

INSPECTION REPORT

BOURNVILLE SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103515

Headteacher: Mrs R Harker

Reporting inspector: Mr D Page
1028

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 November 2002

Inspection number: 249667

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 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Griffins Brook Lane Birmingham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Dickens
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
1028	D Page	Registered inspector	Education Inclusion	What sort of school is it? School's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9798	V Ashworth	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30996	A Higginbotham	Team inspector	Mathematics	Resources
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	English Physical education	
12356	R Dickason	Team inspector	Biology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31008	P Rourke	Team inspector		
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Special educational needs Information and communication technology	
23480	M Harding	Team inspector	History	
15940	N Godfrey	Team inspector	Business Studies	

13155	J Dixon	Team inspector	French English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
31192	J Stewart	Team inspector		
4697	R Black	Team inspector	Music	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is bigger than other secondary schools with 1304 pupils on roll compared to the national average of 983. There are a little over half as many girls as boys. One fifth of pupils come from ethnic minorities. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (21.8 per cent) is above the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language, (10.2 per cent) is higher than in most schools. Of these, 13 are at an early stage of language acquisition. The first languages are Korean, Urdu and Chinese. There are a few Albanian refugees. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (11.0 per cent), is below the average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning needs or visual impairment. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs, (2.7 per cent), is broadly in line with the average. The socio-economic features of the ward in which the school is situated are broadly in line with the national averages, although adjacent wards demonstrate significant levels of deprivation. The percentage of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the start of the school year is very high compared to the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below the average in English and broadly in line with national averages in mathematics and science. The school has been successful in achieving Beacon School status and is a specialist Business Enterprise College.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of Bournville School is very good. Standards at the end of Year 9 are generally in line with the national average in mathematics and science and below the average in English. Standards at the end of Year 11 are generally in line with the national average. Pupils make good progress in their time at the school. Teaching is very good. Pupils' attitudes are very good and the school provides all pupils with excellent learning opportunities. These significant strengths are as a consequence of the leadership by the head, which is outstanding, and the management by the senior team, which is excellent. The governing body is very effective. Given how effective the school is, its context, and the money it receives, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The head provides outstanding leadership and is ably supported by an excellent senior management team and a very effective governing body.
- The school is sharply focused on supporting learning, and as a consequence teaching is very good.
- The school provides an excellent curriculum, which addresses the academic and personal development needs of all pupils.
- The school is extremely effective at including all pupils fully in what it offers. The provision for visually impaired pupils is excellent. The support for pupils with English as an additional language is very good, as is the pastoral support for all pupils.
- Mathematics, music and physical education make substantial contributions to the life of the school.

What could be improved

- The school needs to raise the standards of pupils' writing.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since it was last inspected in December 1997. Individual target setting and schemes of work are now in place; the school has continued the excellent work to encourage attendance; the length of the teaching day is now in line with national guidelines, and support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is now very good.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below the average in English and broadly in line with national averages in mathematics and science. The standards of work seen in Year 7 English were well below the national expectation. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with the national average in mathematics and below the average in English and science. In comparison to similar schools, the results were well above the average in mathematics, above the average in science, and in line with the average in English. In English, results have varied significantly over the last four years showing no clear trend. Results in mathematics have improved slightly faster than the national trend. In science, there has been a small annual fluctuation broadly in line with the national trend. There has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls while in their first three years at the school. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE and GNVQ was below the national average. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G and one or more grades A*-G at GCSE and GNVQ was above the national average. In comparison to similar schools, the performance in 2001 was relatively better, with the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G being well above the average. The percentage gaining five or more grades A*-C was above and those gaining one or more grades A*-G was in line with the average. Overall, the school's results have been improving slightly faster than the national trend. On the basis of average points scores, there has been a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, with boys outperforming girls for the last five years. However, this generally matches the difference between the standards on entry to the school of boys and girls in these cohorts. There is little difference in the relative performance of the higher and lower attainers at the school. The school met its appropriately challenging targets for five or more grades at A*-C and one or more grades A*-G in 2002. Generally, pupils achieve well and make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. In lessons, pupils are generally very keen to learn. Many play a very full part in the life of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in lessons, around the school and during lunchtimes is generally good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils often display mature attitudes for their age. They relate very well with each other and with adults. They show caring attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school continues to work hard at improving attendance.

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.

Teaching is generally very good. A particular strength of the teaching throughout the school is the excellent way in which teachers manage their pupils. Lessons are well planned and very tightly structured. A good range of teaching strategies is used to maintain pupils' enthusiasm. Lesson objectives are very thoroughly dealt with, and in the best cases pupils are encouraged to discuss and explain each element of the lesson's purpose. Teachers use questions very well to confirm pupils' understanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this contributes to the levels of confidence that pupils have in their teachers. There are very good relationships between pupils and the teachers and this contributes to the quality of learning. Teachers have high but appropriate expectations of pupils. As a consequence of the very good teaching, pupils are very well engaged by the activities and generally very attentive throughout lessons. Teaching in subjects other than English does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing.

The skills of literacy and numeracy are well supported. However, pupils' standards of writing on entry to the school are well below that expected. As a consequence, more emphasis needs to be placed on providing structured guidance for pupils to further develop their writing skills. The school is exceptional at ensuring that the needs of all pupils are effectively met. The support for pupils with special educational needs, most notably those with visual impairment, is excellent. Pupils learning in English as an additional language are supported very well. The school has worked hard, and successfully, to ensure that teaching addresses the needs of both boys and girls. Pupils of all cultural backgrounds are well integrated into the lessons. Pupils work exceptionally hard and concentrate very well on their studies and as a consequence make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. Particular strengths are the alternative provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and a rich range of extra curricular opportunities, especially in the areas of physical education and music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. A member of the senior team has responsibility for ensuring all pupils are fully involved in the life of the school. This ensures that the needs of all pupils are considered at the very highest level of management. The provision for visually impaired pupils is excellent.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very Good. The support for pupils with English as an additional language is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection report. There is a clear understanding of the cultural implications of learning English as an additional language, and home languages are prized, discussed and encouraged.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Religious education lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils discuss health and poverty across the world and are encouraged to reflect on their responsibilities as global citizens. Considerable opportunities for social development arise from pupils' involvement in the life of the school. Other cultures are often celebrated, the activities often being led by the pupils themselves.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school looks after its students well and the very well-developed pastoral system effectively supports those who experience difficult personal problems.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The head teacher has an exceptionally strong and clear vision for the direction in which the school needs to develop. The senior team contribute to this vision and support it with excellent levels of enthusiasm and effectiveness.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors take a very full, and very well informed, part in the strategic management of the school. They rigorously hold the school to account while providing very effective support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Well established and comprehensive systems are in place for the school to evaluate how well it is performing, both at a whole school and individual department level. There is no sense of complacency in any part of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school has highly sophisticated mechanisms for ensuring that it achieves best value from its spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expectations placed upon their children; • The progress made by their children; • That their children like school; • The teaching is good; • The school is helping their children become mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children do not get the right amount of homework; • They are not kept well informed.

The inspection team found evidence to support all the parents' positive views. The inspection team did not find evidence to support the parents' less positive views. The amount of homework is set within national guidelines and the school provides detailed reports on pupils' progress.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

With 164 full time students, the size of the sixth form is in line with the national average. It has grown from 125 students three years ago. Nearly all the students in the sixth form are from the school's Year 11. There are slightly less girls and more boys than the national average, which reflects the intake at Year 7 to the main school. The school has a collaborative arrangement with a nearby 11-18 school, some of whose students join courses at Bournville. The number of pupils taking advanced vocational courses is much lower than the national average. The number taking A levels was in line with the average until the move to AS levels, and the number taking AS levels is far in excess of the average. The number taking intermediate GNVQ is well above the average and no pupils take GCSE courses in the sixth form. While the percentage of students with special educational needs including those with statements, (9.4 per cent), is below the average, the percentage with statements, (3.1 per cent), is above the average. The percentage of minority ethnic students in the sixth form roughly matches that of the rest of the school. The percentage of students with English as an additional language, (6.3 per cent), matches that of the main school. The percentage of sixth form pupils eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average. Students' standards on entry to the sixth form in the past have often been lower than average. Guidance concerning entry requirements provided for those in Year 11 has been improved in the current year.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good. Standards are generally improving over the recent years. Given the relatively low attainment on entry, students make good progress in their time in the sixth form and achieve very well. In 2001, the standards at GCE A/AS levels and advanced GNVQs were well below the national averages for maintained schools. The standards at GNVQ were above the average. Standards in 2002 have improved in many subjects. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership by the recently appointed director is excellent and management very good. Some students are not following appropriate courses. However, generally the sixth form meets the needs of its students well. Given how effective the sixth form is, its context, and the proportion of the school's money which it receives, the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Strengths

- Leadership of the Post-16 provision is excellent and management is very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Curriculum provision, including the Key Skills programme, is very good.

