

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

**BOURNE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Southbourne, Emsworth

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126069

Headteacher: Mrs M Eva

Reporting inspector: I D Thompson  
12271

Dates of inspection: 13 - 17 May 2002

Inspection number: 194359

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Park Road

Southbourne

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Postcode: PO10 8PJ

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Fax number: 01243 379286

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Moss

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12271	I D Thompson	<i>Registered inspector</i>		Information about the school. The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	B Quest-Ritson	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20412	D Shepherd	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19913	R Garrett	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	
18261	A Hill	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design. Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	
27585	K Hounslow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
3643	D Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
15051	L Kauffman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology; Design and technology; Equality of opportunity.	
27368	M Merchant	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
4757	D Morris	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
2141	J Oxley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Religious education.	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Bourne Community College is a smaller than average 11-16 mixed comprehensive school serving a semi-rural area of West Sussex. There are 685 students on roll from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. However, roughly half of all students come from an area of Hampshire that has a high level of social difficulties and a substantial number come from a local military establishment. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. Almost all students are white. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is from a home where the first language is other than English. There are 14 travellers' children on the school roll but none was present during the inspection. The school's tests show that students' standards when they join the school are below average overall. The proportion of students on the school's register of special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need, most of which refer to moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Higher than average proportions of students enter and leave the school at other than the usual times. Many of those joining the school after Year 8 have had difficulties in their education elsewhere.

The school has been identified as being in challenging circumstances and has experienced a period of considerable change over recent years including a very high staff turnover and changes of management. The headteacher was appointed in April 2002.

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

Bourne Community College provides a satisfactory standard of education and is improving following a period of decline. Overall standards and the quality of teaching are improving as a result of strong leadership. The school is well managed, has a good climate for learning and provides satisfactory value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- The headteacher provides very clear educational direction and leadership.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good; provision for outdoor and adventurous activities is outstandingly good.
- Links with the community and partner institutions are very good.
- Relationships and social development are very good.
- Standards in GCSE physical education are well above average.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Attendance.
- Standards in modern foreign languages are well below average.
- National Curriculum requirements are not met for the teaching of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- The allocation of time to some subjects is insufficient and the distribution of time for subjects across the week is unsatisfactory.
- Parents are not sufficiently involved in their children's education.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in November 1996. Following a period of falling standards and staffing difficulties, resulting in the school being identified as being in challenging circumstances, the school has turned the corner and there are clear signs of improvement in management, teaching and standards. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	E	A B C D E

Although standards of attainment are below average, overall achievement is satisfactory in relation to students' prior learning. Inspection evidence shows that there are recent signs of improvement in the rate of progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2001 were below average in English, mathematics and science. Compared with results for schools taking students from similar backgrounds, standards were below average in English and science but close to average in mathematics. After a sharp decline, results have improved at a similar rate to that found nationally over the last four years and represent satisfactory achievement overall in relation to students' standards when they joined the school. Standards show signs of improvement, particularly in mathematics. However, students, particularly girls, did not do as well as they should have done in science.

In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A\*-C was well below the national average and the average for similar schools. For five or more grades A\*-G results were close to both the national average and the average for similar schools. Results showed a sharp improvement from the low level of results in 2000 to which they had declined in the years following the previous inspection. Nevertheless, results have improved at a slower rate than nationally over the last five years. Students' best results, in comparison to other subjects studied, were in English, English literature and

physical education. Worst results were in French and information and communication technology. The school's target for the award of five or more grades A\*-C was not met but results were close to the target for five or more grades A\*-G. The school has set realistically challenging targets for the next two years that reflect a determination to improve.

Work seen during the inspection generally confirms the standards of tests and examinations in 2001. Standards are:

	<b>Years 7-9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Well above average		Physical education.
Above average in	Physical education.	Music.
Average in	Design and technology, information and communication technology, mathematics and music.	Art and design, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology.
Below average in	English, science, art and design, geography, history and religious education.	English, mathematics, history and religious education.
Well below average in	Modern foreign languages.	Science and modern foreign languages.

Achievement and progress are:

	<b>Years 7-9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
Very good in	Physical education.	
Good in	Art and design, design and technology, ICT, music and religious education.	Art and design, music and physical education.
Satisfactory in	English, geography and mathematics.	English, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, religious education and science.
Unsatisfactory in	History, modern foreign languages and science.	Modern foreign languages.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Students' good attitudes contribute to the pleasant atmosphere in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. In lessons, students are attentive and ready to become involved, though at times a few have difficulty sustaining concentration. Around the school they are generally considerate to each other. They are courteous and helpful to adults.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. Relationships are good. They are friendly and supportive between students and teachers and help learning.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory attendance affects the progress of a substantial number of students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. In this inspection, a much higher proportion of teaching was very good or better and a lower proportion was unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching, and the quality of learning it promotes, is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Some good teaching was seen in all subjects and some high quality teaching in all but three – an indication of the success of the effort that has been put into staff development aimed at improving teaching and learning. All departments have examples of good practice that could be more widely shared. The unsatisfactory teaching was seen in occasional lessons scattered among departments across the school and only one poor lesson was seen. Teaching is particularly good in art and design, design and technology and religious education; it is strongest overall in music and physical education. Only in modern foreign languages is teaching unsatisfactory overall.

The strengths of teaching lie in teachers' very good command of their subjects, the way in which they plan lessons to capture and maintain students' interest, the effectiveness of the methods that they use to promote learning and good classroom management, based on good relationships, that creates a good climate for learning. As a result, learning is satisfactory overall and during their time in the school, students of all abilities make satisfactory progress. However, the use of homework to extend and consolidate learning is unsatisfactory. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory but the teaching of information and communication technology skills in subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.

## **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory quality and range because statutory requirements are not met in respect of information and communication technology across the curriculum. Time allocations to subjects are unbalanced. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall with very good provision for students' social development. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory standards of care overall. Good procedures for promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and supporting students' personal development. Procedures for promoting good attendance are unsatisfactory because they do not have sufficient impact on raising standards.

Provision for outdoor and adventurous activities is outstandingly good and makes a significant contribution to many aspects of students' personal development.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides very clear leadership and direction for improvement. There is a high level of support among staff. Most departments are well led but there is some variation in the quality of middle management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very effective in their support for school improvement but they do not meet their statutory obligations in relation to information and communication technology across the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. Generally good and improving among the senior team. Evaluation skills are developing among other staff – with support from senior staff.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school plans spending carefully, linking it closely to the priorities for improvement and seeking ways to obtain the best value for money that it can.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoy coming to school.</li> <li>• Teachers expect students to work hard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality and consistency of homework.</li> <li>• Information about progress.</li> <li>• The school's partnership with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents that their children are happy in the school, but considers that greater demands could be made of some groups of students. Some parents had concerns about homework, about information on progress and about whether the school works closely enough with them. Inspectors agree with parents that homework is not always used effectively to improve learning. They consider that the information parents receive about progress in annual profiles is satisfactory, though somewhat variable. They believe that the school should strengthen its partnership with parents, particularly with a view to improving attendance.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and pupils' achievements

- Standards of work seen overall are below average.
- Students achieve as well as might be expected overall. It is only in modern foreign languages that they consistently do not do well enough.

1. The school's tests when students enter the school confirm the results of Year 6 tests taken at the end of primary school and show that their standards of attainment are below average overall.

2. When considering standards and students' achievements, it must be remembered that standards, which were already below average, fell in the years following the previous inspection to the low point of the 2000 results that led to the identification of the school as being in challenging circumstances. This designation means that a school's results are so far below the national average that it qualifies for external assistance, including additional funds, to help raise achievement. An immediate effect was a sharp rise in standards in 2001 and there are signs that the rate of progress is increasing, particularly in Years 7 to 9, as a result of efforts to improve teaching and learning. It is only in modern foreign languages that students are consistently not doing as well as they should. Overall, students are doing as well as might be expected in Years 7 to 9, in relation to their standards when they join the school, and in Years 10 and 11 in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9.

3. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below average in English, mathematics and science. Compared with results for schools taking students from similar backgrounds, standards were below average in English and science but close to average in mathematics. After a sharp decline, results have improved at a similar rate to that found nationally over the last four years and represent satisfactory achievement overall in relation to students' standards when they joined the school. Standards show signs of improvement, particularly in mathematics. However, students, particularly girls, did not do as well as they should have done in science.

4. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A\*-C was well below the national average and the average for similar schools. For five or more grades A\*-G results were close to both the national average and the average for similar schools. Girls' average points score was much further below their national average than boys' and a higher proportion of girls left the school with no qualifications. In some subjects, such as mathematics, the differences between boys' and girls' performance reflected both their relative standards on entry to the school and in tests at the end of Year 9. However, the high level of staff turnover makes it impossible to arrive at any more secure explanation as to why girls did not do as well as they should overall. No significant overall differences in performance were found during this inspection. Results showed a sharp improvement from the low level of results in 2000 to which they had declined in the years following the previous inspection. Nevertheless, results have improved at a slower rate than nationally over the last five years achievement being affected particularly by poor attendance and the effect of a high level of staff turnover on the continuity of learning. Students' best results, in comparison to the other subjects that they studied, were in English, English literature and physical education. Worst results were in French and information and communication technology (ICT). The school's target for the award of five or more grades A\*-C was not met – largely because it was set too high in relation to students' standards at

the end of Year 9 - but results were close to the target for five or more grades A\*-G. The school has set realistically challenging targets for the next two years that reflect a determination to improve.

5. Work seen during the inspection generally confirms the standards of tests and examinations in 2001. In general, students do best in the subjects that have the higher levels of practicality. They respond particularly well when teachers adopt an approach that involves students in working in practical ways, such as in religious education where the stress is on students learning through participating in activities. Despite progress in lessons often being good across the school, unsatisfactory attendance pulls down overall achievement for a substantial number of students.

6. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies in the standards expected in departments. In music students write their own lyrics. They talk about the quality of their language and produce sensitive work of above average standard. In physical education students receive very good guidance on how to express themselves accurately and are encouraged use correct vocabulary. In geography, teachers insist on the use of precise geographic terms in spoken answers and put key vocabulary on display. However, the development of literacy skills is not planned for in science and opportunities for reading aloud, speaking and extended writing are few. In modern foreign languages, religious education and history teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on accuracy in writing.

7. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in mathematics. Students can add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers. They calculate simple percentages correctly. Points are plotted accurately on graphs and angles are measured accurately to one degree. Overall standards are below average in science, which is why few students achieve the higher levels. Higher attaining students use numeracy well in calculating the efficiency of machines. Computer assisted learning is helpful in raising standards of numeracy among the lower attaining students. Standards in design and technology are good as a result of the implementation of its good policy. Standards are satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT), especially in simple calculations for costing products. Formulae are used appropriately in spreadsheets. In art, good numeracy strategies have proved helpful in work on ratio and enlargement and on the golden section. Spatial development is as expected.

8. The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactorily varied with the result that students' achievement in applying their skills to practical situations is unsatisfactory overall. Scrutiny of students' work and observation in lessons shows art as the strongest department in this respect, with good application of ICT in design and technology, religious education and the learning support department. Use of ICT is satisfactory in English, music and physical education. There is no consistent application of ICT in mathematics, science geography, history and modern foreign languages. These departments fail to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills. Few teachers refer to standards in ICT in reports to parents.

9. Students with special educational needs (SEN), who benefit from the very good provision in the learning development centre (LDC), make generally good progress with their work. Students in Year 10 who are following an alternative work related curriculum take fewer GCSE examinations, but are given a study support programme that includes work experience and associated preparation for leaving school. They follow an accredited key skills course and are making good progress with the more practical modules that the course offers for certification. Students who are supported by learning development assistants (LDAs) in mainstream lessons make at least good progress against the targets in their

individual education plans (IEPs). Students who do not benefit from that support make broadly similar progress as their classmates. Students with more severe and complex special educational needs make poor progress, and slow the progress of others in their classes, because staff are as yet unprepared for the sudden arrival of such students.

10. Overall, gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress but there are unacceptably varied approaches by departments to ensuring that they are challenged as much as they should be. Once these students are identified, most departments have a satisfactory range of strategies to match challenge to their individual needs. However, some departments, such as modern languages and geography, have not made satisfactory progress in identifying the gifted and talented and consequently their progress is not as good as it should be. In physical education, many students excel in team and individual sports to bring accolades to themselves and the school. In art and music, talented and gifted students can monitor their work through use of computer programs to record their high calibre skills. Some exceptionally high quality work is produced in design and technology. In English and ICT, teachers' identification of gifted and talented students has resulted in them gaining very good English results in 2001 – a Bourne student gained one of the five highest results in the country. In ICT, students are involved in the county's gifted and talented Saturday programme where they work with similar students from other schools and are challenged to extend their standards.

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

- Students' attitudes are generally good - particularly in response to challenging and interesting teaching.
- Behaviour is good, both during lessons and as students move around the school.
- Students respond well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development - particularly to the social provision in the personal, health and social education (PSE) programme and to the outdoor and adventurous activities.
- Good, friendly and supportive relationships between students and teachers help learning.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.

11. Students' attitudes to the school are generally good. Students interviewed said they liked the school and the friendly atmosphere there. In lessons, students are attentive and ready to become involved, though at times a few have difficulty sustaining concentration. Students respond best to lively teaching and to a high level of intellectual challenge. This was the case in an English lesson for Year 8 seen during the inspection where students were preparing to write an essay on William Blake by looking at his poem '*The Tyger*'. They responded particularly well to the demanding questions their teacher put to them. Students also respond well to lessons with practical elements. This was noticeable in science and design and technology lessons. In a key skills lesson, when Year 10 students were preparing for work experience, they visited the school kitchens and science laboratories to look at the implications of health and safety at work, noting warning signs. Students reacted to the practical approach of the lesson with seriousness and good manners.

12. Standards of behaviour are good in lessons. Students know that teachers expect good behaviour and respond well. There are occasions when some students are noisy and slow to settle down to work in lessons, but these are few. The way students behave as they move around the school is, on balance, also good. Students can be lively and noisy among themselves, but they are also friendly and good-humoured. They are courteous and helpful to visitors. Students interviewed consider that there are instances of bullying, but that these are few. They were confident that instances would be reported and dealt with promptly by

the school. The level of exclusions, both permanent and fixed-term, is about average for a school of this size and type.

