have achieved as well as or better than predicted on the basis of prior attainment. In the AS examination this year most pupils achieved their predicted grades on the basis of their prior attainment.

129. Standards of work observed are in line with national standards. In Year 13, most students are achieving standards expected in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lesson seen, however, they were achieving better than this as a result of very effective teaching which made considerable demands on their previous knowledge, their powers of reasoning and their ability to analyse data. The structure of the lesson and the range of activities clearly focused their learning. Students applied previous knowledge and developed a good understanding of the reasons for the distribution of deep-sea trenches and volcanic activity. Students recall knowledge very well, interpret data well and discuss complex geographical concepts using appropriate subject specific vocabulary. They apply this well both in full class discussion and through written work identified in very comprehensive notes, but this was not as clearly illustrated through assessed assignments or in their practice answers to examination questions.

130. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course and are achieving appropriately. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of the reasons for the variance in levels of development in different parts of the world and are beginning to understand some fairly advanced demographic concepts. Students are successfully moving on from their GCSE work and developing their data processing and analysis skills well.

Quality of education

131. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result. In one lesson teaching was excellent. Clear objectives, very good planning, a brisk pace, very good relationships with the students and an imaginative range of methods and approaches were constant features of the best teaching. All teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge through their exposition and through their question and answer sessions. The physical geography lesson on structural elements, for example, included an excellent introduction from the teacher and was followed by a rigorous and well-focused question and answer session involving all the students, which led to very effective learning. There were also very good opportunities for students to work independently and then explain their findings to the rest of the group. This was also an outstanding feature of a very good, very well structured and organised lesson in Year 12, where students worked extremely effectively in small groups and reported back to the class. Learning was once again very effective.

132. Students learn well. They are co-operative, attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. They work well in groups, support each other and listen well to each other's ideas. Most are confident in offering their ideas and respond well when they are given more responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

133. In many respects effective leadership and management support the good teaching and learning in the subject. Day to day management and organisation are very good and there is a clear commitment to improving standards and building on what has already been achieved. This is well illustrated by good student-review procedures involving discussion between student and subject teacher, followed by the student's self-evaluation and recording of targets. However these targets are not yet focused sharply enough on specific learning goals or on enough information from analysis of students' performance. Marking is not rigorous enough and does not consistently and clearly identify specific targets for improvement; nor are there sufficient opportunities for students to produce work for in depth assessment. Fieldwork in Year 12 is very well organised and provides good opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and understanding and to fulfil the requirements of the syllabus. Department planning for this year does not identify in sufficient detail the priorities for the sixth form for this year or the professional development requirements for members of the department. Regular department meetings focus on most important issues and are helpful in ensuring effective communication within the department, although there is little focus in these meetings on teaching and learning or on the sharing of good practice.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is always at least good and occasionally very good.
- Students have a mature and positive approach to their work.
- The leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students participate too little in oral work and discussion, especially in Year 13.
- Students take the initiative for their own learning too rarely.

134. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were well above recent national averages for the subject. Results have fluctuated from below to well above average since 1998 and have largely reflected the prior attainment of the students taking the course. The proportion of students who have gained a pass grade has been above average for three of the past four years. The proportion of students who gained the highest grades, A or B, was clearly above average in 2001, but in 2000 was below the average. Students tend to perform much the same in history as in their other subjects. The results in the AS examination, which students took for the first time in 2001, were above the national average.

135. The standard of work seen was in line with that expected nationally. Students in Year 13 have good knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression in the USA in the 1920s and 1930s. They explained the links between the causes of the two events well. In a lesson in which they worked on the requirements of a good examination essay, they explained satisfactorily what is needed in terms of structure and content. They successfully critically evaluated an exemplar provided by their teacher. They understand well that different views of the past can co-exist. Their work on the document analysis part of the course is poorer than their essay writing. Many have difficulty in analysing and evaluating the sources sufficiently well enough to attain the top grades. Most students express themselves adequately orally, but many do not develop their answers sufficiently.