What could be improved

- In some areas of the curriculum, students are following courses which are inappropriate for them.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics A level	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are well motivated and work hard. The provision is very well managed.
Biology A level	Unsatisfactory. Relationships in lessons are good and coursework is well organised. Teaching is satisfactory. However, expectations of students' achievements in lessons need to be raised in order to improve learning.
Business studies A level	Very good. The quality of the teaching is good and therefore the achievements and progress of the students are also good. The quality of the management of the subject ensures that students are provided with flexible learning opportunities and effective support and guidance.
Information and communication technology A level	Good. The quality of teaching is good and there are good relationships between teachers and students. Standards of attainment have risen to match national standards this year. Provision for students with visual impairment is very good.
Physical education A level	Very good. The quality of leadership of the department is very good. Students have positive attitudes to their work and make good progress. The quality of teaching is good.
Music A level	Very good. The leadership of the department is excellent. The subject knowledge of the teachers is very good. The relationship between the students and the teachers is excellent.
History A level	Very good. Results are improving. Teaching is very good: teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Students enjoy the lessons and appreciate the high level of personal support.
English A level	Good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of leadership is very good. Students become able to make independent judgements.
French A level	Good. Teaching is good. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work.

In the chemistry lesson seen, the level of attainment was broadly average with good progress made. In vocational information and communication technology lessons sampled, standards of attainment were average. Students are benefiting from opportunities to follow courses newly introduced to the sixth form which are more appropriate to their needs. They are reaching expected standards because they are highly motivated and the quality of teaching is good.

In drama, students are gaining confidence in expressing their opinions when questioned by the teacher. Teaching is purposeful and lessons are well planned and resourced. In media studies, students show good levels of interest and are developing appropriate understanding of techniques of film-making. The quality of written work is sometimes unacceptably low.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. The provision for guidance and induction has been significantly improved for the current Year 11. The school is successful in raising personal expectations, and some students are the first generation to experience Post-16 education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Excellent. The recently-appointed director is taking the sixth form forward with dynamism and determination and is ably supported by the governors through their strategic plans. All pupils are very well supported to enjoy access to the provision.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching and challenge; • The accessibility of teachers to support them; • The help and encouragement they get to study; • The courses are well suited to their talents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The careers advice; • The range of worthwhile activities; • Their treatment as responsible young adults; • The advice on what to study; • The degree to which the school listens and responds to their views.

The questionnaire was issued early in the year when Year 12 students will have had very limited experience of the sixth form. During the inspection, the significant amount of discussion held with students generally revealed more positive views than the questionnaire would suggest.

The inspection found evidence to support the students' positive views with the exception that some students are on courses inappropriate for them. The quality of careers advice, and advice on what to study, have been significantly improved this year, and are now good for the current Year 11. The sixth form provides a very good range of worthwhile activities and students are increasingly treated as responsible young adults. The student involvement in the Sixth Form Management Group ensures that the school hears and responds to their views.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The head provides outstanding leadership and is ably supported by an excellent senior management team and a very effective governing body.

- 1 The head has an exceptionally strong and clear vision for the direction in which the school needs to develop. She has been very effective in ensuring that all the staff and governors subscribe actively to this objective. She is very well informed of the school's strengths and has effectively identified the areas that it needs to develop further. Effective teaching and learning for the benefit of all is a central objective which very effectively drives all the actions of the school. The identification of a senior manager to co-ordinate all the diverse provision for pupils with special educational needs indicates the headteacher's commitment to providing education which includes all pupils in what the school has to offer.
- 2 The senior team contribute to and articulate the vision with excellent levels of enthusiasm and effectiveness. Their roles are clearly defined and the responsibilities they undertake cover comprehensively the management needs of the school. They work closely together, sharing a clear and common purpose, and this contributes significantly to their excellent effectiveness. Their enthusiasm for the school and its future development is contagious and contributes effectively to the positive ethos which pervades the school.
- 3 Governors take a very full, and very well informed, part in the strategic management of the school. They rigorously hold the school to account while providing very effective support. Governors' roles play to their individual strengths well. Those with particular expertise and considerable experience in finances are involved in planning and monitoring the budget. The school has highly sophisticated mechanisms for ensuring that it achieves best value from its spending. This is, in no small measure, due to the skilful input from the governors. The school has been involved in a national pilot for assessing the value given by the disposal of its funds. Many of the services and products it buys are compared with national benchmarks.
- 4 Well established and comprehensive systems are in place for the school to evaluate how well it is performing, both at a whole school and individual department level. A substantial programme of department reviews ensures that all areas of the school's activity are reviewed thoroughly and frequently. Strengths are celebrated and areas for development identified. Departments carry out their own evaluations in addition, and these contribute to the identification of priorities for development. The priorities of individual department plans are very effectively tied to the whole school priorities. There is no sense of complacency in any part of the school.

The school is sharply focused on supporting learning and, as a consequence, teaching is very good.

- 5 A substantial programme of in-service training has supported staff to focus more effectively on the ways pupils learn. As a consequence, lessons begin well with clear direction. In many classrooms, wall displays support pupils' learning by focusing on learning strategies. Logical steps in pupils' sequences of thinking are presented and these support pupils to become more effective learners. These features help pupils become more aware of themselves as learners and to develop their skills of independent study.

- 6 Teaching is generally very good. Lessons are well-planned and very tightly structured. A good range of teaching strategies is used to maintain pupils' enthusiasm. Whole-class discussion, individual and small group work, are all used frequently. In the best lessons, the teachers introduce the tasks quickly and the lessons move at a very good pace. Lesson objectives are very thoroughly dealt with, and in the best cases, pupils are encouraged to discuss and explain each element of the lesson's purpose. Teachers use questions very well to confirm pupils' understanding. In the best cases, teachers pursue a line of questioning with individual pupils which challenges them very effectively and gives them very good opportunity to demonstrate what they know and understand.
- 7 Teachers have very good subject specific knowledge and this leads to the levels of confidence which pupils have for their teachers. There are very good relationships between pupils and their teachers and this contributes to the quality of learning. There are high but appropriate expectations of pupils. The use of timescales helps inject a good pace into the lessons and ensures that pupils are clear about when it is they have to complete tasks. All pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or special educational need are very well engaged and integrated within the lessons.
- 8 As a consequence of the very good teaching, pupils are very well engaged by the activities and generally very attentive throughout lessons. There are very good opportunities for pupils to review their prior learning. Pupils work extremely well together and very good relationships are clearly evident. Teaching in subjects other than English does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing.

The school provides an excellent curriculum which addresses the academic and personal development needs of all pupils.

- 9 The school provides a broad and balanced programme for all its pupils. In addition, there is an excellent alternative programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11. This provision follows national guidelines to encourage some pupils to follow more vocationally oriented courses. Very good links are made with a local technical college for the provision of some of these courses. For all pupils, the school provides a key skills programme which helps them develop the skills likely to be important in their future lives, such as the ability to use information and communication technology. As part of the preparation for its move to a Business Enterprise College, the school has developed very good links with business which help to enrich the curriculum. The school provides an excellent and particularly rich range of extra curricular opportunities, especially in the areas of physical education and music.
- 10 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Religious education lessons make a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies give pupils excellent opportunities to reflect on spiritual themes. For example, they were encouraged to think about the implications of Armistice Day.
- 11 Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. A substantial programme of external speakers is provided as part of the Year 7 induction, and deals with subjects as diverse as sex education and crime. 'Talk time' within the tutorial period is used to discuss health and poverty across the world and encourages pupils to reflect on their responsibilities as global citizens. Visiting theatre groups deal with harmony and sustainable development.

- 12 Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to be fully involved in the life of the school. A panel of pupils was part of the appointment process for one of the deputy headteachers. The school council is newly formed but already taken very seriously by the pupils and staff alike. Issues go to the very heart of what pupils consider are important elements of the school and they feel very confident that the school pays attention to their views. Awards assemblies celebrate pupils' achievements and contribute effectively to the harmonious relationships in the school. A significant number of pupils attend the Birmingham Young Peoples Parliament.
- 13 Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent. Other cultures are often celebrated, the activities often being led by the pupils themselves. Good examples of such celebration are seen particularly in music, art, drama and religious education. Wall displays celebrate the cultures represented in the local community. During the school's 'Activity Week' artists in residence from different cultures work with the pupils, for example on activities such as rap music and Asian textiles. Pupils from the school have had the opportunity to attend the G8 Conference in Birmingham and the Earth Summit in South Africa, and talk animatedly about their experiences.

The school is extremely effective at including all pupils fully in what the school has to offer. The provision for visually impaired pupils is excellent. The support for pupils with English as an additional language is very good, as is the pastoral support for all pupils.