13. Students respond well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. The PSE programme has a strong emphasis on social provision. In a Year 9 lesson, students discussed the effects of the tobacco trade on individuals and the environment in a global context with a keen awareness of social consequences. Awareness of equality of opportunity issues is established through good teaching in PSE and citizenship. Students appreciate the opportunities that the extensive extra-curricular programme offers them. Older students are able to play a greater part in the school, for example as prefects, but younger ones can act as librarians or on the school council. Council members take their responsibilities seriously and consider the commitment well worthwhile. Relationships in the school are good. Students work well together in lessons. Good co-operative work, for example, was a feature of many mathematics lessons, though boys and girls do tend to work in separate groups. Relationships between students and members of staff are also good. Students have confidence in their teachers and tutors and feel they give them good support. This confidence helps to motivate students and increases learning.

14. Attendance is unsatisfactory, although it has recently improved. In the academic year 2000/2001, the rate of attendance was 88.7 per cent, well below the national average of 90.9 per cent. However, the rate of unauthorised absence was 0.8 per cent, broadly in line with the national figure of 1.1 per cent. So far, in the current academic year 2001/2002, there has been a significant improvement, though the rate of attendance has yet to reach a satisfactory level and is still below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence continues to be below the national average. Holidays taken during term-time contribute to the above average rate of authorised absence. Most students do come to school regularly and are punctual. However, a significant proportion of students, about 32 per cent, have an attendance rate of below 90 per cent. This inevitably has an adverse effect on the standards they attain and their overall achievement.

15. At the time of the previous inspection there had been a sudden deterioration in the rate of attendance. This has improved, particularly during the current academic year. Students' attitudes are also better.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- Teaching is satisfactory overall in all years and has improved.
- Teachers know their subjects very well and plan interesting lessons.
- Relationships are good and contribute to good classroom management.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.
- Some teachers do not make enough use of assessment to check the effectiveness of teaching.
- Teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

16. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. In this inspection, a much higher proportion of teaching was very good or better and a lower proportion was unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching, and the quality of learning it produces, is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Some good teaching was seen in all subjects and some high quality teaching in all but three – an indication of the success of the effort that has been put into staff development aimed at improving teaching and learning. All departments have

examples of good practice that could be more widely shared. The unsatisfactory teaching was seen in occasional lessons scattered among departments across the school and only one poor lesson was seen. Teaching is particularly good in art and design, design and technology and religious education; it is strongest overall in music and physical education. Only in modern foreign languages is teaching unsatisfactory overall.

17. The great majority of teachers know their subjects very well - which supports a confident approach in the classroom that in turn inspires confidence in students. The effects are particularly well seen in art and design, where teachers use their knowledge and skills to drive students to improve their work: for example, in mathematics where teachers use their knowledge to challenge students and make them think, and in geography where teachers provide lively introductions to lessons that grab students' attention and motivate them. There are a few exceptions. Teaching is less effective in some English lessons in Years 7 to 9 partly because the department is short-staffed and is relying on help from relatively inexperienced or non-specialist supply teachers. Learning is affected here because some teachers do not consistently expect students to provide more than a brief response to questions that in themselves are insufficiently probing. In science, the effects of teachers' less secure knowledge of chemistry can be seen in results for chemistry being consistently lower than in the other sciences.

18. Teachers' understanding of their subjects also underpins the way in which they plan lessons that engage students' interests and in the majority of cases match the level of challenge to students' needs. Planning is a particularly strong feature of the physical education department. Schemes of work are designed well to meet individual needs so that there is consistency in the way in which teachers approach their work and students are enabled to learn. The support that teachers in the department give each other, together with clear background planning, meant that temporary and inexperienced teachers were able to make an effective contribution to the department's high quality provision during the inspection week. The way in which teachers use assessment to check the effectiveness of their teaching and to support planning is satisfactory overall with some good practice that shows how improvement could be made. Procedures are good in mathematics and design and technology and data are used well to monitor students' progress. Although there are good procedures in science, not enough use is made of the results of assessment to guide planning and teachers in geography and history do not make enough use of data to monitor progress.

19. Although teachers generally use a good range of teaching methods to promote learning in their lessons, one common weakness in teachers' planning to meet students' needs is the failure to recognise the difficulty many students have in retaining what they have learned. Discussion with some students in lessons indicates they do not expect to be able to remember and observation across the school suggests that more needs to be done to consolidate learning over the longer-term. Teachers in general need to plan specifically to improve students' recall of earlier work. In the best lessons, for example in design and technology, effective linkage is made to the work that has gone before so that learning is reinforced. Overall, students in this school do best in subjects that offer the highest levels of practicality; they learn well when they see the point of what they are learning by applying it in practical ways. For example, in religious education, learning is made more secure by the inventive use of practical activities that involve students in experiences that they remember. Teachers need to find ways to improve students' retention and to reinforce learning; there is good practice in the school that could be extended.

20. A key feature of the school is that relationships between teachers and students and among students are very good. The great majority of teachers build upon these relationships to control their classes well. Occasions when unsatisfactory behaviour

disrupts learning are rare because teachers deal with it rapidly and effectively. Teachers develop their relationships with students through making good use of tutorial time – particularly in personal, health and social education (PSE) lessons where the overall quality of teaching is good, making a significant contribution to many aspects of students' personal development. One of the less positive effects of teachers' clear focus on building students' confidence is that marking of work tends to be supportive and encouraging rather than rigorous in identifying errors and corrections that need to be made. Commentary on students' work seldom explains clearly what they need to do to improve and opportunities are missed to help students do better.

21. All teachers are aware of the importance of developing students' literacy and numeracy skills because of the work that has been done recently to improve the teaching of basic skills across the curriculum. However, it is too early for this work to bear fruit; the application of the policies across the school is patchy and overall the teaching of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics is just satisfactory with more attention paid to literacy than numeracy.

22. Teachers' use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This is partly because of difficulties of access to equipment and the provision of relevant software and partly because teachers require more training to be confident of including ICT in their planning. There is some good practice; for example, teachers in art and music provide good creative opportunities for students to use ICT to develop their work. However, there are too few opportunities in subjects across the school for students to use ICT to develop their knowledge and understanding.

23. Learning across the school is affected by the overall high rate of absence. Poor attendance does not just affect the learning of absentees. It creates unnecessary difficulties for teachers who need to revisit missed work – thus taking up class time that could be better used and so slowing the progress of all. Planning is made more difficult and continuity is more difficult to manage when the composition of classes varies from lesson to lesson.

24. The use teachers make of homework to extend learning is unsatisfactory. Although, again, there is some good practice – for example, in design and technology throughout the school and in art and design and physical education in Years 10 and 11 – too few departments give sufficient attention as to how homework might be used to consolidate learning, to involve parents in their children's learning or to provide opportunities to develop students' independent learning skills.

25. The quality of teaching provided for students with special educational needs in the learning development centre (LDC) is good. Both teachers and learning development assistants (LDAs) know the students they withdraw for support very well and they manage individual students and small groups sensitively and expertly. The support given by LDAs across the school is of good quality and is valued by students and staff alike. Students on the 'inclusion register' of special educational needs who are not supported in lessons, and who have individual education plans (IEPs), nonetheless make the same satisfactory overall progress as their peers. This is because the majority of teachers know, understand and make good use of the IEPs. Very good records are kept and students' performance is under constant evaluation. A particular strength is in the basic skills work carried out through a commercial computer software package, managed by LDAs. Basic literacy and numeracy skills sessions take place during morning registration, as part of the 'out of school hours' (OOSH) initiative. They are managed efficiently and yield very good performance data on students' progress in literacy and numeracy. Students are well motivated to attend these sessions and they make good and often very good progress in reading, spelling and number work.

26. No lessons for travelling students were seen during the inspection, as they are all travelling with their families. Discussions with the Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) and with a settled traveller, who is studying for her GCSE at the school, indicate an appropriate level of support and generally satisfactory progress being made over the settled months. Work packs are sent to travelling students during the summer and most of them do the set work and return the packs. One family of seventeen travelling children has made a great success of the school and TESS provisions. The younger children are now in full-time education, one has taken GCSEs and is at college, whilst another has set up in business with his older brother. More travellers' children are taking an interest in full-time and further or higher education, as families settle and look to the future for their children.

27. The recent introduction to the school of students with more severe and complex needs has created difficulties for teachers who find it difficult to manage the learning of such students and are generally insecure in both teaching and management of them. If the school is to successfully include such students, there is a need for more careful preparation, better resources and training. The very good relationships between staff and students with special educational needs sustain students' motivation to study and are a particularly important factor in the successful inclusion of students who would otherwise be at risk of permanent exclusion from school.

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

- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Provision for students' personal development is very good.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with very good provision for social development.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- The school's links with the community make a very strong contribution to its work.
- Insufficient time is provided for some subjects and the distribution of time across the week is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements are not met in respect of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

28. The curriculum provides an unsatisfactory range of opportunities, because there are some shortcomings in complying with all statutory requirements. There is no provision for a daily act of collective worship and the provision of ICT across the curriculum throughout the school is unsatisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Religious education now just meets the requirements in Years 10 and 11.

29. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, including religious education and personal, health and social education (PSE). The allocation of time to subjects is unbalanced in Years 7 to 9 and means that the programme of study for modern foreign languages cannot be covered because students only receive two-thirds of the time recommended by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Similarly, there is a shortfall of time in both history and geography. As a result, students do not make enough progress in these three subjects.

30. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a core curriculum and a range of options. These include vocational courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism. They are offered at both Foundation and Intermediate Levels to cater for students' vocational

needs. A small group of students, the 'green group', follows a specially devised curriculum which includes outdoor activities and academic study and is tailored to the needs of individual students. A number of other students undertake programmes of work-related learning in conjunction with local colleges. They spend part of their week in school and part at college. The school plans to expand the range of vocational courses in September 2002.

31. Students are given full and equal access to most areas of the curriculum. Subjects that traditionally had a gender bias are open to all, for example a good project on 'ties as fashion items' was completed successfully in textiles by a boy and small furniture items are skilfully crafted by girls in the Year 10 'green group' following a resistant materials course in design and technology. Generally all departments, with the exception of geography, have made a good equality of opportunity statement through their department policy.

32. Strategies for teaching literacy are satisfactory overall. Teachers are aware of the literacy strategy but there are variations in the effectiveness with which departments apply the policy. In physical education, students receive very good guidance on how to express themselves accurately in examinations. In drama and geography, teachers insist on students using the correct terms in spoken answers and put key vocabulary on display. However, the development of literacy skills is not planned for in science. In religious education and in history teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on accuracy in writing.

33. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. A whole school strategy for numeracy was launched on the first day of this term (Summer 2002) with a day of staff training. It is too soon for the effects of this strategy to be seen in terms of higher attainment. In geography, for example, a policy is still being developed. In mathematics, matters are further advanced with the department using strategies developed nationally in its work. The teaching of basic skills is good in Years 7 to 9 as a result. The design and technology department has a good policy in place.

34. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. It is provided through individual education plans (IEPs), drawn from statements and annual review information, in the case of statemented students, or from test and other performance information for others. Students at the 'school action plus' or statemented stage of the special educational needs register have individual work plans drawn up by the learning development teachers and used by learning development assistants (LDAs) to check the progress of targeted students. All teachers have copies of IEPs and many use them well to develop individualised resources and subject specific targets for learning. This is a practice that needs extending to all teachers and departments, some of which do not account well enough for the different levels of learning skills in their classes. The use of a French language assistant in the modern languages department is very effective in supporting the learning needs of students. The commercial software literacy and numeracy programs are used well in and out of school hours for students whose basic skills are weak. Most LDAs are attached to subject departments, where they develop subject knowledge and skills and act as a valued support to students, as well as providing effective liaison between the department and the learning development centre (LDC). The LDC staff monitor students' progress efficiently and use assessment data well to develop individual programmes of work.

35. Travellers' children are taught through the school curriculum during the winter months. In the summer travelling months they are provided with learning packs that can be completed and returned through the Traveller Education Support Service (TESS). The success of this arrangement is dependent on parental support and students' motivation.

36. Students in Years 10 and 11 who become disaffected with schooling are able to take a reduced number of GCSEs and benefit from a work related curriculum that prepares them for further education or the world of work. They work towards certification on an accredited key skills course.

37. The curriculum has not yet been successfully modified for students with more severe and complex needs. Provision for students with the most significant difficulties is unsatisfactory due to a lack of training for teachers. The use of volunteers to help students with their reading is a valued means of supporting the curriculum for students with SEN.

38. The provision for extra-curricular opportunities is very good. Students benefit from an extensive programme. The school has a tradition of providing teams for most major sports and is particularly strong in football, netball, athletics and dance. Overall, 40 per cent of the students take part in sporting activities out of school time, supervised by seven members of staff. There is also a tradition of outdoor adventurous activities for all students in Years 7 to 9, both at home and abroad. In addition, targeted groups of students use the excellent facilities for outdoor and adventurous activities in curricular and extra-curricular time. An extensive out-of-hours enrichment programme for all years provides many opportunities for students to enjoy activities such as choir, drama, art, writers' workshop, homework clubs and revision clubs. Some Year 10 students have been identified to take part in special sessions to try to raise their academic achievement from grade D to C.

39. The provision for students' PSE is very good. Students are allocated one lesson each week. In Years 10 and 11, this allocation is shared with separate careers lessons. The programme is particularly well planned. The chosen topics are introduced at appropriate stages during students' time at the school and already include substantial elements of citizenship education. Most of the teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9, is done by the co-ordinator with the assistance of other specialist teachers. Visiting speakers, particularly health professionals, complement the programme. Spacious accommodation with ready access to ICT contributes to the high quality of the provision. Enthusiastic teaching and a careful evaluation of how specific topics promote students' personal development are further reasons for its success.

40. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. It is an integral part of the PSE programme. All students in Year 10 have two weeks work experience, which is well monitored, with careful preparation and follow-up during and after the placement by members of the teaching staff. All Year 11 students have an individual interview. The careers library is used well, with seven computers available.

41. The links that the school has developed with the community are very good and are used astutely for the benefit of students. They are a notable strength of the school. A good example of this is the close links developed with the Cobnor Activities Centre that provide students with opportunities to undertake a wide range of outdoor and adventurous pursuits as extra-curricular activities and, where appropriate for certain students, as part of an adapted curriculum. Other initiatives, for example the series of business breakfasts, are intended to raise the standing of the school within the local community. Adult education classes are already held on the site. The imminent construction of the leisure centre will provide better sporting facilities for school and community alike.

42. The school has satisfactory links with partner institutions. There is an induction programme for Year 7 students, and some informal links between subject leaders in the primary schools and their counterparts at Bourne. Links with local colleges are well established.

