

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FRED LONGWORTH HIGH SCHOOL**

Tyldesley, Manchester

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106527

Headteacher: Mr. A. Colley

Reporting inspector: Mr. C. Sander  
4151

Dates of inspection: 22 – 26 April 2002

Inspection number: 190331

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 – 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Printshop Lane  
Tyldesley  
Manchester

Postcode: M29 8JN

Telephone number: 01942 883796

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Cllr. B. Wilson

Date of previous inspection: 4 October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4151	Cedric Sander	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
9189	John Horwood	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
2919	Philip Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11044	Jean Hedge	Team inspector	English Equal opportunities	
16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10941	Renee Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
31693	Tim Hanafin	Team inspector	Art	
24894	Clive Petts	Team inspector	Design and technology	
29972	John Webster	Team inspector	Geography	
30317	Elizabeth Barthaud	Team inspector	History	
23550	S. Marie Blewitt	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
1523	Trevor James	Team inspector	Religious education	
8212	Judith Jones	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Fred Longworth High School is an oversubscribed 11-16 secondary high school of above average size for boys and girls, designated a specialist arts college since 1997. It is located in the Hindsford ward on the Tyldesley and Atherton boundary on the eastern edge of Wigan, one mile from Salford. There are 1292 on roll. It has increased in size since it was last inspected. Nearly all the students live within 1.5 miles of the school. Standards on entry are broadly average. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is very low. Two per cent are of ethnic minority origin. Fourteen per cent of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals, a broadly average figure. Sixteen per cent have identified special educational needs, below the national average. The proportion with statements, three per cent, is above average. Just over three-quarters of the students continue in full-time education after the age of 16.

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

Fred Longworth High is a very good school. It achieves very high standards because the very skilled teaching develops very positive attitudes to learning. The very effective leadership defines the school's priorities with a strong, straightforward clarity and the very good management skills of key staff produce a high degree of shared commitment to continuous improvement. It is very successful in promoting the personal development of all its students, combining an emphasis on the values of working hard and on developing wider interests, particularly in the performing arts and in sport. These very good features of provision and performance are achieved in a local context that is broadly average and with an above average level of funding. The school provides very good value for money because it implements its aims and values very successfully, reflecting the school's motto *Facta non verba*.

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

- Standards are above those expected nationally and achievement is very good at age 16.
- GCSE results in 2001 were well above average for similar schools.
- Very good teaching that produces very positive attitudes to learning.
- Rapidly improving boys' performance in examinations at age 16.
- Very good leadership and excellent financial management.
- Very good personal development and relationships amongst all its students.
- Combines very well the monitoring of personal development and academic progress.
- Provides an excellent range and quality of extra-curricular activities, including very good provision for the performing arts and sports.

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

- Setting targets for students in all subjects at age 14.
- Monitoring separately the performance of the more competent, competent and less competent students in each subject.
- The criteria to measure success in planning the overall improvement of the school.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

There has been very good improvement since the school was last inspected in 1996. The issues identified at that time, in particular the teaching of basic skills, procedures for assessment and the quality of accommodation, have been rigorously addressed. Examination and test results have risen ahead of the national rate of improvement and the examination results of the boys at age 16 have risen continuously and at a very good rate. The provision for the arts is now very good indeed. The quality of teaching and learning is very much better, including a much higher proportion of very good teaching. There has been good improvement in the teaching of literacy skills.



## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	A

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

Standards on entry to the school are broadly average, at which time very few students are well above average and many are below average in their reading. They catch up well in these areas so that standards are average overall at age 14. They improve further at age 16, by which time they are above average. The trends of improvement in results are ahead of those nationally at both ages 14 and 16. Standards in science, history, dance and music are well above those usually found nationally. The very good use of information and communication technology is a strength of the learning in these subjects. Many students do well because they take care with their written work. Many of the more competent students show a very good level of understanding. Standards in literacy and numeracy at age 16 are higher than are usually found nationally. Overall, achievement at age 16 is very good.

Results in national tests at age 14 in 2001 were broadly in line with the average for all schools nationally, indicating satisfactory progress. They were well above average for similar schools in mathematics and science. At age 16 they were well above average for all schools nationally and above the challenging targets set by governors. The very good rate of improvement in boys' examination results at age 16 is a very strong feature.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are keen to learn and respond very well in lessons. They readily accept responsibility. Participation in school activities is high. They value highly what their school provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour in lessons is nearly always very good and frequently excellent. At all other times, including lunchtime and break time, it is never less than good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students are confident, polite and trustworthy. Very good relationships are a strong feature.
Attendance	Very good. Well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is well below average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good across all years. It is consistently very good in science, history, physical education, music and art. It is good in mathematics. There is some excellent teaching in the overall good teaching in English. As a result, the needs of all students are very well met. Well-planned, knowledgeable teaching sets a tone of high expectations in nearly all lessons. Attitudes and behaviour are very well managed. As a result, students work hard in lessons, learning often at a very good pace and making good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are very well used in many lessons. Students are encouraged to help one another but, particularly before the age of 14, have fewer opportunities to show initiative and make decisions. Literacy skills are well taught in many subjects. Numeracy is well taught in mathematics but there is no planned teaching of these skills across all subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Very well planned to meet individual needs, resulting in a good range of high quality provision. Excellent provision for extra-curricular activities.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students relate very well to support staff who are well informed about their needs. Individual Education Plans define the students' needs well. Further guidance is needed to support the early identification of the full range of additional learning needs.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The very well-planned provision for personal, social and health education results in very good moral and social development. The additional opportunities in the arts provide very good opportunities for cultural development. Provision for spiritual development is good.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. The school is particularly successful in combining care for the individual's personal welfare, attitudes and development with the monitoring of their academic progress and achievement. The support and monitoring of attitudes and achievement are very well linked. There are very good policies to ensure pupils' health and safety as well as to encourage high standards of behaviour.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher demonstrates a very high commitment to the continuous improvement of the school and the consistent promotion of its values. Excellent teamwork and delegation are the hallmarks of the very good management of the school's performance and provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body has a very clear picture of the school's longer-term development, working very successfully in partnership with the headteacher. All the statutory requirements of the governing body are met except provision for religious education in Year 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Monitoring and review arrangements are rigorous and highly effective. Measuring the outcomes of decisions is satisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Financial planning is extremely thorough. Expenditure controls are very good indeed. The principles of best value are very well understood and applied with a high degree of skill. The quality of resources and accommodation is very good and is an aspect of continuing improvement. Staffing meets the needs of the National

