

## INSPECTION REPORT

**BLATCHINGTON MILL SCHOOL AND SIXTH-FORM  
COLLEGE**

Hove

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114606

Headteacher: Mr N Hunter

Reporting inspector: Mr T Feast  
3650

Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2002

Inspection number: 249958

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr Mrs J Barnard-Langston
Date of previous inspection:	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3650	T Feast	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14214	G Smith	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4351	J Strickland	Team inspector	English Drama (sixth form)	
32118	J Jackson	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1249	J Edge	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
18261	T Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs	
31779	V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30743	N Cowell	Team inspector	Geography	
1085	J Laver	Team inspector	History	
8119	D Milham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
32208	D Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
30297	G Spruce	Team inspector	Music	
18888	J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Leisure and tourism (sixth form) Educational inclusion, including race equality	
10807	P Quest	Team inspector	Religious education	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20832	M Gallowalia	Team inspector	Science (sixth form) English as an additional language	
20527	B King	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)	
10060	D Gutmann	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)	
2652	R Lomas	Team inspector	Psychology (sixth form)	
12191	C Moxley	Team inspector	English (sixth form)	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Blatchington Mill School and Sixth-Form College is a mixed, community comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18 years. There are 1690 students on roll, with 164 in the sixth form. There are many more students on roll than at the last inspection and is the case for other secondary schools nationally. There are more boys than girls in Years 9 to 11 but this trend has been reversed significantly and there are now more girls than boys in Years 7 and 8. The attainment of students on entry to the school at the age of eleven in Year 7 is average overall and has improved significantly over the last three years. One hundred and fifty-nine students have been identified as having special educational needs, a figure broadly in line with the national average. Thirty students have been provided with statements of special educational needs by the local education authority, a figure also broadly in line with the national average and a similar proportion to that at the last inspection. About six per cent of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a slight increase since the last inspection. This is higher than most schools nationally. Fourteen students are provided with support for English as an additional language, a similar figure to that at the last inspection. Two hundred and twenty-nine students are entitled to free school meals, a lower percentage than at the last inspection but a figure broadly in line with the national average. Twelve students have been identified as refugees, most of whom are Sudanese Copts. The school serves a very mixed catchment area and recruits students from all over the city of Brighton and Hove. The family backgrounds are broadly average. Since the last inspection, the school has achieved specialist college status in performing arts. Special educational needs support is now provided in the new facilities of the student support centre.

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

The school has many very good features. The standards the students attain are above those expected nationally in Years 7 to 9 and match those expected overall. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leadership and management are very good. The overall effectiveness of the school is good and it gives good value for money.

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

- Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Behaviour is very good, as are relationships in the school.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The contribution of the community to students' learning is very good.
- The school's management of its finances is excellent.

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

- Standards in science and geography at GCSE are below the national average.
- The attendance of students is unsatisfactory.
- There are too few opportunities for students' spiritual development.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996. The school's improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The improvement in strengthening procedures for monitoring the work of departments, the implementation of policies and the setting of priorities have been very good. The quality and efficiency of the sixth-form provision have been kept under review very well, although there has not been as much progress as the school would have liked. The improvement in involving parents and the community in students' learning has been very good. The progress in building on the good practice for developing students' personal responsibility for their own learning has been satisfactory. Improving the links between the subject departments and the learning support team has been good. The progress in improving access to the site for both pedestrians and vehicles has been very good.

## STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

*(average points scores are calculated by given each grade achieved a numerical value, adding the total for each student and dividing it by the number of students who took the particular examination or test)*

The standards the students achieved in the unconfirmed national tests at the age of 14 in Year 9 in 2002 were an improvement on the school's results in 2001 in English, mathematics and science, but particularly in English and mathematics. In 2001, the standards were above those attained nationally and well above those of similar schools. The trend since 1997 in the school's average National Curriculum point scores is broadly in line with the national trend. The boys attained better results than the girls in mathematics and science and similar results in English. The results in the unconfirmed GCSE examinations in 2002 saw the average point score per student decrease slightly from 40.9 to 40.1 and the percentage of students achieving 5+ A\*-C grades decreased from 52 per cent to 49 per cent. Boys attained better results than the girls in mathematics and science but the girls' results in English were substantially better. In 2001, the average total GCSE point score per student was above the national average and those achieving 5+ A\*-C grades was in line with the national average. The girls attained higher average point scores than the boys overall, as is the case nationally. The trend since 1997 in the school's average GCSE point score per student is broadly in line with the national trend. The average point score for advanced level (AL) and advanced supplementary level (AS) candidates in 2001 was 11.5, which was well below the national average of 17.4. Boys' performance was higher than the girls'. The school was above its 2002 target for English and below its targets for mathematics and science in the unconfirmed national tests at the age of 14. The school was

in line with its target for 1+ A\*-G grades and for average point score, but below that for 5+ A\*-C grades in the unconfirmed 2002 GCSE results. Standards above those expected nationally were seen in English and in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 but they were below those expected in science in Years 10 and 11. Standards above expectations were seen during the inspection in information and communications technology (ICT), art and design, music, design and technology, dance, physical education and religious education. In many subjects, students were achieving well in relation to their standards in the subjects when they started at the school. Students with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans. Students with English as an additional language make good progress, as do those with refugee status, although analysis of the unconfirmed results for 2002 show Bangladeshi and Sudanese students attaining lower than the average point scores of the school overall. Students with Indian, Chinese and Arabic backgrounds attained results above the school's average point score.

### STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is good and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory.

In school, students show a good interest and enthusiasm for their studies and show good respect for the feelings of others. The taking of holidays in school term times is having an adverse effect on the level of student attendance.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Satisfactory

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection, in the reduction of the amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed and a significant improvement in the teaching observed which was very good or excellent. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in art and design, ICT, music, science and personal and social education, and examples of very good teaching were observed in biology, chemistry, design and technology, dance, drama, English, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, psychology, religious education, Spanish and special educational needs. Teaching in the core subject of mathematics is good in Years 7 to 11 and, in English and science, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is good and in numeracy it is satisfactory. Relatively little unsatisfactory teaching was observed, mainly in science but also in English and

mathematics. It was usually linked to the lack of planning of specific tasks to meet the varying needs of students which led to the lack of sufficient challenge in the work or the pace at which the students were expected to work.

In over two-thirds of lessons observed, teaching was good or better. The improvement in the quality of teaching is reflected in good learning overall. Students acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding well in most lessons. They show very good interest and concentration in most lessons and work at a good pace.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The range and quality of the extra-curricular provision is very good. The range of provision in the performing arts and in physical education is excellent.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The provision is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The provision is very good from the specialist support staff and is good overall in lessons.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall, very good for students' moral, social and cultural development but unsatisfactory for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good overall.

The school has good and effective links with the parents overall.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. This very good leadership and management are having a very positive impact on most areas identified as priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. The governing body plays a very good role in shaping the direction of the school and in holding the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	It is good overall and much improved since the last inspection.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The principles of best value are applied very well.

The headteacher and key staff and the governing body ensure that there is very clear educational direction to the work of the school and that the school's resources are used very well. The staffing of the school is very good. The accommodation and the resources are satisfactory overall.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects the students to work hard.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Students like school.</li> <li>• Students make good progress.</li> <li>• They are comfortable approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increased amount and an improved quality of homework.</li> <li>• The information about their child's progress.</li> <li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. The school has considerably improved its communications with parents since the last inspection and the partnership with parents is good and there is good information provided to parents about their child's progress. There is some variation in both the amount and the quality of tasks set and of the marking of homework but it is satisfactory overall. A few parents commented that different groups of students had different opportunities to take advantage of the school's provision. The inspection recognises that different opportunities are offered, but that the provision is equally good for the different groups of students.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

At the time of the inspection there were 164 students on roll, a considerable increase since the last inspection. There were considerably more students in Year 12 than Year 13; 45 girls and 63 boys in Year 12, and 37 girls and 19 boys in Year 13. At the end of Year 11, a majority of the students choose to leave the main school and pursue their education elsewhere. The attainment of the majority of students on entry into the sixth form between 1999 and 2001 has been below the national average, but is currently in line with it, reflecting new entry requirements introduced by the school for the 2002 entry. A significant number of students leave the school at the end of Year 12 with AS-level or vocational qualifications. Relatively few students join the sixth form from other schools, although some foreign students join for up to one year in order to broaden their social and linguistic experience. Students follow a range of AS- and A2-level courses, as well as a more limited range of vocational and GCSE re-sit courses. All students in Year 12 also take a general studies course and all students follow a personal, social and health education programme.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. It provides satisfactory value for money, and its cost effectiveness is improving. In 2001, the A-level results were well below the national average although the majority of students taking the examinations achieved satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE, with boys achieving better than girls. Attainment in many subjects is in line with national expectations, and students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Attainment is improving and, in some subjects such as history, the unconfirmed examination results in 2002 show significant gains on the previous year's results. However, in English, standards attained are below those expected nationally.

Students following AS- and A2-level courses receive a suitably broad and balanced education, although a substantial minority is unable to study the combination of subjects for which they hoped, owing to the constraints in the timetable option blocks. A substantial number of students following vocational or GCSE re-sit courses receive a much less broad education. Although many of these students also do work experience, they have substantial gaps in their timetables.

The programme for personal, social and health education is satisfactory but is relatively limited in scope. The amount of personal and academic support is satisfactory, although reports to parents are not consistently informative about standards, progress and ways to improve in the different subjects. The limited number of registration sessions which students are required to attend restricts the amount of personal support that some students receive. Some students feel that they receive insufficient advice on what courses they should follow when joining the sixth form or what options are available to them when they leave the school at age 18. However, there are good links with local schools and universities. Many students are positive about their experience in the sixth form, although there is only limited integration with the main school.

There is clear educational direction of the sixth form, co-ordinated by two senior members of staff, and leadership and management are good overall. There has been an improvement since 2001 in the monitoring and review of performance in the sixth form, for example with assessment data being more effectively analysed by the senior management. However, the use of this information at departmental level remains inconsistent. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, the impact of teaching on students' attainment is less

effective in some subjects such as English. Students study key skills within their chosen subject options. Accommodation is unsatisfactory due to inadequate study facilities, including the availability of computing facilities at times. The sixth form does not meet statutory requirements in that it does not provide sufficient religious education for students and there is not a daily act of collective worship. Overall, there has been a satisfactory improvement in the sixth form since the previous inspection.

### Strengths

- Good teaching in a number of subjects, leading to good learning.
- A good range of courses is offered at AS- and A2-level.
- A coherent and strategic vision for the future development of the sixth form.
- A very good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum.

### What could be improved

- The A-level results of students are well below the national average overall.
- Sixth-form accommodation, which is deficient, particularly in areas for quiet study.
- The consistency of monitoring and guidance given to all students.
- The provision of religious education in the sixth form.
- The range of learning opportunities of those students following vocational or re-sit courses.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English	Provision is unsatisfactory. Standards are below those expected although they are improving. Achievement is unsatisfactory, partly because students are unclear about how to obtain good grades. The quality of teaching is satisfactory.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory. Standards are in line with national expectations. Teaching demonstrates good subject knowledge, although marking and monitoring lack precision, and is satisfactory.
Biology	Provision is good. The take-up in Year 13 is small but, in Year 12, standards are currently above national expectations and students achieve well. Teaching is good.
Psychology	Provision is good. Standards are consistently above expectations and teaching and learning are good.
History	Provision is good. Standards are in line with national expectations and students respond well to good teaching.
ICT	Provision is good. Standards are above expectations and students respond to good teaching by achieving well.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Business studies	Provision is good. Standards are in line with national expectations. In lessons, the quality of teaching is good and girls achieve well, whilst boys achieve satisfactorily.
Leisure and tourism	Provision is good. Students' levels of attainment are above those expected nationally and their achievement is good. The quality of teaching is good.
Drama	Provision is good. Although attainment in 2001 was well below average, current attainment is above that expected and achievement is good. The quality of teaching is good.

**The following sixth-form subjects were also sampled:**

Dance	Provision is very good. Standards are above national expectations and achievement is good.
French	Provision is satisfactory. Standards are now above national expectations and achievement is satisfactory.
Product design	Provision is very good with standards and achievement above national expectations.
Art and design	Provision is very good. Very good and sometimes excellent teaching leads to high standards and very good achievement.
Music	Provision is very good and standards are above national expectations. Students are enthusiastic about the subject.
Geography	Provision is good. The standards in the one lesson observed were above national expectations.
Religious studies	Provision is satisfactory with standards in line with national expectations.
Chemistry	Provision is good. Currently there is take-up only in Year 12, and these students achieve well with standards above national expectations.
Physics	Provision is good. Standards in Year 12 are above national expectations and students achieve well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. Whilst some students feel that they receive good support, others feel that they get inadequate guidance on what courses to follow or what opportunities are available beyond school. Careers guidance is unsatisfactory for some students. Many school reports lack specific detail about progress made in individual subjects and how students can improve.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Following a long process of review and evaluation, the school is committed to raising the profile of the sixth form and students' standards. There is thorough strategic planning and a coherent vision for the future. The sixth form is increasingly cost effective.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classes are small and students receive individual attention.</li> <li>• Good relations with teachers.</li> <li>• The school helps them settle in well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation, particularly the provision of more study areas.</li> <li>• The guidance given on options and career choices.</li> <li>• Availability of computing facilities.</li> </ul>

Students are positive about most aspects of the sixth form and would recommend it to their friends. The inspection team agreed with students' views that guidance, accommodation and access to computer facilities should be improved.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The standard of work seen in the lessons and in the books of students in Year 9 during the inspection was above the national expectation in English, mathematics and science. This represents a similar performance to that reported in the unconfirmed results in the national tests for 14-year-olds in Year 9 in 2002 and in line with the results achieved in the 2001 tests. Given their attainment on entering the school, this represents good achievement overall by students in Years 7 to 9.
2. The standard of work seen in lessons and in the books of the students in Year 11 during the inspection was in line with the national expectations overall but this reflected considerable variation in the standards seen in different subjects. In English, standards were above national expectations, in mathematics they were in line with them and in science they were below expectations. This represents a similar picture to that reported in the unconfirmed GCSE examinations in 2002 and a slight deterioration in the results reported in 2001. Given their attainment on entering Year 10, this represents satisfactory achievement overall by students in Year 11.
3. The school's overall performance in the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds in Year 9, when using average point scores, was above the national average and well above that of schools in a similar context using the percentage of students eligible for free school meals. The average points score in 2002 maintained the upward trend, increasing from 35.4 to 35.7. Over time, the school's trend using students' average points scores is broadly in line with the national trend. In the 2001 national tests, the results varied a little across the three subjects tested, being well above the national average in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. In the unconfirmed 2002 tests, the percentage of students achieving the expected Level 5 or better significantly improved in English and mathematics and was slightly higher in science. The percentage of students attaining Level 6 or better improved significantly in English and mathematics and declined in science. In the 2001 tests, the average points scores of boys and girls was broadly similar in all three subjects but, in 2002, using the percentage of students achieving Level 5 or better, the boys performed to a level similar to the girls in English and significantly better in mathematics and science. The school's targets for the percentage of students attaining at least Level 5 in 2002 were exceeded in English, were close in mathematics and were below in science. The targets for the percentage of students attaining Level 6 or better were exceeded substantially in English and mathematics and were below in science.
4. The school's performance in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was above the national average in relation to average points scores and in line with the national average in terms of the number of students achieving five grades or more at A\*-C. These results were well above the national average when compared to schools in a similar context nationally and reflect good achievement on the results these same students achieved in their national tests at the age of 14 in Year 9 in 1999. The results in the unconfirmed GCSE results in 2002 saw the average points score drop from 40.9 to 40.1 and the percentage of students achieving five grades or more at A\*-C decrease from 52 per cent to 49 per cent. In 2001, the girls gained a higher average points score than the boys overall. In the unconfirmed 2002 results, the boys attained better results than girls in mathematics and science but the girls'

results in English were substantially better than the boys'. The school achieved its 2002 target for average points scores but missed its target for the percentage of students achieving five or more grades at A\*-C.

5. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the overall results of students in design and technology, art and design, communication studies, drama, English, German, ICT, music and Spanish were significantly better than the national average. In science and geography, they were well below. In mathematics, they were broadly in line.
6. The attainment of students is average overall, especially in relation to their starting point in the respective subjects. It is better in Years 7 to 9, where it is good, than it is in Years 10 and 11. In the current Year 9, attainment is above expectations in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, music, physical education and religious education, and in line with expectations in art and design, geography, history and French. In Year 11, it is well above expectations in music and ICT, above in art and design, design and technology, English, ICT, German, geography, Spanish, media studies, physical education and religious education, below in science and in line in mathematics and history. Overall, the achievement of students is satisfactory; being good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. It is good generally in Years 7 to 9 and very good in art and design, ICT and music and good in English, design and technology, religious education and physical education in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in English and mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and geography and unsatisfactory in science, as there are problems of continuity between the different teachers taking the classes.
7. Standards in literacy are satisfactory overall and there are some good strategies to support standards in subjects such as art and design, music, design and technology and science. There is a good emphasis on developing the technical vocabulary of the subject. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory overall but students in Years 10 and 11 are not given sufficient practice in numerical skills. There is too little evidence of the national strategy for numeracy evident in students' work across some of the subjects, especially in science.
8. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. In Year 7, students with below average literacy and numeracy skills are provided with support in small groups. These students make very good progress and this enables the amount of support to be reduced in Years 8 and 9. Similar progress is also made by students on the special educational needs register who require support for their examination or vocational preparation. The achievement of students with statements of special educational needs towards their targets is good because they are well supported by teaching assistants. In mainstream lessons, progress is also good overall and effective strategies are generally used to promote learning.
9. The school has a large number of students for whom English is an additional language, although only 14 have been identified as at a stage of learning of the English language that requires specialist support. Most of the students learn satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress. They make very good progress when they receive direct support from the specialist staff or when the mainstream teachers adopt effective strategies. The school has analysed the unconfirmed 2002 results for GCSE and the national tests at the age of 14 in Year 9. Bangladeshi, Sudanese and some other students with an African background attained lower than the average points scores of the school overall. Students with an Indian, Chinese and Arabic background attained results above the school's average points score.

10. The school has met more than half of the targets it set itself for 2002 than it has failed to meet. Overall, the trend since the last inspection has been one of improvement and an improvement broadly in line with the national trend.

### **Sixth form**

11. The standard of work seen overall in lessons and in the books of students in Year 13 during the inspection was broadly in line with those expected nationally. This represents an improvement on the A-level results reported in 2001 and the unconfirmed results from 2002. The current group of students studying for A2-level was among a year group that achieved standards above the national average in their GCSE examinations in 2001. However, many of that year group went on to post-compulsory education elsewhere in the city and the current standards represent satisfactory achievement by the students who stayed on. The standard of work seen in lessons and the books of students taking vocational courses matches the merit requirements of the courses, which represents good achievement in relation to their GCSE results.
12. The school's performance in the AL- and AS-level examinations in 2001 was well below the national average when comparing average points scores. The boys' results overall were better than the girls'. In 2001, results in the following subjects were well above or above the national average: art and design; communication studies; computer studies; design and technology; music and psychology. Biology, history, religious studies and leisure and tourism were in line with the national average, whilst business studies, chemistry, English literature, French, mathematics, sociology and physics were well below.
13. The main reason that the school compares unfavourably with the national average overall is that a smaller percentage of students stay on in the sixth form than would be expected nationally and, until 2002-2003, their attainment on entry was below the average overall. The school has changed its policy regarding admission to sixth-form AS-level courses for the start of the academic year and this is reflected in higher attainment being observed in many Year 12 lessons.

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

14. Students of all ages have good attitudes to learning and are very well behaved. They come to school in a positive frame of mind and are proud to belong to Blatchington Mill School. Relationships between students and with adults are very good and are based upon mutual trust and respect. Students feel confident about asking their teacher for help or clarification when it is needed. This atmosphere of support and understanding helps students to learn well in their lessons.
15. Students are usually very well behaved during lessons. Teachers are very consistent in their high expectations of behaviour and the result is a lively but harmonious community. This school has a good atmosphere and, within this setting, students work hard and do their best. During lessons, students work constructively on their own, in small groups or pairs. For example, during a trampoline lesson, Year 8 students brimmed with enthusiasm and did their very best when learning how to perform a front drop. They encouraged each other to keep on trying and clapped when one of their group managed to do it for the first time. The school expects and achieves high standards of behaviour and has established a very effective blend of high expectations and praise. In between lessons and when in large groups such as

assemblies, students also behave very well. They listen attentively and respectfully and frequently join in. Although bullying does occasionally occur, students feel confident that teachers deal with such behaviour firmly and very effectively. During the inspection, unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in very few lessons. It usually arose because a minority of the students lacked motivation and expressed this by calling out and by repeatedly interrupting the teacher. Their more committed classmates, however, usually ignored this behaviour and did not allow it to affect their progress. Over the last school year, 2001-2002, the number of permanent exclusions was just below the national average and the number of fixed-period exclusions was similar to the national average.

16. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good. Members of staff provide very good examples of how to behave and address the students with the respect and consideration they deserve. Students, in turn, speak highly of their teachers and a shared sense of common purpose helps to create a stable and calm atmosphere within which students make good progress. The school has a very successful policy of social and educational respect for all. This is reflected in the harmonious and friendly atmosphere and an almost total absence of unacceptable behaviour linked to racial intolerance.
17. Attendance is unsatisfactory. It was below the national average in the school year 2000-2001 and the rate was similar in 2001-2002 at 90.6 per cent. In the latter year, attendance in Years 9 and 11 fell below 90 per cent. The school has made considerable efforts to raise levels of attendance. There is some evidence of success. The attendance rate so far in the current year is above 93 per cent. Authorised absence has been reduced significantly but the rate of unauthorised absence is currently higher than last year's rate. Analysis of previous years' information indicates no difference between the attendance of boys and girls or between any of the ethnic groups within the school or of the refugees. Students do their best to arrive in good time for their lessons, although the size of the school sometimes makes this difficult. After illness, the second most common reason behind absence is term-time holiday. The school does everything it can to discourage parents from doing this but a significant minority persists. This interrupts their children's education and inevitably places them at a potential disadvantage in the future.

### **Sixth form**

18. Sixth-form students have good attitudes to the school and to their work. Although only around one third of the students in Year 11 choose to stay on for the sixth form, those who remain are well motivated. Students spoken to during the inspection like being taught in small classes and would recommend the sixth form to others. Relationships with each other and with members of staff are very good; they behave very well and are polite and helpful towards visitors. Students' personal development is satisfactory; they are responsible young adults and can be relied upon to get on with their work both at home and at school. This mature approach is reflected in the steady progress they make and the fact that there have been no permanent exclusions from the sixth form during the last school year.
19. No figures for sixth-form attendance were available for 2001-2002 but numbers present during the week of inspection, along with the available registers for this term, indicate that overall attendance is satisfactory. Students have considerable freedom to come and go, as long as they sign in and out, and the expectation is that they meet their tutor three times a week as a minimum. While a significant number

of students leave at the end of Year 12, those students staying on into Year 13 do complete their A-level studies.

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

20. The quality of teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 11. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection in the reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed and an improvement in the teaching observed that was very good or excellent. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in art and design, ICT, music, science and personal and social education. Elsewhere, some examples of very good teaching were observed in biology, business studies, chemistry, dance, design and technology, drama, English, French, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, religious education, Spanish and special educational needs. Relatively little unsatisfactory teaching was observed, mainly in science and, elsewhere, primarily in English and mathematics when there was insufficient planning of different tasks to meet the needs of the students in the lessons and this has an adverse impact on students' learning.
21. Overall, teaching is good in mathematics, religious education, design and technology, history, music, modern foreign languages and physical education. In discrete lessons of ICT and in art and design, teaching is very good. In English and science, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall.
22. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of the lessons observed. It was excellent in four per cent and very good in a further 29 per cent. Thirty-nine per cent of the teaching observed was good and, in a further 22 per cent, it was satisfactory. In seven per cent of lessons the teaching was unsatisfactory.
23. Overall, teaching is good both in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11. Very little teaching was seen that was unsatisfactory and, where it was observed, it was often linked to the unsatisfactory nature of the teachers' planning and low expectations. There was much very good teaching and some excellent teaching seen. In these outstanding lessons, teachers had very high expectations and students responded accordingly. Teachers used assessment very well to identify very good progress, both over time and in the individual lessons, and teachers used their excellent subject knowledge to create activities that inspired the students to achieve very well.
24. Teachers' subject knowledge is good overall. This results in confident staff teaching well and making very good use of exemplar material as a stimulus to learning as, for example, in a Year 9 design and technology lesson researching into different types of bags. In most lessons, objectives are made explicit to the students at the start of the lesson and instructions make clear to students what they are expected to do. This approach was seen to very good effect in a physical education lesson in Year 11 where the clarity of instructions led to high quality performance by students playing basketball and very good gains in confidence in carrying out set routines.
25. In most lessons, there is good attention to the teaching of skills common to all subjects, especially for literacy, as seen in a Year 9 hockey lesson where students recapped on key technical terms learnt in Year 8 and learnt new ones such as 'reverse stick drag'. There are insufficient resources overall for all teachers to consistently include ICT across the curriculum but students' ICT skills across the subjects are good. A good example of the use of ICT and literacy was seen in a Year 10 physical education homework, where students had undertaken independent research on different individuals with a high profile in sport, illustrating their projects

with scanned photographs and incorporating technical terminology such as 'commitment' and 'psychological'. Very good support for numeracy was observed in a Year 7 history lesson where students explored the measurement of time through timelines, but such planning for numeracy is not yet a sufficiently consistent feature across all subjects.

26. Teachers' planning is good overall but the weakness noted at the last inspection of the inconsistent use of support teachers and assistants has not yet been fully overcome. Overall, teachers identify good activities and resources and students apply themselves very well to their work and show very good interest and concentration. Overall, planned opportunities for students to show independence in their studies are less evident, as shown in a Year 9 mathematics lesson working on Pythagoras' rule when they were not given sufficient opportunity to explore the ideas for themselves. There is excellent planning evident in some lessons and this has a perceptible impact on students' learning and their attainment in those lessons. In some lessons where students are grouped by ability, for example in mathematics and science, there is insufficient planning of different activities and resources to meet the differing needs of the students in the groups and insufficient planning of work that will help to minimize the differences in performance of the boys and girls and of different ethnic groups.
27. The quality of teachers' assessment and its use to raise the learning of students is satisfactory. The quality varies between departments and within departments and this has an adverse effect on the learning of students in some lessons. Marking of exercise books, albeit at the start of the term, is not consistent and there are differing standards in the quality of dialogue with the students. Very good practice was seen in aspects of design and technology and this helped students to achieve well and attain high standards. Overall, individual subject targets are set and discussed with students and parents. Many students find this a useful opportunity to reflect on their own performance, especially where there is room for improvement.
28. Teachers' management of students' behaviour is very good. They often reinforce this positive behaviour with supportive comments and encouragement, as in a Year 11 French lesson. The quality and marking of homework are satisfactory overall but there is a lack of consistency between departments and within departments in setting homework that builds on work already undertaken or requires students to research new areas. A very good example of high quality homework being used and set was seen in a Year 10 physical education lesson focusing on 'Why people take part in sport'
29. The student support centre allocates learning support teachers and teacher assistants to the mathematics and English departments to support Year 7 students who attain below the expected Level 4 in their national tests in Year 6 in their primary schools. These 'booster intervention' and 'springboard' groups benefit from good teaching and are very successful in raising the attainment levels of students. In lessons where students on the school's special educational needs register receive special tuition for their literacy work, or for more general support with their examination or vocational preparation, the quality of most teaching is very good and students make very good progress. Learning support teachers and teacher assistants know the students well and develop positive and supportive relationships with them. They build a pleasant, relaxed but productive environment for learning. Teacher assistants who support identified students in the lessons are valued by class teachers and most give very good support. Most are well qualified, some with higher degrees. They give support in classes to wider groups and teachers and

students alike welcome this. In lessons where there is no support for students on the register of special educational needs, most teachers understand the needs of those students and they make progress in line with their peers.

30. Overall, the teaching of students with English as an additional language is satisfactory. The teaching by specialist staff for students with English as an additional language is very effective. They have adopted a mixture of in-class support and special tuition. Students often make good progress, as in a geography lesson where bilingual support was provided and the student acquired both English and geographical understanding of terms such as 'international migration', 'economic migrant', 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker'. The class teacher provided good opportunities for listening and the support teacher helped in providing explanations and making effective use of an Arabic dictionary. Where a student received individual tuition, the teacher used analogies effectively to make business terminology understandable to the student, including terms such as 'company' and 'sole trader'. Arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The support staff maintain a detailed profile of the performance of students with English as an additional language. They also assess and maintain a record of language development of students at an early stage of learning English according to the local project's language acquisition criteria. Mainstream teachers assess and maintain a record of the language competency of these students, as they do for others. However, the needs of these students are not consistently met in mainstream classes where there is no support and teachers do not always plan specifically to meet their needs. This is despite the work of the specialist staff but their hours are not sufficient to deal with the level of need in the school.
31. Students' learning is good overall in Years 7 to 11. The students acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding well. They often demonstrate good, and sometime very good, creative and physical effort, especially in subjects such as art and design, music, design and technology, dance and physical education. They usually work at a good pace and show very good concentration and interest. Students' own knowledge of learning is good overall and showed to good effect in a drama lesson in Year 7, where they developed confidence in their capacity to perform. In mathematics and science, this aspect of students' learning is unsatisfactory.

### **Sixth form**

32. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, much of the teaching that was observed was good or better. It was excellent in four per cent of lessons observed and very good in a further 33 per cent. It was good in 39 per cent of lessons observed and satisfactory in a further 22 per cent. It was unsatisfactory in two per cent of lessons. Some excellent teaching was seen in art and design, and examples of very good teaching were seen in business education, biology, chemistry, drama, English, history, ICT, leisure and tourism, French, music, physical education and personal and social education. Teachers' subject knowledge in the sixth form is good overall and they manage the students very well. Students show a good understanding and knowledge of their own learning, which is satisfactory overall.

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

33. The school provides students with a good quality and range of opportunities for learning across Years 7 to 11. The school's aim is to provide a curriculum that allows

all students to achieve their full potential and it is making good progress in achieving this. The overall length of time of the school week is in line with the majority of similar schools and follows the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) guidelines. In addition, the school day is extended for some students with a lesson six that enables the curriculum to be widened in areas such as science. In addition, there is an extended day programme from 1800-2000 two evenings a week. This enables the GCSE programme to be extended in the performing arts with GCSE music, drama and dance being offered as both one- and two-year courses.

34. The statutory curriculum is in place in Years 7 to 9 and is enhanced by subjects such as drama and dance. In addition, German and Spanish are offered as additional modern languages in Years 8 and 9. The grouping of students by their differing abilities in some subjects has a positive impact; for example, early in Year 7, the grouping of students for English and mathematics leads to efficient deployment of specialist support staff. Physical education provides a very good range of activities. All students are involved in performing arts subjects. Standards of attainment are improving and there is a strong, positive influence on students' personal development. These are key benefits from the school's successes during its first two years as a specialist performing arts school. Whilst all students take ICT as a discrete subject, the use of it in some subjects is limited owing to a lack of sufficient access to facilities and its impact is therefore variable. In music, it is very good, whilst in humanities, this lack impairs the range of ICT work covered.
35. The statutory curriculum is in place in Years 10 and 11. The range of GCSE subjects is extended by courses such as media studies, sociology, business studies and the three separate sciences. The performing arts faculty offers an excellent range of courses, using the benefits of the extended day. Media studies is a successful option offered. In Years 10 and 11, the school provides good opportunities for work-related learning whilst maintaining the opportunity to study a well-balanced and broad curriculum. For example, a well-chosen group in Year 10 spends every Monday on a work-related course beyond school. This is an improvement on an already well-established and effective arrangement used for Year 11. Also, there is flexibility about the number of GCSE examinations to be taken; some students consolidate achievement by taking less than the usual nine GCSEs, whilst others take more than nine using an extended day arrangement as part of the performing arts provision. Years 10 and 11 have access to a useful range of vocational qualifications, for both ICT and art and design.
36. Good quality personal, social and health education is provided for all students in Years 7 to 11. The course is well organised so that, for example, due regard is taken of the different needs of students as they mature and now includes the required elements of citizenship. Careers education is included in the personal, social and health education programme. The school has taken suitable steps to improve the quality of provision by the Connexions service. Impartial careers advice is given to a majority of Year 11 students, including all those chosen as priority, and all others who seek an individual contact. Work experience, for all during Years 10 and 11, gives students a good insight into working life.
37. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is very good. On entry at Year 7, the provision is aimed at students whose attainments in literacy and numeracy are well below the national averages, as measured by the national tests at the end of Year 6 and by tests in the first week at Blatchington Mill. These students are provided with individual or group tuition in the student support centre for five to six weeks. As a matter of course, all Year 7 classes have additional specialist support for

at least one lesson per week during their first term at school. This enables specialist staff to observe those lessons and provide up-to-date information on the students' special needs. The support in Year 7 is continued into Years 8 and 9, at a much reduced level, as students leave the special educational needs register because of measurable improvement in their attainment. Special educational needs provision continues in Years 10 and 11 when students are struggling with their academic courses. A national scheme to improve students' attainment in numeracy is being piloted by the student support centre, in which learning support teachers and teacher assistants are allocated to the mathematics department to provide tuition and guidance, as appropriate, to students on the special educational needs register.