43. Provision for students' spiritual development is good. Although there is little evidence of planning in departments (apart from religious education where it is excellent) for spiritual development, the PSE programme makes a significant contribution and most subjects provide opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences. In religious education, opportunities to discuss topics such as the purpose of the Jewish Shabbat demonstrate a sensitive awareness of the role of women in the Jewish home and enable students to express their values and beliefs openly and honestly. Students are also encouraged to tackle fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life, death and suffering. In history, students develop a good understanding of the link with nature through studying the beliefs of the plains Indians. In design and technology, students reflect on their personal achievement and take pride in their finished work. In mathematics, students reflect on patterns and order in relation to number. Assemblies take place once each week for each year group and make a satisfactory contribution to students' spiritual development. Emphasis is placed on the collective aspect of assemblies and they often involve worship and opportunities for reflection.

44. Provision for students' moral development is good. The school has clear expectations that students should know right from wrong, and most students are able to distinguish right from wrong consistently. The headteacher and staff are good role models for students. Assemblies make a good contribution to this aspect of development, providing students with opportunities to examine values and the importance of rules. Opportunities for moral development are provided largely through the PSE programme and religious education. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, sex education, drugs awareness, alcohol abuse and vandalism, and ethical issues such as human rights and prejudice, provide a sound curriculum for discussion and development. Several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In religious education, students studying prejudice acquire a very good appreciation of the different aspects of bigotry. History reinforces this with its examination of equality and slavery through the study of Black peoples of America.

45. Provision for students' social development is very good and is a strength of the school. Students are given many opportunities to take responsibility and develop social understanding, particularly through the outstanding outdoor and adventurous activities programme and its strong community links. Students are encouraged to develop self reliance, gain a real insight into other peoples' cultures and develop a team spirit and sense of 'togetherness' through a very well planned and carefully structured series of visits and activities, many in Europe. Topics in the PSE programme, such as rights and responsibilities, healthy environment, sex and love, citizenship, political issues, and friendship all make a powerful contribution to developing attitudes and fostering independent thinking. Students organise several charity events. They have participated in sponsored sleepovers in Chichester cathedral and Southbourne parish church for the last four years and have raised substantial sums of money for the homeless. Many subjects contribute well towards social development. For example, in design and technology, students are given a great deal of responsibility for their own actions and work well in groups. The team dimension is very strong and students collaborate well with each other and forego their individual wishes in the interests of the team as a whole. In many subjects, the use of group work, discussion and the sharing of ideas enable students to grow in confidence, to respect the views of others and to develop attitudes and values. In history, good use of pair work enables students to learn from each other. In mathematics, students develop good relationships through the use of 'starter' games. The use of fieldwork in geography provides

opportunities for students to share their findings with each other and collaborate in producing finished work. Opportunities are missed, however, in modern foreign languages, where there are few occasions when students learn in groups or pairs.

46. Provision for students' cultural development is good. There are many opportunities for students to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development and provide them with an insight into the values and beliefs of others. The school's curriculum provides some planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. Religious education makes a good contribution, especially in terms of the study of different religions and the cultures that support them. This assists students to prepare for life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. In geography students develop an awareness of the cultural diversity and contrasts in all aspects of the people, and landscapes of Kenya. In history, the study of Black culture in Britain, Black peoples of America and of Plains Indians greatly enriches students' understanding of these groups, their different cultures and traditions. In music, the use of an array of musical instruments from different countries contributes well to discussions about the cultures that developed them. In design and technology, students research food from the regions of Britain and abroad and thus gain an insight into these cultures. In English, the study of texts from other cultures provides students with further opportunities to develop their cultural awareness. The celebration of the variety of different cultures and traditions in the life of the school is a feature of some assemblies throughout the year. However, planning for a whole-school approach to the development of students' understanding of life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society is underdeveloped. Many trips and activities promote students' cultural development, especially the cultural visit to Spain. A wealth of opportunities for trips to youth theatres, festivals of music, drama and dance is provided locally. Students' participation in cultural and sporting events is high and they develop an awareness of how they can make a good contribution to society. The fundamental principles of the school as a community college support the cultural development of students. This is a strength.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- Standards of care are satisfactory overall.
- Procedures to promote good behaviour and to support personal development are good.
- Monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in the use of data in departments.
- Procedures to promote good attendance are unsatisfactory.

47. The school has good procedures to ensure students' welfare and safety, both within the school and on the many educational and recreational visits they make outside. Some potential hazards were drawn to the school's attention. Most were already part of planned improvements. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. A varied health education programme is included as part of the curriculum, with good use of outside professional visitors.

48. Procedures to monitor and support students' personal development are good. Heads of year and their tutor teams stay with students as they move through the school. They come to know them well. This knowledge is backed by carefully kept records that monitor behaviour and personal development. It is used effectively to give personal support to

students, who are confident they will get help should they need it. The annual target setting day gives a useful opportunity for students to discuss and review personal progress with their tutors. Although these have information about students' progress in individual subjects, the targets set tend to be general ones.

49. The school's procedures to monitor and improve attendance are unsatisfactory because they have yet to be fully effective in raising the overall rate of attendance to a satisfactory level. The school is aware of the need to improve attendance and has worked hard to increase levels, both overall and for individuals. They have, for example, consulted the County Student Retention Team and acted on their recommendations. Parents are contacted on the first day of absence. Levels and patterns of attendance are scrutinised. Attendance has improved overall. However, during the first two terms of the current academic year there were some 32 per cent of students with an attendance rate of below 90 per cent. In their efforts to improve attendance the school considers that they receive prompt and effective support from the West Sussex Education Welfare Service, but they have had difficulty in following up cases when students come from Hampshire, especially where they suspect absence is condoned by parents.

50. In the course of the past year, the school has revised and changed its procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour, recognising the need for consistency in teachers' management of behaviour. Members of staff were given training in how to use the new procedures before they were implemented in September 2001. They consider, rightly, that standards of behaviour have improved. Monitoring records show that the number of more serious incidents has been reduced, and that minor infringements are now more often dealt with by subject teachers in the classroom. Students interviewed also believe that behaviour has improved because of these new procedures. The good standards of behaviour seen in lessons during the inspection confirm that current procedures are effective. In addition, the school has organised alternative arrangements for some groups of students who found the standard curriculum difficult. This too has helped to improve behaviour. There are good procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour and bullying. Students interviewed consider that the school handles cases of bullying effectively.

51. Although the procedures to monitor and support students' personal development are good, those for academic progress are weaker, though satisfactory. This reflects a variation in methods of assessment and the use of available information to track individual students' progress in subjects. In consequence, the quality of the educational and personal support and guidance that the school gives students is no more than satisfactory overall.

52. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall but not yet fully embedded in the life of the school. There are examples of particularly good practice in design and technology, mathematics and physical education. The procedures for assessing students' attainment are unsatisfactory in history and religious education but good in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, physical education and science.

53. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are satisfactory. The school's use of computers to support the work of the departments in this respect is still at an early stage of development due to staffing difficulties. The computers required updating during the Easter holidays so it is only recently that matters have moved ahead more rapidly. Most departments have an electronic connection to the school system. The school organises appropriate target setting days and formal grades on a termly basis and form teachers maintain an overview of students' progress. The school has a good policy that emphasises its commitment to equality in a wide range of areas including

gender, minority ethnic need and the needs of different groups such as travellers. However, the school does not analyse data sufficiently, for example examination results, to identify gender differences or the needs of different groups and to help to set targets for improvement.

54. The school's use of assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the appropriateness of the curriculum, and to inform its planning, is satisfactory in most departments. It is unsatisfactory in history but good in mathematics and physical education. All students have predicted grades, which are updated on a regular basis, and assessment information is used successfully with individuals. Baseline information against which students' performances are evaluated is well established and used appropriately in setting departmental targets. Governors approved an appropriate policy at the beginning of the year. By September the school expects to be able to have a detailed overview of all its different groups of students, and to take appropriate action as required.

55. The school has a process to identify gifted and talented students that is stronger in some departments than others. Confusion arises because the school has maintained the title 'able programme' rather than 'gifted and talented programme'. Teachers' training has involved national speakers to raise awareness about thinking skills, problem solving and programmes to accelerate learning. The personal, health and social education (PSE) programme, with its focus on personal development, is successfully underpinning the work of the co-ordinator for gifted and talented students.

56. The school has been through a difficult period since the previous inspection. It continues to provide good personal support for students and has introduced effective new procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour.

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

- Parents' views of the school are broadly satisfactory.
- Links with parents are unsatisfactory because the school has not yet convinced enough parents of the importance of regular attendance at the school by their children.
- Information for parents is satisfactory.
- The impact of parents' involvement in their children's education is unsatisfactory.

57. Parents' views of the school are broadly satisfactory. However, the number of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire was lower than average and relatively few attended the pre-inspection meeting. Those parents who did return the questionnaire consider that their children like the school and that the school expects hard work. The inspection team agrees with parents that their children are happy in the school, but considers that greater demands could be made of some groups of students. Some of the parents who returned the questionnaire had concerns about homework, about the information on progress and about whether the school works closely with them. Inspectors agree with parents that homework is not always used effectively to improve learning. They consider that the information parents receive about progress in annual profiles is satisfactory, though somewhat variable. They believe that the school should strengthen its partnership with parents.

58. Links with parents are currently unsatisfactory. The school does provide information about itself and about student progress which, on balance, is satisfactory. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents provide basic information about the school. The termly newsletters are intended to keep parents up-to-date with events at the school. Parents are given information about progress at consultation evenings and in the annual

profiles. These latter vary considerably in what they tell parents about how well their children are doing. Some, the best, give precise information on what a student can do, cannot do and needs to do in order to improve in the subject being reported on. Others simply comment on the student's attitude.

59. There is little evidence of an active partnership with parents, for example information on the curriculum for different years (except for an options booklet) or of prior consultation and discussion about changes. There have been difficulties in recent years. The Bourne College Association (parents' association) has lapsed, though it will be restarted. The level of parents' involvement and their contribution to their children's learning is unsatisfactory. The use of planners as a home/school dialogue by both parents and the school is patchy. Most parents do attend consultation evenings (and the school does contact those who do not). The most significant factors are the small number of questionnaires returned and the below average rate of attendance for almost a third of students. These do not indicate a strong and flourishing partnership with parents and suggest that the school has not yet convinced parents of the need to contribute to that partnership.

60. The previous inspection report described the school's partnership with parents as a key priority for development. It still is.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The school is well led and managed.
- The principles of best value are applied well.
- Financial planning is very good and the school uses its resources well to promote improvement.
- The governing body plays a very strong role in shaping the future of the school.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is managed well.

61. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The headteacher provides very good leadership with a focus on raising standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning through staff development together with monitoring and support for teaching. Given the school's recent troubled history, the priorities have been the restoration of staff morale and the rebuilding of parents' and students' confidence in the school. By gaining the support of the staff and governors, by communicating her vision for the school and setting a very clear educational direction, the headteacher has successfully established a common sense of purpose that has turned the school around and led to considerable improvement in a short time. An effective climate for learning has been established; a clearly defined strategic management process is being developed, linked to systematic staff development, and the school now has a good capacity to improve further.

62. The headteacher is supported well by the senior management team (leadership group) whose individual strengths are used to provide oversight and leadership for aspects of the school's work. The whole team has a role in monitoring the quality of teaching and providing support where teaching is found to need improvement. Where standards cannot be improved, the headteacher does not shrink from taking disciplinary action – which has been partly responsible for the high turnover of staff. The overall success of this approach is seen in the improvement of teaching since the previous inspection when about one lesson in six failed to reach a satisfactory standard and in the high proportion of lessons that were of very good or outstanding quality in this inspection. Nevertheless, there is still work to do in improving teaching and a more consistent and rigorous approach to monitoring quality is needed at senior and departmental level.

63. Discussion with staff and school documents show a consultative approach to management that has led to the establishment of a culture of confident self-evaluation in which aims and values are shared. Policies and quality of provision are reviewed regularly to enable areas for improvement to be identified and targets set for development. The school applies the principles of best value to its work well. Outcomes and benefits are evaluated against costs and the school's management of its resources is compared with that of other schools to determine if improvements can be made.

64. The school makes good use of additional sources of funding for specific purposes – the improvement in teaching, for example, is in part due to the staff development paid for through the raising achievement package (RAP) funding. The use of New Opportunities Funding (NOF), in co-operation with the outdoor pursuits centre at Cobnor, has led to outstandingly good opportunities for students' personal growth and contributes to the development of alternative curricular provision to meet students' needs more effectively.

65. Financial management and control are very good. The school benefits from very efficient financial administration. All costs are monitored to ensure that funds are applied as effectively as possible to support the school's priorities. The budget has been well managed to clear a deficit and to build up a small contingency reserve. An apparently large surplus currently in the school's accounts consists of Standards Fund monies that are intended to be spent before the end of this academic year.

66. The governing body is very well informed about the school's work. Discussion with governors shows that they have a clear understanding of the school's circumstances and what needs to be done to secure improvement. While holding the school rigorously to account, governors are fully involved in providing support. The chair of governors is particularly active in maintaining contact with the school and providing valued support for the headteacher. The only weakness in the governing body's support for the school is that they do not meet their statutory responsibilities to ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all students and that National Curriculum requirements are met in respect of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum.

67. The acting learning development co-ordinator leads a strong team of learning development teachers and assistants. She has good experience and qualifications and is clear on the direction in which the special educational needs provision is moving. Her promotion to the acting post is recent and she works closely with her predecessor who is currently an acting assistant head teacher. The support of the learning development centre (LDC) is valued throughout the school. Its work is closely monitored and very good records are kept. Regular team meetings are held in which there is an exchange of information that sharpens the focus of staff on the progress of students with special educational needs. The handbook for the well designed and managed LDC is comprehensive and clear. It puts the centre's work at the heart of the school's inclusion initiative. The pastoral and curriculum responsibilities of the school come together in the teaching and learning forum, which reviews the progress of students with special educational needs. Very good use is made of technology for administration, learning programs and for recording the progress students make. One learning development assistant (LDA) gives five hours of clerical support to the department, which contributes greatly to its smooth administration.

68. The co-ordinator of the gifted and talented programme, who is a member of the senior management team, has worked to improve the provision for gifted and talented students. Good bids have been made for internal and external funding to develop holiday

programmes. Links with colleges and universities have opened up opportunities outside school. All departments have been well informed about the identification of gifted and talented students but a minority of heads of department has not taken any action.