- 14 A member of the senior team has responsibility for ensuring all pupils are fully involved in the life of the school. This ensures that the needs of all pupils are considered at the very highest level of management in all significant decisions. Within this 'faculty', the provision for special educational needs, visually impaired pupils and support for pupils with English as an additional language are coherently managed. The special educational needs co-ordinator has only been in post since Easter but has already put in place good systems for assessing pupils' needs. The governing body has identified a governor with responsibility for special educational needs and this person visits school regularly to monitor progress. The school has close and effective links with a local centre specialising in supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties. As a consequence, pupils from the school benefit from specialist help. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is well-planned.
- 15 Pupils with visual impairment are fully integrated into the school. Highly effective specialist teaching support is available for them and many resources have been especially modified. Large screen monitors are widely available throughout the school for visually impaired pupils to use with computers. Worksheets and other written materials are available in large print and a section of the library is devoted to appropriate books. The support is well focused on enabling the pupils to help themselves. This is an explicit aim of the school's approach to these pupils and they are taught the skills of independent living. Relationships between the visually impaired pupils and the specialist staff are excellent.
- 16 Procedures are very well set out in a comprehensive handbook of high quality which provides very good support for mainstream teachers. The school effectively implements advice from external agencies for the benefit of these pupils. Such links are extensive and very effectively managed.

- 17 A Learning Mentor has been appointed to support the emotional needs of those with visual impairment and has contributed to improvements in attendance. In-service training is provided for all staff to ensure a wide and thorough understanding of the needs of these pupils.
- 18 Provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is very good. The school makes a thorough diagnosis of their language needs and deploys resources very effectively in order to support their learning. There is a clear understanding of the cultural implications of learning English as an additional language, and home languages are prized, discussed and encouraged. Due attention is paid to the actual learning capabilities of pupils irrespective of their first language. The parents of pupils whose English is limited are kept well informed about how the school plans to help their child.
- 19 Staff training events have been set up to ensure that all teachers are aware of the learning needs of pupils with English as an additional language. This is especially important in terms of the need for rapid language acquisition of students arriving in school in Years 10, 11 and 12, where the preparation for examinations is a priority. Support is provided according to the individual needs of pupils: in some cases there is in-class support from a dedicated learning support assistant; in others, withdrawal from lessons for one-to-one teaching in the learning support base. In both cases, there are clear and helpful guidelines on how to help students acquire the language they need to play a full role in the school and achieve their academic and social potential. In addition, there is a well-attended after-school workshop each day which students may attend for further help if they wish.
- 20 The school has a well-established and strong system of pastoral support based on very good procedures and practices. The clear aim of this support is to improve progress by creating a secure background to pupils' learning. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff involved. An induction programme for Year 7 pupils is made more effective by a consistent core of teachers involved each year. This programme not only helps to settle the pupils in their new school but also creates a smoother transition between the approaches to subjects. Heads of Year are effective in managing the target setting for individual pupils and in monitoring their progress.
- 21 Relationships between pupils and staff are very good, as a result of which pupils feel valued. At least one member of staff knows each pupil very well and can provide effective support when required. Good use is made of well structured opportunities within tutorial time, to listen to pupils and engage them in well-focused discussions. Good procedures are in place to deal with bullying, although pupils record that this is not an issue at the school.

Mathematics, music and physical education make substantial contributions to the life of the school.

- 22 Teaching in mathematics is very good and sometimes excellent. The planning for the lessons is detailed and very effective. This incorporates the structure of lessons recommended in the national strategy for mathematics. Pupils are very well supported to learn in mathematics lessons and questioning is used very well to both deepen pupils' understanding and to influence the direction of teaching.

- 23 Additional classes are offered as part of the extra-curricular programme of the school. These provide pupils with additional help and support, particularly at times when they are due to take external examinations. High standards of wall display engender an interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
- 24 The mathematics department is an enthusiastic, highly committed and hard working team. They operate very well together, sharing good ideas and practices under the very good leadership of the head of department. The department makes a significant contribution to the provision of in-service training for the school staff.
- 25 The music department provides a wide range of performing opportunities both within lessons and afterwards. There are a number of rock bands of various types, and in addition, pupils take part in choirs and school shows such as "Grease", which is currently in preparation. Students are very responsive to the provision made by the music department and courses are extremely popular.
- 26 Resources for music are excellent and held in very good accommodation. Staff are keen and enthusiastic and often display excellent subject knowledge. The teaching of composition using technology is exceptionally good. As a consequence, the attitudes of pupils to the subject are excellent, and they display great confidence in the teachers.
- 27 The physical education department has a high profile in the school. Its staff inject a substantial amount of energy into the life of the school. Members of the department are prominent around the school at breaktimes, talking with, and enthusing pupils, not only regarding their own subject but engendering good attitudes to school generally.
- 28 The quality of teaching in physical education is often very good and is never less than satisfactory. The best lessons are very well planned to increase students' knowledge and understanding and involve them actively. Teachers set tasks that are challenging but, when appropriate, also generate amusement so that the learning points are more easily remembered. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and appropriately high expectations of students' effort and achievement. Provision of a variety of linked activities helps students to sustain high levels of concentration so that they learn effectively and make good progress. Because relationships among students and with teachers are positive, all join in discussions knowing that their contributions will be valued. The department makes a significant contribution to the extra curricular provision and provides many pupils with an opportunity to shine.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school needs to raise the standards of pupils' writing.

- 29 Standards of English are below average when pupils enter the school. Pupils' attainment in English on entry to the school is lower than in mathematics and science. The school makes effective use of a range of measures to improve levels of skill in reading and writing. Good provision is made for those with special needs, including those who arrive with little experience of English. Most become able to write in sentences and become increasingly competent in their use of technical and general vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils recognise significant detail in what they read and can write effectively for a variety of purposes.

- 30 However, the quality of the writing of many, including some with otherwise good levels of attainment, is often reduced by lack of clarity and accuracy in the expression and organisation of written work. Misspelling of words in common use, and basic errors of punctuation and grammar, persist even into the sixth form. Planning in other subjects does not clearly identify opportunities for pupils to speak and write at length. There are therefore many missed opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills further in a structured way while also improving the way they demonstrate their knowledge in all subjects. Writing is not at present a focus for monitoring within the school's evaluation procedures, and staff lack the necessary training to support this development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 31 In order to improve the quality of provision and the standards attained by pupils, the governors, headteacher and staff should address the following:
- i) raise the standards of pupils' writing by:
 - (1) carrying out the school's plans to address this issue;
 - (2) ensuring that more opportunities are created across the curriculum for pupils to develop their writing skills by making explicit reference to these in teachers' planning;
 - (3) including writing as a focus for monitoring within the school's evaluation procedures; and
 - (4) by providing training for staff on the above.

(Paragraph numbers: 8; 29; 30; 95; 113; 114; 118; 122.)

Sixth form

- ii) ensure that students are following courses which are appropriate for them by:
 - (1) carrying out the school's plans to address this issue;
 - (2) improving the guidance given to potential students regarding the appropriateness of courses for them;
 - (3) monitoring students' progress more closely in the first term of their courses in order to:
 - a. identify when students are experiencing difficulties; and
 - b. provide them with guidance regarding alternative courses.

(Paragraph numbers: 33 and 50.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	38
	Sixth form	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	2	14	14	7	1	0	0
Percentage	5	37	37	18	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	15	13	3	0	0	0
Percentage	6	45	39	9	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1140	164
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	253	29

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	135	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	134

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	59
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	80

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.3
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	161	74	235

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	116	95
	Girls	47	43	30
	Total	129	159	125
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (49)	68 (71)	54 (64)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (13)	41 (41)	24 (31)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	72	118	103
	Girls	47	46	39
	Total	119	164	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (67)	70 (68)	61 (68)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (37)	38 (37)	35 (41)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	120	68	188

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	45	112	114
	Girls	30	62	66
	Total	75	174	180
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	40 (41)	93 (95)	96 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.2
	National	39.0

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	0	N/a
	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
	2001	32	34	66

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	9.7	10.0	9.9	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	16.9	17.7	17.4	N/a	N/a	N/a

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	N/a	N/a
	National		N/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		81.0

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1017	26	4
3		
35		
14		
1		
4		
28		
27		
13		
7		
31	4	1
41	7	1
13		
3		
6		
40	2	
21		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	628.58

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	24.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	4329,595
Total expenditure	4313,330
Expenditure per pupil	3,339
Balance brought forward from previous year	178,984
Balance carried forward to next year	195,249

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	28
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	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

1,304

Number of questionnaires returned

206

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	54	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	45	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	43	13	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	53	16	7	2
The teaching is good.	28	63	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	44	17	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	35	6	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	35	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	55	13	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	40	46	2	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	54	7	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	53	6	1	5