	Curriculum well.
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**PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high expectations.</li> <li>• The good progress made by students.</li> <li>• The very good teaching.</li> <li>• The very good leadership and management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> </ul>

The vast majority of the large number of parents who returned the questionnaire expressed a high degree of satisfaction. The inspection team confirms their very positive views. The team found the homework arrangements to be good overall, with particularly well-planned opportunities for less competent students to attend homework clubs at school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

- *All young people are referred to in this report as students because that is the practice of the school.*
- *The word 'competent' refers to students whose work is broadly in line with the standards expected nationally. On entry to the school this group comprises approximately half the students in each age group.*
- *The phrase 'more competent' refers to those whose work is higher than the standards expected nationally. This group comprises less than ten per cent on entry to the school.*
- *The phrase 'less competent' refers to those whose work does not yet reach the standards expected nationally. This group comprises approximately 40 per cent of the students on entry to the school.*
- *The word 'results' refers to how well the students are doing in national tests and GCSE examinations. Occasionally, the word 'performance' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'standards' is used to define how well students are doing when their work is compared with what students nationally are expected to know, understand and do at ages 11, 14 and 16. Occasionally the term 'work' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of the standards found, or expected nationally.*
- *The word 'level' refers to a particular standard of work described in the National Curriculum. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'grade' refers to the public examination grading systems for GCSE. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'achievement' defines how much progress students are making and whether they are working hard enough. It usually refers to how well they are doing at age 14 compared with what they were able to do at age 11, and at age 16 compared with what they could do at age 14. Evaluations are expressed in terms such as 'very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory'*
- *Except in English, mathematics and science, not all students study all subjects after age 14.*

## **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

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

#### **Results and standards on entry to the school at age 11**

- Standards on entry to the school are broadly average.
- Standards of literacy, including reading, are below average.
- The proportion of more competent students is below average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average.

1. The results of standardised tests taken by all students shortly after they start at the school in Year 7 are broadly average. The proportion of students scoring well above average is small. The picture has not varied significantly over the last five years. On the basis of these test results it would be reasonable to expect about half to reach the national expectation, level 5, at age 14.

2. The parents who returned the questionnaire or who attended the pre-inspection meeting are very pleased with the progress made by their children. The findings of this inspection confirm their views. Overall, the highest standards seen were in science and music.

### **Results, standards and achievement at age 14**

#### **Strengths**

- Above average test results and well above in science and mathematics for similar schools in 2001.
- The trend of improvement in test results is ahead of the national trend.
- Above average standards in mathematics and well above in science.
- Above average standards in music and physical education.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- None. Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects.

3. Results in the national tests at age 14 are better than might reasonably be expected. They indicate a good degree of progress. Between the ages of 11 and 14 the rate of progress is good, ahead of the national expectation and greater than the Wigan average.
4. Results in the national tests in 2001 were above average for similar schools and broadly average for all schools nationally. They were not quite as good as in previous years and were below the three-year average. Approaching three-quarters of the students reached the nationally expected standard, level 5, in mathematics and science and approximately two-thirds did so in English.
5. The boys' and girls' performance in science and mathematics in 2001 was broadly similar. The boys' results were noteworthy, being further ahead of their age group nationally than were those of the girls. They did less well in English where their performance was further behind their age group nationally than that of the girls.
6. The rate of improvement over the last five years has been ahead of the national trend. Over the last three years the highest test results have been in mathematics but students' performance has been furthest ahead of their age group nationally in English, mainly as a result of the strong performance by the girls.
7. The statutory teacher assessments in 2001 were broadly average. They were well above average in music, history and geography, above average in art but below average in ICT.
8. The standards of work seen were broadly in line with these results and assessments. They were better than are usually found nationally in science, mathematics, drama, dance, music and physical education.
9. In these subjects the required basic skills are well taught and the resultant good level of understanding enables the students to do so well.
10. Standards in ICT are currently in line with those that students are expected to reach nationally. There is no timetabled teaching of the skills currently in Years 8 and 9 but there are some very good opportunities to develop them across a range of subjects.