69. The school has a good, clear and updated equality of opportunity policy that takes account of most relevant acts of parliament relating to gender and minority ethnic groups. The policy does not yet include the most recent disability legislation. However, the school site was being modified during the inspection to accommodate the needs of wheelchair users. Governors have ratified the equality of opportunity policy and the co-ordinator ensures that the policy is updated regularly. There is no regular formal monitoring of gender needs in the classroom. As a result the school misses opportunities to try out different groupings of students. It is not capitalising on the recent research about the effectiveness of varied gender groupings to gain the best social and academic results.

70. The match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The position in the English and history departments is unsatisfactory because both are short of full-time specialist teachers and are over-reliant on help from supply teachers. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching take place through departments and as part of the process of performance management. Teachers' professional development is satisfactorily managed. Staff self-development is encouraged and several are taking advanced degree courses. Learning development assistants (LDAs) are similarly encouraged to train formally, in line with the school's aim to be a 'learning community'.

71. Performance management was re-launched in September 2001. The elements of the strategy are satisfactory but its impact is not yet clear. The headteacher reports that morale has been favourably affected. Recent threshold assessment indicated that most aspects were 'strong features' but use of data and comparisons with similar schools were still 'developing'.

72. The school follows the local education authority's (LEA's) procedures for newly qualified teachers. Inspectors confirm that they are well supported. A new supply teacher is well supported by the English department.

73. The school's premises plan states clearly the priorities for development of the unsatisfactory accommodation. The senior management is fully aware of the maintenance and capital work yet to be carried out and applies each year for finance to maintain the improvements to the buildings. Because of the increasing numbers of students, space is now at a premium and additional buildings are a necessity. Unsatisfactory facilities in art, music and science impede students' progress. History teaching is affected because the classrooms used are dispersed throughout the school. New developments in progress include a new sports hall and facilities for disabled students. The buildings are well cared for and the displays in many areas contribute to a pleasant environment.

74. Overall, resources for learning are of sufficient quality and quantity to enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. For most subjects of the curriculum the provision of resources is satisfactory; in art it is good. However, a number of departments, including science, religious education, history, modern foreign languages, and geography lack sufficient access to computers to support their work and there are problems of deployment and access in the ICT suites. Although the school has a broadly average number of computers, opportunities to book ICT rooms are limited and thus restrict the use that teachers are able to make of ICT to support learning in their subjects. With the introduction

of a new ICT option, access is becoming more difficult. Equipment for teaching physics is inadequate. The school's ratio of books to students is a little below that which is recommended by the National Library Association. Nevertheless, the library is a valuable resource that is used well, particularly for English, for which there are timetabled lessons.

75. Considering the school's effective use of its budget and the recent improvement in standards, particularly in the quality of teaching, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

76. To continue to improve and to raise standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and the school should:

•Improve attendance by:\*\*

(Paragraphs: 4,6,15,24,50,81,91,100,118,124,133,162,167,174)

- \* closer monitoring by middle managers and classroom teachers;
- \* better co-ordination of the two local education authorities' (LEAs) arrangements to follow up absence.

•Improve standards in modern foreign languages by:

(Paragraphs: 82,148,149,150,151,153,154)

- \* improving the quality of teaching;
- \* increasing the time allocated for teaching in Years 7 to 9 and improving its distribution through the week;
- \* making better use of homework to extend learning;
- \* making better use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning.

•Improve the structure of the curriculum so that:

(Paragraphs: 9,23,29,30,67,76,93,100,104,127,133,135,142,145,146,148,150,154,169,170,173,174)

- \* statutory requirements are met in respect of ICT across the curriculum;
- \* the time allocated to subjects is better balanced.

•Improve the involvement of parents in their children's education by:\*

(Paragraphs: 25,58,59,60,61)

- \* involving parents more closely in target setting and reviews;
- \* improving the quality and relevance of homework;
- \* gaining their confidence and convincing them of the relevance of the school's work so that they co-operate in improving attendance.

•The following should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- \* the accommodation provided for food technology, art and design and music is unsatisfactory and affects learning.

\*\*These issues are already part of the school's strategic planning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	111
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Number</b>	6	28	35	35	6	1	0
<b>Percentage</b>	5	25	32	32	5	1	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.*

### ***Information about the school's pupils***

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	685
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	92

### **Special educational needs**

Y7 – Y11	
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	207

### **English as an additional language**

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

### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils	
39	Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission
30	Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

### **Attendance**

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	10.5
National comparative data	8.1

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	61	60	121

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	30	42	40
	Girls	33	27	27
	Total	63	69	67
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	53(44)	58(66)	56(56)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	16(19)	38(37)	28(26)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	33	32	39
	Girls	32	23	27
	Total	65	55	66
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	55(53)	46(58)	56(64)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	19(30)	34(33)	26(37)
	National	31(31)	42(39)	33(29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	51	49	100

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A*-C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	14	45	49
	Girls	17	43	44
	Total	31	88	93
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31(24)	88(89)	93(98)
	National	48(47)	91(91)	96(96)

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

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per pupil	School	31.8 (31.7)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	683
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	41	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes:**

##### **Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

#### **Education support staff:**

##### **Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	558

#### **Deployment of teachers:**

##### **Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.0
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#### **Average teaching group size:**

##### **Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	21.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1737872.00
Total expenditure	1714238.00
Expenditure per pupil	2704.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-10352.00
Balance carried forward to next year	13282.00

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	10
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  
Number of questionnaires returned

685
73

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	37	53	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	55	5	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	51	12	1	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	45	23	12	3
The teaching is good.	18	60	14	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	36	33	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	52	10	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	47	4	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	22	40	30	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	23	60	10	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	62	8	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	38	15	4	15

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### **Strengths:**

- Teachers use a good range of teaching methods to help students learn effectively. They prepare students particularly well for GCSE examinations.
- Students' behaviour is good, reflecting the quality of relationships and teachers' good management of students in the classroom.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- Attractive and informative displays are a feature of English classrooms and elsewhere. They contribute to students' appreciation of and interest in the subject.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Although monitoring of teaching takes place on a regular basis, observation does not cover full lessons and the focus is more on provision than on quality of learning and sharing of good teaching practice.
- A shortage of full-time specialist English teachers affects continuity and quality of learning for some classes in Years 7 to 9.
- Marking does not sufficiently draw attention to inaccuracies in students' written work or show how students might improve their written expression.
- Homework requirements are not always precise enough to reflect and develop the learning in some lessons.

77. In 2001, students' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was below average and below average in comparison with results in similar schools. Students' performance in English was below that in mathematics and science, where their performance was similar. Given that students' attainment on entry to the school has consistently been below average, the results represent satisfactory achievement. The trend of results has been downwards since 1997. Boys' results improved in 2001 but girls' fell.

78. GCSE results for A\*-C grades in 2001 were significantly below average, but above average for A\*-G grades. English literature results for A\*-C grades were also significantly below average, and below average for A\*-G grades. Compared with their standards at the end of Year 9, students' results suggest satisfactory achievement overall. The lowest and highest attainers obtained good results in both subjects, but the proportions achieving grades between B and E were below national figures. One student's performance was outstanding in being among the top five candidates for English literature in 2001. The performance of both boys and girls was significantly better in their English examinations than in all other subjects.

79. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Orally students are quite confident, but their spoken responses to questions are often brief. Reading skills are well developed because reading is emphasised strongly in the department's programme of work and there are opportunities for wider reading in tutor periods and in library lessons with access to the library's attractive range of suitable fiction. The 'Reading Passport' rewards students' wider reading and cultivates a good attitude to reading. Middle and higher attainers in Year 11 work hard to produce thorough, well understood and well evidenced coursework assignments. The analytical skills of middle

attainers are not strong enough, however, for more than straightforward analysis of character or comparison of texts. Often their work is marred by errors in spelling and punctuation. It also lacks variety of expression and is prone to lapses into conversational or over-casual style. Students' work would benefit if teachers' marking drew more attention to errors and their correction. Marking does not always provide models or explanations of how students' standard of expression might be improved. Standards of attainment since the previous inspection have not been as high as those reported then, but show signs of recovery. Predicted grades for students currently in Years 9 and 11 suggest performance much closer to the average than in 2001.

80. Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. The substantial number of students with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress because SEN staff and the department's literacy assistant provide good support in the classroom. Teachers, too, know and provide for the needs of students well through their comprehensive individual education plans. These students often improve on their target levels or grades. As indicated above, all students entered for the GCSE English examination in 2001 obtained a pass grade, showing good achievement by the lowest attainers and those with SEN. Although girls' performance at the end of Year 9 has declined relative to the national picture in previous years, there was no evidence of underachievement by girls in this inspection. Gifted and talented students are identified and they make good progress in Years 10 and 11. This was clearly demonstrated in the above average proportion of A\* and A grades in GCSE English and English literature in 2001. Though achievement by other students is satisfactory given their prior attainment, the standards they attain are affected by the writing weaknesses referred to earlier. In addition, quite a high proportion (up to 20 per cent) of students were absent from some classes, particularly in Years 8 and 9, and such absence inevitably affects standards.

81. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is satisfactory overall. Teachers are aware of the literacy strategy thanks to the efforts of the literacy co-ordinator and the whole school training that has taken place. There is good practice in music where, for example, students match their own lyrics to music. They are encouraged to think and talk about the quality of their language and as a result gain confidence in speaking and produce sensitive work of above average standard. In physical education, students receive very good guidance on how to express themselves accurately in examinations. They are encouraged to talk about physical skills and techniques using the correct vocabulary. Such approaches make a clear contribution to the above average standards in GCSE. In geography, teachers insist on the use of precise geographic terms in spoken answers and put key vocabulary on display. They provide 'Aids to Improving Sentences' and opportunities to write with understanding and awareness of peoples' circumstances. They expect high standards of presentation. However, good practice is not evident in science because the development of literacy skills is not planned for and opportunities for reading aloud, speaking and extended writing are few. In modern foreign languages students' oral confidence is not developed sufficiently. They do not develop the patterns of learning recommended in Curriculum 2000 and lack techniques for handling language as a result. In both these subjects and in religious education and in history teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on accuracy in writing. This is evident in superficial marking of written work and failure to pick up on spelling mistakes. These inconsistencies in provision across subjects mean that the school's strategies for the development of literacy skills are only satisfactorily effective and that the teaching of literacy is similarly only satisfactory.

82. The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory overall, as is the quality of learning. Teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This reflects the care teachers take over preparation for examinations in Years 10 and 11 that is evident in work seen during the inspection and in results obtained for the highest and lowest attainers in 2001. In a good Year 10 lesson, for example, the teacher's careful planning, good questioning and helpful research activity ensured that lower attaining students learned about rapid scanning of text to find evidence quickly and developed their knowledge and understanding of Steinbeck's '*Of Mice and Men*'. Scrutiny of Year 11's coursework showed that teachers develop students' knowledge and understanding well and encourage a personal response. They do not always, however, draw sufficient attention to mistakes in spelling, sentence punctuation and expression.

83. Teaching is less effective in Years 7 to 9 partly because the department is short-staffed and is relying on help from supply teachers who are relatively inexperienced or non-specialists. Continuity and quality of learning for some classes have been affected as a result. In addition, one Year 8 lesson was unsatisfactory because the teacher was not able to get the attention of the students in order to conduct a purposeful lesson; as a result, little learning took place. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons for this age group, teachers did not involve students sufficiently because their questioning did not require more than a brief response or there was over-reliance on a few volunteers for contributions. On two occasions, the homework set did not sufficiently reflect or develop the learning because its general nature allowed students too much scope to do very little. Although monitoring of teaching takes place regularly, and is scrupulously recorded, observations do not cover full lessons and tend to focus on the consistency of the way in which lessons are taught rather than on the quality of learning. Some small changes in procedure and focus would help identify the shortcomings observed above and encourage sharing of the existing good practice.

84. Teachers have clearly developed good relationships with students and manage them well. As a result, students' attitudes to learning are usually at least satisfactory and their behaviour is good. Some good and very good teaching provides students with an intellectual challenge that they want to respond to, and provokes lively and also thoughtful responses. This was the case in a very good Year 8 lesson where the teacher's lively questioning, high expectations and focus on language produced a spoken contribution from the whole class in their discussion about Blake's poem '*The Tyger*'. As a result, all the students tackled the written activity with enthusiasm. The teacher's subsequent review brought out thoughtful comments which showed that students were responding to the spiritual issues inherent in the poem at a level above expectations. In a good Year 9 lesson, the teacher's clever use of tone of voice in her reading from Jane Austen's '*Pride and Prejudice*', her careful questioning and her effective use of video helped students to learn about Austen's style of writing and explore character differences with understanding. These teachers' ability to use a wide range of teaching methods to develop learning is a strong feature of the department's work. Attractive and informative displays are also a feature of English classrooms and elsewhere about the school. They demonstrate teachers' commitment to the subject and contribute to students' awareness of its importance.

85. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards of attainment are not as high as they were, though the progress made by students with special educational needs is good, and other students continue to achieve satisfactorily overall. The department's systems and thorough curriculum planning continue to ensure its smooth running, but because of the reservations about teaching and the fact that standards

of attainment and achievement have not risen, leadership and management can only be regarded as satisfactory at this stage. There are indications of some improvement in results from the predicted grades for Years 9 and 11, and standards in the current Years 7, 8 and 10 look more promising. Given attention to the areas for improvement at the beginning of this report, the capacity for improvement is good.

## DRAMA

86. Drama is provided as part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and as an option in Years 10 and 11. A small group of students took GCSE in 2001; numbers were too small to make comparisons with national figures but a Year 11 group is being examined this year with the expectation of at least half obtaining grades A\*-C. A large number of students have chosen the subject in the current Year 10. Observation of drama in this inspection had to be limited to lessons in Years 7 to 9 because of timetabling arrangements.

87. Students make a good start to their drama work in Year 7 and show good attitudes. They recall previous learning well, and work together constructively to produce some imaginative work. Pairs of students, for example, created a conversation from four pieces of information and responded well to the challenge the activity presented. One class of Year 9 students working on monologues as a 'presentation style' also responded well to the challenge of presenting a Jules Feiffer passage and appreciated how the solo performance helped their confidence. In another Year 9 class, using the same material, the attitudes of some boys were much less enthusiastic and the teacher did well to involve them in the lesson eventually. Two girls with little time to practise gave confident presentations showing some understanding of character. Overall, standards of attainment are average.

88. Teaching is good overall. The teacher's touches of humour and her patience establish good relationships and she manages well the awkwardness and lack of confidence among some students by changing the activity to something they can participate in. She provides good feedback to students on how to improve. For example, tips about using full stops as an opportunity for eye contact and 'reading with attitude' were particularly helpful for students presenting monologues. She draws attention to the skills of drama and encourages use of the correct terms in discussion and review. The result is that students make good progress, particularly in personal confidence, speaking and listening, and working with and awareness of others.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### **Strengths:**

- The leadership of the department is good, establishing a good team spirit with the capacity for sustained improvement.
- Assessment data is used particularly well to identify those students requiring extra support in their learning.
- The provision for students with special educational needs (SEN), who are supported well.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The staffing difficulties within the department.
- The use of computers in the teaching of mathematics.



89. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average. The proportion of students gaining the higher levels was close to average. When compared with those of similar schools, results were close to average. Results were better than those in English and science. Boys did better than girls in 2001, the opposite outcome to that of 2000 and reflecting a similar variation to that seen in standards on entry to the school. The trend of improvement is broadly in line with the national trend over the last three years.

90. The 2001 GCSE examination results were below average but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Some students did not do as well as expected, mainly lower attainers, due to a lack of continuity in their learning caused by the staffing difficulties within the department and the difficulties some students have in retaining their learning. Boys did better than girls in 2001. Some students were not entered due to unsatisfactory attendance. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\*-G was below the national average. Overall, performance was better than in English and science and broadly matched students' standards in their other subjects. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

91. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly average at the end of Year 9. This improvement on the results of 2001 is due to the new leadership in the department and the commitment of the other teachers, new to the school since September. Higher attaining students cope well with problem solving, finding the area of a regular pentagon, for example, given the length of one of its sides. Their recall of basic facts, such as trigonometric formulae, is not yet fully secure and further practice is required. Middle attaining students use Pythagoras' Theorem well, setting out their working clearly to find one side of a triangle given the other two. Lower attaining students make satisfactory progress in lessons but assessment evidence shows that progress over time (achievement) is not as good as might be expected due to changes of teachers.

92. Work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 11 shows improvement over the 2001 results. Standards are close to average with girls performing better than boys. Higher attaining students can draw trigonometrical graphs and solve simple trigonometrical equations. Basic algebraic skills are secure, providing well for possible future study. Simple vectors are well known. Middle attaining students can calculate areas of plane figures correctly, from quadrilaterals to circles. They solve simple problems in geometry and work accurately with negative numbers because they are given plenty of practice. Lower attaining students produce a large amount of neat, accurate work, particularly in simple statistical diagrams. Algebraic skills are not well developed, with errors in collection of similar terms, for example. Investigation work in Year 11 matches the standards expected for students of the same age nationally. The best work shows the thorough groundwork in algebra put to good use in summaries. The preparatory work gives clear evidence of the good attitudes that students have to their work - neat, with plenty of work to see. Standards in literacy and numeracy within the department are broadly average. Access to computers is very limited, restricting the overall understanding of basic concepts in mathematics. Support for students with SEN is good throughout the school. A learning support assistant, working within the mathematics department, liaises well with the teachers. Group sizes are small and individual plans for these students are well prepared. As a result, progress in lessons is satisfactory but students require more continuity of teaching to improve achievement in the longer term.

93. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching and a small element of unsatisfactory teaching. The strength of the teaching lies in teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This clarifies matters for students, for example in the learning of quadratic equations, when students see the point behind the teaching and can then apply the principle to the solution of problems. Good subject knowledge is the drive behind the constant flow of questions seen in good teaching,

consolidating mathematical language and numerical factors very well. The management of students is good and contributes to the good attitudes that students show in lessons. It is the principal reason that the department has the capacity to improve attainment.

94. Resources are used to good effect in lessons. In a lesson on perimeter and area, a length of string was used in an effective opening presentation, clarifying students' understanding, particularly important for a group of students who find it difficult to understand abstract ideas. When teaching is good, lesson time is used well. Time-limited goals are used to good effect, maintaining the pace of learning. In the otherwise satisfactory teaching, students are sometimes left for too long on one particular task with the result that concentration and the pace of work fall away as the end of the lesson approaches. Lesson planning sometimes lacks the variety of activities needed to maintain students' interest in learning. In some lessons elements from the National Numeracy Strategy are being used to good effect, improving teaching methods, as students are required to explain their ideas and so clarify their understanding. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory.

95. The temporary teachers in the department have quickly settled in to their work but their lack of knowledge of particular students' needs affects continuity and progress. Teaching methods are not always coherent, this was the cause of the unsatisfactory teaching seen. The department has appropriate policies in place, on homework for example. Although the use of homework is satisfactory overall, some students do not do their homework by the due date and need a strong follow-up from the teachers. Day-to-day assessment of students' work is satisfactory. The marking of work is thorough and sometimes includes helpful written comments to help students learn. The result is plenty of neat accurate work by students.

96. The quality of leadership and management is good. Credit is due to the head of department for keeping the department going under very difficult staffing conditions. The good, clear, educational direction for the department inspires confidence and the respect of teachers, shown by the joint lesson preparation, the sharing of ideas and the beginnings of good use of assessment to raise attainment. Departmental summaries show the progress of students from their entry to the school and have been used well to identify students in particular need of support. Students in Year 11 on the borderline of GCSE grades C/D have been helped this way. The leadership of the department has established a good team spirit with the capacity for sustained improvement. The development plan is good. National Curriculum requirements are currently not met because the use of computers in the teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory. The lessons specifically allocated to teaching numeracy in Years 7 to 9 do not fit comfortably with the main lessons as they are taught by a different teacher, reducing continuity and progression, particularly in the case of lower attaining students. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, as attainment has improved.

## **SCIENCE**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Assessment procedures.
- Support for newly qualified teachers.
- Good relationships between teachers and students.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Standards in all years.
- Provision for gifted and talented students.
- The use of data to support planning.
- Opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT).
- Schemes of work for students in Years 7 to 9.
- Accommodation and resources for learning.

97. Students enter the school with below average standards. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below average when compared both with all schools and similar schools. For the last three years results have been below average. This year, results are expected to be closer to the national average. Over the last three years, girls have not performed as well as boys. There has been a steady improvement in boys' performance so that by 2001 their standards were at the national average for boys. There was no significant difference in attainment of boys and girls on entry. However, this year there have been substantial changes in teaching staff so that there is no secure explanation for this underperformance of girls. There is no evidence to suggest that girls will perform less well than boys this year. Results in 2001 for science were similar to those in mathematics but better than those in English. Achievement was unsatisfactory because students did not achieve the results in science that might have been expected based on their attainment at age 11.

98. Standards in GCSE examinations were well below average in 2001. Few students obtained the highest GCSE grades. Girls did less well than boys. Results vary from year to year but over time there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Overall results have improved steadily over the last three years. Nevertheless, students did not achieve the results that might have been expected in 2001 considering their performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. Results in science were similar to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English.

99. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and well below average at the end of Year 11. Most students have below average literacy and numeracy skills, which affect their standards, particularly in achieving the highest level/grades. Their explanations of scientific principles are often superficial. They cannot apply their knowledge well. A significant number of students have difficulty with the calculations required for both their terminal examination and their coursework. Generally, students have low levels of recall and understanding of work carried out the previous year. This is why it is so important for the department to continue to develop the modular course. Low attendance restricts the attainment of a significant group of students. Teachers make little provision for gifted and talented students except through extra lessons for Year 9. Gifted and talented students have been identified but the department makes insufficient provision for their needs. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, particularly when the teacher and support assistant work well together. Most teachers use the technical language of the subject well and improve students' literacy skills

by the use of key words. It is important, however, to correct these words when they are spelt incorrectly. Students' standards in ICT are unsatisfactory because they do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers and data logging equipment. Standards in ICT should improve when the new data-logging equipment is in full use. During the inspection week, Year 11 students were on study leave, which is too early when they have such low independent learning skills. These students need all the help they can get. It was possible to interview some of the highest attaining Year 11 students. Their coursework is of a high standard. These students can balance chemical equations but find it difficult to use these equations to calculate the amount of product from given information. Their understanding of forces, animal and plant cells, and factors, which alter the rate of chemical reactions, is at best rather superficial. As it is so close to their final examination their understanding should be better than this if they are to achieve the highest grades. Coursework marks and their Year 10 examination results indicate that the current Year 11 will achieve GCSE results similar to last year.

100. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In about half of lessons, teaching was better than satisfactory. Teachers need to find ways to improve students' long term learning so that the work in the classroom can be translated into better results. Homework is not readily identified in exercise books and is a weakness in the department. Teachers do not give students sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills by setting open-ended research projects. Some teachers have insufficient chemical knowledge and understanding, which consequently affects students' learning. Teachers generally have good relationships with their students; this supports classroom management. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of resources and methods to make their lessons more interesting. In most lessons, teachers organize students well so that most have every opportunity to learn. Teachers set clear objectives for every lesson. The quality of marking is variable particularly in respect of the use of comments to help students improve their work and teachers do not always mark students' work regularly. Reports to parents are satisfactory. Teachers identify the grades/levels that students are working at. However, teachers do not give students sufficiently precise targets about what they need to do to improve.

101. Overall, students learn satisfactorily. In a Year 7 lesson, students made satisfactory progress when drawing simple conclusions about plant populations in fields. In this lesson, the teacher gave the students the opportunity to improve their ICT skills to organize and display data. When finding out how light bends when passing through a glass block, Year 8 students learnt very well. The teacher gave the students very clear instructions for the practical work that enabled all students to observe and understand refraction very well. Importantly, teachers adapt their teaching very carefully to the needs of their students. In a Year 9 lesson with the most able, students learnt well how to calculate and compare the efficiencies of various devices. The teacher used a good range of examples at a pace suitable for these high attaining students. Students learnt satisfactorily about transpiration in a Year 10 lesson. Through the use of numerical data, students were given the opportunity to improve their skills in drawing graphs to prove that high wind speeds increase evaporation rates. From these examples, it is clear that teachers can use a range of methods and resources with confidence to maintain students' interest. At present, the schemes of work do not contain sufficient guidance for teachers to use the range of methods possible.

102. The quality of students' work indicates that their attitudes to high academic achievement are good. Behaviour is mostly good. Students work well together carrying out experiments. They move responsibly around the laboratory to collect materials and

equipment. Students follow their teachers' instructions to wear safety glasses and consequently work safely. Students have good relationships with their teachers and each other. When talking to each other and their teacher they are usually courteous and polite. Sometimes students spoil otherwise worthwhile answers by calling out.

103. Assessment procedures are good. However, the department does not make sufficient use of assessment information to guide curricular planning and students do not have good knowledge of the level/grade they are working at. The GCSE course, which has been used in the past and is taken by the current Year 11, is not the most suitable for these students. Students have weak long-term memories and need a course that tests them more frequently. This matter has been remedied for Year 10 students who now follow a modular course. However, teachers have insufficient experience of running a modular science course and need training and development opportunities. The newly appointed head of department provides sound leadership of a department in which there are several weaknesses. Whilst the head of department has identified areas for improvement, such as accommodation, resources and ICT training, she has not concentrated strongly enough on standards and underachievement. The technician team is efficient, supportive, and makes an important contribution to the work of the department. The use of ICT to support learning is not planned well enough in schemes of work and staff lack training in its use. Too many science lessons take place out of laboratories, which restricts the opportunities for practical work for some groups. Although the preparation area is large, it is poorly designed so that there is not enough working space. The department gives attention to health and safety. Brief written risk assessments exist for some experiments but not all - risk assessments should be produced to meet the needs of particular groups of students carrying out the work.

104. Overall, the department has made unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment and record keeping are now much better. However, students now underachieve at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Standards at the end of Year 11 have fallen from below to well below the national average.

## ART AND DESIGN

The provision for art is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.
- The leadership of the department.
- The provision made for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The use made of computers to support learning.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The accommodation and resources for the subject.
- The analysis of performance data and its use to raise standards.

105. The department has hit a very low point in standards of attainment, although it has performed above the average standards found in the school. Along with the school as a whole, the department has been through a very difficult period over the past two years and as a result lost the focus on standards that had carried the performance of students well above national standards in past years. The evidence of improvement seen during the inspection indicates that the department shares the school's new sense of direction and is well placed to improve further.

106. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was well below average, but amongst the best in the school. The trend in results has been steadily downwards over the past three years. Although girls did better than boys, the gap between boys' and girls' performance narrowed over that period. The number taking GCSE has risen sharply, being more than double that three years ago. All students have secured a pass grade in that time.

107. Students enter the school having had a widely differing experience at their primary schools, with standards well below average overall. Particular weaknesses in their early experiences of art may be seen in their observational drawings and their three dimensional work in Year 7. From work seen in Years 7 to 9 it is evident that the curriculum has been improved and is being managed in a way that ensures better coverage of the key art skills from entry. The very good use of computers is an important factor in the improved standards seen during the inspection. It is also a factor in motivating boys to research and develop their work. By the end of Year 9, they have had a rich experience and achieved well so that standards are just below average. In Year 7, students benefit from the support of an associate adviser for computer art from the 'Art in Schools' initiative and they receive a very good introduction to the use of a high quality computer software program. They name and can use menu buttons such as 'start', 'colour', 'feather' and 'import'. They are able to scan and manipulate digital photographs they take. They use laptops and personal computers confidently in pairs, supporting each other in exploring the program. In clay work, higher attaining students learn to model rounded bas-relief forms on their tiles, forming columns, lintels and pediments on their architectural reliefs. Lower attaining students tend to draw details on their tiles, rather than model them, because the poor modelling tools available make the process difficult. They learn to use the slab technique to build cylindrical clay forms, on which they build interesting and amusing features to form a 'pothead'. In Year 8, students' knowledge of movement is developed well from a study of the work of Balla and the Futurist movement. From a series of animation exercises they go on to plan for a digital video-clip in which they will manipulate clay to animate simple forms. Observational studies in Year 9 show some weaknesses in both observational and linear drawing skills. Good textural drawing is evident and drawing skills are improved by the use of grids and left-right brain exercises that challenge students' perception of images and objects. Lower attaining students often need the support of copy work when using grids to enlarge drawings, but they show a very good sense of tone in their figure drawings.

108. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 indicates significantly higher standards. By the end of Year 11, the identified natural talents of a few students begin to flower and they produce some excellent individual work. Higher attaining students study Surrealism in depth and use the style of Magritte and Dali to produce some very imaginative studies. They are able to manipulate the work of Dali, such as his painting 'The Persistence of Memory', in very imaginative ways, using the computer. Work in the 'Pop Art' style is very good. Using well-researched artists such as Lichtenstein, Warhol and the Japanese Manga style, they paint acrylic studies that have a powerful visual impact. Both boys and girls work on a large scale in their painting, some working from steps to complete their well-composed and colourful work. Sketchbooks are of a generally high quality and one or two are exceptional in the breadth and depth of research, the extensive annotation and excellent presentation. The weak literacy skills of lower attaining students are evident in their sketchbooks, some of which lack sufficient work to indicate a GCSE grade higher than E. The weaknesses in drawing, evident in earlier years are still evident in Years 10 and 11, showing that students have not had a sufficiently rigorous grounding in basic art skills in Years 7 and 8. Computer work is becoming ever more interesting and complex as students gain experience. Stencil

cutting and printing are taught well and students produce well finished portraits from computer scans. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. One Year 10 student, who finds it difficult to settle to many of his classes, demonstrated a web site he is building for himself.