38. Support for students with statements of special educational needs is good. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. A major part of this provision is managed on a day-to-day basis by teacher assistants, whose role is valued by the school. Students who need more specialised help, such as those with visual and hearing impairments, are given the support of visiting specialists. These arrangements enable statemented students to have physical access to the school and curriculum access to the full range of the National Curriculum. In this, the student support centre is proving very successful in helping the school meet its aims for the education of all students. All statemented students have an individual education plan, which is set by the student support centre and forwarded through departments to all class teachers. A senior member of each department acts as the liaison person between the student support centre and the department. At present, the targets on these plans are too generalized and not sufficiently measurable and attainable and, as such, do not allow departments to deploy skills and resources accurately enough at the identified needs of the students.
39. The curriculum provision for students with English as an additional language is very good when they have direct support from specialist staff and is good overall. The school utilises the support staff from the local education authority's central service. The present level of support is the equivalent of 0.6 of a full-time teacher and eight hours of bilingual support. The staff have adopted a mixture of in-class support and individual or group tuition. There is a difference in the progress the students make with the specialist support and where there is none. In mainstream classes, not all staff plan sufficiently to meet the needs of these students and do not have the necessary skills. There is not the same level of liaison between department and specialist staff as there is for special educational needs.
40. The school has a good strategy for improving literacy and this is having a positive effect on students' attainment across all subjects. The school has adopted a strategy for improving numeracy but the impact is not yet consistent across all departments and this contrasts unfavourably with literacy. There are good plans for developing ICT skills across departments but the availability of facilities does not allow all of them to be implemented. There is some good use of 'SuccessMaker' as a strategy with students in Years 7 and 8 to improve literacy and numeracy.
41. Students' learning and their personal development are enriched by the very good provision for extra-curricular activities. There is a high participation rate. The physical education and performing arts elements are excellent. There are also many activities covering a much broader range including ethics and chess clubs. There is a good range of study clinics, and revision and homework clubs.
42. The community beyond school makes a very good contribution to students' learning. The school offers an impressive range of visits and trips, in Britain and abroad.

Extensive performing arts activities include many which give students contact beyond school. In addition, students play their part in activities whereby the school promotes creative activity for the community and local schools through, for example, the use of the Windmill Theatre. A further strength is the use made of local businesses, benefiting students in Years 10 to 13. Students benefit from their Internet contacts worldwide.

43. The school has very constructive relationships with local primary schools. The school gathers useful information about individual students, including those who are attaining levels below those expected. There are good opportunities for students to get to know the school before they join it. Staff make contact with the staff in local schools on curriculum issues.
44. The provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is very good, but for spiritual development it is unsatisfactory. Overall the provision is good.
45. Each year group has one assembly per week. These are of a good standard and make a very positive contribution to students' personal development. Students are encouraged to take part and their success in a variety of school activities is celebrated. However, the spiritual dimension is not addressed consistently. There is a morning tutor time but this is used for administration and pastoral matters with little attention being paid to spiritual development. The school does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Several subjects, such as art and design, have seriously thought about this element in their curriculum planning, but this is not the general rule. As a result, opportunities are missed. The spiritual development is therefore unsatisfactory.
46. The provision for moral development is very good. The school ethos strongly reflects the fact that the school is committed to providing an environment that respects and values each individual. A sense of fair play is encouraged. Positive reinforcement takes place whenever possible, and letters are sent home informing parents of students' achievements in a variety of activities. The school code of conduct forms the lynch pin of everyday life and this is consistently promoted by all members of staff. As they get older, students are increasingly mature and are able to distinguish right from wrong and develop the ability to make reasoned and responsible decisions on moral dilemmas. For example, Year 9 students considered the relative urgency of a range of incidents that involved the police. They prioritised a number of duties in order of importance and were able to explain and justify their opinions. Several subjects, such as religious education, encourage students to consider contemporary moral problems. A well-organised personal, social and health education programme, which is satisfactorily delivered, offers students an opportunity to examine their own and others' values and attitudes and contributes well to meeting requirements for citizenship.
47. Social development is very well catered for. Students are involved in a wide variety of activities. They work well together in class, in sports teams and on other school activities. Students perform in school, in the local community and the school bands and orchestras undertake international tours to great acclaim. These experiences help students to mature and encourage them to use their initiative and to become increasingly aware of the wider world. Drama lessons encourage students to be confident and self-evaluating. In a Year 8 lesson, a group of students were preparing for a play that was focused on personal development. This sense of self-confidence is reflected throughout the school with students taking an active role in group work. Social awareness is consistently focused on in the physical education department.

Environmental awareness is encouraged in such subjects as art and design and geography. Several departments have focused on the need to address the new requirements for citizenship lessons. In a religious education lesson, students were considering the role of the media. Students are encouraged to become involved in the decision-making process through active year group and whole-school councils. Students in Year 10 may volunteer to be a 'senior student' in Year 11. If successful, they then help in various departments. The school is involved in a number of community events and is closely linked to a school in Tanzania.

48. The provision for cultural development is also very good. Cross-curricular co-operation in several curriculum faculties, such as the humanities, ensures that students are made fully aware of our cultural heritage. The curriculum is enriched by numerous visits, field trips, European study trips and theatre visits. There is a strong awareness of the diverse nature of the population in the school. Art and design lessons provide a wide range of references from a number of cultures. A recent event in the English department highlighted a wide variety of poetry and prose from other cultures with students from a number of cultural backgrounds presenting work in their own language. Physical education widened students' horizons by highlighting the Commonwealth in the last sports day. Students investigated one Commonwealth country and used this as a basis for their participation in sports day. They are offered the opportunity to take the sports leaders' award. The religious education department examines all the main religions that are found in our society. Assemblies are used to highlight a number of festivals of other religions.

### **Sixth form**

49. The curriculum provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. A good range of courses is offered at AS- and A2-level although lack of students means that some subjects are not taken up every year, for example chemistry. Several vocational options are offered with viable numbers opting for them. Students study key skills in their chosen subject options. The school is in breach of the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in not offering religious education in the sixth form. The programme for personal, social and health education is satisfactory, although somewhat limited in scope. The breadth and balance of the curriculum of some students taking vocational courses or GCSE re-sits is not sufficient and some of them have too much time when they have no timetabled lessons.
50. The curriculum is enhanced by enrichment activities offered by the school that make a strong contribution to students' personal development. The students are less involved in other aspects of the life of the school than is normally the case and this does limit opportunities to demonstrate responsibility and show initiative. The curriculum helps to provide specific support to students with special educational needs where necessary.

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

51. The provision for students' welfare and guidance is good. It is underpinned by an effective pastoral system that provides students with effective academic and personal support and guidance. There are very good links with contributory primary schools, and incoming Year 7 students receive a warm welcome. The inspection took place at the start of the academic year and these new students were still grappling with the unfamiliar timetables and expectations placed upon them. Teachers' sensitivity and patience help them to settle down and enable them to make good progress in their work from the moment they arrive in Year 7. Routine

health and safety procedures are in place although several concerns within the art and design department were raised. Child protection procedures are very good and statutory requirements are met.

52. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are good. Teachers know their students well because year teams remain the same throughout students' time in the school. Tutors closely monitor their students' attendance, punctuality and their students' personal planning diaries. As well as encouraging a basic work ethic, this system also helps tutors to spot any personal problems and deal with them at an early stage. At regular intervals, students of all ages have one-to-one reviews with their tutors. These meetings follow a set format that changes as students move through the school and students indicate that they find these discussions very useful. Students reflect upon their personal strengths and weaknesses and on the academic progress that they have made over the intervening period. As a result, they have a very clear idea of how well they are progressing and targets are identified in order to help them to improve. This structured system of self-review helps students and tutors alike to monitor individual progress and to identify when additional support is needed.
53. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and for guiding curricular planning are satisfactory overall and good in some subjects. The senior staff and curriculum leaders keep good records of formal assessments and these are made available to teachers. Where assessment procedures are good, there is usually a corresponding linkage to good or very good levels of attainment. In subjects that make good use of assessment, such as design and technology, the teachers use effort grades and attainment numbers to involve the students in a discussion that builds on the student's own self-assessment and focuses on the areas of strengths and weaknesses. Targets are set for improvement and, as a result, the students know what they need to do to improve. Where assessment is unsatisfactory, for example in mathematics, marking and recording, though frequent, are not based on curricular targets but consist of ticks, praise and corrections. As a result, this assessment does not tell students how to develop their knowledge or understanding. In all subjects, oral assessment of the students during the lesson is good or very good. 'SuccessMaker' is used to provide additional assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and offer individual activities based on the student's achievement in Years 7 and 8.
54. The quality of care and welfare for students with special educational needs is very good. Students' needs are identified very well and the Code of Practice implemented. Review and movement up and down the stages on the register are monitored very well. The quality and care for students with statements are very good, for example those with visual or hearing impairment are effectively assessed and supported very well, and comments fed back to students and parents. Annual reviews meet requirements and attendance of parents at review meetings is very high. Parents and outside support specialists are also involved at all stages of assessment. The quality of support from external agencies is good. Students with English as an additional language receive very good care and welfare. There is effective assessment and their needs are supported well by specialist staff. The refugees are given good guidance and their needs are well met. There is increasing evidence of the guidance given to gifted and talented students and it is having a positive impact on attainment.
55. Procedures for promoting behaviour are very good. Members of staff provide very good examples of how to behave and they are very consistent in their expectations.

Students have a very good idea of what is, and what is not, acceptable. The school's high expectations are reflected in the very good behaviour seen during the inspection. There are close ties with external agencies and a wide range of different types of guidance is available for students who have particular problems. The police liaison officer is occasionally asked to talk to particular individuals and his timely intervention usually has a very positive effect upon their behaviour. The school's policy for social and educational support is very successful and students who are at risk of exclusion receive very good support. This support is reflected in a level of permanent exclusions that is below the national average. Procedures for dealing with bullying are very effective and parents and students are confident that such behaviour is dealt with firmly. Should students behave inappropriately, or be late to class, they may be placed on report or given a detention. This system of sanctions is very flexible and can be adapted to suit the individual misdemeanour.

56. The school devotes considerable time to the monitoring and promotion of attendance and current procedures are good. An electronic registration system enables the school to monitor overall trends in attendance, as well as individual tutor groups and students. Those who achieve perfect attendance over a given period receive a tangible reward, such as a cinema ticket or cash prizes. Although the school is already scrupulous in following up each and every unexplained absence, it is actively reviewing its procedures in order to identify and implement improvements. For example, the school currently requires written confirmation of the reasons for every absence. Despite the best efforts of the school, however, the note or letter may not be provided and the related absences cannot therefore be authorised. Despite the rigour of this system, the recorded level of unauthorised absences over the last school year is similar to the national average; this is a testament to the close collaboration between the education welfare officer and the year tutors.

### **Sixth form**

57. This school provides satisfactory academic and personal guidance and support for sixth-form students. Almost nine out of ten of those who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that they were helped to settle in and that the range of courses suits their talents and career aspirations well. Students feel well supported and indicate that teachers are very willing to help them if they are having difficulties with their work. They are granted considerable autonomy; they only have to come in to school when they have a lesson or tutorial. Although students sign in and out, they are not required to attend every registration. This does restrict the amount of personal support some students receive. It also makes it difficult to monitor easily the attendance of individual students. Health and safety procedures mirror those of the main school and are effective.
58. Parents are kept regularly informed of their children's progress. Comment within the students' reports, however, tends to refer to their attitude to their studies and provides little tangible information as to how they are getting on with their work and how they could improve. Students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that they have reservations about the way in which their work is assessed.
59. Students indicate that they would like to receive more advice about the subjects they should study if they are to follow their chosen career path and some students indicated that they did not feel they received sufficient guidance when choosing their sixth-form options.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

60. This school places great emphasis on working closely with parents and is keen to involve them as much as possible. Links with parents are good and the overwhelming majority supports their children well. Attendance at consultation meetings is very high and almost everyone comes along to the annual review day. Although some of the parents take their children out of school for family holidays, the majority do their best to ensure that their children attend regularly. Their encouragement and support motivate their children to work hard and achieve their very best.
61. This school enjoys a good reputation within the area and is regularly over-subscribed. Just over one quarter of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and their responses indicate that they are pleased with many aspects of the school's work. Views expressed by those who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting were also largely positive, although a few concerns were expressed. For example, although they feel that members of staff are approachable, some parents feel they receive insufficient information about the progress their child is making. Inspectors do not agree; the quality of information provided is good compared to similar schools. There are regular opportunities to meet with their children's teachers and the annual reports are very informative. In addition, the school has set up 'parental gateway' and parents with Internet access at home are able to access their children's academic and pastoral records. They are, for example, able to check that they have received their full complement of letters, see test results and details of their child's attendance. The school's newsletter also helps to keep parents well informed and the magazine, 'Millpost', provides plenty of interesting information about the performing arts.
62. Around one in six of those who voiced an opinion have misgivings about the limited amount of homework set and the closeness of the partnership between home and school. Inspectors do not agree with these concerns. The amount of homework is similar to that provided in other schools, although there is some variation in the amount, quality and marking of homework set. The partnership between home and school is constructive and mutually supportive. For example, around two-thirds of the parents of students in Year 7 have taken the opportunity to buy their own copy of recommended computer software. The work their children do at home can be sent to school electronically and this dovetailing of work helps them to maintain good progress across a range of subjects.
63. The impact of parents' involvement in the day-to-day life of the school is good. They help with extra-curricular clubs and in the library. The parent teacher association organises various social and fundraising events, such as the '500 lottery club'. Funds raised have recently been used to brighten up the corridors and to help various departments. For example, rugby shirts have been bought for the physical education department and CD-Roms have been bought for mathematics.

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

64. The leadership and management of the school are very good. There is a very clear educational direction to the work of the school and there is a consistent focus on raising standards, improving the quality of teaching and learning and improving the facilities on site. The leadership of the headteacher and of other key staff, including the school's business manager, is very good in focusing the school's drive for

improvement and of ensuring that it is successfully reflected in the school's ethos, the strategic planning and the day-to-day operations.

65. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good improvement in the focus of managers in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the work of the school. The drive to improve the quality of teaching has been successful overall. The result has been a significant reduction in the incidence of unsatisfactory teaching and a considerable rise in the proportion of teaching that is identified as very good or excellent. The school development plan 2000-2003 identified the implementation of effective teaching and learning as a priority and teaching has improved in comparison to that reported at the last inspection and, in most subjects, reflects the impact of both senior managers and curriculum team leaders. The quality of leadership and management in subjects such as the performing arts and physical education is very good and, in subjects such as mathematics, religious education, design and technology and ICT, is having a positive impact on the standards the students attain.
66. The senior management team is a combination of long-serving staff and others more recently appointed. The members of the team know and understand their responsibilities very well and work well as a cohesive and very effective team. The work of the senior management team has ensured that the school's performance management strategy has been implemented well and used to reinforce the drive for improved quality in the educational provision and the effective use of new technology. The senior management team uses assessment data well to identify trends and to identify target areas for improvement. There is very good quality information to determine and analyse progress towards targets set.
67. The governing body is heavily committed to its involvement in the school's work. Governors fulfil their role very well in determining the school's directions and priorities and they have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They play their part very well in holding the school to account but have not made sufficient progress in ensuring that statutory requirements are met. There has been excellent team-work between the governing body and school leaders in ensuring that many of the ambitious projects to improve facilities on site have been realised.
68. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads a strong, experienced and committed team of learning support teachers and teacher assistants, which provides a very good quality of care for students with special educational needs. He works with the inclusion co-ordinator to ensure that the school meets its commitments to all its students. He has developed very good links with the contributory primary schools and is fully involved in the information gathering process that eases the transfer from primary to secondary school. The school uses the local education authority's support services for students with English as an additional language. This operates from the students' support centre and there is effective liaison between the staff in the centre. The newly built accommodation offers an excellent base from which the team can work. It has very good resources, including 14 networked computers, a wide range of software and a very good range of text and reference books to support the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The special educational needs co-ordinator is responsible for disseminating information on the new Code of Practice to subject departments and for developing the important links between the student support centre and subject departments. There has been a good improvement in this since the last inspection but subject departments and class teachers do not yet play their full part in the school's provision for special

educational needs through appropriate planning of lessons to meet the differing needs. The increased organisational, administrative and clerical work demanded under the new Code of Practice is not adequately met by the current 2.5 hours per week of clerical support.