11. Overall, students achieve well at age 14. Their very positive attitudes and the high expectations of their teachers are two important reasons why they achieve well and all do better than expected. The students are frequently fully involved in the lesson and are invariably confident about what they are doing. As a result, the pace of learning is nearly always good.
12. Students with special educational needs progress at a similar rate to other students because they are well supported, and their identified needs are well understood in the planning of lessons. Students in Year 7 make significant progress in reading and spelling. The highest gain in reading age was one year 11 months, and in spelling one year and seven months. The school has yet to evaluate whether these gains have been sustained.
13. There was no evidence to indicate that the progress made by the very small number of students who speak English as an additional language was less than that of other students.
14. The school has not yet formally identified its gifted and talented students and the proportion who are well above average on entry to the school is very small. However, the very well-managed setting arrangements, the very good level of challenge in the large majority of lessons and the good proportion gaining well above average assessments at age 14 indicate that the most competent students progress well.
15. Nearly all students make good gains in literacy skills because these are well taught. As a result, written work is generally good. This is a particularly good feature in science. Numeracy skills are very well taught in mathematics but are not reinforced consistently across other subjects. The very good use of ICT in music results in some outstanding compositions. Where standards are below average on entry to the school, for example in art, very thorough and methodically planned teaching of skills supports good progress. As a result, a high proportion reach the nationally expected standard at age 14.

### **Results, standards and achievement at age 16**

#### **Strengths**

- Very good achievement at age 16.
- Well above average GCSE results in 2001 that were above the school's targets.
- Very high achievement at GCSE when measured against previous test results at age 14.
- Results in science in the top five per cent for similar schools.
- Excellent improvement in the performance of boys since the last inspection.
- The trend of improvement is ahead of the national trend.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Girls' results in modern foreign languages.
- Results in resistant materials within design and technology.

16. The rate of improvement since the last inspection is ahead of the national trend because the girls have sustained their above average performance and the boys' performance has improved greatly.
17. GCSE results in 2001 at age 16 were well above the national average for both all and similar schools. The well above average proportions obtaining 5+ A\*-C and 5+ A\*-G confirm that students of all levels of competence, including the gifted and talented, the

very small number who speak English as an additional language and those with identified special educational needs, achieve well. These results were ahead of the school's challenging targets, based on standards reached previously at age 14.

18. The results indicate a very high level of achievement when compared with the students' previous test results at age 14. Results in English and mathematics were well above average for similar schools. In science they were in the top five per cent of similar schools, indicating very good achievement. Good achievement was a feature of the results in English, mathematics, music, textiles, geography and English literature. The girls' results were below average in modern foreign languages, as were the results overall in the resistant materials course in design and technology.
19. Since the last inspection the girls have continued to do better than the boys. However, the gap has narrowed significantly. In 1997 twenty per cent fewer boys than girls obtained 5+ A\*-C grades. By 2001 this had reduced to seven per cent. Very good leadership and management have resulted in much greater awareness of gender issues across the school. This has led to the greatly improved motivation of the boys. The change in attitude is a very significant factor in their improvement.
20. The standards of work seen at age 16 are above those usually found nationally. In some cases they are higher than the most recent examination results because there is a slightly higher proportion of more competent students in the current Year 11. Overall, students of different levels of competence achieve very well.
21. Standards are well above average in science and above average in English and mathematics. They are also above average in art, design and technology, music, dance and physical education. In no subject are they below average.
22. The very well co-ordinated provision produces very high standards in the performing arts, particularly in dance, where many students, nearly all of whom are girls, produce performance work that is highly imaginative and based on a very thorough grasp of techniques. There is similarly a very good level of skill in drama. In both subjects the students' evaluation skills are very good. Performance and composition skills are very high in music and gain much from the skilful use of ICT. Standards overall are well above those usually found nationally because nearly all students have the confidence to express themselves creatively and imaginatively. The very good personal development promoted by these subjects is an important reason why so many students do so well. The school's aims and targets as a specialist college for the performing arts are very well met.
23. Achievement at age 16 is very good. The proportion of students achieving standards above those expected nationally is considerably greater than it was at the age of 11. Approximately 30 per cent of students obtain above average results at age 16 compared with approximately 10 per cent at age 11. Many competent students make very good progress to achieve above average results. The progress made by the boys is particularly good.
24. The most important reasons for this are the very mature attitudes of the students, the high expectations of their teachers and the good pace of the carefully planned lessons. The emphasis across the school upon developing attitudes as well as skills is fundamental to the pattern of improving performance at age 16. Consequently, learning is rarely interrupted by distraction.

25. Standards of literacy are above average. The written work of the more competent students is fluent and sometimes sophisticated. Competent students meet the writing requirements in their different subjects because technical vocabulary is well taught and they receive good support in the organisation of their written work. Many make good progress in lessons because they listen well and speak confidently, particularly in response to questions. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy in Year 7 has improved the students' technical skills and their confidence in the use of language.
26. Standards of numeracy are also above average because these skills are very well taught in mathematics. They are also well taught in science. There is a whole-school policy but this has not yet been translated into key objectives within the schemes of work of each subject.
27. The progress of students with special educational needs is good overall. They achieve well in GCSE examinations in relation to their abilities. In 2001, students with a statement of special educational need achieved between six and nine GCSE grades A\*-G.

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

#### Strengths

- Very good attitudes and relationships throughout the school.
- Very good, and often excellent, behaviour.
- Students are confident, polite and trustworthy.
- Attendance is well above average.

#### Areas for improvement

- The punctuality of students.