109. The response of students in Years 10 and 11 is always positive and hardworking. Many of the Year 11 students use a lot of their free time to work on their GCSE coursework. The department operates as an open workshop and, in spite of cramped accommodation, students are able to continue their work unsupervised and without interrupting formal lessons. Students in Years 7 to 9 are generally very attentive to the teacher's introduction to lessons and they settle to work quickly. There is unsatisfactory behaviour in a few lessons, particularly in Year 7, when students talk over the teacher and do not always pay sufficient attention to instructions given. The general behaviour is good and most students are interested and involved in their work.

110. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers are well qualified and experienced and have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject area. They use their knowledge and personal skills to guide students' research and to challenge their skills. In one lesson in Year 7, where students were being introduced to computer art, the teacher worked together with an associate adviser for computer art, to produce a very good lesson. The 'PowerPoint' presentation and follow up paired work, enabled students to progress rapidly in their understanding and use of a complex digital imaging program. The lesson developed from a study of the work of Schwitters and Picasso, whose work lends itself well to image manipulation. Lessons are well planned and prepared and students are able to settle to the practical work quickly, after a brief introduction to set out the aims for the lesson and introduce key words and concepts. Very good relationships are at the heart of most lessons, helping to build an atmosphere for learning that is stimulating and industrious, but relaxed and enjoyable. Many of the lessons are truly creative and often raise important issues, for example war and conflict, and provide opportunities for reflection on experiences. In this and other ways the department makes a very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Teachers evaluate students' work throughout the lesson, offering positive critical comments that are generally acted on. In one lesson, there was a very good 'gallery session' at the end. Students were able to offer their own critical views on the work done in the lesson and they demonstrated good perception and critical thinking that was helpful to the class as a whole. There is some evidence of weakness in the management of larger, more challenging classes in the lower years, where teachers sometimes have a tendency to raise the voice above the chatter of students, but overall the standard of teaching is good and students make good progress in the lessons.

111. The department benefits from good, experienced leadership and has made a good improvement overall since the last inspection. The work of the department is well displayed in classrooms and some public areas, and has a positive effect on the overall presentation of the school. The curriculum has some areas of considerable strength, such as computer work and the extensive research work undertaken by students. It also has a weakness in the more traditional areas of observational and figure drawing. The curriculum in Year 7 does not give students a sufficiently rigorous grounding in the basics of line, tone and texture, although the use of colour is prominent and taught well. Performance data is collected, but it is not used effectively to show the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, with storage being particularly poor. One room is very cramped and work is stored alongside the (unused) kiln. Another is large, but not easy to organise for both textile and clay work. The school has set aside a large sum of money to start the refurbishment of the department, giving it an opportunity to review itself as a whole. Resources are generally unsatisfactory. There are insufficient computers and

associated hardware, much of the good work being done on borrowed laptops and a teacher's PC. The books used are good, but only because teachers use many from their own collections. The teaching team works well together, supported by a young art student technician and, from work seen in lessons and around the department, it is clear that the department has a very good capacity to improve standards.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### **Strengths:**

- Steady raising of standards through structured yet innovative teaching.
- Teamwork within the department.
- Assessment and monitoring arrangements.
- Revised schemes of work with developing evaluation.
- Support for students with special educational needs (SEN).

### **Areas for improvement:**

- More opportunity to develop critical appreciation of students' designs.
- Alternative accreditation in Year 11 to encourage more consistent attendance.
- Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and software.
- Accommodation.

112. Teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 as below average. Work seen during the inspection substantiates this judgement of past work. However, new assessment methods and revised schemes of work are leading to improvement, which has brought work seen in line with national averages.

113. GCSE results in 2001 were just below average at grades A\*-C and were average at A\*-G. These results are an amalgamation of the four elements of design and technology offered at GCSE. The strongest area was textiles. There is a difference between boys and girls attainment; girls being more successful than boys because of their strengths in creating their portfolios. Girls' performance in design and technology is higher than their attainment in other subjects while boys' performance is weaker than in their other subjects.

114. In 2001, examination entry levels in design and technology were 20 per cent below the national average, but the new head of the department has dealt with this issue and all students will in future have the opportunity to take GCSE examinations. This includes the 'green group' (students who follow an alternative curriculum) in Years 10 and 11. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds but the department has good policies for inclusion work; all students' needs are matched by good and consistently modified planning in the schemes of work.

115. In Years 7 to 9 students with SEN make good progress in relation to their prior performance, while in Years 10 and 11 they maintain their standards and are often stronger in making than designing.

116. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is good in relation to students' prior knowledge, skills and comprehension. Well planned and exciting units of work provide a clear structure to improve the quality of designing and making. Effective teaching of specific skills – such as orthographic and isometric drawing, rendering, flow planning and evaluation – supports

learning early in the process of skills development and product analysis. The new modular assessment scheme consolidates learning. Although this is not yet embedded totally in department practice, it is improving students' attitudes to taking responsibility for their learning. Parents are given the opportunity to give their views and opinions about the quality of work produced in the department. Students use technical terms effectively as a result of the department's literacy policy. Numeracy is also planned within modules of work through accurate measurement, weighing and analysis. Computers are being used well to develop understanding of systems and control in co-operation with the ICT department. Students are encouraged to work co-operatively. In a Year 9 lesson students were required to work in teams. The lesson was brought to a crescendo when a huge commercially produced billboard sign was used like a giant jigsaw, to consolidate the teamwork of the lesson and the main teaching points relating to development in students' graphical skills. Behaviour is exemplary across the department. Consistent expectations of work, homework and behaviour help to make all lessons a challenging yet enjoyable experience; students have fun in learning.

117. Standards are maintained in Years 10 and 11 and achievement is satisfactory. Although Year 11 were on study leave, a close scrutiny of students' personal portfolios and the opportunity to meet students gave a clear indication of improvements and commitment. Much better access to ICT is improving presentation and research. Many students struggle with technical drawing skills to produce accurate working drawings. Evaluation focuses on students' personal analysis of their design but students only rarely use others to evaluate their end product, as for example in some textiles and food portfolios. Overall, portfolios are a good reflection of students' skills, knowledge and understanding. They are make good use of teachers' feedback to modify and improve their work, but there are limited opportunities to develop a critical eye for each other's designs. Meeting deadlines, previously a problem for many students, is improving through practice and in response to teachers' expectations but absence is still affecting achievement. Options for more appropriate accreditation at the end of Year 11 are being investigated. Potential health and safety matters related to practical areas such as food were raised with the school. In addition, the lack of high quality equipment has a negative impact on final results and students' attitudes.

118. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall: in interview with students from Years 7 to 9, there was a unanimous view on enjoyment of design and technology. Consistent approaches to behaviour, safety and homework help to drive students to improve. This was seen in Year 8 where design embellishment, using embroidery, engrossed both boys and girls. This was a good development from the group looking at and trying out Andy Goldsworthy's environmental designs. The results were depicted well in class photographs displayed in the textiles room. Personal development is very good: teachers are very good role models. Students have good opportunities to review their individual and team development; to celebrate strengths and improve weaknesses; and to raise self-esteem and boost their confidence.

119. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some outstanding examples of teaching and learning, demonstrating a purposeful partnership for success. Teachers have secure knowledge and in some cases high quality industrial experience to bring a realistic commercial dimension to extend teaching and learning. Teachers promote high standards of skills through good demonstrations that include questioning to probe understanding and creativity. This was demonstrated in Year 7's card modelling to test out their innovative designs for a personalised desk tidy. Varied teaching styles, with a brisk pace, inspire success and maintain concentration so that good pieces of work are produced. An additional support for teaching is the effective deployment of very good LDAs who have an interest in design and technology that sparks the thinking of the students assigned to them. Dedicated work from the technician ensures materials are prepared and tools are

maintained to a high standard. Ageing equipment, although sufficient, is inappropriate for the high quality finish required by the department, for example the CAD/CAM embroidery equipment in textiles. Assessment modules are new, but already having an impact on improving learning and progress, especially in Years 7 to 9, encouraging all students to improve their standards. Homework is a key feature in raising standards and is often the initial starting point of the next lesson. Teachers' commitment to the use of homework means few students in Years 7 to 9 fail to produce good homework. It is often celebrated in good wall display to help students and to share ideas to improve standards of presentation.

120. Management of the department is good. The new manager has built on previous departmental practice to strengthen work in design and technology. Teamwork is the key feature being established. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is completed professionally and recorded effectively but there are limited opportunities to share good practice. In addition, there is inadequate attention to the developing role of technical support in the department. A lack of up-to-date equipment, accommodation and computers is beginning to undermine the high quality work the department strives for. The department reflects the vision and aims of the whole school in its drive to raise standards and develop students' aspirations for the future. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### **Strengths:**

- Standards are improving because of good subject leadership.
- Teachers now have a very high commitment and capacity to succeed.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Not enough use is made of computers to support learning.
- Teaching does not always stretch higher attaining students.
- Not enough use is made of test results to identify students who are in danger of not achieving as well as they should.

121. In 2001, teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 as well below average. This represented unsatisfactory achievement. When they entered the school, most students' geographical experience was weakly developed. During the first three years in this school, they built up their knowledge and skills too slowly and made unsatisfactory progress. Results in GCSE examinations have declined since the previous inspection and in 2001 were very low compared with the national average. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The proportion of students who did not achieve a GCSE pass grade by the end of the course was higher than the national average and the proportion reaching the highest grades of A\* and A was lower than average. Most students' achievements were unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 in relation to their standards when they began the course.

122. The work seen during the inspection confirms that standards have improved since the arrival of the new head of department in January this year and are now broadly below average by the end of Year 9. These standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to students' low standards when they joined the school. Samples of students' work show that they are achieving better because teachers now have higher expectations of them

and provide resources that are better adapted to their needs. This enables them, for example, to produce good accounts of the changing land uses in towns and to consider the unequal global distribution of wealth. Students with special educational needs (SEN) are well known by their teachers. These students achieve satisfactorily because they are given good individual help and encouragement, often with effective extra support in lessons. Higher attaining students develop and apply their practical skills well. For example, students in Year 10 produce accurate maps and graphs to show the distribution of population in developed and less developed countries. Throughout Years 7 to 9, there is, as yet a weak tradition of translating the department's embryonic literacy policy into specific activities in lessons. As a result, students rarely develop their ability to record their work in a variety of different styles. In too many lessons, teachers rely too much on work sheets requiring short answers and so students have insufficient practice at writing extended prose. Opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills are more frequent and some very effective group and pair work was seen during the inspection. In this way, students in Year 10 extend their understanding of land use conflicts by sharing their ideas on the threat to national parks caused by large numbers of visitors.

123. One reason why standards of work and students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is improving overall is because most students, both girls and boys, display good attitudes to learning in lessons. Effective teaching ensures a good atmosphere for learning so that students become well motivated and hard working. A high level of challenge by most teachers encourages most students to give of their best. However, some students are too ready to sit and listen to the teacher rather than getting involved in the lesson. Other reasons why students are only making satisfactory progress when most of the teaching is good include their very poor knowledge base of basic geographic facts and their weak retention of learning, made worse by absence, which means that teachers have to work hard to reinforce learning covered in previous lessons.

124. Students with a wide range of prior attainment choose to study geography in Years 10 and 11 for the GCSE examination. In 2001, 15 students studied GCSE geography: this year 42 students have chosen to follow the subject, which is testimony to the impact the new head of department has had on improving students' views of the subject. The work seen shows that the very low standards achieved in last year's examination are likely to be exceeded. Higher attaining students in Year 9 show that they understand the impact of human activity on changing industrial environments in Japan. Through a well planned and increasingly complex series of tasks, they are able to extend their ideas from an appreciation of immediate landscapes to wider concerns such as the quality of life in Japanese cities. They show increasing confidence in drawing graphs and interpreting maps. In Year 10, higher attaining students use information and communication technology (ICT) successfully in the completion of their coursework and can write extended essays that show a good grasp of geographical vocabulary. Lower attaining students have a poor grasp of the location of countries in the world and they lack confidence when using and explaining the significance of statistics about unfamiliar places.

125. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall as is the quality of learning. All but one of the lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory: one in three was good and half were very good. In the less than good lessons in Years 7 to 9, students were obliged to listen passively to the teacher for too long and there was a lack of challenging tasks for more capable students. Some very good practice was observed. In a very good lesson in Year 10 that built on previous learning about land use conflict in national parks, students responded very well to the pace of the lesson, the very good resources which they enjoyed using and the teacher's high expectations. Tasks were carefully planned for all levels of attainment. Students rapidly began to see how the fragile landscape in these parks is being eroded by poor management of visitors. Learning is accelerated in nearly all

lessons by the teachers' very good subject knowledge. This is invariably used well to motivate and enthuse students through lively and stimulating explanations and challenging and probing questions. Students are prompted to think about the topic they are studying and so their understanding is deepened. Tasks are usually planned very carefully in lessons to ensure that the work is well matched to the needs of all individuals in the class. This leads to students with SEN and those identified as gifted and talented being able to make equally satisfactory progress. In a minority of lessons, however, especially in Years 7 and 8 where the classes are organised in groups of varied prior attainment, there is insufficient work geared specifically to the needs of higher attaining students, which holds back their progress. Also, lessons can at times be too directed by the teacher, which results in too few opportunities for students to work independently and to learn from their mistakes.

126. Satisfactory systems for assessing students' progress are in place in the department. Work is marked regularly, but there are too few helpful comments to help students improve. Targets for improvement are not, at present, based on national standards. Not enough use is made of the results of external tests to predict GCSE grades for students, and the strategies that the department has for intervening when underachievement has been identified are, as yet, under-developed. There are insufficient opportunities for using ICT in lessons and although the department plans to use more, at present it does not meet National Curriculum requirements to use computers to help students develop their knowledge and understanding of geography. Good accommodation with stimulating displays of students' work enhances the quality of teaching and learning in most lessons.