69. The school's development planning has improved well since the last inspection. There is good identification of the priorities for development and, overall, there has been good progress towards meeting targets. As yet, the action taken has not resulted in improved reported levels of attendance, sufficient improvement in the quality of sixth-form provision or sufficient availability of ICT resources to enable all departments to have appropriate access.
70. The school's management of its finances is excellent. The management of the budget is efficiently and effectively carried out. There is very careful linkage of the school's finances to plans for improvements. Despite occasional hitches during the inspection week, the school is very effective in its use of new technology. Principles of best value are applied very well. The business manager plays a very pro-active part both in school and with other local schools in ensuring that the school gets excellent value for money from its purchases. Some recent examples include the new indoor sports facilities and the cost of utilities. The cost of educating a student annually is average for secondary schools. The percentage of time teachers spend in contact with students is broadly average. All designated funds have been very effectively and efficiently directed to the purpose for which they are intended, for example towards staff professional development. The overall effectiveness of the school is good and it gives good value for money.
71. The accommodation is satisfactory and meets curriculum requirements. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement and most of the school is attractive in appearance, providing a good learning environment that is well decorated. Most corridors are bright and cheerful with good examples of students' work on display. There is good access for the disabled. The dining areas have been considerably improved and now provide a modern and attractive venue for students. Some areas, such as the performing arts suite, the new sports hall, the 'Windmill Theatre' and the learning support centre, are very good. The use of a CCT system has greatly improved security. Students are given relevant and up-to-date information through a series of video screens throughout the school, for example on events happening in school.
72. There are some unsatisfactory aspects. Although every attempt is made to ensure that subjects are timetabled together as closely as possible, some subjects such as English are still taught some distance away from their curriculum base. The continued existence of huts, despite good maintenance, requires staff to travel some distance for lessons. There are still problems with the art and design block, despite the upgrading carried out over the summer holidays.
73. Most departments have sufficient resources for their needs whilst some, such as music and art and design, are well resourced. The music department has extensive ICT resources and the art and design department possesses an excellent range of objects for observational drawings. The availability of facilities for ICT is limited for those studying food technology and humanities. There are good resources for students with special educational needs in physical education, but the department lacks larger equipment such as cricket nets and basketball hoops. There are insufficient textbooks in design and technology and history.

74. The library is well organised and attractively set out. There are good induction arrangements into the use of the library for students at the beginning of Year 7 and Year 10. The number of books in the library is in line with government guidelines and there is a good range of fiction. However, many of the books in subject sections do not reflect the current curriculum and examination syllabuses. Space in the library is limited and there is little monitoring of patterns of student use. Overall, it has a satisfactory impact on students' learning.
75. The overall level and quality of staffing across the school is very good, for example in support of students with special educational needs. Departments have a very good match of qualifications to subjects taught and this contributes well to the good quality of teaching. Teachers are mostly experienced. Governors are pleased with the quality of staffing and note that most teachers leave for promotion or to move to a place with less expensive housing. Recruitment of staff is currently not presenting as great a difficulty as in some areas nationally. The school benefits from its links with initial teacher training institutions, including the University of Brighton. Performance arts status is reflected by the addition of a dance specialist to support development of the curriculum area.

### **Sixth form**

76. There is clear educational direction to the work of the sixth form and the leadership is good. The governing body and senior staff have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and have taken good steps to remedy the weaknesses and build on the strengths. The requirement of the locally agreed syllabus that religious education is offered to sixth-formers is not met. The work in the sixth form satisfactorily reflects the school's aims and values and there is a similar drive to raise standards and the quality of teaching and learning as in the rest of the school.
77. Accommodation for the sixth-form work is unsatisfactory. Whilst accommodation in some departments, such as the performing arts, is very good, the overall condition of the sixth-form rooms is shabby and the study facilities are inadequate. The sixth-form library does not provide a stimulating learning environment.
78. The overall provision of staffing in the sixth form is very good. There is a very good match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum. The school's arrangement for performance management is good. Professional development for staff has been effective. Teachers have been well prepared for the demands of the new AS- and A2-level syllabuses. A satisfactory level of resources is available overall to support the work of students on sixth-form courses.
79. There is very good financial planning to ensure the cost-effectiveness of sixth-form provision. The costs and benefits have been carefully considered and reviewed by the school. The school is committed to improving and expanding its sixth-form provision, expanding numbers and the range of courses. It believes this is a worthwhile investment as do the inspection team. The governing body has a very good strategic plan for developing the sixth form and monitors the developing situation closely. Provision in the sixth form is satisfactory and provides satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. The governors should include in their post-inspection plan the way they intend to respond to the following issues in order to raise standards in the school. The governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards achieved by students in science and geography at GCSE by:

### Science

- (a) modifying the allocation of staff to double science groups at GCSE so that staff and students see one another more frequently;
- (b) providing more opportunities for students to develop their capabilities to do research and carry out independent investigations;

### Geography

- (e) providing greater opportunities for students to develop higher writing standards;
- (e) matching the work more closely to the abilities of the students;
- (e) using target setting more effectively to raise standards.

(Paragraphs 5, 6,195,106,108,125,127)

- (2) Improve students' attendance by:

- (a) changing school procedures as to the classification of absences to accurately reflect patterns of attendance;
- (b) identifying more directly the link between attendance and students' performance through reports and other communication with parents and students.

(Paragraphs 17, 56, 60)

- (3) Improving the range of opportunities to support the spiritual development of students by:

- (a) identifying and implementing opportunities across the subjects to support the development of students' spiritual development.

(Paragraph 45)

## Sixth form

- (1) Improve provision and raise standards in English by:

- (a) monitoring students' progress and using that information to make sure all students are aware of what is needed for them to make the progress of which they are capable;
- (b) setting different types of written work more frequently to aid students' progress;
- (c) making more appropriate class arrangements for the current Year 12 AS-level group.

(Paragraphs 12, 209, 210, 211, 213)

(2) Improve the sixth-form accommodation by:

- (a) redecorating and refurbishing the current sixth-form centre;
- (b) improving the study facilities, including the availability of ICT facilities.

(Paragraphs 77, 199)

(3) Improve the guidance given to students and the monitoring of their progress by:

- (a) making clear to students what guidance is to be given when choosing their options on entering and leaving the sixth form;
- (b) making more explicit to students and their parents what students need to do to improve and to obtain the grades they need;
- (c) senior managers evaluating both the effectiveness of the monitoring and guidance and students' perception of these;
- (d) increasing the requirement to attend registration sessions and improving the consistency of support given in personal, social and health education sessions.

(Paragraphs 57, 58, 59, 197)

(4) Provide religious education in the sixth form by:

following the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

(Paragraphs 49, 67, 76)

(5) Improve the range of learning opportunities and expectations of those students following vocational and GCSE re-sit courses by:

- (a) increasing the amount of taught time the students have and reviewing the viability of individual student's timetables;
- (b) increasing the opportunities to take subjects such as religious education, general studies and physical education.

(Paragraphs 49, 169)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	168
	Sixth form	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		55

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	7	48	65	37	11	0	0
Percentage	4	29	39	22	7	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	16	19	11	1	0	0
Percentage	4	33	39	22	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1526	164
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	214	15

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	28	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	152	7

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	14

<b>Student mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	99

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	153	144	297

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	110	102
	Girls	117	111	113
	Total	223	221	215
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (61)	74 (68)	72 (56)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (22)	50 (47)	39 (24)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	120	90
	Girls	128	114	94
	Total	217	234	184
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	73(61)	79 (78)	62 (65)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (16)	54 (54)	27 (29)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	141	131	272

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	64	130	135
	Girls	77	117	126
	Total	141	247	261
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	52 (52)	91 (91)	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 student	School	40.9
	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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	26	37	63
	Average point score per candidate	12.1	1.4	11.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	24	36	60	2	4	6
	Average point score per candidate	12.6	10.7	11.5	6	9	8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	0
	National		81

### ***Ethnic background of students***

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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	1286	81	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	35	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	3	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	10	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	9	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	10	0	0
Any other ethnic group	82	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	252	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	99.41
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.5

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

Total number of education support staff	49
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1471

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	22.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4,538,000
Total expenditure	4,230,000
Expenditure per student	2,539
Balance brought forward from previous year	328,000
Balance carried forward to next year	38,643

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.1
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.85
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	1635
Number of questionnaires returned	455

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	61	4	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	53	18	4	9
The teaching is good.	22	67	3	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	52	15	2	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	42	6	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	48	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	24	56	12	2	6
The school is well led and managed.	38	53	2	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	57	4	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	41	4	0	5

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents indicated that, overall, their children like school and that they make good progress whilst they are at the school. Behaviour in school is good, the quality of teaching is good and the school expects the students to work hard. Nearly all indicate that they would be comfortable approaching the school. They believe the school is well led and managed, provides an interesting range of activities and is positive in their child's personal development. A sizeable percentage does not believe their child gets the right amount of homework, or that they are well informed about their child's progress. A smaller percentage does not believe that the school works closely with parents.

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

## ENGLISH

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 is well above average.
- The high number of students entered for both English and English literature.
- Girls' attainment in the GCSE English examinations is above average.
- The success of the GCSE media studies option.

### Areas for improvement

- Boys' attainment in GCSE is below average.
- Cohesive teamwork and better departmental organisation.
- Greater consistency in the quality of teaching.

81. In 2001, students' results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. Boys did as well as girls in the tests, in contrast to their relative performance nationally. Results in English were higher than those in mathematics and science. The unconfirmed figures for 2002 show that standards at this stage have risen further with an increase in the percentage achieving Level 6 or better.
82. Results in GCSE English and English literature were also above the national figures in 2001. In 2002, there was a drop in attainment in both subjects, the unconfirmed figures showing English literature slightly below previously recorded national figures, with boys well below. In both examinations, girls do significantly better than boys. In media studies, a very successful option course now offered by the English department, standards are well above the national average. In 2001, 43 students took this examination, of whom 86 per cent attained grades at A\*-C.
83. Work seen during the inspection shows that overall levels of attainment are above the standards expected nationally. Last year's exercise books, submitted for scrutiny, showed satisfactory coverage of National Curriculum Programmes of Study, with some demanding texts being studied, a wide range of writing tasks and good understanding of genre. In Years 10 and 11, some well-presented coursework folders included a few essays of unusually high quality in the ideas and critical judgements expressed. However, where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, it has an adverse impact on standards attained.
84. There were clear links between teachers' preparation and input and students' learning and achievement. Although just over half the lessons seen were good or better, a fifth of the teaching was unsatisfactory and in these lessons students' response, interest and progress were below standard. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Not every teacher is requiring and marking regular pieces of writing and, three weeks into the term, some work by students in Year 9 had not been marked at all. In the better lessons in Years 7 to 9, good use was being made of features of the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy. There were clear objectives for the lesson, which were well understood by the class, brisk starter activities and consolidation of the learning in a final short review session. In a good lesson in Year 7, students were sharing their own book recommendations, introducing the class to a book by reading a chosen passage aloud, with teacher's comments relating this skilfully to other reading experiences. In a very good lesson in Year 8, students were able to recognise the sonnet form in a passage from

'Romeo and Juliet', the teacher developing their understanding by good use of her subject knowledge. In these and other good lessons, teachers were alert to the possibilities of making links, using analogies, drawing on their own reading and language experiences to enliven the lesson and extend students' range. Students respond eagerly and their achievement is good. The contribution of ICT across the department is satisfactory. The achievement of students with special educational needs, English as an additional language and refugees is good in relation to their starting point in the subject.

85. Where teaching was unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, lesson objectives were not always made clear and so the students were not always clear about what they were expected to do. Teachers had not thought sufficiently about how they could stimulate and sustain interest in the exercise or text being used and students were bored. Asked to write the opening paragraph of a horror novel, students in Year 9 were given no examples to read and discuss, nor was it explained to them that opening paragraphs do not necessarily indicate the nature of the story to come. There were books in the classroom which could have provided excellent illustrative material.
86. Struggling with a ballad writing exercise in Year 8, students in a lower attaining class lacked the clear step-by-step guidance which could have made the task meaningful to all of them. A Year 7 class read a play script as part of their work on myths and legends but, without adequate introduction and strategies for involving the whole class, the reading, which occupied most of the lesson, was unrewarding for many of the students.
87. The school's choice of grouping students in classes by ability as a method of meeting a variety of learning needs works well with good teaching. However, liaison with the learning support department, which was mentioned in the previous report, is still not good enough. Not all support teachers receive up-to-date lesson plans and information in advance. Students in lower attaining classes, however, take both the GCSE English examinations and respond well to high expectations. Opportunities to extend the range of higher attaining students are effectively used in their classes. A lively lower attaining class in Year 11 made good progress in understanding the nature of fact and opinion writing. The teacher helped them to draw on their own experiences and their reading, and they made the distinction with increasing confidence. Students were alert and involved throughout. The style, pace and vocabulary of a Year 11 lesson on an American novel were suitably targeted for a higher attaining group.
88. Methods for improving teaching and sharing best practice are not well developed, despite the recommendation made in the previous report that the team identity should be more firmly established.
89. Leadership and management are satisfactory in terms of staff deployment and examination procedures, but less so in overall organisation or the encouragement of effective team planning and unsatisfactory in respect of monitoring and evaluation of performance in the subject. Although there is a good English curriculum handbook, departmental meetings are infrequent, records of meetings are not well kept and there is no departmental development plan with training priorities and resource needs clearly identified.
90. English is making a considerable contribution to the work of the school as a whole and to its examination successes. A recent production of 'Macbeth', the annual 'Voices' production and the introduction of the new media studies course indicate

teachers' initiative and commitment. The very constructive response to feedback shown by the majority of teachers whose work was observed is a very encouraging indication of their will and capacity to improve further.

## Literacy

91. The school has developed a good policy for the development of literacy across all subjects of the curriculum and it is working well. The co-ordination of the strategy has been taken over by the deputy headteacher, newly-appointed in 2002 and working with the co-ordinator for English in Years 7 to 9.
92. There is abundant evidence that the other departments have taken the strategy seriously and made good use of the training they have had. Particularly good efforts have been made in subjects which do not necessarily have a literary or literacy emphasis, such as music and design and technology, where reading and writing skills are encouraged and there are regular checks on vocabulary, spelling and understanding. In science, the strategy has led to an expansion of reading for research. Key words are used in all subjects; they are usually well displayed and carefully incorporated into lesson planning and the teaching.
93. During the week of the inspection, the school and the parents' association held an evening meeting for parents on literacy and numeracy. The English literacy co-ordinator and the deputy headteacher had planned an excellent introduction to the literacy strategy, demonstrating ways in which parents can help their children to develop their literacy skills. This very useful session was well attended, and parents were shown the importance of their support and partnership in the literacy work of the school.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and attainment is above that expected nationally.
- The curriculum leader is a good role model as a teacher and leads a collaborative approach to development planning.
- Teachers offer a good level of support, both to each other and to their students.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment of students' standards with greater use and analysis of data, and setting formative curriculum targets with students.
- Increase the use of ICT to support the teaching of mathematics.
- Develop a consistent approach to teaching calculation that builds on students' prior experience and reflects the Key Stage 3 Strategy mathematics' strand.

94. Standards in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and they have improved in line with the national trend since 1997. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of students at Level 5, Level 6 and the average point scores are well above the national average. In the unconfirmed 2002 national test results, boys' standards were higher than girls'. This was particularly significant at the grades above those expected where 37 per cent of the boys achieved Level 7 or 8 compared with 25 per cent of the girls. This was not evident in previous years' results.