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- 32 The school does no GCSE courses at Post-16 and all the following grades are the GNVQ equivalent. The percentage of pupils, all girls, gaining five or more A*-C grades or GNVQ equivalent was above the average. In 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades was well below the average. For both girls and boys, the number gaining one or more A*-G grades was below the average but the average total point score was well above the average. The average points score for GCE A/AS levels and advanced GNVQs were well below the national averages for maintained schools. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
- 33 Guidance for pupils about to enter the sixth form has been significantly improved for the current Year 11. In the past, for the year groups currently in Years 12 and 13, and for those for whom examination results are known, entry requirements for courses were not so high. As a consequence, some students have been allowed to start courses for which they do not have an adequate grounding. While teaching is generally very good and students make good progress, those starting from a low base of subject understanding are not able to catch up sufficiently to attain the higher level passes. As a consequence, the sixth form's performance at the higher grades has been below the national average, and lower than might be expected based on the school's performance at 11-16.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 34 The students' attitudes towards the school are very good. Most are keen to come to school, showing great interest in sixth form life and the good range of activities the school provides. They have positive attitudes towards their work and concentrate well in most lessons. They learn to become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and set themselves appropriate targets for improvement.
- 35 Behaviour around the school and in lessons is generally good. Behaviour was very good in some physical education and English lessons, and excellent in some mathematics lessons. Occasionally there are instances of inappropriate behaviour but these are quickly resolved. There are no exclusions.
- 36 Personal development and relationships are excellent. Great strides have been made recently in preparing students for Post-16, starting with the induction procedures in which the students have become very involved. They have designed their own publicity material and conduct an open evening, during which they play live music and speak about their school life. The students want to succeed and most show strong commitment. They are keen to show initiative and take increasing responsibility for themselves. They sign an agreement at the start of Year 12 and a further one in Year 13, which are specific in their requirements and the penalties that may be imposed. There are some excellent relationships between the students and teachers which make them feel valued and keen to learn.
- 37 The key skills programme enables the students to prepare for later life, working alongside other people or independently. This scheme of work is very successful in developing personal and learning skills. The Sixth Form Management Group has replaced the Head Boy and Head Girl system, and is modelled on the staff Senior

Management Team. This student body aims to raise standards and the image of the school. It is formed from members of Year 13 and assisted by Year 12 task groups. Communication skills are developed alongside initiatives to develop relationships with the rest of school, such as the rock and pop concert. The attractive and informative weekly sixth form newsletter is edited, designed and produced by a student. There is an increasing opportunity for the sixth form to take charge of its own personal and social development during the Post-16 stage.

- 38 Attendance is satisfactory. There are however many students who achieve high rates of attendance across the two years, particularly in Year 13. The figures are lower in Year 12 where the settling-in process is not complete for a small number of pupils, some of whom leave at the beginning of the academic year.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 39 The quality of teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. The pace at which the work is undertaken is well matched to the needs of the students. Questioning is skilful and the students answer questions confidently with a good level of understanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and many have a great deal of experience. Relationships between the teachers and the students are very good, promoting high levels of mutual respect and understanding. Expectations are high and therefore the work is challenging.
- 40 As a consequence of the variety of learning experiences, the coaching and development of key skills is well established. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare their lessons effectively to suit the needs of individuals as well as the whole group. Boys and girls are helped to make very good progress, regardless of special educational need, ethnicity or whether they are learning in English as an additional language. The reviews of learning at the end of lessons are particularly effective when students discuss in groups what they have learned before sharing it with the whole group. Teachers are passionate about their subjects and communicate this enthusiasm to their students.
- 41 Homework is generally set regularly although in some subjects better use could be made of time by using homework to prepare for tasks to be carried out during lessons. Some work is marked in a detailed way to help students make progress in their understanding. However, while the marking of students' work is constructive, it is not always detailed enough, with the result that students need more help if they are to fully understand how to improve.

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

- 42 The curriculum provided in the sixth form is very good. The school offers a wide range of AS level and A level courses including a very popular music technology course. Links with other schools and colleges are used very well to broaden this range. A level technology courses are provided in this way and courses using video conferencing in psychology and law are shared with other institutions. Vocational courses are evaluated and have been introduced successfully in information and communication technology; health and social care, and business studies. Great care is taken to ensure that students currently in Year 11 are very well informed about the courses available to them. Careful planning allows all students to follow the courses they choose; for example there are additional groups for information and communication technology. There is very good equality of access for all students to the subjects that are offered. One afternoon each week is devoted to physical

education or to community activities. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and valued by the students, particularly in music and physical education, in which a sports leadership course is provided.

- 43 In addition to their academic courses, students are being offered a key skills programme which has started with communication skills delivered through the general studies programme. There is a very strong emphasis on students' personal and social development as well as their academic and intellectual progress. During the compulsory general studies course, students learn about a range of moral and social topics. This is supported by studies of racism and international social issues included in subjects such as modern foreign languages and biology. Transferable skills, citizenship and health issues are taught within tutorial time. This is a very well planned programme which includes modules such as 'Learning about Learning' and 'Learning for Life'. With the end-of-day programme, this provides very good academic support, pastoral care and the opportunity to learn about religious, social and cultural issues. This programme includes many visiting speakers and makes very good use of links with the local community.
- 44 There are regular opportunities for students to meet with a tutor who acts as their mentor and provides support for any aspect of a student's sixth form life. Discussions include progress towards achieving course targets and agreements are reached about new targets. The Christmas event is arranged so that students from all cultural heritages and religious groups can take part. Overall, both the academic and pastoral needs of students are addressed very well. Students appreciate the access they have to a range of advice about careers and further courses.
- 45 Students take significant responsibility for managing the sixth form environment. This makes a strong contribution to their social development. The student sixth form management group agrees and produces a very good handbook which describes many aspects of sixth form life, such as the very clear entry policy, expectations of work and behaviour and the way in which the tutorial system operates. They make presentations about this to the governors. Further support for students' social development is provided by sixth form social events. The school succeeds in providing a positive and stimulating learning environment where everyone is valued and the majority can achieve and succeed. Its provision helps students to become mature and considerate adults. Overall, provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

- 46 The quality of assessment is very good and significantly adds to the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Courses are reviewed annually, leading to the production of thorough analysis of data, including examination results, and critical self-assessment reports. Examples were noted of very effective action being taken to develop strengths and to bring about improvements. In addition to internal reviews, good use is made of expertise from outside the school, for example reports by advisors from the local authority.
- 47 Teachers have good understanding of the criteria against which students' work is assessed in examinations and ensure that students are aware of them. The school has well established systems to set targets for individual students based upon their previous attainment. The extent to which results of national examinations match predictions is carefully examined and reasons for divergence are sought. Methods of

recording attainment on a day-to-day basis and matching against predictions at departmental level are less well established but are under development.

- 48 Students with special educational needs, including those with visual impairment, are well catered for and receive effective support. The requirements of the Code of Practice for the formal assessment of their progress are being met. The newly-appointed co-ordinator is considering what additional provision needs to be introduced to monitor the shorter-term progress of students with special needs other than those with visual difficulties.

Advice, support and guidance

- 49 The school has good procedures in place to care for its students. There is a clear health and safety policy and all necessary guidelines are followed. The school looks after its students well and the secure relationships within the sixth form offer support for those who experience difficult personal problems. The school is successful in raising personal expectations and some students are the first generation to experience Post-16 education.
- 50 The school provides good support and advice for all its students from the start of the induction procedure. For those already in school, this process starts at the beginning of Year 11. There is very good written material providing guidance on courses and grades required for entry. The induction procedure continues through the summer with performances by professional theatre companies on making decisions, and looking at targets and goals with Birmingham University. By the start of Year 12 there are individual interviews and enrolments where students are offered their first choice of courses from a good range, whenever possible. The sixth form is also able to include those visually impaired students who are able to undertake Post-16 education. The provision for guidance and induction has been significantly improved for the current Year 11.
- 51 Students are provided with mentoring at the end of each day by their tutors. Individual learning needs and additional support are identified. Academic progress and personal development are monitored continuously by form tutors, subject tutors and head of sixth form. In addition, personal issues are well supported by the school counsellor who visits regularly. Attendance and punctuality are considered to be very important and the school operates a reprimand system which is kept under review by the sixth form management team. There is also a reward point system in place for attendance and a range of achievements.
- 52 Students are able to take advantage of very effective careers advice offered in school, together with individual professional advice from the careers service. The school has established links with Birmingham, Aston and Warwick universities in particular and some pupils are encouraged to seek places at Oxford. Work placements, gap years and places in industry are discussed, and visiting speakers from higher education establishments and their representatives advise in tutorials. Students are in a very good position to receive appropriate advice for further training and career opportunities.

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

- 53 From those parents who returned the questionnaire, together with those seen during the inspection, it is clear that parents of sixth form students are well satisfied with the school's provision and that almost all students are able to study their first choice subjects.