136. The standard of written work was largely in line with that expected from students in Year 13. Some essays were of above average standard, but many lacked the depth of analysis of issues and the evaluation of the significance of events that are required to gain top grades, and included material not relevant to the question. Students in Year 12 achieve standards expected early in the course and in line

with those expected nationally. They show generally good knowledge and understanding of the events they are studying. This was seen particularly in a lesson in which students presented work on early socialists.

137. Most students use sources satisfactorily and the highest attainers interpret evidence well. A minority, however, still have difficulty with the basic aspects of using sources and assume primary sources are necessarily the more reliable. Students research well, using a variety of resources, including the Internet. Most use this resource effectively, although a minority of the presentations on early socialists clearly depended heavily on information taken from web sites and used indiscriminately. The highest attainers use sources very well, evaluating them in context effectively. Their essays, including some written as practice examination answers, done under time restrictions, are well structured and evaluate and express valid viewpoints, backed up by appropriately selected evidence. The essays by the lower attainers are, however, largely narrative and descriptive.

Quality of education

138. Teaching is good overall, and is contributing well to students' good progress early in their course in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively. The work set is appropriately challenging and matched well to the requirements of the examinations. Work is marked to examination criteria and the usually detailed comments on marked work provide students with clear guidance and ways to improve their answers in the future. Students are set practice examination questions, both essays and source evaluation, early in the course.
139. Lessons are largely teacher-led, with students participating when asked to do so by the teachers. Students are not often asked to take the initiative for their own learning in lessons. Teachers provide students with opportunities to research, form their own views and opinions and then to justify them either orally or in writing. In a lesson in Year 12, for example, students had carried out research, in pairs, on early socialists, presented their findings orally to the group and provided information sheets to accompany their presentations. As part of work to improve the quality of their essay writing, students in Year 13 were asked to plan an essay on the Great Depression in the USA and to evaluate an example done by the teacher. This led to greater understanding of how to structure a good essay. Teachers rightly value students' oral contributions to lessons and give them good opportunities to contribute. Not enough students, especially in Year 13, take good advantage of the opportunities offered.
140. Students learn well. They bring a very positive approach to their tasks, showing interest and a commitment to hard work. Those in Year 13 have a less-overtly enthusiastic approach in lessons than those in Year 12. Students are well prepared for lessons, completing homework as required; this enables the teachers to move on to new work effectively. They respond well to the challenges set by their teachers. Their work is generally efficiently organised and most notes are clear, easy to follow and well presented. Students in Year 12 participated in oral work well, despite in some cases finding it an ordeal. This commitment to work and a wish to improve is leading to good progress. Students' work as independent learners is restricted, however, by the poor provision in the library. The number and range of books available to them are much too small for them read widely and acquire the depth of understanding needed to gain top grades.

Leadership and management

141. The subject is very well led and managed. Students' attainment and progress are carefully monitored. The head of department is up to date with the latest developments and requirements from the examination board, and ensures that students are too. Additional sources of funding have been used well to provide more texts for students beginning the new AS course. The department makes good use of out-of-school lectures and visits to broaden and enrich the students' learning experiences. The team of experienced and qualified specialist teachers provides good support for students.

PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement and progress are good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good: teaching is very well planned, informed by excellent subject knowledge and includes high levels of challenge for all students.
- An excellent learning ethos provides very good support for students' growth as learners and people.
- Homework tasks of outstanding quality are used to extend knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The leadership and management of the subject are of very high quality.

Areas for improvement

- Early in Year 12 students are unclear about how they can improve the standard of their work and are too dependent upon the teacher.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning.
- The provision for psychology in the school's library is not always adequate to support students' learning.