28. Nearly all students have positive attitudes to school and to learning. An important reason why they make good progress and learn well is that much emphasis is placed on developing the right attitudes to learning as soon as they start at the school. As a result, the aims of the school are very well achieved in practice.
29. Students arrive at school in a very orderly manner and the majority are keen to attend regularly. In planned discussions during the inspection, and in occasional remarks at other times, students in all years indicated that they valued highly what the school provides.
30. As a result, they are invariably polite and well mannered, showing courtesy to staff, visitors and to each other when moving around the school. The commitment to hard work is shared by students and adults alike. These very good qualities were well evidenced in a Year 9 art lesson where students showed good concentration and applied themselves well to the task and in a Year 7 art lesson where many students were excited and interested in the work.
31. Many students learn well because they work very well with each other. On many occasions in the lessons seen during the inspection they showed good skills in teamwork, listening well to each other, contributing ideas and sharing information and understanding. For example, in a Year 11 design and technology lesson and in both a Year 9 drama lesson and a dance lesson the level of collaboration and co-operation resulted in excellent progress. Occasionally, they were not given enough opportunity to show initiative, offer suggestions or make decisions.



32. Students respond well to the high expectations of the teacher and to the very good pace of lessons, contributing with enthusiasm to the question and answer sessions. Within a Year 11 geography lesson they confidently shared ideas with their teacher, asking as well as responding to questions.
33. In a very small minority of lessons, such as in a Year 11 design and technology lesson and in a Year 11 German lesson, there were some students who lacked initiative and enthusiasm but this did not affect the progress of others.
34. Standards of behaviour are very good in most lessons and frequently, for example in a Year 11 dance lesson and a Year 10 ICT lesson, they are excellent. Very good teaching and the pace of the lesson keep students fully engaged in learning and there is no unsatisfactory behaviour in any lessons. The absence of any poor attitudes and behaviour in lessons means that all can learn to their full potential. It is a strength of the school that boys and girls of all ages and levels of competence share these high standards. Around the school, including at lunch and break times, behaviour is consistently never less than good. In spite of some areas of congestion, such as corridors and the dining room, good relationships and diligent supervision ensure the efficient functioning of the school.
35. Very good relationships are the 'norm' within the school and are fundamental to its success. They produce a calm but purposeful atmosphere where a raised voice is a rarity and where mutual respect and trust flourish. Students demonstrate a good degree of mutual support and respect for the feelings of others; for example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson where they helped each other tie knots in the aprons and in a Year 7 art lesson where they supported each other to ensure all kept up with their work.
36. Personal development is very good. Nearly all students are invariably mature and sensible as well as being confident, polite and trustworthy. They are keen to take on responsibilities such as membership of the school council or acting as librarians as well as taking on responsibilities in the classroom such as in art where they willingly take responsibility for their own cleaning up. The flourishing success of many extra-curricular activities is a strong indicator of their high level of involvement in the life of the school.
37. Attendance levels are well above the national average, with unauthorised absence well below. There has been a continuous, gradual improvement since the last inspection because the school works very hard to sustain a good partnership with the families of its students. A small minority of students arrive late but the school is addressing this. As a result, the number of latecomers has reduced significantly.
38. Registration takes place during the morning tutor period and at the start of the first lesson in the afternoon. These arrangements are efficient and secure. Absences are pursued promptly with good support from the school-based education welfare officer. Attendance data is analysed routinely and the school keeps itself fully aware of trends as well as identifying students who may need support.
39. Students with identified special educational needs develop the confidence to participate fully in the life of the school community because very good support promotes good attitudes and behaviour. The reassurance and guidance they receive from their teachers and support staff encourages them to work well. Relationships between students with special educational needs and learning support staff are very good because they are based on mutual respect and trust.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

### Strengths

- The high proportion of very good learning and teaching.
- High expectation is the hallmark of the very good teaching.
- The very good learning attitudes of the students.
- The basic skills of numeracy and literacy are very well taught.
- The very effective planning of lessons results in very good levels of understanding.
- Students work hard because teaching is both challenging and supportive.
- Resources, particularly in ICT, are very well used.

### Areas for improvement

- The inconsistent quality of teaching in geography and English.
- Target setting for each year group.
- Guidance to support the early identification of the full range of special learning needs.

40. The overall quality of both teaching and learning is very good. It was very good or better in 45 per cent of the 162 lessons seen during the inspection, seven per cent of which were excellent. It was good or better in 78 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory on just one occasion. Teaching and learning were very good in science, history, music, art, dance, drama, physical education and religious education. They were good in all other subjects.
41. There is a high degree of consistency in the overall quality of teaching and learning because very good planning matches work carefully to the different levels of competence in many subjects. As a result, there is a high level of involvement in most lessons. Those students who find the work difficult are well supported and the most competent, including gifted and talented, are well challenged. Provision for these students is particularly good in music. In no lessons seen were there students at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
42. Teaching and learning were less consistent in English and geography where they were better in Years 10 and 11. There was a slightly smaller proportion of very good teaching overall in Year 9, in part explained by a need to concentrate on final preparations for the national tests that resulted in a more narrow range of teaching and learning styles.
43. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection confirms the highly satisfied views of the parents who completed the questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors looked carefully at the quality of homework and found that, overall, this was good. It generally provides good opportunities for students to work on their own and to develop what they have studied in lessons. The provision of homework clubs is a very good feature, particularly for the less competent students.
44. One of the most striking features of the learning seen during the inspection was the enjoyment of the students in what they were doing. This stemmed from the very good relationships that characterised a very high proportion of the lessons seen in many subjects. It was as apparent in mathematics, modern foreign languages and science as it was in physical education, art and drama.
45. The well-planned setting arrangements in many subjects also contribute to the generally good match of work to the needs of individual students. The teachers know their students well and show a high degree of skill in managing both behaviour and attitudes in lessons. As a result, students invariably work very hard in lessons and

make good progress. This is a very good feature of the teaching in science and mathematics. The sequencing of learning was a very good feature of the planning of lessons in drama, art and modern foreign languages. It was also a feature of the best English teaching. Occasionally in this subject, progress is slower in lessons when the objectives of the lesson are not fully explained and the work is not adapted to meet the wider range of needs in all-ability classes.