- 54 Parents consider that the school has high expectations and that their children are happy and very well cared for. They agree that the school expects students to work hard and that behaviour is good. The students make good progress. The annual reports to parents are detailed and give very good information on achievement and progress. They are pleased with the range of activities, particularly in music. Generally, the school works well with parents and helps the students to become mature.
- 55 Parents have confidence in the school and are pleased with the high standard of pastoral care and improving examination results. The regular newsletters are appreciated and information on assignments, when this is available, and dates for completion, are particularly welcome. They consider that behaviour is good and that the staff have a commitment to the students and want them to succeed. They are happy with the good quality written information they receive, particularly the detailed school reports and prospectus. A small concern was expressed about the size of the sixth form centre and its adequacy for the number of students. However, the overall view is one of appreciation of the school's efforts to work well in partnership with students and parents.
- 56 The students' questionnaires, together with the views of those seen during the inspection, indicate that the students enjoy being in the sixth form. Most students indicate that course information is clear, and, with guidance, they are now able to make the right choices. Nearly everyone agrees that they are taught well and are challenged in their work. They also know that they are well supported and listened to by the staff who treat them like responsible adults. However, many of those who responded to the questionnaire do not feel they are advised well on careers. Those who were seen indicate that students know where to get this advice and must request it. Not all those who responded are able to say that the sixth form has a good range of worthwhile activities. However, those who were spoken to during the inspection did not agree, as they felt the school is open to ideas.
- 57 Some students found the transition from Year 11 quite hard, even though they were well prepared. They now enjoy the smaller classes and greater attention from their tutors. They very much appreciate being able to take charge of their own lives using the management team structure and are pleased to be able to go into schools to recruit students. They would like the Centre to be larger, now that more students are being admitted. The overall view is that students find the sixth form a very good experience, and commend the teaching, the advice received, the monitoring and the opportunities which follow.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 58 The leadership of the sixth form is excellent. The recently-appointed director is taking it forward with dynamism and determination and is ably supported by the governors through their strategic plans for the development of the school. Students are very aware that there is a sense of shared purpose and a clear resolve in the air to drive up standards and to raise the aspirations of all concerned. Their attitudes towards the sixth form are extremely positive.
- 59 A range of policies and initiatives has been set up which will transform the sixth form over the short to medium term. New accommodation is planned for the growing numbers, and the shared ownership with the students themselves is intended to ensure that all concerned will be directly involved in creating educational provision which serves the wider community well and fulfils the overall aims of the school. The

sixth form development plan is extraordinarily thorough and plots a clear path towards the achievement of the school's objectives, geared specifically to the quality and range of educational experiences which the school can offer.

- 60 The sixth form is very effectively managed. There is a management team under the very capable leadership of the director. In addition, the students' management group has been created. Between them they have a well-planned programme of developments which they will jointly carry out over the next three years. This is designed to improve teaching and learning, raise standards and attract more youngsters to continue their education in the school. There are effective and constructive relationships with other schools in the area, and good collaboration in ensuring that a full range of study opportunities is available.
- 61 Departmental reviews are being effective in improving standards. The Post-16 task group is using the reviews to develop more effective teaching and learning, and to identify strengths and weaknesses. There are very good procedures for the analysis of the performance of students in external examinations and comparing actual with potential attainment. The role of tutors has been enhanced in order to engage them more effectively in the raising of standards of attainment. Clear entry requirements to follow advanced courses have been established.
- 62 Before students embark on a sixth form course, there is helpful input to prepare them for the next stage of their education. They are helped to establish clearly what they wish to achieve, and this is now followed by a careful examination of their subject choices and the setting of targets. Effective systems of monitoring and target review – including students' review of their own progress - have been set up to support students through their sixth form years. Careful review of potential, and monitoring of progress, is intended to help avoid the present situation where there is a small number of students who are clearly following courses which are unsuitable for them. Such students need to receive advice on alternative courses of study before it is too late to change.
- 63 The student management group is also playing an important role in the shared task of raising standards. It has done much to advertise the sixth form through talks to students in other schools and within school to develop a sense of purpose and a work-ethic amongst fellow students. Members of the group have recently made a presentation about the sixth form to the governors, and the latter are discussing the possibility of involving students further as partners in school management.
- 64 The number of students on roll in the sixth form has continued to grow over recent years. The governors and senior management team of the school monitor provision carefully to ensure that best value for money is achieved. This is done in terms of the range of courses which can be offered, in collaboration with nearby schools where necessary. Given the range of courses which it presently provides, and the potential for raising standards through its present leadership and management, the sixth form is very cost-effective.
- 65 The qualifications and experience of the staff teaching in the sixth form are very well matched to the good range of subjects offered. Teaching accommodation is mostly good, though the students' common room is now small for the growing sixth form numbers. They appreciate, and use well, the three study rooms which are available, although one of them is sometimes used for video conferencing. This enables subjects to be studied that would otherwise not be on offer. The new accommodation planned as a result of the successful bid to be a Business Enterprise

College will be welcomed. The library is very well resourced and sixth formers use this for their research, private study, computing and for reading quality newspapers.

- 66 Resources are very well matched to the needs of the curriculum and are very well managed and deployed in the school. There is very good provision of computers in many areas in the school. The music department is particularly well resourced, enabling the provision of two A level options in this subject.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	5	80	62	0	15	1.0	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	8	75	96	13	46	3.2	6.5
Biology	17	29	88	6	34	1.2	5.2
Business studies	10	100	92	0	32	4.8	5.5
Chemistry	5	20	90	0	43	0.4	5.9
Computer studies	20	50	86	0	23	1.9	4.6
Economics	1	0	89	0	36	0	5.5
English literature	27	70	95	19	37	3.2	5.9
General studies	54	57	85	9	30	2.4	4.9
Geography	15	93	92	7	38	4.6	5.7
German	2	100	91	50	40	6.0	5.8
History	8	88	88	25	35	4.0	5.4
Mathematics	18	50	87	22	43	3.2	5.8
Music	5	100	93	20	35	6.0	5.7
Other social studies	14	36	87	0	34	1.0	5.3
Physics	12	33	88	8	40	1.8	5.6
Sports / PE studies	5	80	92	40	25	4.8	5.0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students are well motivated and work hard.
- The provision is very well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of another option module in Year 13.
- The development of the use of information and communication technology.

- 67 The A level examination results in 2001 were well below the national average. Fifty per cent of the students entered achieved a grade and 22 per cent achieved a grade A or B. The boys' performance was better than that of girls. The results in 2002 showed a considerable improvement, with one hundred per cent of students achieving grades A to C.
- 68 In the AS level examination in 2001, 92 per cent of students entered achieved a grade. Sixty two per cent achieved grade A or B. In 2002, 91 per cent of students achieved a grade and 55 per cent achieved a grade A or B. The standards of work seen in the sixth form are above average. Students are making very good progress because of effective and challenging teaching.
- 69 Teaching is all very good and students learn well as a result. Lessons are well planned. The pace at which the work is undertaken is well matched to the needs of the students. Questioning is skilful and the students answer questions confidently with a good level of understanding. In a Year 12 lesson on calculus, the students showed a good understanding of algebra and, by questioning the teacher, were able to help their understanding of differentiation from first principles. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a great deal of experience. They give clear explanations and relevant examples where appropriate. For example, in a Year 13 mechanics lesson on collisions, students looked at colliding trucks and balls to help their understanding of this concept.
- 70 Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of questions which test their understanding. Homework is set regularly together with tests and examination questions. Some of this work is marked in a detailed way to help students make progress in their understanding. Students are encouraged to discuss with each other how to answer the examination questions before going away to answer them. In a Year 13 statistics lesson, the two students were preparing for an examination by talking together about how they would answer a question, with the teacher offering help and support. The only use of information and communication technology seen was the use of the interactive whiteboard. Planning does not identify clearly enough the opportunities to reinforce pupils' computer skills and develop their understanding of information and communication technology applications.

- 71 Students find the work interesting and challenging. They are aware of their progress and predicted grades, and recognise and appreciate the help and support given by the teachers. Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- 72 Work is very well managed in the sixth form. Staff are committed and enthusiastic about their work. They co-operate in the planning and work well together under the very good leadership given by the head of department. Teachers know individual students' strengths and weaknesses well. The curriculum for sixth form mathematics is appropriate and meets the needs of the students. The alternative mechanics and statistics courses allow some flexibility. As the numbers studying A level mathematics increases and the school further develops business education, another choice of module in Year 13 related to business education would enrich the mathematics curriculum.

Chemistry

- 73 One lesson was sampled in chemistry. In this lesson, the level of attainment was broadly average, with good progress made and the students on track to achieve between grades B and D at the end of the course. The students were able to describe the various types of bonding and relate these to observable properties of the chemicals. Teaching was good and well matched to the individual needs of the students, who responded with enthusiasm and considerable application to their studies.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Relationships in lessons are good.
- Coursework is well organised.
- Teaching activities include presentations and debates.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the leadership of the subject.
- Raising expectations of students' achievements in lessons.
- Raising attainment in examinations and reducing the number of students who do not pass AS and A level examinations.
- Improving the organisation of students' notes and other work.

- 74 Results in the A level examination in 2000 and 2001 were well below the national average, though in 1999 they were about average. In both 2000 and 2001, students did significantly less well in biology than in their other subjects and in 2001 they gained lower grades than were predicted using their performance in GCSE examinations. A significant number failed the examination and overall, the standard achieved by the students and the progress they made in their A level course was unsatisfactory. Results improved in 2002, when a quarter of the students gained grades A* to B and their results were as predicted using their performance in GCSE examinations.
- 75 In AS level examinations in 2001, students did little better than was predicted using GCSE results. However, students' performance in 2002 was not as good as the predictions and a large number of students failed the course, although some did gain

high grades. Overall, the standard achieved by the students and the progress they made in the AS level course was unsatisfactory.