Standards and achievement

142. The first GCE Advanced level examinations were taken in 2000 and results were about average. Although all students entered for the examination gained pass grades the proportion gaining the higher A and B grades was below average. In 2001 results improved and were a little above recent averages with a much higher proportion of students gaining higher grades. Of the Year 12 students entered in 2001 for GCE AS level, three quarters gained grades in the A to E range and the remainder were unclassified. The department has reviewed its approach to teaching and learning and the preparation that students require to be successful. Although the drop-out rate was higher than expected a large number of students have continued with the second half of the course in Year 13.
143. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and, overall, students achieve well. Standards are, however, better in Year 13 than Year 12. In Year 12, students' achievement is better than expected based on prior attainment and the majority are already reaching the standards expected in the course objectives. They have a clear understanding of psychology methodology and use this confidently when, for example, they analysed case studies exploring the impact of separation, deprivation and privation on children at different ages. Their levels of understanding increased as they questioned their teachers, discussed matters in pairs or small groups and completed a well-designed data-capture sheet. Students who found difficulty in developing conceptual understanding constantly posed questions to the teacher and developed hypotheses for testing. These often result in a successful outcome and an increase in confidence to pursue the set task.
144. Year 13 students' achievement is very good and higher than expected. Most students showed confidence as they explored the concept of intelligence and began to grapple with the controversy of intelligence testing. Many of them showed a considerable understanding of the complexity of this aspect of their work as they explored evidence that will contribute to their future study of the *nature versus nurture* argument. In both Years 12 and 13, students apply psychological theory to the analysis of a range of situations, identify the key factors, draw conclusions and support their views with well-founded evidence. The degree of sophistication in the responses of Year 13 students is impressive.

Quality of education

145. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very well used in framing the lesson objectives and in the careful planning of teaching and learning opportunities. For instance, in one Year 12 lesson, students made significant progress in their understanding of the differences between deprivation and privation through a group analysis of Bowlby's study. They then applied the same methodology in pairs to Goldfarb's work. The outcomes confirmed the good progress students had made and the level of understanding achieved. The teachers use well-targeted questions to enable students to be active participants in the learning and to display their current level of knowledge and understanding

before progressing to further in-depth study of a topic. Students question the teacher to clarify information, confirm their own level of understanding or to propose a possible solution to a hypothesis. Such situations enable teachers to respond quickly in order to meet students' learning needs before providing them with even more challenge in further teaching and learning. Teaching always has good pace and, together with the high expectations teachers have of their students, contributes to the considerable progress made in lessons.

146. The teaching is very well supported by a range of learning resources and well planned tasks. These provides further challenge, encourage students to participate in lessons and contribute to good levels of achievement. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the analysis of test items from a test provided important stimulus to students to question and discuss the nature of intelligence testing and the range of measures that might be needed to contribute to a test of human intelligence. The responses showed great insight into both the methodological and ethical considerations surrounding the issue.
147. All students learn very well in class and during their study periods and have excellent attitudes to the subject. They are eager contributors to lessons and benefit from the learning ethos that encourages enquiry, discussion and the development of responses that are well supported by carefully researched evidence. They work exceptionally well on their own, in pairs or small groups and remain focused on the task until its completion. They listen to each other, are sensitive to the views of others and, in Year 13, show great independence of thought that enriches the learning of others. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good and provide a secure basis for productive working. The subject contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
148. Both class and homework tasks provide outstanding opportunities for students to consolidate knowledge and further develop understanding and skills. The work is rigorously and constructively marked with extremely useful comments that enable students to set themselves targets for the further improvement of their work. Following the marking of their work, most students add their own notes to complement their responses to the task so that they have comprehensive coverage of the material used to answer an examination-type question. Students in Year 13 are very well organised: those in Year 12 are still developing the skills needed to be successful and independent learners.
149. Students' use of literacy and numeracy is very good and many have well developed skills in information and communication technology. However, students do not have sufficient opportunities, except in home or coursework tasks, to demonstrate their capability and use information and communication technology to support of their learning.

Leadership and management

150. This cost effective department is very well led and managed and serves its students well. The team of psychology teachers is highly committed to meeting students' learning needs and to enabling them to be successful. In their commitment to high standards, teachers carefully analyse examination results against a range of indicators, the attainment and progress of each student is systematically monitored and tracked and regular feedback is provided as part of the student support programme. The subject is well resourced - with hardware and texts - but there is unsatisfactory provision within the library of a wide range of materials and journals. Targets for attainment and improvement are well defined and provide useful criteria for the annual review of departmental effectiveness.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

151. The inspection focused on English language and literature as well as French and Spanish. A theatre studies lesson was observed. The A-level results in theatre studies are well below average and the small amount of work seen was of average standard. The lesson was very well taught and students showed very good attitudes to their work.