46. At the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall. Since that time, there has been very good improvement in the proportion of very good teaching. The high priority placed upon teaching and learning in the school improvement plan, the resultant emphasis in subject improvement plans and the very effective action taken by senior managers through the school's programme of faculty reviews have all contributed to this very good level of improvement.
47. The best teaching and learning were seen in science where they were very good or better in 63 per cent of lessons. The highly effective balance of challenge and support was a feature of the very skilful use of questions. As a result, the students made great gains in understanding as well as knowledge. This led to a very clear understanding of scientific principles. In addition to the very good level of challenge that characterised much of the teaching seen during the inspection, the students in science were kept very well informed about how they are doing and what they need to achieve next.
48. The quality of learning is very good because a very high number of the students are very well motivated in lessons. They concentrate well. When students first join the school the high level of expectation is set consistently in lessons. This lays very firm foundations for very good learning in the later years. The emphasis on developing the right attitudes to learning from the outset is one of the most important reasons why such a high proportion of the students, and particularly the boys, make good progress. The very good levels of attendance ensure a good degree of continuity in the students' learning.
49. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than very good, the pace of learning was slower because objectives were defined less clearly. The use of resources was less imaginative. For example, in some geography lessons there was an occasional reliance on worksheets that did not stimulate interest and activities were narrowly restricted to textbook exercises so that basic gains in knowledge did not lead to a wider understanding that would enable the students to apply their learning later on. This reduced the level of challenge. A lack of clarity in the setting of objectives and rather dull tasks occasionally characterised some pedestrian learning in English.
50. Many students make good progress over time because basic skills are well taught. This is a particularly strong feature in art where the highly structured course enables all students to gain a sound level of competence. Basic practical skills are also very well taught in dance, drama and music.
51. The National Literacy Strategy has been well established in Year 7. The school has good strategies in place for improving students' literacy skills, concentrating currently on the key objectives of writing for a range of purposes and using group talk to support learning. These are incorporated well into the teaching of all subjects.
52. The school has made considerable efforts to make the teaching of literacy a priority in all areas. There is a consistent approach to marking and the presentation of written work across all subject departments. Students in Year 7 have spelling planners covering key words for all subjects and spelling, reinforced through excellent displays

and tests, is monitored by form tutors. The whole school spends ten minutes daily in quiet reading. Further strategies have been developed to help departments teach students the language they need to make progress in each subject. These include training on group talk and non-fictional writing, an excellent booklet for teachers and the monitoring of students' writing every term.

53. Key words are displayed in most classrooms, although varying use is made of them. In science good support is given to literacy, although the range of writing is limited mainly to notes and accounts of experimental work. In mathematics teachers make a point of correcting the use of mathematical terms and their spelling. There is a good emphasis on literacy through the new *Framework for teaching English* in Year 7. Glossaries and definitions are widely displayed in geography rooms. In art there are good examples of the use of writing to support the interpretation of artwork. Writing frames are used and students make written evaluations of their work. In drama, students read a range of different kinds of text as well as using writing for research, note taking, and evaluation. There is good support for literacy in music and in ICT.
54. Numeracy skills are very well taught in mathematics, but the need and opportunity to apply and extend them further in other subjects is not explicitly stated as key objectives in planning. There is a good emphasis on teaching the necessary technical vocabulary in different subjects and students use it with a good level of understanding. As a result, most students have the necessary skills to complete written coursework well and many also make good use of ICT to further improve its quality.
55. The planning of lessons generally reflects a very good level of knowledge, not only of the subject but also of the individual student. In the best teaching there is a very good link between the setting of objectives, the needs of the students and the choice of methods. As a result, many make good gains in knowledge and understanding. This was a feature of the best teaching in history where imaginative planning resulted in a wide range of tasks that held the interest and developed the understanding of the students.
56. Many students apply their understanding very well when they also have the opportunity to work in smaller groups on a task. This was a particularly strong feature of the very good gains made in dance, music and drama. By sharing ideas and insights, their skills of interpretation develop very well. The quality of learning in these subjects is very good because time is given to reflecting upon performance work in order to evaluate its strengths and areas for further improvement. This develops a good level of critical thinking because students are provided with frequent opportunities to show initiative and make decisions. These features of learning were much stronger in the arts subjects than in other lessons seen during the inspection.
57. An important reason why the proportion of very good teaching is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection is the imaginative use of resources. There has been much improvement in the quality and quantity of ICT resources and these are very well used in many lessons. The 25 interactive white boards are very well used in many subjects, contributing greatly to the pace of learning by stimulating high levels of interest and concentration.
58. The provision for students with special educational needs is good. Teachers are aware of each student's individual needs from the information provided by the school's learning support staff. There is good teamwork in lessons between support staff and subject teachers, but inconsistent involvement in planning. The provision of activities that are matched to individual additional needs varies across the school. There is

insufficient guidance provided for individual teachers about the full range of additional learning needs that may arise before an initial referral.

59. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are good, providing a detailed overview of all aspects of a student's needs, their objectives and actions to be taken. They are not subject specific.
60. Teachers promote positive attitudes to learning. As a result, students with special educational needs are confident to answer questions and to demonstrate techniques; they put sustained effort into their work. Consequently, they make good progress and learn well.

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

### **Strengths**

- The very good range of provision meets the learning needs of all students well.
- Very good provision for students' personal development.
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme.
- The excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- The extensive range of links with the local community.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Timetabled lessons for religious education in Year 11.
- Timetabled lessons for ICT in Years 8 and 9.

61. The curriculum is very well managed to provide a broad and well-balanced range of opportunities. This includes very effective provision for personal development and a wide range of additional activities, many of which establish strong links with the local community. This provision is reviewed regularly to ensure that the needs of all students are met and that changes are well co-ordinated.
62. Since the last inspection, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been broadened to provide more opportunities to follow vocational courses and adapted to meet the full range of different needs. Less competent students now have the opportunity to spend more time on a well-balanced but smaller number of GCSE courses. These arrangements result in a good level of success. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, with the exception of provision for religious education in Year 11.
63. There is a well-planned range of learning opportunities for students between the ages of 11 and 14. In addition to the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, all students follow courses in drama and dance, reflecting the school's designation as a specialist college for the performing arts.
64. At age 11, students study French or German and all take a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9. A cost of this arrangement is that there is insufficient time for ICT. The planned curriculum for September 2002 has addressed this issue, providing for one modern foreign language and more time for ICT lessons.
65. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the quality of provision after age 14. More flexible arrangements have been introduced to cater for students' individual needs, in particular opportunities for work-related courses. Consequently, the

curriculum meets the needs of all students very well, completion rates on courses are very high and nearly all obtain a grade in the final examination.

66. Religious education is taught as part of the PSHE programme. All students in Year 10 follow a GCSE short course, approximately one quarter choosing to take the final GCSE examination. Despite these improvements, the time given to religious education in Year 11 is unsatisfactory.
67. The quality of careers education and guidance is good and well-linked to the making of subject choices at age 14 and the range of options after age 16. A small number of students are guided towards a range of vocational courses run in conjunction with the local college. This link is very well managed so that arrangements run smoothly. These students are not then required to follow a GCSE course in design and technology. In addition, some no longer study a modern foreign language, following instead a key skills programme in number, communication and ICT. These more flexible arrangements have helped to increase the motivation of less competent students, including increased attendance.
68. The National Literacy Strategy is very well led and managed by a member of the senior team and a member of the English department. This planned provision supports particularly well the progress of less competent students. Those with difficulties in Years 7 and 8 attend paired reading sessions with students from Years 10 and 11. There are 'catch up' sessions for students attaining below Level 3 in Year 7. The very good involvement of parents is a strong feature. Year 7 parents are advised on how best to help their children with literacy, including a laminated guide to display on the fridge at home.
69. The school has wisely defined the development of literacy skills as its priority because these are below average overall at age 11. The policy for numeracy has been prepared but is not yet expressed in terms of key objectives within the schemes of work of each subject.
70. The provision for students with special educational needs is good overall because the well-managed support enables them to follow the requirements of the National Curriculum with some well-planned adjustments after age 14.
71. There is good additional curricular provision that supports well the progress of less competent students. Those in Year 7 who have achieved Level 2 or below at the end of primary school, follow a one-week booster course to improve their reading and spelling. Literacy Progress Units are taught for three days a week at a breakfast club for Year 7 students who achieved Level 3 in the national test at age 11.
72. The special educational needs co-ordinator writes all the IEPs. Students and subject staff contribute to their evaluation. This informs future plans. Subject reports range from those that are subjective descriptions of work covered to those that evaluate objectively students' progress towards the achievement of their targets.
73. Provision for gifted and talented students is identified as an area for development in the majority of subjects. Government funding within the local 'Excellence Cluster' will not reach the school until the start of the next academic year. There are, however, already examples of good practice in science, art, music and physical education where these students are well challenged to achieve still higher standards through extension materials.