95. GCSE results are in line with the national averages in the period 1997-2001 for the percentage of A\*-C grades and passes at A\*-G grades. Since the last inspection, this percentage has risen in line with national trends to 50 per cent in 2000 but dropped by two per cent in 2001. In the unconfirmed 2002 GCSE results, this percentage rose again by one per cent. The achievement of both boys and girls was in line with the national average in 2001, with boys attaining better results than the girls.
96. In lessons in Years 7 to 9, the standard of work seen was above that expected and was matched to the ability and needs of the students. In lessons in Years 10 and 11, standards were in line with those expected nationally. This is similar to standards attained in the last tests and examinations. Since the last inspection, the department has increased the proportion of higher attaining groups in Year 10 from one to three and has developed a system of early entry for students entering GCSE at the intermediate tier. Whilst the potential improvement in attainment from these initiatives has not yet been seen, expectations of the students have been raised in these classes. A poor level of calculating skills and lack of feel for number in many students hinder their overall achievement in mathematics. In most lessons, calculation is taught as a series of algorithms and does not build on the students' prior knowledge. In three lessons, the teacher acted as a poor role model by resorting to a calculator for a calculation that should have been demonstrated mentally or with jottings.
97. In Years 7 to 9, students' achievement is good. The introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in the school year 2000-2001 as a pilot, and subsequent collaborative development of the scheme of work, has improved achievement through better structured and planned lessons. The department has developed or purchased a good range of activities and resources, which are helping to make lessons varied and engaging.
98. Students with English as an additional language are well integrated and achieved equally to others in lessons observed. Students with special educational needs also achieve well with appropriate strategies to meet their needs. A low attaining set in Year 7 made good progress because of the very good relationships that have already been established between teacher and students and between the students themselves. Students were confident to come to the board and explain their understanding of addition. This class has also been helped by the pragmatic adapting of the 'Springboard 7' materials.
99. The quality of teaching is good overall, particularly in Years 7 to 9, although the teaching of calculation is unsatisfactory. In two lessons in Year 8, teaching was very good whilst, in two in Years 10 and 11, teaching was unsatisfactory. In the lessons where teaching was very good, a very good learning environment had been created in which students were confident to discuss their learning, the students were challenged by the teacher and the lessons moved at a good pace with teachers using a variety of activities and resources. In one Year 8 lesson, students developed a good understanding of sequences through the teacher's challenging questions and skilful development of the students' answers. Where lessons were unsatisfactory, it was due to poor planning leading to work not matched to the needs of the students or to a very slow pace of learning. All teachers are good at circulating round the class while students are working, helping individuals with particular problems, conducting the in-class oral assessment of achievement and identifying difficulties. The written assessment is not as good, despite the work being marked frequently;

most of this consisted of ticks or complimentary comments without indicating to students what is good about their work or where and how it could be improved. No comments related to specific curriculum targets. There is insufficient use of ICT in the department. The department does not follow the guidance in the Key Stage 3 framework to explore geometry using ICT and misses many other opportunities to enhance the students' understanding of mathematics that ICT offers.

100. The curriculum leader has a good vision for the subject's development and the quality of leadership and management is good. The department has a good capacity and commitment for further improvement. The quality and detail in planning is significantly different in Years 7 to 9 compared with Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, there has been a considerable review over the last three years of the department's provision. The collaboratively produced scheme supports teaching with a variety of activities and clear teaching objectives for each lesson. For Years 10 and 11, the guidance is less useful. Accommodation is adequate, though some classrooms are too small for large classes. The department is satisfactorily resourced and the head of department plans the best use of this funding well. Teachers in the mathematics department give up their time to support students with their mathematics both formally in the mathematics clinics and informally at other times. This support is valued by the students.

## **Numeracy**

101. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. The introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy as a pilot two years ago has had an impact on some, but not all, departments and is yet to have sufficient impact on students' calculating skills. The lack of department policy for the teaching of calculation and the poor modelling of calculating strategies by teachers lead to students using algorithms without understanding and an over-reliance on the use of calculators. Students in Years 10 and 11 are given insufficient practice in basic skills, and levels of numeracy let some students down, even when they thoroughly understand concepts and methods of GCSE topics.
102. In some Years 7 and 8 lessons, teachers provide students with the opportunities to demonstrate their prior understanding of number work. This approach, however, is not consistent across the department. A numeracy presentation to parents, presented by the local education authority's Key Stage 3 Strategy mathematics consultant, gave useful information to parents and provided them with strategies for helping their children develop calculating skills and a feel for number. Few of these strategies offered were evident in their children's mathematics work.
103. In other subjects, students demonstrate good application of numeracy skills and teachers have an awareness of the need to reinforce these numeracy skills through their subject. In a history lesson studying the measurement of time, a class discussion as to how the students could calculate the number of seconds in a year led to the good use of calculation strategies and to the use of standard form to express large numbers. In science, ICT and design and technology, students are encouraged to develop their numeracy skills, particularly with the presentation of data.
104. There has been an audit of numeracy across the curriculum and curriculum areas have identified their numeracy needs. The head of the mathematics department contributed to a whole-school in-service day on the subject of numeracy, but the impact has been inconsistent across subjects.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above those expected nationally.
- Learning of high attaining students is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in double and single science courses in Years 10 and 11 are below those expected nationally.
- Current learning overall in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is inconsistent.
- Curriculum arrangements for double and single GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Use of ICT.

105. Standards in science since 1997 have varied considerably. Standards have risen in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 but fluctuated greatly. Standards have fallen in GCSE taken by Year 11, although students taking three separate sciences attain in line with national expectations whilst those taking single and double awards have attained well below the national expectation. Overall, achievement also varies too widely. Achievement during Years 7, 8 and 9 is good, whilst achievement during Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
106. Most Year 11 students take double award GCSE. Their results in 2001 were well below the national average for the percentage attaining A-C grades. A group of high attaining students attain well, taking a set of three separate science GCSEs. Some low attaining students take single award GCSE, with results below the national average. The unconfirmed results in 2002 indicate a similar picture. Overall, the achievement of students during Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. The same students make greater progress in English and mathematics. The proportion with ungraded GCSEs is too high in the single and double award courses. The percentage of students reaching grade C or better in these two courses is too low.
107. In 2001, the results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Comparable results were attained in the unconfirmed national tests in 2002. The results were much better than the results in 2000. However, the improvement in the school's results in 2001 in English and mathematics was better than for science for the same students. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. The improvements apply to both boys and girls. The increases include significant improvement in the results for higher attaining students.
108. The standard of work and students' achievements seen during the inspection were in line with standards attained in recent years. Science provision is not consistent across year groups and this has an adverse impact on the standards and achievement of some students. For example, some Year 10 lower attaining students attained well taking account of their potential, and they felt very positive about their achievements. They confidently used good knowledge about the periodic table to identify charges on ions, and then worked out chemical formulas. At other times, similar students in Year 11 made insufficient effort and learned little. As they planned a scientific investigation about electrical resistance, most just gave the simplest detail, some not even trying to make sure their test was to be fair, and few attempting to explain what principles

applied. Similarly, variations exist in the attainment of gifted and higher attaining students. In Years 10 and 11, the higher attaining students, taking three separate sciences, understand even the hardest GCSE science concepts very well. However, sometimes higher attaining students in Year 9 make unsatisfactory progress, as happened when the work was presented with a lack of planning and the challenge of the tasks presented was too low.

109. Overall, progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have risen in Years 7 to 9. However, they have fallen in Years 10 and 11, and the quality of teaching is now lower for those older students. There is now some excellent and very good teaching in Years 7 to 11, which was not reported in the earlier inspection. Leadership is now better, such as seen in the more extensive monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
110. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school, as a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The range is from excellent to unsatisfactory. The proportion of unsatisfactory learning in Years 10 and 11 is too high. This is one reason for the unsatisfactory attainment and achievement during those years. Teachers in Years 10 and 11 vary in how determined they are in tackling the instances where learners lack interest, concentration and intellectual effort. For example, sometimes, planning lacks detail, or student inertia is not challenged. Some teachers tackle the weaknesses in learning effectively. For example, with a class of lower attaining students, the teacher planned a variety of ways by which to insist that students thought hard, such as by using key words, routines about behaviour and re-visiting the new work in a summative test. In all years, higher attaining students learn well and sometimes very well, responding to the usually high expectations of the expert teachers. They make strong gains in knowledge and understanding, maintain a strong intellectual effort and are able to work independently. With Years 7 to 9, most teachers promote high standards of behaviour and are able to focus students' enthusiasm effectively. They make sure they know how well students are learning and give good feedback to help improvements. Even so, some teaching is unsatisfactory because planning and assessment are weak, so that students make insufficient progress. Overall, the quality of teachers' marking varies too much, from excellent to unsatisfactory. A widespread strength, for all years, is that teachers regularly set, and then enforce, useful homework. The learning of students with special educational needs, the refugees and those students with English as an additional language is similar to that of their peers.
111. Other factors have a bearing on standards. The process of arranging classes by the ability of the students is used well by most teachers. A weakness is that some arrangements, with Years 10 and 11, place a class with a teacher only once a week so that teachers are not able to establish good habits of learning. The allocation of expert teachers to classes for top attaining students is leading to very impressive outcomes. Leadership and management procedures are very thorough and are satisfactory overall. Staff track standards and know about the extent of inconsistent practice. Evaluations are made of the extent of improvement. The teachers are well aware that there is insufficient impact of ICT on learning and are revising the scheme of work to identify appropriate opportunities.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The leadership of the curriculum leader is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall.
- Attainment of students in GCSE examinations is well above the national average.
- The range of the curriculum.

### Areas for improvement

- The number and use of computers in art and design.
- The accommodation.
- The links with expressive and performing arts subjects.

112. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are broadly average, with a significant number attaining standards above those expected nationally. By the end of Year 11, the students have made very good progress and standards are above average. Students on the register of special educational needs are able to achieve a similar standard of work as their peers. They go on to success in the GCSE examination. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination in 2001 was significantly above the national average. There has been a steady increase in this proportion since 1999 and results for 2002 show a further increase. The numbers opting for GCSE have increased significantly in the current Years 10 and 11.
113. In work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9, students have benefited from the good teaching of a wide range of art skills and have made good progress since entry. They are quick to pick up techniques from the very good demonstrations of teachers' personal skills. This is especially noticeable in the very good self-portraits they work on, showing how much they have learned about facial proportion since entry at Year 7. It is also evident in the impressive displays of students' work in classrooms and public areas. The displays cover a wide range of printing processes, as well as painting, drawing, modelling, construction and carving. During discussion, the students make effective contributions and learn about the life and work of a broad range of art and crafts from many countries and cultures. Standards of annotation in most sketchbooks are high and work is presented attractively in an individual way. They show the good progress made in the development of their practical and critical studies over Years 7 to 9. Examination coursework in Years 10 and 11 is well developed and sustained, taking students deeper into the life and works of the artists they choose to study. They research from books and the Internet, making very good progress over the course. Higher attaining students in Year 10 note the folds, angles and planes in the still life construction they observe. They use wax crayon to convey light and shade in their wax resistant watercolour studies. Lower attaining students lack observational skills and tend to draw outlines in wax, leaving solid areas of colour that lack tone and depth. Students in Year 11 extend their knowledge of great artists through research and utilise it to paint, model, print and construct their own interesting studies based on that research. Their overall level of achievement in lessons is high and their sketchbooks and portfolios show very good progress being made over Years 10 and 11.
114. The response of students to lessons is very good. Students are very positive and well behaved in every lesson and they rise well to the encouragement for them to

take responsibility for their work and the resources they use. They enjoy lessons and make positive contributions to discussions.

115. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The well-qualified teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their specialist field. They are able to convey their knowledge and skill in a simple, clear and straightforward way that is accessible to the wide range of students. They plan to the Key Stage 3 Strategy lesson structure and give very effective demonstrations of their own skills in introductory sessions. They set high standards in the lessons and have high expectations of the work and behaviour of students. They are positive in evaluating students' work and enjoy very good relationships with them, ensuring a pleasant, productive and creative environment for learning.
116. The curriculum leader has a clear sense of where she wants the department to go and leads a strong team in the direction of improving standards. Leadership and management are very good. The very good curriculum is taught in unsatisfactory accommodation, where matters of concern over health and safety were raised during the inspection. The department makes very good provision for the moral, social and cultural development of students. The use of computers for art and design is increasing and it has a good impact on learning, but the department is not well resourced for it. The department makes an excellent contribution to the overall presentation of the school, through the number of excellent displays of work in corridors and halls. Since 2000-2001, students from a nearby special school have joined the department on GCSE courses and have obtained very good results. The present position of the department within the design and technology faculty does not enable it to link up and make its full contribution to the performing and expressive arts departments of the school.
117. The department has made a good improvement in standards from the previous inspection. The gap in performance between boys and girls has narrowed significantly and both teaching and the response of students to lessons have improved.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Examination performance overall at GCSE is above average.
- Standards in electronics are consistently above average.
- Good teaching overall.
- Good assessment procedures and practice.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop further expertise in using ICT, especially CAD/CAM across all areas.
- Implement the student booklets throughout Years 7 to 9.
- Upgrade the accommodation and improve the display areas.

118. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above those expected nationally and reflect standards in the 2002 teacher assessments. Girls usually do better than boys, especially for those attaining the higher grades. Students achieve well from variable attainment on entry and make good progress from Years 7 to 9. Practical work is usually good and the above average design folders are neatly presented. Good work was seen in the candle holder project in Year 9 which looked at development,

materials and construction methods, and in the very good use of computer-aided design in a jewellery project and good use of colour and shading techniques in a Year 7 project on health foods. Work which is below average is weaker in that it lacks depth in research, poorer production quality and some work is unfinished, such as in evaluations.

119. Standards of work in the present Year 11 are above those expected nationally and are similar to the standards in the 2001 GCSE results, where targets were exceeded in most subject specialisms. The unconfirmed 2002 results showed a continued improvement in all subjects except resistant materials where performance was lower than in 2001. Electronic products, taken mainly by higher attaining students, perform consistently to a very good standard, well above the national average. Food technology results also improved considerably in the unconfirmed 2002 results, where average performance has been the norm hitherto. Results in the short courses are also consistently above the national average. In child development, standards match the national average.
120. All students, including those with learning or behavioural difficulties, integrate well and make good progress with the majority of students achieving success at examination level. Students involved in the design and technology 'focus group' are working at a satisfactory level overall with good practical skills being developed. Very good work was seen in Year 11 electronics in the security alarm project, with good analysis of user needs. Practical products were also of a very good quality. In Year 10 food technology, good work was seen in a project researching diabetes and food allergies, with good written work and informative drawings. Weaker work was mainly associated with poorer presentational skills, some drawings in pen and not pencil, and lack of detail, such as a lack of labelled drawings, featuring in the work.
121. Student attitudes are good overall. They work well in lessons and settle to tasks quickly which enables the teachers to begin lessons in a constructive way. Students work well in pairs or groups, and contribute positively to lessons. The National Literacy Strategy is very well supported, with technical language being used effectively. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and students cope well with subject requirements. ICT skills are good and used effectively to communicate in a variety of ways in students' work, although access to facilities is limited. Control is successfully undertaken in Years 7 to 9.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with a small proportion of lessons having very good and satisfactory teaching. In the better lessons, learning is accelerated and good progress made because teachers use good subject knowledge to develop or expand ideas, use effective teaching strategies, make good use of time and resources and have good student management. The use of assessment practice is a good feature in many lessons. A Year 9 textiles lesson looking at bag design, a lesson where historical and cultural values are investigated in jewellery design and a Year 11 lesson where self-assessment is used effectively in raising standards are some examples of good teaching having a positive effect on students' learning. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features but can, on occasion, lack challenge for the range of students' ability in the class, or where insufficient use is made of students' prior knowledge in the lesson planning.
123. Leadership is good and management is effective. There is a shared vision for improvement. There is good documentation and good planning and relevant schemes of work are in place. The assessment policy is good and procedures are used in raising standards. The application of these to all subjects within the

department is not sufficiently consistent. There is good practice in monitoring students' work, including book and folder reviews, and students receive regular feedback about their performance against subject criteria. The student work booklets are a good feature but could be implemented throughout Years 7 to 9. The use of ICT, including CAD/CAM, requires further development to build on the good work seen. There is a gender imbalance in some subjects, particularly electronics and graphics. The accommodation is rather cramped and in need of general upgrading. Display of work can be difficult and safety lines are not marked on floor areas around some machinery. Resources are satisfactory but there is a shortage of textbooks, ICT equipment in food technology and a lack of computerised sewing machines in textiles.