- 76 Standards of attainment seen in lessons and students folders are below average. In Year 12 the higher attainers had a very good understanding of the ways in which the rate of reaction involving an enzyme could change. However, lower attainers were not able to explain a graph showing how a limiting factor affects a reaction. The understanding shown by these students was not sufficient to gain a pass grade in the AS examination. In Year 13 in a debate about hedgerows and pesticide use on farms, students were able to explain the fundamental issues but did not have the biological knowledge to justify their views with detailed information. The work seen in students' folders is too often poorly organised and incomplete; it is of little use for revision. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology, and in one lesson an attempt to use the internet failed because the connection did not work.
- 77 Teaching is satisfactory and has some good features. Lessons in which practical coursework is carried out are carefully prepared and the teacher checks that students understand what they need to do in order to succeed. Relationships in lessons are very good. Students are encouraged to work hard and are willing to ask and answer questions. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and of the requirements of the examination syllabus. They provide students with good quality and well organised advice about examinations and coursework.
- 78 In most lessons, better use could be made of time by using homework to prepare for tasks to be carried out during lessons. For example, research about farm practices and issues of food supply carried out before the lesson would have ensured that students were better informed and more progress would have been made in the lesson. Expectations of students' understanding and of the amount of work that can be done in these lessons are not high enough. Students do not have enough opportunities to write about science, and opportunities for consolidating learning in this way are missed. Some graphs are done well but others are incomplete.
- 79 Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. After the last inspection, examination results declined and responses to the school's efforts to improve teaching have not been effective enough. Strategies for improving examination results have been introduced and revision sessions are used. Good use is made of information from tests to set targets and students are very well supported by their teachers during discussions about progress. Testing is more regular and more textbooks are provided for students. Nevertheless, a significant number of students have failed to gain pass grades in recent examinations and not enough is done to reduce this number.

BUSINESS

Business education

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

Strengths

- The quality of the teaching is very good and therefore the achievements and progress of the students are also good.
- The relationships between the teachers and the students are very good, providing a very good working atmosphere in lessons.
- The quality of the management of the subject ensures that students are provided with flexible learning opportunities and effective support and guidance.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of written evaluations and assessments of students' assignments.

80 Standards at present are around the national average in GNVQ Intermediate level, but below average in GCE Advanced level. Pass rates over the previous three years have been almost one hundred per cent in both GNVQ and GCE Advanced Level. This represents good progress by the majority of students when account is taken of their entry qualifications in Year 12.

81 In Year 12, students make good progress in understanding the subject, including features relating to the economic environment in which business operates. Students in Year 13 also progress well in their current work. Their portfolios are reasonably well organised, providing evidence of good research skills and some analytical ability when dealing with hypothetical situations in business. Progress is also good for students who have special education needs and those with English as an additional language.

82 Some students are particularly adept in using computers when completing assignments, showing the ability to produce presentations using specialised software. In all lessons, students engage in discussions on a range of issues which demonstrate well developed skills in debate. Many students are articulate and comfortable with their use and understanding of technical language. The majority of students in both years are generally adept at planning their own work when researching and completing assignments. In a Year 12 GCE lesson, students investigated the motivation theories of Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor and related them to employment in a number of jobs. They were developing skills of critical reasoning and formulating opinions, and the capability to defend their opinions with evidence. In a Year 12 GNVQ class, students were gaining an appreciation of employment by evaluating their experiences on recent work placements.

83 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. The teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, fostering interest and understanding in the majority of students through carefully planned lessons. Relationships between the teachers and the students are very good, promoting high levels of mutual respect and understanding. The students are complimentary about the level of support they receive from their teachers. Overall, progress is good. Lessons are invariably designed around current events in the business world. Teaching strategies are carefully orchestrated to promote knowledge and understanding through whole class and small group activities. Expectations are high and therefore the work is challenging, allowing students to experience the complex nature of business. As a

consequence of the variety of learning experiences, the coaching and development of key skills is well established. The marking of students' work is constructive but not detailed enough, with the result that students need more help if they are to fully understand how to improve.

- 84 The subject leadership and management are very good. A clear vision exists relating to the present and future development of the subject. The teachers work as an effective team. Planning of the course content is detailed and effective. Student assessment is generally good and is being used to influence the planning of lessons. Students would benefit from more detail in the written evaluations they receive on completion of assignments. This in turn could be influential in improving attainment at the higher grades in public examinations. The level of resources is very good; computers are available in the classrooms including a number of laptop computers. The resources, together with good accommodation have a beneficial effect upon the attitude of the students and their subsequent progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on advanced level information and communication technology which is currently taught only in Year 13. Lessons in the newly introduced vocational courses in Year 12 were sampled.

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

Strengths

- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The quality of teaching is good and there are good relationships between teachers and students.
- Standards of attainment have risen to match national standards this year.
- Provision for students with visual impairment is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use is made of day-to-day assessment of students' work to set targets for improvement.

- 85 There have been significant changes to the management and staffing of the department recently. This is already resulting in more effective teaching and learning and in higher standards of attainment.

- 86 The proportion of students gaining grades A-B in 2001 at A level information and communication technology was well below average. The proportion gaining grades A-E was similar to the national average. Students entered for AS level examinations achieved well below average results. Provisional results for 2002 show a significant improvement, and, although numbers entered were small, the proportion achieving A-B grades was average.

- 87 Students in Year 13 are in their second year of the A level course for information and communication technology. In work seen, standards of attainment are average. Students have well organised folders of course-work with well researched projects. Higher attaining students evaluate their projects regularly, in discussion with end users, and modify them to make improvements. They make good use of illustrations to explain aspects of their work, for example the use of data flow charts in business organisations. They have a sound understanding of relational databases and higher attaining students understand more fully how the efficiency of business practice can

be improved. Visually impaired students achieve at least average standards because they are highly motivated and very well supported.

- 88 In vocational information and communication technology lessons sampled in Year 12, standards of attainment are average. Students are benefiting from opportunities to follow courses newly introduced to the sixth form which are more appropriate to their needs, and they are adapting well to the new and more demanding work. They are reaching expected standards because they are highly motivated and the quality of teaching is good. AS level courses have been replaced by vocational courses this year. Students following the advanced level vocational course for information and communication technology use computers confidently and make independent decisions about the presentation of work. They have a sound understanding of the use and benefits of information and communication technology to business organisations and a good grasp of technical language which they use to explain features of their project. Students following the GNVQ course have a mature approach to improving their skills and knowledge and they are learning to work independently.
- 89 Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment because they respond well to good teaching. There is a small number of girls following information and communication technology courses and they are well integrated in lessons. There is little difference between their progress and that made by boys. Year 12 students following vocational courses are making good progress in developing more advanced skills for information and communication technology and with learning to work independently. Year 13 students following the advanced GCSE course have made particularly good progress in learning to use relational databases for inclusion in their major coursework project. They are gaining a good understanding of how information and communication technology is used in business and industry to increase efficiency and improve communications. They have made good progress with coursework and folders are well organised. Occasionally students do not manage time well enough and are hard pressed to meet deadlines. Students with visual impairment make very good progress because they are very determined in lessons and are provided with suitable resources. They are taught effectively by subject teachers and, in addition, are supported extremely well by staff from the special unit. All students learn to use skills which support their work in other subjects, such as using computers to draft and redraft work, and presenting information to communicate clearly and attractively.
- 90 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and students respond to this positively. Students respect the teachers and trust them to help them to make good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare their lessons effectively to suit the needs of individuals as well as the whole group. They are well informed about the requirements of courses and use teaching methods which encourage students to think and work independently. The reviews of learning at the end of lessons are particularly effective when students discuss in groups what they have learned before sharing it with the whole group. Although long term monitoring of progress is very good, teachers do not make enough use of day to day assessment to set short-term targets for improvement to increase progress further. Teachers take care to help students develop useful study skills such as note-taking. Very good relationships have been established between teachers and students which have improved the confidence of students and raised their aspirations.
- 91 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The new head of faculty has a clear vision for the development of the subject and has established an excellent working relationship with colleagues. There is a very high commitment to

improving standards and to sharing good practice as part of that process. In the short time since changes to staffing and leadership in the department, standards have risen. Documentation is clear and informative and resources have been improved. There is very effective delegation of responsibilities for managing the subject which works well because there is mutual respect between staff.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Strengths

- The quality of leadership of the department is very good.
- Students have positive attitudes to their work and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Criteria for admitting students to the course in Year 12 need to be reviewed.
- Results at AS level need to be improved.

92 The school's first results at A level in 2001 matched national results for the proportion achieving the higher grades, A-B, and the proportion gaining grades A-E. Both students who continued from AS level in 2001 were successful at A level in 2002 and gained the grades expected. Results at AS level in 2002 were below the target levels, with only 35 per cent gaining pass grades. A significant proportion of those who failed had not taken the subject at GCSE. Some of those who were unsuccessful in Year 12 intend to re-sit their examinations during Year 13.

93 All lessons observed took place in classrooms but other evidence indicates that students have good levels of skills of performance in at least one game or other athletic activity. Eight have gained county representation in games such as badminton, basketball, cricket and football. One has represented England at baseball and one at football.