74. The school's PSHE programme is very effective in supporting students' personal development. The very good provision is very well managed, including regular monitoring and an annual review of its effectiveness. By emphasising the school as a community and the role and responsibilities of the individual, this provision contributes much to the development of the students' very positive attitudes.
75. All students are well prepared for adult life. After age 14 there are additional life skills lessons that address well a wide range of issues, including health, relationships and parenting. Careers education is also included in the life skills programme. The quality of materials is very good and includes open access to three different computer-based programs. There is a comprehensive library of information as well as additional advice and guidance provided by the local careers service.
76. There are good links with local colleges. These provide a good degree of continuity as well as providing a further widening of opportunities after age 16. The provision of vocational courses successfully encourages less competent students to continue in full-time education after age 16. Those following the 'New Start' scheme have improved attendance and they value the additional support they receive as a result.
77. There are very good links with the local community. Local residents are encouraged to make use of the school's facilities and to work alongside students, for instance in a community theatre group. Links with partner schools are very productive, having improved the continuity in teaching and learning as students move from primary to secondary school.
78. The curricular life of the school extends well beyond the normal school day. There are evening drama classes, a Saturday school for the performing arts, drama workshops, both in the school and in neighbouring schools, as well as numerous links with local primary schools and local organisations and many community arts projects. These all enrich learning by involving other members of the community and specialist staff for workshops and events. The 'Fred Longworth Challenge' award further encourages and recognises community involvement.
79. The curriculum is further enriched by additional resources, visits and experiences, particularly in music, art, dance and drama. Such provision is a strong feature of the performing arts college specialist provision. For instance, very good use is made in lessons of external expertise in performance arts, and visits are arranged to outside organisations to provide students with first-hand learning experiences. Summer schools are held to develop the skills of gifted and talented students in science, literacy and the arts. The school is a centre of excellence for tennis.
80. The provision made for extra-curricular activities is excellent. A large number of clubs meet before, during and after the school day and are well supported by teachers and students. Most areas of the curriculum are represented and a good range of activities is provided. Very good arrangements are in place to give students additional help with individual subjects. Opportunities are provided through art, music, drama and physical education for students to gain experience of sporting and cultural activities and to learn new skills. In addition, a variety of educational trips are organised to places of interest in this country and abroad.
81. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Opportunities are effectively threaded through the curriculum and the day-to-day life of the school.

82. Provision for spiritual development is good. As a result, mutual respect is a pervading feature of a school community in which students are treated increasingly as young adults. Achievements are celebrated in assemblies, newsletters and displays on corridors, so that students develop good levels of self-esteem that convince them they can succeed. In religious education, other faiths and beliefs are studied, enabling students to understand and value the feelings of different cultures. In the best teaching seen, students were regularly encouraged to reflect upon what they were doing. This was a particularly strong feature in the performing arts subjects and in art where there are opportunities to explore ideas, feelings and meanings by looking at other students' and artists' work.
83. Very good provision is made for students' moral development. Adherence to school rules, the behaviour policy and the anti-bullying strategy promote an orderly environment where students help and support each other. Some Year 8 students felt the best thing about the school was that it was a 'happy place' where any problems were dealt with effectively. The importance of appreciating the needs of others is emphasised. As a result, many students work hard to raise money for a range of charities.
84. Social education is very good. Very positive relationships exist amongst staff and students during lessons and throughout the day. There are opportunities in many subject areas to develop social and collaborative skills in a range of subjects, including physical education, art, science, drama and modern foreign languages. Students have opportunities to develop responsibilities; for example, by being librarians, school council members and prefects, and by helping at clubs. There are good opportunities for residential visits that help to develop further a wide range of social skills.
85. Provision for students' cultural development is very good. There is a good level of multicultural awareness, for example in studies of attitudes to women in India and cultural traditions in Egypt and Japan. There are trips abroad, including ski holidays and a German exchange. Visits to the theatre and regular music and drama productions all enhance the cultural experiences of the students.

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

### Strengths

- The high quality of care fulfils the aims of the school very effectively.
- The very good pastoral system results in positive relationships across the school.
- The monitoring of attitudes as part of the monitoring of academic progress.
- Very good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and regular attendance.

### Areas for improvement

- The assessment of standards at age 11 and target setting at age 14 in subjects where there are no national tests.
- The monitoring of the progress made by students of different levels of competence.
- Consistent and effective use of morning registration time.

86. The school provides very good care for its students. Its success is founded on a shared awareness that the development of positive attitudes is as important as the gaining of knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, the provision makes a very strong contribution to the fulfilment of the school's aims. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in further improving its provision, particularly in its assessment procedures after age 14.



87. There are sound procedures to ensure students' welfare, protection, safety and health. Arrangements for child protection are well managed, including well-defined lines of communication and requisite training. Levels of supervision and site management procedures are very good. Departmental practice is well linked to the school's health and safety policy, including the requirements for risk assessments. There are regular fire drills and fire alarms are tested weekly. Very good medical facilities include a well-equipped, dedicated medical room and good provision of trained first aiders. There are two school nurses who visit on a regular basis for routine medical matters. Accident reports are completed and external agencies are involved as required. Routine health and safety inspections are carried out on a regular basis.
88. The very well-managed pastoral arrangements provide a high degree of continuity in the provision of care. Wherever possible, the student remains with the same tutor as they progress through the school. The students' planners are well used to record details of absence, lateness, medical treatment, meetings, homework or other requirements, thus ensuring that staff and parents are aware of any problems. A major strength of the school's provision of care is the review system that links very closely personal development and academic achievement.
89. The school monitors attendance well. It analyses data to identify issues for action. The attendance figures are well above average, demonstrating the effectiveness of these procedures. The school has identified that there are unacceptable amounts of lateness and is addressing the issue – the heads of year have target figures of a 50 per cent reduction and significant progress has already been made.
90. Behaviour policies have recently been reviewed. The high levels of very good behaviour and the absence of bullying seen during the inspection demonstrate the effectiveness of these policies. The school believes in a 'no-blame' approach to bullying, with staff supporting discussions between the parties involved wherever this approach is viable.
91. The school cares well for those students with identified special educational needs. However, there is limited guidance to inform subject staff of the range of learning difficulties they could encounter and of strategies they might use. There is good communication between learning support staff and subject teachers through bulletins and the circulation of Individual Education Plans. As a result, teachers are well aware of the needs of individual students who are on the register of special educational needs.
92. The very well-defined role of the form tutor provides a very close link between the monitoring of students' personal development and their academic progress. These arrangements fulfil very well the aims of the school.
93. Students' work is assessed accurately because there is a very good understanding of the standards described in the National Curriculum in all subjects. These are well used in the marking of work so that students have a very clear picture of how well they are doing. The communication of assessment data is very well managed so that individual teachers have a comprehensive profile of their students' previous test scores and future targets.
94. There are two very well-planned opportunities each year for students to review their progress. These are well linked to the recently revised reporting arrangements and place emphasis on attitudes to work as well as the standards achieved. The opportunity for parents to be closely involved in these arrangements is a very good feature. The reviews are well managed by the student's tutor who is well placed to provide an overall picture of progress made. Students' progress is also monitored