124. Improvements since the last inspection include food technology in place of home economics in Years 10 and 11, electronics and computer control now well established and a computer network installed. The department is involved in the national Greenpower initiative for battery powered vehicles and is achieving considerable success in this venture. A good feature is the participation of both girls and boys in this scheme.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers are well qualified and experienced.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE are well below the national average.
- The improved use of target setting to have an impact on student attainment.
- More frequent, formative and rigorous marking.
- Increasing the monitoring and evaluation of teachers' marking, assessment and recording.
- Matching the work set to the needs of higher and lower attaining students.
- Developing the use of writing to demonstrate understanding of new work.

125. At GCSE in 2001, almost all students entered gained an A\*-G grade. Fewer students gained the higher A\*-C grade than they did nationally. Students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, attained less well in geography than they did in their other subjects. Girls attained higher results than the boys. Since the last inspection, the subject has not kept up with the national trend of improving attainment, especially at GCSE. There has not been sufficient improvement since the last inspection.

126. Students join the school with lower than expected skills and knowledge in geography. Progress in rectifying these deficiencies is good and, by the end of Year 9, standards are in line with expectations. Students in Year 7 presented their work on mapping skills with care. They understood conventional signs and used scales and co-ordinates confidently. Year 8 students learnt new work about equatorial rainforests well. They had a good grasp of specialist vocabulary and could explain terms like 'canopy'. They accurately differentiated physical, social and economic data for different countries. By Year 9, students can empathise with issues which give rise to conflict between different interest groups in their study of National Parks.

They used their enhanced geographical knowledge well to support arguments for and against developments in areas such as the New Forest.

127. In Year 11, students recalled earlier learning well and gave good oral responses and showed standards in line with national expectations. This is an improvement on the results reported in the unconfirmed 2002 GCSE results. Work on population pyramids and relative birth and death rates in the demographic transition model showed that graph interpretation and analysis skills are developed well. Students have good opportunities to develop responsibility for the organisation and presentation of their work and research. Year 11 students, discussing the recent earthquake in Dudley, showed good knowledge of tectonic activity and the Richter Scale. They use terms like 'epicentre' with understanding and make good links to earlier work on the Kobe earthquake. Scrutiny of exercise books shows that some students have an insufficient record of work to serve them as a basis for examination preparation. Standards in oral work are satisfactory but supplementary questioning reveals some lack of depth and security of knowledge. In their presentations, students show very good learning of technical vocabulary and have a good understanding of how prevailing winds and geology contribute to erosion in East Anglia.
128. The quality of teaching and learning observed was good. Lessons had good pace and students worked well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding and, combined with their experience, these factors have a positive impact on the good learning in lessons. The subject is well resourced and activities are varied and these have beneficial impacts on students' learning. Teachers have high expectations of most students but some tasks are undemanding and, at worst, limit the progress of higher attaining students. In some lessons, the classroom management is not sufficiently robust to ensure that students cover all that has been planned. Students with special educational needs are supported sufficiently, can study the full curriculum and their learning is satisfactory. Good supplementary support materials are being introduced. Those students with English as an additional language learn well with additional support in Years 10 and 11 and, elsewhere, their progress is satisfactory. Teachers use questions skilfully to check understanding and give clear explanations of key ideas, new techniques and subject vocabulary. Relationships and the behaviour of boys and girls are good and promote good and enjoyable learning. Opportunities have been increased for students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The foot and mouth crisis restricted opportunities for fieldwork planned last year and current opportunities for using ICT are limited by the availability of facilities. New technologies are used very well to give students access to up-to-date information. Literacy development is supported by well-developed resources. There are insufficient opportunities for students to write, thereby explaining and consolidating new learning. Opportunities to develop numeracy are good. Students have experience of a wide range of graphical techniques. Students are given good opportunities to develop elements of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects in geography. Homework is set regularly and, in the marked work, teachers do indicate to students how well they are doing and what to do to improve.
129. The leadership and management of geography are satisfactory. The department is well staffed and well organised. Action is being taken to raise standards at GCSE. The curriculum leader has a clear vision of the direction in which the department needs to develop and is leading the drive to raise standards. A programme of syllabus revision and resource updating and enhancement is well under way and is

being effective. Monitoring of teaching and of standards attained has not had sufficient impact on standards attained at GCSE.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching, leading to good learning by many students.
- The good motivation of students.
- Good leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Improving the quality of marking to give students a clearer idea of how they can improve their work.
- Improving access to computers so that the use of ICT can be made a more integral part of lesson planning.

130. Standards of students by the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations, as was confirmed by the teacher assessments in 2001. These standards represent good achievement for students, including those with special educational needs and more able students, since the current Year 9 joined the school with levels of knowledge and understanding below national expectations, whereas the current Year 7 have joined with a higher level of knowledge and skills. Students develop a good understanding of key developments in periods of British history as well as other themes such as the history of the black peoples of America or the Renaissance. By the end of Year 9, students begin to understand how to discriminate between different causes and consequences when considering an event like the Civil War, as well as an understanding of how to investigate developments in everyday life, for example the impact of changes in industry.
131. The GCSE results for 2001 and unconfirmed results for 2002 showed standards in Year 11 close to the national average, although with girls achieving better than boys in the A\*-C range. The inspection confirmed that standards of those of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, are, overall, in line with expectations. Students make satisfactory progress in developing an understanding of developments over time when investigating a topic such as medical practice, whilst work on the Devils Dyke shows a growing confidence in evaluating evidence. The inspection did not reveal a significant difference in attainment by gender.
132. The quality of teaching and learning in history throughout the school is good, and there were no unsatisfactory lessons seen. Amongst the good characteristics of the teaching is the effective use of resources, both written and visual, as witnessed, for example, in Year 11 lessons on the development of nineteenth century surgical techniques. These resources, including graphic illustrations, interest the students and help their understanding. Teachers also encourage research and independent learning skills, as when students in Year 9 investigated nineteenth century American slavery from a range of books. Very good classroom management, focused questioning to reinforce and extend understanding and good use of GCSE assessment criteria to show students how to improve are common features in motivating students to work hard and achieve well. Marking of work is less effective, particularly for students in Years 7 to 9, since it often gives no real indication of how they can achieve a higher standard.

133. Leadership and management in history are good. The department is staffed by experienced specialists, who have successfully remedied some of the issues identified in the previous inspection, for example the provision of greater opportunities for extended writing. These and other measures are helping to improve standards of literacy, whilst numeracy skills are tackled through the analysis of historical data. A range of visits broadens the history curriculum. There is insufficient use of computers as a teaching and learning aid, due to poor availability of facilities, and accommodation for history is dispersed. However, overall, this is a developing department, with rising standards and good use of monitoring and evaluation of lessons, and there has been good progress since the previous inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision for discrete information and communication technology is **very good**, but entitlement in some subjects needs developing.

### Strengths

- Students attain examination results well above the national average at GCSE and make good progress.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Students' motivation, attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Record keeping is very good and aids teaching and learning.
- Learning through the Internet is being used and developed effectively.
- Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is rigorous.

### Areas for improvement

- Marking across Years 7 to 9 needs to be more consistent.
- All subjects need to assess and report students' ICT capability.

134. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments of the percentage of students achieving the national expectation or better rose from 73 per cent in 2000 to 81 per cent in 2001. Girls and boys achieved equally well. In Year 11, GCSE passes at A\*-C grades improved from 52 per cent in 2000 to 77 per cent in 2001. The 2001 GCSE figure was well above the national average. In 2001, there were 35 distinctions, 28 merits and one pass in the ICT certificate of achievement. The pass rate for GCSE business studies and information studies has been 100 per cent for both years. In a recent Year 10 GNVQ unit examination, students achieved a 97 per cent pass rate, with 74 per cent at distinction or merit. Students make good progress in these subjects and very good progress in Years 10 and 11.

135. By the end of Year 9, students have made good progress, from a low starting point on entry in Year 7, to arrive at above average standards. In Year 7, students gain a good understanding of the use of 'Publisher'. They are able to use a wizard, import text and images confidently and evaluate their work as it progresses. Year 8 students can add data to a spreadsheet and use formulae to arrive at calculations, whilst Year 9 students consider logos and typefaces when creating a breakfast cereal promotion. They are able to use enhancement tools to design eye-catching PowerPoint slides. Their work contributes well to their literacy and numeracy standards. Special educational needs students achieve well, as do gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11. It was not possible to make a judgement about students with English as an additional language or the refugees.

136. Standards seen in the work in Years 10 and 11 in GNVQ classes are significantly above national expectations. Year 10 students use an e-learning program to develop

communication skills. They are able to compare and analyse commercial publications and understand the importance of a target audience, before producing 'flyers' of professional quality. Year 11 students produce multimedia presentations after reviewing commercial websites. They can design very good presentations which include quality images, enhancements and hyperlinks in their slides. Students are very confident, work independently on their projects and put considerable effort into coursework tasks. Their attitudes and behaviour were very good overall and excellent in some lessons seen.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and good in Years 7 to 9. This reflects teachers' very good subject knowledge, planning and confident teaching skills. Lessons begin with good introductions, usually using projectors and interactive whiteboards where available. Considerable teaching time is saved by the use of new technology and students learn quickly. Students concentrate on their tasks throughout lessons, which end well with homework set. Coursework for subjects in Years 10 and 11 is marked well with individual feedback provided for improvement. All students are fully involved in lessons, make at least good progress and are monitored well in lessons.
138. Students are keen to learn and enjoy the benefits of using high quality equipment. This enthusiasm is particularly so in music where demanding state of the art technology is inspiring them. Many use the Internet well to improve coursework. After-school clubs are very popular and are oversubscribed. Students are polite, friendly and have mature attitudes to learning.
139. The department is well led and managed by a knowledgeable curriculum team leader. He is supported by a hard working team of teachers, technicians and a network manager. A very detailed development plan is moving the subject forward, utilising emerging technologies to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning throughout the school. Departmental documentation is very detailed and of high quality. The department has good links with universities.
140. Much progress has been made since the last report. ICT is now taught discretely to all students throughout Years 7 to 11. Control technology is now part of the design and technology curriculum. A very detailed central system for recording students' discrete entitlement is now in place. However, other subjects do not input into this system and a small number of subjects are not planning for or providing sufficient use of these facilities and students' skills in their own work.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning is good overall and good in Years 7 to 9.
- The strong focus on helping all students give of their best.
- The contribution to the development of literacy skills.
- Well thought-out schemes of work.

### Areas for improvement

- Sharing of good practice more uniformly across the curriculum team.
- The development of reading skills.
- The use of ICT.
- Ensuring rigour in all aspects of assessment.

141. Standards of work at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Students' results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show a rising trend from 1999-2001 with results above the national average. Results in 2002 show a dip. Girls outperform boys, but by less than the national average. Students of all levels of ability make satisfactory progress with most gains being made in writing. The higher ability German and Spanish classes progress faster and reach the same level as their French counterparts in Year 9. The emphasis in all languages on developing grammatical awareness makes a good contribution to literacy. The contribution to numeracy is more limited. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress although individual education plans are not sufficiently specific to the subject. Students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
142. Results in French GCSE examinations between 1999 and 2001 were just above the national average. There was a slight drop in the unconfirmed results for this year, 2002. German results since 1999 have always been well above average, while results in Spanish in 2001 were well above the national average. This year boys outperformed girls in Spanish; both groups of students attained at levels well above the national average for their gender. The evidence from the work scrutiny and the lessons observed showed that the performance of middle and higher attaining students across the three languages is comparable.
143. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 in all languages and also in Years 10 and 11 in German and Spanish; in the latter years, it is satisfactory in French – the major language. Thoughtful planning, skilful matching of work to students' needs and the ability to gain their active participation at an early juncture characterised the best lessons. In a Year 9 Spanish lesson, a teacher-led survey and carefully sequenced oral activities of increasing difficulty accelerated student learning and enabled them to gain confidence in using the language productively. Brisk pace, high expectations and extensive foreign language use exploited their positive attitudes and enjoyment in learning to the full. The students achieve satisfactorily through the systematic acquisition of vocabulary and structures for writing and listening exercises, although the latter is rarely formally tested and there is no evidence of wider reading materials. Note-taking skills are good and homework is used to consolidate and sometimes extend learning. In a Year 10 Spanish class, a lively and humorous presentation reinforced students' learning of key words for an oral task, while in a Year 11 German lesson, a structured worksheet helped them gain confidence to speak and write longer sentences. By the end of Year 11, middle and higher attaining students in all languages can use a range of tenses, state opinions and give reasons. Their writing is sometimes re-drafted on their own initiative using ICT. A great deal of effort is invested in developing students' written coursework which motivates lower attaining students to see most tasks through to completion. In those lessons which were satisfactory, time was used less well and activities sometimes lacked the variety and pace needed to keep students actively engaged.
144. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum team has a clear aspiration to enable students of all levels of ability to achieve well, supported by well-designed schemes of work closely aligned to National Curriculum requirements. At present, they are participating in the new Key Stage 3 Modern Foreign Language Strategy. Assessment to set personal targets and curriculum planning has hitherto been satisfactory, likewise the impact of procedures to monitor effectively the work of colleagues. Regular trips abroad enhance linguistic skills for many students.

145. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The curriculum team has raised standards in Spanish in Years 8 and 9 and at GCSE in French and German. Parents are provided with more useful information about students' attainment in the newer reports. The previous reading programme, however, no longer exists and students now have inadequate access to ICT facilities for language lessons and this has an unsatisfactory impact on students' learning.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The good quality of teaching overall and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The standards achieved by students at GCSE, which are well above average.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular musical activities which are excellent.
- The accommodation and resources.
- The leadership and management of the department by the head of music are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work and lesson plans do not specify clearly enough the provision for students with special educational needs and English as an additional language.
- Students are not given sufficient opportunities to listen to, compose and perform music from non-western cultures.

146. In 2001, GCSE results at A\*-C grades were well above the national average, as they have been since 1997. Students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above national expectations. They have a very good understanding of a range of musical techniques and how these can be used in their own compositions. They can analyse music critically, using correct musical terminology, and perform confidently to a high standard. Students use music technology sensitively and with great technical skill. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve well in this subject and gifted and talented students achieve very well overall.
147. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above expected standards. Most students can perform at the keyboard using appropriate fingering, they sing enthusiastically with good diction and a reliable sense of pitch and they are able to use ICT effectively to create their own compositions.
148. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed in lessons was very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7 to 9, with examples of excellent teaching and learning being seen. Teaching was very good in the two instrumental lessons seen. Where teaching is good or better, teachers use effective questioning and clear explanations to enable students to develop their understanding of musical concepts and techniques. Teachers are also very good at using their own considerable musical skills to illustrate musical ideas and to provide stimuli for students' own work. Attractive and well-planned worksheets are used to structure time spent working in groups. A particularly commendable aspect of the department's teaching is its encouragement of vocal work across Years 7 to 11. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, students began by listening to a challenging piece of modernist music. This was followed by an inspiring demonstration by the teacher of how the voice can be used in unconventional ways, resulting in students producing group improvisations of a very high standard using their own voices. The very good attitudes demonstrated in this lesson are typical of students' very positive attitudes to music throughout the

school. The department's policy is that homework is not set regularly during Years 7 to 9, but arises from the topics being covered.

149. The music department, as part of a performing arts faculty, supports an excellent range of extra-curricular groups involving many students. A samba band, for example, has over 100 members, including many who do not have formal instrumental tuition. There are two major stage productions each year and a large number of choirs, bands and orchestras that perform in school, in the local community and undertake international tours, all to considerable critical acclaim. Over 26 per cent of students receive instrumental lessons in school; more than double the national average. Regular extended visits by professional musicians further enrich the music curriculum for many students, for example the Brodsky quartet during the inspection.
150. The management of the department by the head of music is very good and has resulted in the department making good progress since the last inspection. Liaison between individual members of the department is good, enabling ideas for effective teaching to be shared. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have a good impact on continuing improvement. Revised schemes of work have been developed which closely integrate composing, performing and listening and the use of ICT. However, the scheme of work does not provide sufficient opportunities for students to work with music of non-western cultures and does not set out clearly enough the ways in which the needs of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language are to be met.
151. The department has excellent resources and accommodation, including two recording studios, a large number of computers with professional-standard software and attractive, well-equipped practice rooms.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in Years 7 to 11 is above the standards expected nationally.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Students' achievement is good.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching across the department and the activities to ensure consistent coverage of all strands of the National Curriculum.
- Planned opportunities for literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of their level of performance in Years 7 to 9.