ENGLISH

Overall the quality of provision for English is **very good**.

Strength

- Results for English literature at A-level in 2001 showed a marked improvement on those of the previous year and were above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is of a high academic standard and they use a wide range of approaches that stimulate an enthusiastic response from students.
- Students' attitudes are positive and committed.

Areas for improvement

- Although results in English language at A2 level in 2001 showed a marked improvement they were still below average.
- Students need to read more widely to broaden their background knowledge, especially in literature.

Standards and achievement

152. In the GCE examination in 2000 at A-level in English literature, the percentage of students achieving the highest grades, A and B, was below average as was students' average points score. Performance in 2001, however, was much improved and results exceeded national averages. The results in English language in 2000 were below average but there was a significant improvement in 2001, with performance closer to the national average although still below.

153. Standards of attainment are average overall. Students of literature in Year 12 show rapidly developing knowledge of their set books, as well as growing confidence in identifying accurately details of structure, language and general themes. In a lesson on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, students held a lively, well-informed discussion of possible stage sets for the play. The outcome was imaginative and demonstrated the group's sound grasp of key issues such as the contrast between life in the city and the country, and differences between the aristocracy and the working men. In their study of the art of interviewing as part of their language course, students analysed with sharp, critical skills various aspects of one of Michael Parkinson's television interviews with a celebrity. Working in groups they located important characteristics of the use of questioning and other elements of the interviewer's technique.

154. The level of attainment of students in Year 13 is average overall with a wide range of levels of attainment represented. Many students are achieving more highly than would be expected when their prior attainment is considered. One high attaining group worked with interest and enjoyment at an analysis of young children's writing in their study of language acquisition. Their commentary was well informed and perceptive and they used the appropriate technical vocabulary with confidence. Another class showed good understanding of the imaginative quality of Keats' poetry, but their understanding of wider classical and literary references was limited by the narrowness of their general reading.

155. The general quality of students' speaking and listening in both years is above that commonly found. They are confident and articulate, and often make extended contributions that are coherent and well shaped.

Quality of education

156. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Its main strengths are in teachers' high academic standards; very good planning and preparation; excellent management of students' learning; and the mutual respect shown in all lessons. Teachers use questioning skilfully and robustly to elicit relevant responses. The pace of lessons is brisk with clear objectives and precise targets. Students' oral skills are exploited to the full and are further developed. The caring and purposeful atmosphere created in lessons lends confidence to students. In all lessons seen, students showed evident enjoyment in their studies, which contributes strongly to their commitment and motivation. Students are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups and collaborate very effectively, showing patience and sensitivity to the opinions and views of others. Listening skills are outstandingly good.

157. Written work is marked conscientiously and constructively. Comments are encouraging but also offer clear guidance for improvement. The great majority of students take great care with the presentation of written work. They make useful notes and their folders demonstrate the range and depth of their studies. In both examination courses students carry out very thorough, extended research projects. One, for example, provided very detailed historical background for the study of the poetry of The First World War. A coursework assignment on *The Glass Menagerie* was mature and perceptive in its reading of the play and the writing was carefully planned, skilfully crafted and accurate in expression. Many students make very good use of the facilities for information technology, but, at the moment, the provision of reference books in the library is inadequate to support A-level studies.

Leadership and management

158. Sixth form courses in English are very well managed and organised. Some classrooms are grouped conveniently together but teachers are too often obliged to use rooms dispersed about the site. This is wasteful of both time and energy. During the week of the inspection three members of the department were absent through illness and colleagues showed their total professionalism by covering lessons and continuing the teaching of courses. Such support characterises the ethos of the department. The recently appointed head of department brings great energy and vision to the post. Overall management and leadership are very good.

FRENCH

Two Year 13 lessons and one Year 12 lesson were seen, and the files of most students were scrutinised. In addition, discussions were held with Year 12 and Year 13 students to ascertain their achievements and their views of the courses.

Provision in French is **good** overall.

Strengths

- The department provides good learning opportunities.
- The teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- The students have very good reading skills.
- The able students achieve particularly well.