127. The leadership and management of the subject, with the arrival of the new head of department, are good. He has energised the subject with his clarity of vision and there is now a very good capacity to succeed. He has worked very hard to increase the popularity of the subject. The quality of teaching is, however, insufficiently monitored and the head of department needs to find a variety of formal and informal means to ensure that all teaching and learning matches the quality of the best. As the subject grows, he will need to create good opportunities for colleagues to share good practice through, for example, collaborative fieldwork and departmental meetings. Detailed long-term plans are now in place. Although a big improvement on earlier plans, they still do not make explicit enough how higher attaining students are going to be extended and lower attaining students supported. These plans need to be regularly reviewed when results of external tests and examinations are analysed.

128. The department declined severely in the years following the previous inspection and is now in a period of recovery. Standards declined to very low, but have now climbed back to below average. The popularity of the subject in the school has increased and improvement has been satisfactory.

## HISTORY

Overall, the provision for history is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- Good relationships between teachers and students support students' learning.
- The choice of topics and delivery supports the students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- Support for coursework assignments in GCSE is effective.
- Fieldwork in Year 7 and in the GCSE course is good.

### **Areas for development:**

- Schemes of work do not ensure consistency or identify opportunities for the development of key elements of history.
- There are insufficient assessment tasks to identify progress towards National Curriculum targets, or to enable accurate assessment of National Curriculum Levels.
- Marking does not assess progress or inform students how to improve their work and levels of literacy.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT).

129. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below average for the higher A\*-C grades, but all students achieved at least a pass grade. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' standards at the start of the course. Results have risen over the last three years after a fall in 1999.

130. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are below average by the end of Year 9. Students use source material confidently to obtain information and higher attaining students compare sources and make judgements about their reliability. However, their responses lack depth and do not show evidence of reasoning based on understanding of bias or motive. Students show knowledge, in extended writing, of the process of the slave trade and reasons for the demand for slaves. Higher attaining students are able to make the link between the slave trade and the growth of Liverpool. Students in Year 9 study some of the elements of the two World Wars and their 'letters from the trenches' indicate that they recognise the privations that occurred. Students have a general picture of pre-war Germany and the promises made by the Nazi party. Higher attaining students make generalised links between the Treaty of Versailles and the discontent that led to the outbreak of war in 1939. Lack of consolidation of information and weak recall is resulting in some confusion over differentiation between the two wars.

131. In work seen during the inspection, the standards are below average by the end of Year 11. For Year 11, only coursework was available for scrutiny during the inspection. Investigations into Bodiam Castle demonstrate that students have a secure understanding of the features and purpose of castles. Projects are well presented and show evidence of good research through texts and through first hand investigation. Work on the ending of apartheid in South Africa includes an overview of the key events that led up to the changes and students demonstrate a clear understanding of apartheid and the forces that opposed it. Analysis of the effects of these events and of the opposing views is limited and students do not generally link events. Year 10 students use source material to identify key features of the lives of the Plains Indians and they have a secure picture of their lives. Students are aware of the beliefs of the Indians and their close links with the natural world and show, in their free writing, that they are sensitive to this. Responses to questions are generally straightforward and accurate, but lack alternative viewpoints unless clearly directed by the teacher. Higher

attaining students identify motives when considering source material. Lower attaining students do not consider the validity of information given. Students are aware of the variety of inhabitants of America and study individual groups, such as the mountain men and the Mormons. Although they present clear images of them, they do not consider the effect of these groups on each other, or on the indigenous peoples of America. There is little evidence of students making comparisons over time or analysing change.

132. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Many students leave work unfinished and the high level of absence combined with the below average amount of time allocated for history, is resulting in students failing to consolidate their learning. Homework time is not used to extend or to reinforce learning. Many students appear reluctant to write and use a variety of methods to avoid settling to their tasks. In a Year 9 lesson, some students spent their time watching others work rather than getting on themselves. Motivation is better in Year 10 where the demands of the examination become more focused and topics are studied in greater depth. Progress is then satisfactory. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. The use of source material and oral work supports their progress. At times, the low expectations of teachers and lack of homework reduces the level of challenge for higher attaining students. Students make better progress in their oral work where their reluctance to write is not an issue.

133. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons become unsatisfactory when teachers' expectations are too low and students are permitted to waste time. In the best lessons, teachers take pains to use methods that require students to analyse material and make judgements on it. Students make the best progress when they have clear targets and teachers make their expectations clear regarding the completion of work. A good lesson was seen when students were prioritising the factors that led to the Great Fire of London in 1666. The discussion between students led them to consider the factors more carefully in order to justify their views. Teachers generally have good relationships with their students and this creates a working atmosphere that enables such discussions to take place. Marking in books is encouraging, but there is a lack of detail and insufficient information to encourage students to aim for a higher standard. There is no system of assessment to measure students' progress in the key elements of history and so progress in these is not monitored. Students are not involved in their assessment and are unaware of how they might raise their standards.

134. The department has undergone a recent change of management. The acting head of department has instigated some developments this year, but other improvements have been suspended, awaiting the appointment of a new head of department in September. Staffing problems have reduced students' progress and the wide variety of rooms used by supply staff has affected learning. Schemes of work are being developed, but there is a lack of consistency in method, content and assessment across the department. The recent appointment of a head of faculty is seeking to address this. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet used to enrich students learning, but Year 7 benefit from first hand fieldwork during their visit to the Isle of Wight.

135. There has been insufficient progress since the previous inspection. The department has identified literacy as an area for development and key words and writing frames have been recently introduced. GCSE results have risen over the last three years and a wider range of teaching methods has been introduced. However, schemes of work are still incomplete and marking still provides insufficient guidance for students. The rate of student progress has fallen. Assessment of the National Curriculum key elements of history has not taken place and students are unaware of them.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Overall provision for specialist ICT is **satisfactory**. Provision for cross-curricular ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- The team spirit of the department and its capacity to improve.
- Good leadership of the co-ordinator.
- Effective technical and learning support.
- The new module and assessment package.
- Links with Australia.
- Creativity in art and music.

### **Areas for development:**

- The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum.
- Monitoring the teaching of ICT across the curriculum.
- Meetings of teachers to raise standards consistently.
- Provision of a personal skills checklist for students.

136. In 2001, teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 as above average. This assessment is not matched by current standards. In work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly average.

137. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were below the national average and well below average for boys. The proportion of students entered for the examination was more than three times greater than the national average entry. This shows confidence and good equality of opportunity for students of all levels of ability. However, 40 per cent of boys and nine per cent of girls did not gain a pass grade. This was the result of incomplete coursework and failure to meet deadlines. Students' performance in ICT was not as good as in other subjects.

138. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good in relation to students' prior learning. A new assessment process is used to identify students' progress. Teachers have planned rigorous schemes of work to develop students' skills and understanding. Regular, effective testing and evaluation, introduced recently, helps to raise standards by showing students what they need to do to improve. However, students do not have a list of the skills covered by the course that would enable them to check their own progress. Students use word processing to improve the quality of their work and enhance its presentation, by combining text, graphics and images. They make limited use of annotation to illustrate how their work has improved through testing and analysis. Marking contributes to improvement, but the marking process is inconsistent so the clarity of the message varies. Very effective work in web page design is helping students to see how they can share information with others on a wide platform. A recent collaboration by Year 9 students with Bourne School in Australia, via email, has had a great impact on students desire to use electronic communication. In addition, the high quality of the attachments they receive is having an impact on the quality of information they return.

139. In Years 10 and 11 satisfactory achievement is maintained but students lack a secure foundation of skills. Access to computers was restricted during their time in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are working hard to redress this deficiency. For example, the development of business cards, letter headed paper and a promotional flyer for a simulated company is giving students a purposeful project towards their examination coursework. They concentrate well on applying their skills of word processing, importing images, modifying text

and fonts as well as using the digital camera and scanner to produce good quality results. Many struggle with annotation of the improvements in their work. Higher attaining students spend additional time in refining their work using home computers or computers in the library and youth wing. Students' support for each other and support from the learning development assistants are key features that are helping to improve standards. Students have difficulty in recalling information and this is not helped by poor note taking. They wait for teachers to provide the information they need and have to be pushed to use the Internet to improve their research.

140. In Years 7 to 9, students with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress in relation to their earlier learning; progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Weaker literacy skills affect their ability to use computer tools, such as the spell check, and to understand some on-screen instructions. Good work by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and her team has introduced an independent learning system into the curriculum. Students have regular 8-week courses on this programme. It is improving literacy skills, especially reading. At the end of eight weeks, assessment is used to identify where further support is needed, but this information is not used consistently by all departments.

141. Application of ICT skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactorily variable. There is little opportunity for students to test predictions, discover patterns and measure results in science because the equipment for data logging has only just been purchased. In mathematics, there is limited use of programs to illustrate how repetitive instructions can control movement. However, in design and technology systems and control are taught via collaboration between two departments. In music, there is inspired use of a multi-media program that allows recording, enhancement of sound and video to track students improving performance from Years 7 to 10. In art similar use of programs to research, record, enhance and manipulate images, shows students how to use computers creatively.

142. Gifted and talented students attend a Saturday club run by the local education authority. Teachers and technicians are involved in the programme, giving students the opportunity to collaborate with students from other schools.

143. Attitudes are good. Many students make good use of ICT clubs at lunchtime and can also use ICT outside school hours, for example in the youth wing. Boys predominantly use extra-curricular ICT. Behaviour is generally satisfactory. A minority of students in Year 8 exhibits immature behaviour, but teachers use the school's behaviour policy successfully, supported by heads of year, to solve the problem. Personal development is very good. Students support each other well and there are times when adults and students co-operation in learning is outstanding, as seen in the work of the learning development assistants (LDAs). They help to underpin the department's commitment to inclusion.

144. Teaching and learning in the department are good overall. There is some very good teaching with a strong emphasis on personal development, where students are expected to take responsibility for their learning. In Year 10, for example, students developed a company's communication strategies. At such times higher attaining students are helped to take their work to the next level by their own initiative and the team teaching approach to the lessons. Teachers work together very effectively and the results are good. However, there are occasions where students rely too much on the teachers and there are no prompt sheets to motivate independent progress. Efficient integration of literacy and modest integration of numeracy provides students with satisfactory consolidation of basic skills. Expectations are clear and consistent across the department. All teachers and support staff contribute to planning and decisions, despite also working in other areas of the curriculum. At times, the lack of standardisation because teachers have diverse roles, leads to over generous assessment, but this is being dealt through the use of the new assessed

modules. Homework is used specifically to extend learning. The recent appointment of a specialist ICT technician has improved the availability of equipment. Many teachers were reticent about using ICT because the equipment was so unreliable. Most of the equipment is over five years old, although there have been upgrades. The new technician has improved efficiency by monitoring teachers' concerns closely, and responding quickly. Teachers are starting to become more confident in using computers as a tool to improve teaching and learning in their subjects. Issues remaining for teachers across the curriculum are the difficulty in gaining access to computers and the need for training in the use of ICT in their subjects.

145. Management of ICT as a subject is good. There is great energy in the department, which is strengthening the department's role in the school. Governors have also taken a more positive approach recently and are helping the department to focus on improving hardware and software. However, the lack of a structure for managing cross-curricular ICT makes this element of ICT application unsatisfactory. Five subjects are not meeting their statutory responsibility to teach ICT within their programmes of study. In some cases, such as modern foreign languages, teachers are keen to develop, but limited access to equipment and training restricts their progress. Lack of a steering group to track the necessary curriculum-wide use of ICT impedes development. Lack of time for monitoring and evaluating ICT teaching across the curriculum restricts sharing good practice. Opportunities to book ICT rooms are limited, despite the number of computers available in the school. The issues surrounding integrating and monitoring cross-curricular ICT prevent students using computers widely to raise standards.

146. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because the department has planned for short, medium and long-term targets in line with the school's vision.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- Students' positive attitudes.
- Relationships between teachers and students.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Standards throughout the school.
- The time allocated for teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT).
- The use of homework.
- The quality of teaching.

147. Standards are well below average in both French and German. Previously both languages were taught, in a variety of combinations, but French is now the language which all pupils study when they enter the school. French is the only language taught in Years 7 and 8. In Years 9-11 there are still some German groups. Students' progress in many lessons is unsatisfactory; they do not achieve as well as they should over time because they do not have enough lessons in Years 7 to 9 and this means that they have an insecure foundation for work in Years 10 and 11.

148. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that fewer students than average reached the level that could be expected, considering their standards on entry to the school.

This was confirmed by work seen during the inspection in the current Year 10 and also the present Year 9. Teachers' assessments are generous, and few students are able to demonstrate the skills necessary to work at the higher levels. GCSE results have been consistently far below national averages in recent years. Students gained a grade lower in German, and one and a half grades lower in French than in their other subjects.

149. In work seen during the inspection by the end of Year 9, standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are well below average. The lack of teaching time means that work is skimmed over without enough consolidation. As a result, students of all levels of ability lack confidence in their ability to handle language, particularly in speaking and writing. The lack of language use by their teachers means that students do not develop their listening comprehension skills. Some are able to extract meaning from a taped conversation, but they mainly gain only a gist understanding and cannot fill in the detail. This is because their vocabulary is limited by the amount of time spent on language learning in Years 7 to 9. Students also have problems with reading comprehension. Their poor recall means that they have to look up most words in even short texts. By Year 9, most students can use and understand basic language to describe themselves and where they live. They can use the present tense in descriptions but have not covered past and future tenses in sufficient depth to reach average standards. Progress in lessons is often satisfactory, but students cannot reach higher standards over the course of time because not enough time is allocated to cover the curriculum in sufficient depth. The problem is made worse by the timetabling of lessons. Some students have all their language lessons in one week of a two-week timetable. This means that less work can be covered because they find it hard to concentrate for so long on one subject. There are no significant differences in the standards of boys and girls. Literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. There is not enough speaking of the language in lessons and so this skill is underdeveloped. Regular use of ICT is not possible because of time constraints and lack of access to computers. As a result, this strand of the National Curriculum is not taught.

150. In work seen during the inspection, standards are far below average by the end of Year 11. At the time of the inspection there were no Year 11 students in school but scrutiny of their work indicates that students in both Year 10 and 11 have difficulty in writing accurately in a range of tenses. Some higher attaining students are able to do this, but they are handicapped by a narrow vocabulary range. This is the result of inadequate provision in Years 7 to 9. Oral work is patchy, and the amount of time given to this depends on the teacher. There is, therefore, unacceptable variation in how well prepared students are for this part of the GCSE examination. Standards have also been adversely affected by recent staffing difficulties. Students' basic knowledge of vocabulary, tenses, idioms and constructions is too limited for them to gain the highest grades.

151. Students show interest and enjoyment in their work in most lessons. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory and students and teachers work well together.

152. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Throughout the department, issues raised in the last report have not been dealt with adequately: speaking skills remain below average because teachers do not make enough use of the foreign language in lessons; there is still a lack of accuracy in writing because this skill is not systematically developed, and some students are too dependent on teachers for support. The best lessons have a range of activities that cover the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A good Year 8 French lesson enabled students to make good progress in their learning because it was carefully planned, with a good variety of activities in the four skills. It was conducted at a good pace and appropriate homework was set. In some lessons, there is not enough use of the foreign language by the teacher for this to be the main means of communication in class. As a result, students do not have enough opportunity to listen to the language or to

develop confidence in speaking. Teachers are starting to use National Curriculum standards to assess students' work and some students know the levels at which they are working. The use of homework is not well managed. Although it is set regularly, not enough demands are made of students. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve.

153. The quality of learning is unsatisfactory. Students make some progress in most lessons because they are interested in the work and the books used are up-to-date and appropriate. However, the lack of lesson time and poor lesson distribution mean that learning is not consolidated well and achievement is unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs (SEN) make similar progress to other students. Gifted and talented students have not been identified.

154. Management of the department is unsatisfactory. There has not been enough monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. Standards are lower than at the time of the previous inspection and progress since then has been poor. The quality of teaching is now unsatisfactory and National Curriculum requirements are not met because the ICT component is not covered.

## MUSIC

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

### **Strengths:**

- Very good teaching and learning, especially creative work.
- Good singing by girls and, notably, boys.
- Students of all levels of attainment achieve well throughout the school.
- The strong commitment to extra-curricular music.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory.
- Improving students' self-knowledge of their learning.

155. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average, and in Years 10 and 11 above average.

156. GCSE results in 1999 and 2000 for grades A\*-C were close to the national average, and above it for grades A\*-G. In 2001 the proportion of students obtaining A\*-C grades dropped to well below the national average, though all passed within the A\*-G range. Given that a significant number of these students had special educational needs (SEN), and the fact that none of them were instrumentalists, their achievement was good. Despite the lower level of A\*-C grades in 2001, results for these years are a major improvement on those noted at the time of the previous inspection.

157. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement from below average standards on entry to the school. Students invent lyrics and melodies for songs, often to a high standard, but lower accompanying parts are frequently not as good, tending to consist of rather static harmonies. When rendered on keyboards, this may well be due to less well developed technique in the left hand. However, there are plenty of exceptions to this such as the outstanding '*I'll be there for you*' composed by three Year 9 students and performed by them with excellent verve and flair and making very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to record and refine their performance. Knowledge of composers and

styles and understanding of musical vocabulary is satisfactory. Students perform confidently and sing well with enjoyment and it is greatly to the department's credit that this true of boys as well as girls. Music lessons take place in accommodation which is cramped and often subject to sound levels which impact unfavourably on standards, particularly when it is necessary to listen to music.

158. An above average proportion of students develop their musical attainment with additional instrumental or singing tuition and many of these participate in a variety of musical groups and events during the year. Students who have developed their musical skills by such means often opt to study music for GCSE and find these additional studies of great value.

159. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Year 11, which represents good achievement in relation to students' prior attainment. Students have above average composing and performing skills, especially in relation to lyrics and melodies. For example '*Time's injustice*', a song by a Year 11 student, revealed deep feeling about the subject, very powerfully expressed and performed brilliantly. Instrumental compositions and performances do not reach quite such a high standard, sometimes showing up weaknesses in technical performing capabilities, especially in bass parts. The good standards in singing noted in Years 7 to 9 continues in Years 10 and 11 with the changing voices of older boys assimilated with no difficulty and some good part singing evident, for instance in a duet for baritone and soprano, '*A whole new world*'. Students know and understand dynamics and phrasing and are sensitive to such characteristics in their performances, for example in a duet version of Beethoven's *Minuet in G*. Students' knowledge of composers, styles and musical vocabulary is satisfactory. Well over half of the current Year 10 and 11 cohorts are predicted to achieve A\*-C grades and inspection evidence supports this.

160. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good and is allied to a gift for enabling and encouraging students to extend their creative abilities. The quality of lyric and melody writing is unusually good and this owes much to inspirational teaching. Year 8, for example, apply their knowledge of hooks and riffs to produce well structured pieces. A gifted Year 10 student performs her excellent composition '*Estimate*' extremely well. Lessons are very well planned and delivered, and students from across the whole ability range make very good progress, for example a student with special educational needs has thought of an unusual chord sequence on which to base his composition. Students are interested, concentrate well and make very good intellectual and creative efforts. Assessment is sometimes not well understood by the students and there is scope to improve knowledge of their own learning. Good use is made of limited ICT facilities.

161. The department is well led and managed and there is a strong commitment to extra-curricular music, and a busy programme of well-supported events during the year, much appreciated by school and community. Attitudes to the subject are very good and there is a good take up of students for GCSE. With such very good teaching and learning, it might be supposed that standards could be higher. Unfortunately there is no doubt that poor accommodation is having a negative effect on learning because of lack of space and soundproofing and that progress over time is adversely affected by the high rate of absence of many students.

162. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved markedly and there is better provision for ICT. Overall there has been good improvement.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Teaching is very good.
- Standards in GCSE physical education are well above average.
- Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9.
- There are excellent opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities.
- There are very good curricular and extra-curricular opportunities.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The time allocated for Years 10 and 11.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning.
- Access to expressive and creative activities for boys in Years 7 to 9.

163. Work seen during the inspection matches teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 and the GCSE results in 2001. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are very good at the end of Year 9 and good in the GCSE physical education and dance groups. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' standards. Students of all abilities progress at the same rate because of the effective matching of tasks to their needs and the targeting of challenging groups of students. Talented students represent the school, area and county in many activities and dance is providing an opportunity for all – mainly girls – to succeed.

164. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 9, above average standards were observed in long jump, softball and relay changeover techniques. In Year 9, students in long jump classes work hard to improve their run-up and increase height at take-off; other Year 9 classes strike and field the ball effectively in softball and understand the technique of carrying and passing the baton in relay running. Dance is a popular activity and many girls of all ages attended a lunchtime session and demonstrated an above average standard. Year 8 students are well above the standard in hop, step and jump because of their keenness and response to knowledgeable teaching. Year 7 students show that their previous learning has been limited in cricket and tennis skills because striking and catching activities are below average.

165. In the GCSE work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 11, the overall standard is well above average and match last years' results. Both boys and girls are talented in practical activities and their work in the theory section shows an understanding of how to answer questions accurately. The GCSE dance group in Year 11 has worked hard to improve their standard and video evidence shows above average practical standards. Year 10 students in GCSE classes are not yet at the same standard but are working hard in their chosen activities. Classes in volleyball, high jump and rounders show that girls are working at a higher level than boys because they put more effort into theory presentations. Students evaluate their work and understand what they have to do to improve.

166. Attitudes to the subject are good overall and only marred by the below average attendance in some classes. Most students are keen to participate and enjoy their active sessions. They are enthusiastic, change quickly for lessons and are keen to answer questions. Behaviour is good and, apart from a minority of students, concentration is sustained. Relationships are very good and students co-operate effectively with one another. The collaborative working is helping students to progress in their skills practices.

When the opportunity is provided, most students take responsibility for their own learning by working and planning in pairs and small groups. They are polite and cheerful around school and respect the school buildings.

167. The quality of teaching is very good overall and some is outstandingly good. Teachers show an in-depth knowledge of the subject. Lessons are planned well so that there is consistency in the way that lessons are taught. Teachers are aware of students' individual needs; they are very well organised and have excellent relationships with students. The outstanding lessons - for example a Year 8 hop, step and jump session - use very active, challenging and varied methods that promote rapid progress. A Year 9 softball lesson showed how, with thoughtful planning, progress in small groups can be transferred to the whole game. The GCSE groups in dance and physical education make very good progress because of the teacher's experience in examination moderation and effective lesson presentation. These lessons are having a positive impact on students' progress and confidence. All lessons include a warm up and a feedback time to consolidate the set objectives. Where appropriate, homework is set and marked. The progress is maintained by an inclusive policy in all lessons. The very good teaching in the department has a strong influence on students' learning and success.

168. The curriculum more than meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Dance as well as physical education is offered as an examination subject. An outstanding contribution is made by the outdoor education opportunities that the school provides. Close links with the local activities centre provide valuable opportunities for personal development. There are residential trips in Years 7 to 9 and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is offered as part of the programme. Teachers are enthusiastic specialists who give generously of their time in promoting the challenging and exciting schedule. Equal access is provided for all students. However, although it would be possible for boys to take dance, the timetable is arranged on an assumption that they will not – additional time being provided for games or outdoor and adventurous activities. Apart from the GCSE courses, the amount of time allocated in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient. Schemes of work are complete and are in line with Curriculum 2000. Literacy links are being established by using key words but ICT links are not as well developed. Assessment procedures are effective but need refining to meet national criteria. Leadership and management is good overall. Documentation is well presented and financial management is very good. Monitoring of teaching is taking place and the trainee teachers are receiving very effective mentoring. The response of supply and trainee teachers during the inspection week contributed to students learning. There are approximately seven teachers who contribute to the very good provision of extra-curricular sporting activities and about 40 per cent of students regularly take part. The accommodation is satisfactory. The building of a new sports hall will improve the indoor facilities. There are good outdoor spaces that are beneficial to student progress.

169. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards have improved and standards on the GCSE physical education course are well above average. Teaching is very good. The programme for outdoor and adventurous activities is excellent. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Areas for improvement should be centred on the allocation of time in Years 10 and 11, increasing the use of ICT to support learning and improving the access to creative and expressive experiences for boys in Years 7 to 9.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Teaching promotes interest and involvement through practical work.
- Students are encouraged to develop their own ideas and values while respecting the opinions of others.
- Relationships are very good and promote confidence and security in students.
- Opportunities for students' spiritual development are excellent.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- There are insufficient opportunities to assess students' progress.
- Marking does not support the development of literacy.
- There are insufficient opportunities for first-hand experience of the world faiths studied.

170. Most students in Year 11 are entered for the short course GCSE in religious education. Results in 2001 were poor. Students were without a permanent teacher during much of the previous year and their motivation suffered. The department has worked to improve the motivation of students in order to raise standards.

171. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 9. Students can define 'passive resistance', using Gandhi as an example. Higher attaining students are developing an understanding of why it is effective, most students are simply aware of this example of its use. In extended writing, students outline the life of Gandhi and higher attaining students recognise that his commitment to passive resistance was linked to his beliefs. Students in Year 8 undertake independent research into a variety of festivals and use information and communication technology (ICT) to research information and obtain pictures. The depth of research is limited, however, and students have insufficient understanding of the purpose of celebration. Brochures produced are attractively presented, though with little analysis of the information displayed. Students discuss significant moments of life, such as marriage and death, and the use of 'circle time' (class discussion) is enabling them to become confident enough to exchange thoughts and feelings on these matters. Students feel their responses are valued and as a result they are willing to contribute ideas and opinions freely. Oral work achieves a higher level than written work, which is hampered by low levels of literacy and resistance to writing in some cases. Very good classroom management ensures that students listen to each other and recognise that there may be various valid opinions. The use of other stimuli, such as paintings and music, supports the learning of students of different abilities, stretching higher attaining students and supporting those with special educational needs (SEN). Students' understanding of concepts such as prayer is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus, but their knowledge and understanding of the key features of the faiths studied is less secure.

172. The standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Students consider religious concepts, such as the sanctity of life, and relate them to contemporary moral issues, for example in their study of the question of abortion. They consider a variety of opinions and make their own judgements, which higher attaining students support with reasons. The opportunities presented for them to discuss moral issues in class enable them to develop understanding of the variety of valid opinions, although students' responses do not yet achieve significant depth of understanding. Students consider the concept of equality as a Christian ideal and relate it to the question of prejudice in its various forms.

They have a good grasp of the meaning of prejudice and higher attaining students give reasons that contribute to it. Their understanding of why many faiths support the concept of equality is less secure. In free writing, higher attaining students demonstrate sensitivity to the question of racism and are aware of some of the reasons for it. Lower attaining students give clear definitions of it, but often fail to complete their work and do not analyse why it comes about. Students have the opportunity to re-enact ceremonies, such as the Jewish and Sikh marriage ceremonies, which results in good retention of facts. Students' understanding of the importance of the Jewish Passover and Shabbat was reinforced by the use of role-play and, as a result, higher attaining students could recall features a term later. Two main factors slow progress. First, not enough time is allocated for religious education. Second, students are not given enough homework to extend and consolidate their learning. Students may be developing their understanding of some abstract concepts, but their knowledge of the key features of the faiths studied is vague and incomplete.

173. Students' motivation is generally good and in class they make good progress in the early years when they have more opportunity to consolidate their knowledge in written form. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in lessons. Boys and girls participate equally in lessons and students with SEN are supported through the teaching methods used. Overall achievement is reduced by insecure prior learning, absence and uncompleted work. Practical learning methods are reinforcing understanding and memory, but there is insufficient time for coverage of the GCSE examination requirements.

174. The quality of teaching is good, and better in the lower years where there are more opportunities for assessment. Teachers are working hard to restore the motivation of students and the positive attitudes of most students to their lessons are testimony to their success. Teachers make excellent use of students' involvement in lessons. Students are gaining confidence in their opinions and are less defensive and more willing to be open to new ideas. In a lesson where students undertook a meditation exercise, the teacher was at pains to inform students that they were not expected to pray, yet they were able to identify the sense of peace and relaxation that can accompany prayer. Very good preparation and management enable teachers to lead students in active learning situations, in very focused yet relaxed lessons. The emphasis of the department has been on rebuilding students' motivation but there has been little formal assessment of progress. There is insufficient use of homework to extend learning or to direct students into research that would support their lessons. As a result students are developing a respect and understanding of aspects of religious education, but their knowledge of the key features of faiths that may influence life choices is weak.

175. The leadership and management of the department are good. Departmental documentation is thorough and the two classrooms are attractive and inviting. Staffing levels are now good, although due to staffing shortages in other areas the head of department teaches little religious education. Resources have improved since the previous inspection and an attractive selection of artefacts support students learning. The department is using ICT as a research and presentation tool although it has limited access within the department itself.

176. Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved, resources and students' attitudes have improved and the time allocation in the higher years is now just sufficient to meet statutory requirements. Students have had little opportunity to benefit from first hand contact with people from other faiths and cultures through visits and visitors. However, the contribution that the department makes to the moral, social and cultural development of students is very good. Its contribution to students' spiritual development is excellent.