152. The unconfirmed GCSE results for students in Year 11 in 2002, where 75 per cent of students attained A\*-C grades, was an increase on the 63 per cent attained in 2001 and continued the rising trend in GCSE results. The 2001 results were above the national average. Girls' and boys' results were similar and the majority of students achieved well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Students' results in 2001 and 2002 were better than those attained in their other subjects. The present

GCSE students in Year 11 are working to a standard above national expectations. The presentation of written work in Year 10 is very good. Students draw detailed diagrams and illustrate their work with photographs. Many are able to extract information from a variety of sources such as the Internet and text books. Year 11 students have already collected the evidence for their personal exercise programme but have not yet used ICT to present it.

153. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes attain standards above those expected nationally. Students perform well in trampolining and boys have reliable skills in basketball. However, those students observed playing badminton have not yet mastered the basic skills. Students' analytical skills are not as well developed as their performance skills and there is a lack of emphasis in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in a few of the lessons observed.
154. In all lessons observed, students of all abilities, in all years, made good progress. Their achievement is good overall and illustrates well the department's commitment to the high achievement of all students. On entry to the school in Year 7, students attain average levels in a few activities and, by the time they reach the end of Year 9, their attainment is above the national average. Boys and girls in Years 7 and 8 mostly have good skills of co-ordination and are able to work co-operatively in small groups to practice and refine their dance movements. Students' development of their awareness of space is hindered by the small size of the dance studio. The provision for changing in this area is also unsatisfactory. Girls in Years 8 and 9 are developing good body tension and control when trampolining and boys in Year 8 have good basic hockey techniques. By the end of Year 9, students are able to warm-up and stretch on their own effectively.
155. Many teams have achieved a high standard at district level, some at county level and one at national level (basketball). Some individual students have achieved representative honours at county level and five at national level. The attainment of these talented students is well above the national expectation and they benefit considerably from the excellent opportunities offered by the hard work and dedication of their teachers. The numbers of students who attend extra-curricular activities and the increased numbers taking the examinations demonstrate the very positive attitudes and involvement of students in the subject.
156. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good, and this promoted good learning in the majority of lessons. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory, almost half was good and just over one third was very good. In the best lessons, students benefit in their learning from a wide variety of challenging tasks matched to the needs of all students. In a few lessons, teachers missed the opportunity to set differing tasks on different court areas or different trampolines. Teachers recap previous work and convey the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson to the students. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give students a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. The very good subject expertise of the dance teacher gives students the opportunity to develop style, quality and extend their movement vocabulary. All lessons begin with a health and fitness section and this promotes students' knowledge of this strand of the National Curriculum. The department focuses on developing literacy skills, and key words and objectives are displayed, but strategies for the development of numeracy and ICT are not as regularly used and it has insufficient impact on learning. The planning and pace of examination lessons in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Questioning is rigorous and students are challenged throughout the lessons. Homework is used very effectively

and there is an insistence on high standards. It is clear the energy and enthusiasm shown by the deputy team leader, who has responsibility for the GCSE examinations, have resulted in rising students' attainment levels year on year.

157. The curriculum team leader provides clear educational direction and very good leadership for the subject. She leads by very good example with her teaching and monitors department teaching with a specific focus, for example examination lessons. All the issues raised in the previous report have been remedied. The curriculum has been enhanced by the introduction of the Junior Sports Leaders Award in Year 10 and the teaching of dance to boys and girls in Years 7 to 9. The department made a very good contribution to students' cultural development in the school year 2001-2002 by linking commonwealth countries to the annual sports day. Students are well informed about their performance and their future targets by the use of the student progress booklets but students are uncertain about their understanding of their level of work. The facilities are good overall and the new sports hall allows higher standards of performance to be attained. However, the lack of main court basketball posts and cricket nets considerably limits the overall effectiveness of the facility. The changing rooms in this area are cramped and not appropriate for use with large groups or adults.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The good progress made by students across Years 7 to 11. Standards of attainment are above the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus.
- The good quality of teaching which ensures that students are interested and motivated.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Limited use of ICT.
- Assessment information is not effectively used.

158. Despite a slight drop in the level of A\*-C grades in 2002, the GCSE results have consistently been above the national average. In 2001, 56 per cent of students obtained A\*-C grades. Students of all abilities in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in their GCSE courses. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in their lessons.
159. Students enter Year 7 with a wide variation in their knowledge and understanding of religion. They make good progress. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the levels set out in the locally agreed syllabus. They have a good knowledge of the major beliefs and practices of the main religions that are found in our society. For example, this was seen in the work done on Buddhism in Year 9, where students have a good understanding of important concepts. They are able to use religious language and concepts well. A good example was seen in Year 8. When considering creation stories, Year 8 students fully understood the importance of myths in religion.
160. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to make good progress. By the end of Year 11, their level of attainment is above the national expectation. They have a good knowledge of the teaching of religion on a number of social and moral issues. They are able to make informed responses and discuss important issues, such as the

teaching of religion on abortion, in an open and sensitive manner. Students behave well, are interested and involved and play an active part in group discussions. Overall standards of literacy are good.

161. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They use a wide variety of teaching methods to interest and motivate students. An example was seen in a Year 10 lesson where the teacher used the 'Simpsons' television programme well. Resources are used well, although the needs of students with special educational needs are not consistently planned for or met. There is limited use of ICT and it does not have sufficient impact on the learning of students, although it is used very well to monitor and evaluate information about students' standards and achievements. The management of students is very good. Most lessons have good pace and challenge and students respond well. The teaching of basic skills is very good.
162. The quality of leadership of the subject is very good. The department is well organised with a clear sense of direction. Assessment is done well by individual teachers who mark well and keep reliable records. The information gained, however, is not used consistently to plan lessons to meet the needs of all students. This is improving as the department is bringing the subject into line with recent national changes in assessment in religious education.
163. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching has improved. Standards of attainment have improved and the quality of learning is better. The introduction of the short course GCSE has improved the time allocation for the 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
Chemistry	2	50	43	-	5	0.50	0.77
French	1	100	78	-	13	1.00	1.65

***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	5	100	96	40	46	7.20	6.57
Biology	7	100	88	14	34	4.86	5.25
Business studies	8	100	92	13	32	3.75	5.50
Chemistry	5	60	90	-	43	2.80	5.90
Communication studies	12	100	93	33	31	6.33	5.53
Computer studies	12	100	86	33	23	5.67	4.62
Drama	4	100	99	-	38	4.50	6.59
English literature	21	90	95	10	37	3.52	5.91
French	5	100	89	-	38	4.00	5.59
Full design and technology	8	100	91	63	30	7.00	5.38
German	2	50	91	-	40	1.00	5.81
History	7	71	88	29	35	4.86	5.45
Mathematics	7	86	87	-	43	4.00	5.80
Music	3	100	93	33	35	7.33	5.74
Other languages	1	100	93	-	56	4.00	6.84
Other social studies	6	100	87	33	34	6.00	5.30
Physics	6	50	88	-	40	1.67	5.67
Religious studies	5	100	92	40	38	6.00	5.84
Sociology	4	75	86	25	35	3.50	5.32
Spanish	1	100	89	-	39	6.00	5.70
Vocational studies	9	89	76	11	26	3.56	4.36

### ***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.60	10.06

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

#### **Mathematics**

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

#### Strengths

- A significant increase in the number of students commencing Year 12 courses in 2002.
- Alternative choices of modules giving wider curriculum provision in Year 12.
- Students work well together with good teacher-student relationships.
- Good social co-operation with foreign students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring student performance and progress.
- Structured note-taking to enhance study skills and improve attainment.
- Marking techniques.
- Provision for GCSE re-sit students.

164. Unconfirmed 2002 GCE A2-level results suggest a small and continuing improvement over the period 1999-2001, though the number of students taking the examination in 2002 was still in single figures. Boys and girls achieve similar standards. 2001 results were in line with prior attainment; half the candidates gained D grades, none attained an A grade and, overall, they were well below the national average. Of the students who took AS-level in 2001, only a third were awarded grades in the A-E range. A small number of students completed a GCSE re-sit course to gain C grades in 2001; the numbers were too small to make a national comparison.
165. Recruitment to the subject has been supplemented with groups of short-stay foreign exchange students. Their presence is welcomed but, because they often leave before completion of a course, there is consequent disruption to the studies of those remaining, an issue the school is reviewing. After the 2002 AS-level results, several students discontinued mathematics, so only a very small group continues to A2-level standard. However, September 2002 witnessed a big increase in Year 12 intake, including many higher attaining students staying on. This has enabled the department to offer a broader curriculum with two courses leading to A-level; all students studying modules in pure mathematics and statistics, alongside a choice of mechanics or decision mathematics.
166. The teaching and learning in lessons observed were satisfactory. Clear objectives were usually set, though a Year 13 lesson suffered from limited expectations and planning which did not appropriately meet the needs of the students or the length of

the session. The department is well staffed; teachers are well matched to the courses taught, show good subject knowledge and share good relationships with students. In Year 12 classes learning the remainder theorem, there was very productive discussion of methods and students were challenged to test their understanding by demonstrating problem-solving on the board. Effective use of the overhead projector was made in a Year 12 statistics lesson on quantiles and linear interpolation (the planned ICT lesson having to be rapidly altered as the server had crashed). Sound one-to-one interchange of ideas between teacher and students took place in a Year 13 lesson on functions.

167. Inspection evidence at this early stage of their studies suggests satisfactory progress and learning being made by the Year 12 students with performance in line with expectations. Year 13 students, however, exhibited a lack of confidence and shortcomings in algebraic processing. Written work of students largely accords to their ability. Higher attaining students set work out logically and pursue assignments carefully and thoroughly. Work scrutinised from some other students showed a lack of rigour, poor structure and minimal explanation. Such students do not have sufficient opportunities to benefit from note-taking and from exemplar solutions to aid analysis and for future reference. Marking of work does not include sufficient helpful comments, often offering just ticks. Whilst self-assessment assists independent learning skills, insufficient checks are made on technique and presentation.
168. Students are attentive and respectful in class, they are receptive of new ideas, discuss well together and respond positively to teacher questioning. Overall, they enjoy the subject, show good commitment and interpersonal relationships are strong. Whilst evidence of effective learning in Year 13 was inconsistent, the provision of two groups in Year 12 enables an element of grouping by ability and enhanced opportunities for learning. Their quality of learning is good, though in the large statistics class, there is insufficient attention to individual learning needs. The foreign students integrate well into classes and receive good support from their teachers and peers.
169. A course in key skills 'application of number' had been developed well but, both it and the provision of appropriate teaching for students who wish to re-sit GCSE, have discontinued through timetabling constraints and associated poor attendance in the past.
170. Resources are satisfactory, with bridging texts and some good materials packs (especially in decision mathematics) available. Schemes of work, based upon syllabus specifications, are detailed and give guidance as to suitable amounts of time for teaching and what is to be taught, important for modular courses. The curriculum team leader is very supportive of colleagues and demonstrates good commitment and leadership. She recognises that since the last inspection, much departmental time has been devoted to raising standards in Years 7 to 9, and is now determined to raise perception and achievement in the sixth form. Analysis of students' performances against prior attainment is not used sufficiently, and there is insufficient monitoring and target setting of students. A colleague has been given oversight of this aspect and joint responsibility for sixth-form mathematics. The deliberate attempt to attract more able students into Year 12 has been very successful, and there now exists an excellent opportunity for the department to develop further.

## Science

171. The focus was on biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled. Currently, there are no students in Year 13 studying chemistry or physics. The judgements are largely based on Year 12. These students have been in the sixth form for only a few weeks.
172. Standards seen in chemistry and physics are above those expected nationally. The students are achieving well because of good teaching and learning. In general, the number of students taking A-level in these subjects since 1999 has been small. This has contributed to significant fluctuation in results. Three lessons were observed, two in chemistry and one in physics. All were at least good. In one very good lesson in chemistry, the teacher combined expert knowledge, careful planning and high expectations. This led to independent working and very good understanding of the chemistry of elements such as magnesium, calcium and barium. In a good physics lesson, competent explanations enhanced the students' understanding of various motion graphs.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above expectations and improving.
- Students learn well.
- Teaching is good. There are particular strengths in teachers' subject expertise, pace, method and assessment.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop independent experimental skills.
- Use homework more effectively so that the students come prepared to participate in discussions more productively.

173. The results in the A-levels of 2001 were in line with the national average and unconfirmed results of 2002 show similar figures. No clear trend can be derived from the fluctuating results of the small number of A-level students since 1999. As there are very few students in the current Year 13, it is not possible to make a clear, predicted judgement. Observation of Year 12 students' work and learning in lessons indicates that standards are above those expected nationally. These expectations show an improvement on the 2001 examination figures. The number of male and female students is too small to show significant difference in their attainment. However, in 2001, where comparative data are available, the students performed significantly better in biology than in other subjects that they studied in the school.
174. Year 13 students are achieving satisfactorily. An analysis of their work shows that they have average knowledge and understanding of organelles found in cells. They clearly explain the process of active transport across membranes. However, they do not have clear understanding of changes in blood pressure as it circulates around the body. Their investigation skills are below those expected. For example, they are not confident in planning what temperature they should investigate to study the effect of temperature on the rate of reaction of amylase on starch. Year 12 students are only a few weeks into their course. They are making good progress and achieving well, reflecting the new entry criteria. They know how tissues are prepared for microscopic examination. Higher attaining students have very good

understanding of the role of water in living things and the structure of carbohydrates in relation to its digestion.

175. Teaching is good overall. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations. They use this effectively for developing new knowledge and understanding and to consolidate what has been learnt previously. Pace is good and methods are effective. Although planning is satisfactory, not enough is done to time homework so that students come well prepared to participate in discussions to clarify, confirm and extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. When this is done, for example in a Year 13 lesson on respiration and in a Year 12 lesson on structure and function of carbohydrates, the quality of learning is much better. Students are motivated and enthused. In most lessons, there is good focus on assessment and guiding students on what knowledge and understanding they would need for a good result. One lesson ended with the students finishing a brief test and checking answers to determine and inform how well they had learnt about cellular respiration. Over-guidance occasionally compromises students' development of independent skills in practical biology. Focus on literacy, especially on terminology, is effective in enhancing students' understanding of the subject.
176. Students are well motivated and learn well. Their high level of interest and concentration helps them to work productively. They respond positively to different styles of teaching and learning. They are courteous and work well with each other, supporting their colleagues in clarifying ideas and information. They benefit from confident participation in discussions.
177. Good leadership and management of sixth-form biology result in good teaching and learning. The team shares the vision for providing supportive learning. The AS-level course is developing well in terms of securing standards of attainment above those expected nationally.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Results at AS- and A-level are above the national average.
- The attitudes of students to psychology are excellent.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Psychology contributes significantly to students' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Students have insufficient opportunities for self-evaluation of their work so that, by becoming more aware of their learning, they can be actively involved in setting their own targets for success.
- In order to enhance the status of the subject, and understanding among potential students of its scientific basis, a freestanding psychology policy document should be produced.
- Arrangements for the support of the development of students' basic numeracy skills should be made more secure, as a contribution both to improving standards in statistics in psychology, and to enabling more students to remain confident in their capacity to complete the A-level course.

178. GCE A-level results have been consistently above the national average. All students have obtained grades A-E in the last five years, with the majority of students

attaining grades B and C. The unconfirmed results at AS-level in 2002 were particularly above expectations, over 64 per cent of the 14 entrants obtaining grades A-C. Significantly more girls than boys study psychology. There is little difference between the grades they obtain in the examinations. Although it was possible to observe only three psychology lessons, these observations, together with analysis of students' work and discussion with them, suggest an improving trend in standards.