Areas for development

- The standards of students' speaking skills are not high enough.
- Too few students, and especially able linguists, take the subject.
- Assessment and target setting are not linked to examination criteria and specific language learning needs.

Standards and achievement

159. The results at A-level in 2001 were average overall. At A level the one candidate passed with a C grade, which was generally in line with prior attainment. At AS level in 2001, all 6 students passed and their performance was slightly lower than expected overall in relation to prior attainment. The results continue an overall trend of average performance at A level over the past three years. Student numbers in the current Year 12 and Year 13 show an increase over those of the last two years.

160. Current standards in French are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. In Year 12 and Year 13 there are relatively few students with high prior attainment. Most students in Years 12 and 13 have very good reading skills; they can understand and respond to authentic texts, for example, French newspaper and journal articles on the environment, education and health, and most students throughout the Year 13 course improve their ability to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words.

161. In both years, students also have good listening skills and fully understand their teachers' spoken French, and can extract key information from the taped conversations of native speakers. On the other hand, standards in speaking are below average in Year 12 and average in Year 13 overall; many students speak

hesitantly in unprepared situations and lack confidence in forming extended sentences; and many students in both years are unable to easily recall and use previously acquired language. For example, in a Year 12 lesson about the dangers of smoking, most students could only respond to the teacher and to each other in basic French, in spite of prior class and homework preparation of the topic. The able students attain high standards in speaking, as seen in a Year 13 lesson in which two students successfully contributed their own ideas on health issues in the developing world using a range of structures confidently and accurately and with a very good vocabulary and good French accents.

162. Standards of writing are average overall. Many students make errors in basic verb forms and spelling, especially in Year 12. By Year 13 however, most students can produce extended sentences with improved accuracy and are developing a good topic-based vocabulary. The written work of the able students in Year 12 and Year 13 is very good and sometimes excellent. They use sophisticated structures accurately, for example, the subjunctive, and express opinions confidently using abstract terminology on such topics as the environment and education in Year 12 and the developing world in Year 13.

Quality of education

163. Teaching is good overall. All the lessons seen were very well planned, incorporating a range of tasks to address speaking, listening, reading and writing. This enabled students to practise and consolidate a range of skills and make good progress. For example, in a very good Year 13 literature lesson, the teacher successfully built on the students' thorough homework preparation of the character in a novel by planning progressive stages of learning, incorporating individual language study, paired discussion, student presentations and a written assignment. Resources are used very effectively to support students' learning; for example, in a Year 12 lesson the teacher used coloured cards to stimulate sentence making and subsequently recorded the students' responses on the board. These focal points gave all the students security in forming their own language. Some study skills are very well taught, for example, note taking in the foreign language.
164. The quality of home study is more variable and in some cases needs to be more formally set and rigorously checked, especially in learning vocabulary and idiomatic French expressions to ensure that students recall quality material more readily for use in speaking and writing. Although teachers encourage students to access information from the Internet, students do not generally use word processing for presentation of routine writing tasks. The students have very good language learning opportunities. All the teachers have an excellent knowledge of French and use the language fluently in lessons. This gives constant opportunities for students to hear spoken French and gives good preparation for the listening component of the A-level and AS-level examinations. In addition, all students have individual or small group weekly lessons with the French *assistante* in order to improve their spoken language. All can develop their French language and the skill of working with others in work experience in France in Year 12.
165. Students receive satisfactory academic and personal guidance from the teachers. Teachers mark written assignments regularly and in detail, giving clear guidance through comments and examples on how they can improve the quality of their language. However, teachers do not consistently grade each assignment according to examination criteria and the specific language needs of individual students are not systematically addressed through target setting. In addition, students do not redraft their written work as a result of the teacher's correction and, consequently, some errors persist. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Learning is good and most students concentrate well and try hard.

Leadership and management

166. The department is well managed. The teachers have a strong, shared commitment to raising standards; the departmental documentation is professional, comprehensive and thorough; teachers have good opportunities to enhance their knowledge of post-16 issues through attendance at guidance meetings. The areas for development are the recruitment of more pupils, especially able students to the courses, and the amendment and consistent application of the departmental assessment policy.