94 Evidence during the inspection shows that the attainment of students now in Years 12 and 13 is in line with the national average. Students preparing for A level examinations show sound levels of skill and understanding of physiology. Students demonstrated high levels of interest in exploring a test paper and mark scheme in a very good lesson intended to help them recognise how they will be tested in examinations. Most displayed good knowledge which they could express clearly but others were vague on detail and insecure in their understanding and use of technical terms. Students' increased maturity from Year 12 is evident in the way that they meet deadlines for the completion of work. In a similarly good lesson in Year 12, students gained good understanding of how different kinds of information processing can affect athletic performance. They showed good motivation and concentration and worked well in groups to construct possible models.

95 They are able to match theoretical concepts against their practical experience. Most move confidently towards task completion but others are reliant upon additional help from the teacher. There are no significant differences between the performance levels of girls and boys. Skills of writing improve as students make better judgements about the selection and organisation of material. Errors of sentence

construction, elementary spelling and grammar reduce the effectiveness of the writing of some students.

- 96 Standards of achievement are good in lessons and often very good because students are well motivated and teachers are skilful in gaining and holding their full attention. In both year groups, the range of attainment is very wide and this is reflected in the variable quality of students' progress over time. Students who lacked adequate prior experience of the subject before starting the course in Year 12 have progressed more slowly. Those intending to re-take the AS level examination in Year 13 were unable to meet the required standard at the first time of entry, but, their enthusiasm and determination are now helping them to make good progress.
- 97 The quality of teaching is often very good and is never less than satisfactory. The content of lessons is linked to previous and future work so that students recognise its relevance. The best lessons are very well planned to increase students' knowledge and understanding by involving them as active participants. Teachers set tasks that are challenging but, when appropriate, also generate amusement so that the learning points are more easily remembered. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and appropriately high expectations of students' effort and achievement. Provision of a variety of linked activities helps students to sustain high levels of concentration so that they learn effectively and make good progress. The pace is quick and teachers make very good use of questions to confirm understanding and also to deepen or extend it. Questions are often sufficiently open-ended for students to contribute at different levels to answering them. Because relationships among students and with teachers are positive, all join in discussions knowing that their contributions will be valued.
- 98 The work of the department benefits from very effective leadership. Students, like younger pupils throughout the school, are offered an unusually rich range of opportunities to develop their athletic interests and abilities. The work of the department benefits from assistance from non-specialist colleagues which is of good quality, although restricted in quantity. Since the previous report, schemes of work have been made more relevant to the needs of all students. Almost all staff are new to the department, and they work well together. A strength of the provision made for the sixth form is the quality of the analysis of students' attainment. All evidence, including examination results, is analysed and the outcomes have an effective impact on the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the time given to preparation for examinations has been increased, decisions have been made about different examinations, and teaching methods have been modified to meet particular needs.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music

The focus of the inspection was the provision for students following the AS and A2 level music courses, but one lesson of the AS level music technology course was also seen. Both the physical facilities and the quality of teaching for music technology are excellent and together account for the very good progress of the twelve students, who are strongly committed to this very well planned course.

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

Strengths

- The leadership of the department is excellent.
- The subject knowledge of the teachers is very good.
- The relationship between the students and the teachers is excellent.
- The resources to support the teaching are exceptionally good.
- The department is meeting the needs of a large number of students.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not listening enough to a wide range of music.

- 99 Prior to 2000 there had been no candidates for A level music. The development of provision since 2000 has attracted an increasing number of students, from three in 2000 to eleven in 2002, taking AS or A2. In the current year, the number of students is very similar and, in addition, thirteen students are also involved in AS music technology. Some students are studying both music and music technology. Results in 2001 showed that standards were good. At present, all students on these courses are male. This high level of student involvement in music is significant and has a parallel in the extraordinarily high number of students for music in Years 10 and 11.
- 100 Observations of lessons, and of students' work, both seen and heard, confirm that standards in music are being maintained at a high level. In Year 12, students showed that they are confident in their understanding and use of the appropriate terminology in their study of counterpoint and fugue. They have a well developed aural ability and are able to recognize imitation in a musical context. They are competent in singing rounds. This well developed aural precision was also evident in the students' ability to repeat, on instruments, fugue subjects played to them by the teacher. All these students are involved in school based instrumental groups and many also make music in the locality. Most of them work predominately in a 'rock' style, and there is strong evidence of their experiences in this field in the very competent composition activity. A Year 13 student showed excellent understanding of technique in a rock-fusion composition with very compelling Spanish effects and very good control of rhythm and harmony. The students' use of technology is very well controlled and allows their creativity to flourish and develop in a most interesting and personal musical manner.
- 101 The very good progress which the students demonstrate in their compositional work is the outcome of very good teaching. The teacher shows excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm and so is able to provide students with a perceptive and helpful critique of their compositions, together with constructive suggestions as to how the music might develop, yet in no way imposing ideas. In the good teaching of the counterpoint project, the teacher's very good subject knowledge was also strongly evident. The teaching is delivered with a sense of assuredness and in a

style appropriate to the level of work. The students show a well developed aural awareness of the techniques of counterpoint as used in the lesson. However, they also show a distinct lack of awareness of the sound of these techniques within a context of a wider musical repertoire, drawn from all periods of musical history. Although students are provided with listening material, for independent study, it is evident that strategies for improving listening in depth need to be developed.

- 102 The students are all enthusiastic about their musical studies and in their participation in a variety of activities. The relationship between students and teachers is excellent. The students show strong appreciation of the facilities available to them and an awareness of the quality of teaching, which is never less than good. Their commitment to sustained work is a significantly strong factor in the good progress that they make.
- 103 The department is very well organized and managed. Resources are excellent. The combination of these excellent resources and the high level of staffing has been effective in developing a department which recruits students not only from within the school but also from other schools in the area. The excellent leadership has developed a team around individual strengths, all of which contribute to the success of this very good department.

HUMANITIES

History

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

Strengths

- Results are improving.
- Teaching is very good: teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Students enjoy the lessons and appreciate the high level of personal support.

Areas for improvement

- Recruiting more students to a strong area of school provision.
- Marking essays in ways that refer to the examination board's criteria.
- Keeping students' records in a form that is clear and easy to use.

- 104 The number of students choosing history in the sixth form has been low, but is increasing as a result of the growing popularity of the GCSE history course in the main school. This has not yet worked through to Year 13 where numbers remain very low. The current Year 12 students are all well qualified for the AS level course as the school has ensured that this is an appropriate choice for them. It is therefore more likely than in the past that most students will continue to Year 13 and to the A level examination course. Currently, students in both Years 12 and 13 enjoy history and find the lessons stimulating and interesting. Their positive experiences will help to recruit future students.
- 105 Results at A level have been improving for the last three years. Most students gain a pass grade and the percentage gaining the higher grades of A to C has risen to 55 per cent. The two years of AS level examinations also show marked improvement from 2001 to 2002 when the 85 per cent pass rate included four at grade A. Overall, the students did better than expected. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in their examination performance as numbers are too low for such

interpretation. In some years, the girls have produced lower results, and then the situation has been reversed.

- 106 Standards are satisfactory and so too is achievement. Higher attaining students have largely met their predicted grades or exceeded them in both examinations. A few lower attaining students, and a few students with poor attitudes, have not met their predicted grades in recent years. This is a reflection of an open entry policy to the course that allowed some students to begin history without appropriate grounding in the subject. This is no longer the case. However, students with modest GCSE results who are well motivated and prepared to work are well supported and receive a high level of individual care. Some tasks were subtly changed in a Year 12 lesson to meet the needs of a student who was experiencing difficulty. Similarly, a student in Year 13 who had little confidence to speak was given great encouragement and overcame inhibitions to contribute well.
- 107 A number of students progress successfully to history or politics degree courses or to other courses that are relevant to their school history studies. The current students said that they understood history was a solid foundation for many careers such as journalism and law, and they valued the benefits they received in terms of thinking well, arguing a case, and in extending their vocabulary and their world knowledge.
- 108 The standards of work seen in the current classes are good. The main reason for this is the productive partnership between skilled teachers and co-operative students. Year 13 students are beginning their personal studies and they evaluated some examples from previous years. They could identify the ones graded A, C and E correctly, and they engaged in useful discussion with the teacher about why some were better quality than others, so learning how they could be successful. In another lesson they were building up their understanding of Gladstone's first ministry and were developing their grasp of some of the differing historical interpretations of the topic. Well-organised notes and 'mapping' of topics show the students' skills in selecting the most important points. Their essays are developing well in relation to their abilities and show suitable skill in focussing an answer that is soundly based and cogently presented. At times, essay work could be further extended and more analytical.
- 109 In Year 12, students had already studied the Terror as an aspect of the French Revolution and they were seen giving competent presentations on the role and significance of Robespierre. One student gave a computer-based presentation and issued a summary handout of her work. Others had worked as a team, and they gave presentations collaboratively. Their knowledge and understanding were good for this stage of the course, towards the end of the first term. They had progressed well from GCSE in literacy, range of vocabulary and maturity of thinking. The students' key skills progress very well in history in both years. In addition to the skills included above, they are competent independent users of information and communication technology for research and word processing. Personal development is very good through history.
- 110 Teaching is very good overall. One excellent lesson was seen, and all lessons are at least good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good; they are passionate about their speciality periods and communicate this enthusiasm to their students. One teacher is an examiner for advanced history courses; this expertise is shared and is clearly very beneficial to the students. Teachers engage the interest of the students well so that they sustain their efforts during challenging sessions. The teachers provide a careful balance between explaining new ideas and drawing out the students into discussion and dialogue. They are very approachable, ready to help, to

lend their own books, and to show great commitment to the students' interests. This includes organising the field trips to Europe in conjunction with the art department that are a notable feature of the course. This year they will go to Paris. Teachers also provide very good quality booklets, including much guidance material to accompany each module of work. Relationships are warm with mutual respect on both sides as the students are appreciative of their teachers' commitment.