179. The numbers of students choosing psychology has increased. Its subject matter and the way in which it is taught contribute significantly to their personal development. Those who were not fully aware of the subject's scientific basis say they are pleasantly surprised and enjoy its challenge, as well as finding it meaningful to them personally. Students demonstrate great enthusiasm and work consistently hard. They work well alone, in pairs and groups, and contribute incisively to class discussion. They respond well to the intellectual challenge of the course. A focus on the ethics of experiments enhances their critical thinking. Their learning is never less than good.
180. The above expected standards of work seen in psychology derive primarily from the quality of the teaching, which is very good. Good subject knowledge and lesson planning, the highly effective use of questioning, the structure of the lessons themselves, the high expectations of the students, enthusiasm for the subject, good preparation for examinations through the development of exam technique and the focus given to practical psychology experiments, are the main contributory factors. Feedback to students is good in lessons, although the good marking of written work is not yet consistently used to indicate how students can continue to improve. Students' learning is not supported sufficiently by involving them more in their own evaluation of their work, thereby supporting their awareness of their learning and enabling them to join in setting their own targets.
181. Students value the opportunities presented in carrying out psychology experiments to advance their understanding of issues relevant to themselves or their other studies. Students are encouraged to choose widely from various aspects of the subject. For example, a student taking media studies was investigating the factors which improve live performance; another was studying gender preferences in young children at a local primary school, taking cross-cultural factors into account; another was studying the effect of language competence and familiarity among Cantonese and English speakers on short-term memory. Sophisticated experimental design and a rigorous and critical approach were common features.
182. Some students who successfully complete the first year of the course appear to lose confidence as the demands on their understanding of statistics, necessary for successful completion of experiments, increases. Support has been developed for such students by arranging attendance at the weekly mathematics clinic after school. Obtaining early and regular access to this kind of support for some students would make the attainment of higher standards in psychology more likely and encourage the students to complete the course.
183. The psychology co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the value of the subject to students, and a clear vision of its place in the curriculum. Her leadership and management are good. The psychology curriculum provides a broad and balanced view of the breadth of the subject and supports high standards. The subject is currently located within the broader personal and social studies department management structure, and lacks a subject-specific policy document.

This limits its development in the school and the awareness of potential students of its intrinsic value and its scientific knowledge basis.

## BUSINESS

### Business studies

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers have very good relationships with students and support them well.
- There is a very positive working atmosphere in lessons.
- Lesson activities are interesting to students.
- Results in the new A2-level examination are above average.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not always use ICT in the best way.
- Boys' achievement is not always as good as girls' because a minority fails to attend regularly.
- Students' skills in deciding their own ways of learning are underdeveloped.

184. Examination results in A-level business studies overall in 2001 were below the national and the school average because a significant number of boys were not fully committed to their studies. Results in the unconfirmed A2-level examination in 2002 were considerably improved. Students' achievement was in line with, and for over half of the students, better than, teachers' predictions based on GCSE grades. More students, both boys and girls, attained the top grades of A and B than in the previous year. Current students are achieving well in Years 12 and 13.
185. In the small sample of Year 13 lessons seen, students' standards of attainment were as expected in the small class of four. Two students were absent, and this is a recurring problem due to timetable clashes. Good progress overall was indicated in the lesson, although boys tend to achieve less than girls over time. Students showed a good understanding of marketing budgets and displayed an excellent attitude in gathering information quickly. One student, who had not spoken English two years ago, showed an excellent understanding of concepts relating to break-even and types of costs. In a small sample of coursework projects seen, Year 13 students analysed data from case studies of local businesses fairly effectively, showing a good understanding of business concepts and an ability to apply them in practical business situations. Students' critical evaluation was not always sufficiently detailed and they were not always fully aware of the best ways to use ICT to present their work or to analyse data using spreadsheet models.
186. Teaching was good overall and very good in one lesson seen. Teachers planned tasks which were well matched to students' abilities. Teachers tended to direct the ways in which students should learn, which limited students' creativity, and short-term targets for improving individuals' progress were not in evidence. Teachers set homework regularly and mark it thoroughly, according to examining board criteria. From teachers' constructive comments, students know how to improve their work. Teachers began lessons promptly by sharing aims, and ended lessons effectively by reviewing the extent to which general lesson aims were met. In a very good lesson, Year 13 students quickly gained a critical understanding of key aspects of a company's profitability through evaluating a series of alternative investment choices. They developed good skills in working as a team and calculating essential investor profitability ratios.

187. The subject is well managed, and well staffed by experienced teachers who form an effective team. The business base room is very well appointed, with excellent displays and good ICT provision, although A-level lessons are not always timetabled in this room. There are insufficient links with business and industry, extending the curriculum range to include more vocational courses, and more effective use by students of ICT in lessons. This includes presenting information from business websites for research and producing spreadsheet models of costs and profits. It is not possible to gauge overall improvement since the last inspection because of insufficient information. The subject has good capacity for further improvement.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Recent results at A-level are within the range of the top quarter of schools across the country.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Students are enthusiastic and receive much individual attention.
- Students study in real work situations for coursework tasks.

### Areas for improvement

- Coursework progress is not carefully monitored to ensure students complete all sections.
- The subject needs to recruit more students into Year 12.

188. GCE AS- and A2-level ICT and AS-level computing were inspected. A2-level has been examined for the first time this year in 2002.
189. Results in A-levels over the period 1999-2001 have shown a consistent 100 per cent pass rate. Unconfirmed results for 2002 show a 50 per cent pass rate at AS-level in Year 12, and 88 per cent in Year 13. At A2-level, the pass rate was 100 per cent. Overall, standards in the sixth form are above those expected nationally.
190. AS-level students start the course from a variety of knowledge and experiences of ICT and are brought up to a common level. Students have helped each other with this task and have used the available facilities in their own time. Initially students learn about the nature, role and context of information. They listen attentively during theory lessons and make good quality notes. They interact well with each other and are able to quickly identify a wide variety of data gathering methods. Students use theoretical knowledge well to design effective relational databases. They are also able to design neat, consistent, de-cluttered forms for use in the databases. Students then work independently, applying this knowledge in the design of a database which has ten specification points. They make good progress and standards above those expected are attained.
191. A2-level students have a good understanding of normalisation and entity relationships in the design of relational database structure. They work confidently and independently on creating their own databases, which have real applications. In a theory lesson, they gained an understanding of the meaning of a management information system. By relating to a real system, they quickly appreciated the hierarchical nature of management links. Portfolios reflected the application of

considerable effort and are of good quality, although standards vary in the testing and evaluation sections.

192. Students are well motivated and work hard. They willingly help each other. All coursework and teaching material is available on the Intranet which is accessed from home. This promotes independent learning and works well. For students who do not have this facility at home, computers are readily available in college. From conversations, students find the courses demanding but enjoyable.
193. In all lessons teaching is good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and industrial experience. Good use is made of the data projector at the start of lessons to provide quick, efficient coverage of learning material. Students' work is monitored well in lessons with good, individual advice given to all. Coursework is marked according to examination criteria, which all students work to, with feedback comments for improvement given.
194. The subject is well managed by an efficient team leader. Well-documented schemes of work, with corresponding teaching notes, are in place and used effectively. Hardware and software are up to date and reliable. The system is well maintained by a network manager and team of technicians. Good use is made of student data for target setting. A central recording system is in place to monitor progress and underachievement. The team leader is involved in university teaching and many other initiatives which are of benefit to students.

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

### **Leisure and tourism**

Overall, the quality of provision in intermediate leisure and tourism is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching that supports the development of independent learning.
- Very good opportunities provided for students to visit and work in the local leisure and tourism industry.
- Good achievement of current students.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Absence of a curriculum leader, a handbook and schemes of work that show the school's approach.
- Lack of interactive resources and a dedicated teaching base.
- Individual mentoring of students to ensure continuity and progress across all units.

195. In 2002, nine students entered the intermediate level examination and six passes were attained. One student started employment before finishing the school year and two students did not complete all the units. Overall, students attained results that were expected and their achievement was satisfactory.
196. The standards reached by current students in Year 12, as seen in lessons and in their written work, exceed expected standards and match merit requirements. These standards represent good achievement in relation to their GCSE results and students are doing better than expected. However, it is too early in the course to have evidence from completed assignments and final results may depend on the depth of students' research and quality of their recording. Students are developing a good range of knowledge about local tourist attractions and future projects through

their investigations for the first two assignments. Students' responses in discussion are lively, accurate and well thought out. All students know how to obtain evidence from a variety of sources and one student visited a tourist centre independently to collect first-hand information between one lesson and the next. At this early stage, most students are still very reliant on their teachers. They understand the topics and organisation of the units but do not yet know how to present an assignment.

197. Teaching was good overall and very good in one lesson observed. Teachers are well qualified for this vocational course and have a very good local knowledge that allows students' responses to be dealt with effectively. Lesson objectives are clearly outlined at the start of lessons and students are given good starting points, through a range of resources, to help them put their work together. In one lesson, better examples and links to the industry were needed to improve students' knowledge and understanding of communication skills. In another lesson, when students were required to research independently, and very good resources were provided, the teacher did not break down the tasks into small steps and students' learning was hindered by the enormity of the task. Although good identification is made of subject-specific vocabulary, teachers do not always ensure students use these key words in discussion. Evidence from the completed assignments of former students shows that teachers give detailed and informed comments after the students have submitted their work initially. Students benefit from this thorough marking because there are clear indications of the provisional grade awarded and what is needed to meet the unit criteria. However, not all previous students used the advice to improve and extend their assignments and there is no individual mentoring system that helps to monitor students' work on a regular basis.
198. Very good relationships have developed through the independent nature of the learning and students support one another well and work co-operatively in small groups. These were particularly well illustrated when students gave their first presentation to the main group. The majority of students are keen, interested and determined. They concentrate well when working on their own and are comfortable with the independent ethos of the course. Present students are mostly taking the course because they need to re-sit their English, mathematics and science GCSE examinations, but a few students in the group are interested in the leisure industry as a career and wish to pursue further courses next year. This intermediate course is very well suited to the needs of the present students and the curriculum provides the continuity for those students who wish to progress from this course to the advanced level vocational certificate (AVCE) in travel and tourism.
199. ICT is taught as an integral part of the course but the lack of computers in the teaching rooms considerably limits this independent aspect of students' research and learning. A computer room is close by and students make good use of it before and after school, but the room is used for other lessons during the school day. Students feel that the resources in the library provide them with good research material. Students go to work placements once a week, and group visits are arranged to local centres. These initiatives extend students' thinking and provide a good base for learning. There is no appointed curriculum leader, no handbook and the schemes of work are simply those of the examination board. However, the three teachers involved organise the units well according to their own specialisms. The accommodation is poor. There is no dedicated subject base. Display cannot be used to help learning, and teaching resources are limited and have to be transported from room to room.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### Drama

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

#### Strengths

- The enthusiasm and skills of the teaching team.
- Current increase in interest and enrolment in the subject.
- Good accommodation.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards attained in the A-level examination are below the national average.

200. Drama has been offered as an A-level subject since 2000, but numbers enrolling have been very low and the standards attained by the few students who took the examination have been below national averages. In 2000, two students were entered, four in 2001 and seven in 2002. Currently, ten students are studying drama in Year 13 and 18 in Year 12, a very good expansion. In 2001, two C grades, one D and one E were awarded. The unconfirmed 2002 results were five Cs and two Ds. Results in the unconfirmed 2002 AS-level examinations at the time of the inspection had been submitted for re-marking.
201. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above expectations. Students in both years have had a good background in GCSE drama and they are familiar with the demands and disciplines of drama work. They are learning to build on these to meet the new requirements of the A-level syllabus. They work with obvious commitment and much pleasure in the subject and, in the lessons seen, their skills in improvisation were well displayed in the units of work they were preparing for the examination.
202. The three teachers who share the sixth-form drama teaching are keen specialists who work confidently with their students. The small team is well led, and all the teaching seen was good. There was intense focus on a scene in the play being studied in Year 12 and on the development of the sustained improvisation which is being prepared for presentation by students in Year 13. Good relationships between students and between staff and students contribute much to the progress made in lessons, where trust and collaboration are essential. The good accommodation supports the good quality of teaching and learning.
203. The emphasis in the lessons seen was strongly on rehearsing dramatic speech and movement, under the direction of the teachers. There was a good deal of repetition, with both teachers working on the same scene or passage with the class they shared in order to consolidate and polish. In one very good Year 12 lesson, students worked imaginatively to consider the social context of a character in the play they were using, and there was scope for good discussion based on this.
204. Because of the nature of the work observed during this one week, development of the wider knowledge of drama and theatre was less evident. The head of department is aware that, in order to improve examination grades, the intellectual demands of the subject must receive as much attention as the practical. There is awareness that in their reading, discussions and written work, students need to range widely, to meet challenging texts and ideas and to develop their skills in exposition and argument. A good opportunity for this is planned following the visit to

a very interesting new play students were due to make during the week of the inspection.

205. Drama is making a significant contribution to the success of the performing arts faculty and to its impact on the community beyond. In the sixth form, as throughout the school, work in drama develops students' confidence, their skills in speech and movement and their ability to work collaboratively. Production and performance give them a sense of personal and team achievement which is an important factor in their personal development.

## HUMANITIES

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching, particularly the development of independent learning skills, leading to good learning by students.
- Grades in the A-level examinations above the national average.
- Well motivated students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Increasing the participation in lessons of a minority of students, particularly in Year 12.

206. The 2001 examination results of the small group of students showed a pass rate above the national average at A-level, although only boys obtained the higher grades. The unconfirmed 2002 grades for both AS- and A2-level examinations showed results likely to be above national standards. Students currently in the early stages of Years 12 and 13 already achieve well, reaching a standard in line with expectations. They display satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a range of topics in British and European history, and show good achievement, especially in Year 13. The ability to analyse a range of evidence and construct an historical argument was particularly evident in an investigation of Stalin's role in the murder of Kirov. Students' work shows the ability to analyse both short- and long-term factors when investigating a topic, such as the rise of Hitler.

207. The quality of teaching and learning in sixth-form history is good. It is based on teachers' good subject knowledge but is most effective where the teacher develops students' research skills and has challenging expectations, as witnessed in a Year 13 lesson on the Russian purges in which the students were encouraged to use some demanding sources of evidence. Students conducted the following debate effectively, thereby increasing their understanding of the complexities and uncertainties of historical interpretation. Teachers also use contemporary references well, for example when examining the results of recent German elections; this not only helped to increase students' European awareness, but also helped them to understand the electoral system and its political implications in Weimar Germany. Occasionally, the teacher allows too much passive learning by some students instead of involving them more in lessons. However, most students are well motivated and enthusiastic about the subject.

208. Leadership and management in sixth-form history are good. Resources are plentiful and teachers are specialists in the options taught. The quality of assessment is

good, keeping students well informed about their progress. Standards are improving at A-Level and there has been good progress since the previous inspection.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

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

#### Strengths

- The teaching is satisfactory.
- The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- More appropriate size of group in Year 12.
- More precise monitoring of students' progress by the curriculum team leader and key staff in order to raise achievement.
- More frequent setting of written work for some groups.
- Standards at A-level are below expectations.

209. The standards attained by students at A-level in English have been below those reached by the same students in other subjects, and significantly below the national average for this subject. However, there was an improvement in the unconfirmed results for 2002, where students attained nearly as highly as they did in other subjects.
210. The progress that students have made in English during the sixth form since 1999 has been less than that made in other subjects in the school and has been unsatisfactory, although the improved results for English A-level in 2002 indicate that progress is now improving.
211. The teaching seen was satisfactory overall, with much of it good or very good. Some lively and interesting lessons were observed, in which students engaged thoughtfully with texts, exploring their views and challenging initial assumptions. The students showed that they were developing a sound knowledge of the cultural background of the texts that they were studying, particularly about American literature. However, students in some groups do not know sufficiently clearly what is expected of them in order to attain higher grades; in other groups this is made clear. The provision in Year 13 is good and the teaching is mostly good. The size of the one group in Year 12 (29) is unsatisfactory, and is having an adverse impact on standards. The provision for students who need to raise their GCSE English grade has been good until last year. This year it is provided outside the published timetable through a series of clinics, which will need careful monitoring.
212. The leadership and management of the department in the sixth form are unsatisfactory. The shared documentation gives an indication of some of the expectations of teachers and students. However, the department does not ensure that course requirements are clarified to all students. There is insufficient monitoring of students' progress in relation to their previous attainment in external examinations. There is insufficient use of the statistical information that is already available to the department to enable teachers to monitor students more closely to ensure that their progress is comparable to that in other subjects. There is insufficient clarity on the frequency and types of work to be set for homework or individual study, and variations between different groups have an adverse impact on standards and achievement.