Spanish

Two Year 13 lessons and two Year 12 lesson were seen, and the files of most students were scrutinised. In addition, discussions were held with students to ascertain their views of the courses and their own achievements.

Provision in Spanish is **good** overall.

Strengths

- The teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The students have very good reading skills.
- The contribution of the Spanish *assistante* to students' understanding of the Spanish language and culture is very valuable.

Areas for development

- The students' writing skills are not good enough.
- Too few students, and especially able linguists, take the subject.
- The policy on assessment and target setting is in need of revision and is not applied consistently.

Standards and achievement

167. The results at A level in Spanish in 2001 were average overall. The two candidates passed with A and C grades respectively, achieving better than expected in relation to prior attainment. At AS level in 2001, the three candidates gained pass grades but performed slightly lower than expected in relation to their prior attainment. The results continue an overall trend of average performance in Spanish over the past three years. Student numbers in the current Year 12 show an increase.

168. Current standards in Spanish are average overall and achievement is satisfactory overall. In Year 13 achievement is good. Standards in reading are very good. In a Year 12 lesson about family and relationships, most students could understand with minimal guidance a text containing high register vocabulary and complex sentence structures. In listening, students attain average standards in Year 12; in Year 13 they make rapid progress to attain very good listening standards, with most showing very good understanding of the rapidly spoken Spanish of the teacher.

169. Standards in speaking are average overall, with some students in Year 12 speaking hesitantly in unprepared situations and unable to form extended sentences without support from the teacher or text book. However, standards in speaking are good when students prepare the lesson content in advance. For example, in a good Year 12 lesson, the students expressed their opinions well on the Spanish education system, forming extended sentences and confidently reusing expressions they had prepared for homework.

170. Standards of writing are average overall; many students are developing a sound topic based vocabulary in Year 12, on topics such as leisure and tourism, but make errors in basic verb forms and spelling. In Year 13, although some basic errors persist in verb formation, most students use a wide topic-based vocabulary and attempt more sophisticated structures within longer assignments.

Quality of education

171. Teaching is good overall. The students benefit from the very good subject knowledge of the teachers. In one very good Year 13 lesson on public transport, the teacher's excellent Spanish provided a very good model of spoken language for the students, who expressed themselves naturally with good accents acquired over time with this teacher. Teachers use resources well to foster learning. For example, in the same lesson, the teacher used the board very effectively to record the students' responses to a group activity and this was subsequently used as a focal point by students for summarising the points covered in the lesson. In some situations, the students do not contribute fully enough to discussion. In the two Year 12 lessons seen, the teacher's fluency tended to dominate at times and students were inhibited in

their utterances. Study skills are well integrated into lessons; for example in a Year 13 lesson, students took notes in Spanish during a listening task on traffic problems in Spain.

172. The quality of home study is too uneven and in some cases homework insufficiently supports students' language development, especially in learning vocabulary and idiomatic Spanish expressions. Better homework would ensure that students recall quality material more readily for use in speaking and writing. Students make good use of the Internet to access information for assignments but do not generally use word processing for presentation of routine writing tasks. The general contribution of the Spanish *assistante* to students' learning and cultural understanding is very good. Frequent liaison between teachers and the *assistante* ensures that the conversation practice links into the scheme of work. However, on some occasions, more preparation by the students is needed.
173. The academic and personal guidance given to students is satisfactory. Teachers mark written work regularly. However, assignments are not frequently assessed according to examination criteria and students are not fully aware of their progress. Targets for improvement are not regularly set to address students' individual language needs. In addition, students do not redraft their written work as a result of the teacher's correction and as a result students do not always systematically eliminate errors in writing. The students enjoy learning Spanish and have good relationships with the teachers.

Leadership and management

174. The management of the department is satisfactory. The teachers have a strong commitment to raising standards and they have good opportunities to enhance their knowledge of post-16 issues through attendance at departmental meetings. Displays of work are good. The areas for development are the sharing of good teaching practice, the recruitment of more pupils, especially able students and the amendment of the departmental policy on assessment and, subsequently, its consistent application.