- 111 Students say that they receive a very good level of verbal feedback individually after any significant assignment. They are also involved in marking sample essays at times and are given good models to review. However, the written marking of essays could be developed further so that it refers clearly to the assessment objectives and gives a clear statement of how to improve. Also, the students could be encouraged to reflect on their own work so that the teachers could take this into account in their planning of lessons.
- 112 Both the leadership and management of the subject are very good. The schemes of work have been reviewed and are of good quality. In-service training is used well to improve standards and the teachers are well-read in the current literature on their subject areas. Checks on teaching and marking ensure a consistent approach across the department, uniformly high expectations, and common good practice in setting targets that are both encouraging and challenging. This is a strong team. One administrative aspect that could be improved is the recording of individual student data in a way that is clearer and easier to use.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English literature. Other courses sampled were drama and media studies.

Drama

- 113 Results at AS level in 2001 were well below average. Both students who continued to A level in 2002 gained the highest grades, A-B. Students in Year 12 are able to identify significant aspects of the performance of a play they have seen. They are gaining confidence in expressing their opinions when questioned by the teacher. Teaching is purposeful and lessons are well planned and resourced. The best writing is clear, relevant and well-organised, but some is marred by frequent errors of sentence construction and elementary grammar. There have been several failures to meet deadlines for the completion of work.

Media Studies.

- 114 There were no entries for examinations in 2001. Results in 2002 were above average, with the majority gaining higher grades. Current students in Year 12 show good levels of interest and are developing appropriate understanding of techniques of film-making. They can identify how the camera can be used in films to gain particular effects. In a lesson characterised by very good teaching and learning, students were confident in expressing opinions. This confidence is based upon the positive relationships they have with the teacher and each other. The quality of written work is variable. Better writing demonstrates good understanding and clear thinking. Less successful work is sometimes superficial. Too often, communication is disrupted by errors of sentence construction and elementary grammar, such as failing to ensure the agreement between subject and verb, together with misspelling of words in common use.

English Literature

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The quality of leadership is very good.
- Students become able to make independent judgements.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion gaining success in examinations is too low.
- Criteria for admission to the course in Year 12 are in need of review.

- 115 The introduction of the AS level examination has further increased the course's popularity with students in Year 12. Results of the AS level examination in 2001 mainly matched the expectation based upon earlier attainment. Results in 2002 were similar. The school has now introduced clearer guidelines for admission to this and other courses.
- 116 In 2001, results at A level were well below average for the proportion gaining the higher grades, A-B, and the proportion graded at A-E. Results in 2002, though showing a significantly improved pass rate, were still below average, particularly for those gaining the higher grades, and this has been a feature in all recent years.
- 117 Standards of work seen during the inspection were satisfactory. Students in Year 12, working in groups, discussed aspects of Mary Shelley's narrative style in 'Frankenstein'. They showed sound understanding of the text and an ability to recognise significant features. All contributed sensibly, and often perceptively, to discussion. The group showed good levels of interest. However, the teacher's concern that some are not meeting deadlines for handing in work brings into question the motivation and personal organisation of some students.
- 118 Students in a Year 13 class discussing possible interpretations of moral issues in 'Measure for Measure' showed satisfactory understanding of the play, and some had an impressive recall of significant detail. They are developing effective study skills. Good progress was made in this and other lessons because students respond positively to the expectation of teachers. These ensure students explore possible interpretations within challenging time limits and explain their conclusions clearly to the class. Good knowledge and understanding were evident when students were asked to consider possible interpretations of aspects of Shakespeare's sonnets. Students work purposefully and are often infected by their teachers' enthusiasm. Written work generally shows good ability to organise relevant material and to express personal responses clearly. Writing is occasionally less effective when students describe events without explaining their significance or showing how their material relates to the question set. Standards at this stage indicate good progress in learning and personal confidence. Students have developed skills of independent study and can both hypothesise and reach judgements based upon their own thinking. This represents very good progress. Students make sensible use of electronically stored information and critical commentaries.
- 119 The quality of teaching is often very good and is never less than good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the texts they teach. They have good understanding of the strengths and needs of individual students and have high expectations of the effort and achievement of all. Teachers make very effective use of questions both to

confirm understanding and to develop it. When necessary, they ask for further explanation and demand evidence to support opinions. Teachers ensure that students understand how their work is assessed and how they might improve it. Students are responding positively to high levels of challenge and achievement is often very good by comparison with earlier attainment. Good relationships between students and with teachers contribute to effective learning by encouraging all to feel confident that their interpretations will be valued.

- 120 The work of the department benefits from very good leadership and management. Since the previous report, a new head of department has introduced clear guidance for colleagues, including the sharing of good practice. Department documentation now more closely meets the needs identified in the previous report. Responsibilities for aspects of the department's work, including elements of sixth form provision, are now appropriately delegated and are well managed. Excellent use is made of assessment data. Results are analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses and to indicate possible means of further improvement of teaching and learning. Standards of attainment are improving. The work of the head of such a large department would benefit from the provision of office space.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The work is well-planned and well-suited to the requirements of the examination.
- Resources are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their work.

Areas for improvement

- Expectations of students in speaking and writing.
- Planned opportunities to use information and communication technology in support of learning.
- The detail of the scheme of work.

- 121 The take-up for French Post-16 varies widely, and so there are no trends in performance at A level. The last A level candidates, in 1999 and 2000, achieved results well below the national average. In 2001, the small group of students entered for the AS level examination did not do as well as expected and chose not to continue to the higher level. There is currently one group of students who are preparing for the AS level examination. All achieved appropriate GCSE grades in order to embark on the course.

- 122 In the work seen during the inspection, students were making appropriate progress relative to their prior attainment. They are developing confidence and skills in debating social and moral issues in the target language, both in writing and in speaking. However, alongside these developments there are still students who persist in making elementary errors in their writing and who are still rather reticent in speaking. Attainment is overall in line with the requirements of the course at this stage. Boys generally attain higher standards than girls, although this is in line with their standards on entry to the course. Attitudes towards learning French are very positive. In lessons, students concentrate well and try hard. There is an earnestness about their endeavours which reflects well on the relationships between the teachers and their students. Confidence in writing, and the quality of students' writing, is

higher than in spoken activity, where most of the students lack the assurance to speak extensively.

- 123 Teaching is good. There are good relationships between the teachers and the students which promote a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to use their own language expertise to ensure understanding and develop the confidence and language skills of the students. Lessons are well-planned and are based on a scheme of work closely geared to the requirements of the AS examination. Activities and tasks seek specifically to develop the topic knowledge and the linguistic range required at this level. There is good use of a range of authentic materials on current issues which contribute not only to language development but also to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. Audio equipment of good quality is used to good effect. Students' work is regularly and helpfully marked. While lessons are generally pitched at an appropriately challenging level, the demands placed on students are not high enough to encourage a more confident approach to language activities, and to produce more extended language.
- 124 Although the department is well provided with information and communication technology equipment, there is enough planned use of it. There is evidence of well-produced word-processed work and of the use of the Internet for research purposes, but not enough active use by students of information and communication technology facilities in lessons.
- 125 Work in French is generally well and helpfully marked, and gives students a clear idea of what they might do to improve. Students are kept well informed about the scheme of work they are following; they have a clear view of what to expect and what to do next. There is an effective self-evaluation process. The students assess their own progress and set themselves targets for improvement. Students are very clear about the value of this self-evaluation.
- 126 The scheme of work is a helpful guide to what should be taught to satisfy the needs of the examination. However, it lacks guidance about how the course is to be taught and learned, with planned activities, agreed approaches and learning opportunities. Due emphasis is given in the scheme of work to each of the topics which have to be covered for the examination, and the progression of work is carefully planned. Time is built in to ensure effective preparation for the examination. Work in French is well co-ordinated.
- 127 Resources are good in terms of their availability. The texts and other resources are well-chosen and contribute well to the thoroughness with which the course is taught. Accommodation is very good; it is attractive and stimulating and makes a good contribution to the quality of learning which the department can offer.