regularly as part of the faculty review arrangements managed by the headteacher and his senior colleagues.

95. Some parents who completed the questionnaire or attended the meeting before the inspection wished for an earlier opportunity to discuss their children's progress in Year 7. The most recent revisions to the procedures and plans in place for the coming year are designed to provide this.
96. The progress of individual students is well monitored. Many are well informed about the National Curriculum level at which they are working and the assessment criteria that are used at GCSE. As a result, they understand very well what they need to do to improve their work.
97. Arrangements are currently unsatisfactory to track the progress made by particular groups of students, measured against their starting point at ages 11 and 14. The statutory requirements to set targets at age 14 are fully met but there are no additional arrangements in place to do so in subjects where there are no national tests, apart from ICT, with effect from 2003.
98. The use of assessment to inform planning is satisfactory overall. Good use is made of standardised tests at age 11 but there are currently no arrangements at that time to carry out assessments of what students know, understand and can do on entry to the school in design and technology, history and geography.

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

### **Strengths**

- The student planner is very well used to support communications.
- The good range of opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school.
- The excellent quality of information about the school.

### **Areas for improvement**

- More reference to improvements made by the school in the governors' annual report to parents.

99. The partnership between parents and the school is very good. A home-school agreement is in place and students use a planner which has to be signed by parents and teachers on a regular basis. This contains most of the information that students and parents need to know about the day-to-day requirements of school as well as a record of work to be done. The use of the planner is very good throughout the school with staff making full use of it and checking its completeness. Students take a pride in their planners and are very supportive about their use.
100. Parents' views of the school, expressed through the questionnaires and the parents' meeting, were very appreciative. There was a very high return of questionnaires and good attendance at the parents' meeting.
101. The most pleasing aspects for parents are the high expectations, good progress, very good teaching and very effective leadership. Some parents would like to see an improvement in the quantity and regularity of homework. The homework arrangements, however, were found to be good overall.

102. Communication with parents is excellent. The school produces regular, well-designed and informative newsletters. The school prospectus is extremely well presented so that parents have a very clear picture of the aims, expectations and provision at the school. In addition there are letters and leaflets on specific matters of interest to groups of parents.
103. The reporting system to parents on progress is excellent and comprises interim reviews and an annual report. Students' annual reports contain the statutory information and are comprehensive in their content. The governors' annual report to parents meets legal requirements but could be improved by more information on school improvement.
104. The involvement of parents in the life of the school does not include a parents' association. The school expresses its commitment to involve parents by making more comprehensive provision. Many parents are involved with the school through the very good community links and value the 'open-door' policy. Most support their children's education by completing the planners on a regular basis and by attending parents' meetings. The school holds an annual open evening to encourage community awareness and the opportunities to discuss progress are appreciated by parents.
105. The school makes good provision to involve the parents of students with special educational needs. Individual students' files indicate regular communication. Parents of statemented students are invited to attend Annual Review meetings, but currently they are not invited to attend reviews of IEPs. In this respect the school does not yet comply with the recommendations of the new Code of Practice.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

### Strengths

- The headteacher provides very good leadership through a strong commitment to continuous improvement.
- Teamwork and delegation that result in a strong unity of purpose and direction are excellent features of the school's very good management.
- Change and improvement are very well planned because the well-defined priorities are very well understood by all.
- The governors make a very good contribution to the development of the school because their level of commitment and understanding is high.
- Financial planning is excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of measurable criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of decisions and actions in the school improvement plan.

106. The headteacher provides very good leadership because he demonstrates a very high commitment to the continuous improvement of the school and the consistent promotion of its values. Excellent teamwork and delegation are the hallmarks of the very good management of the school's performance and provision. As a result, there is a very high degree of shared understanding of the school's priorities. The link between the school's aims, values and actions is excellent.
107. The parents who completed the questionnaire or who attended the pre-inspection meeting value highly the leadership of the school. The findings of this inspection fully endorse that high degree of confidence.

108. The values and aims of the school are very well defined in the school prospectus. They are highly inclusive and combine a care for individual happiness with the challenge to succeed. The powerful vision that informs the leadership of the school results in a shared commitment to students' personal development and academic success.
109. The specialist school designation as a performing arts college has recently been renewed, a good indication of the very successful leadership and management that have met the challenging objectives of the arts college development plan.
110. The well-defined planning cycle starts in the autumn term with the updating of the five-year staffing plan and projected pupil numbers. The annual plan is prepared with a very good awareness of the school's longer-term needs and circumstances. Its simplicity is also its strength because it defines very precisely what needs to be done to improve both performance and provision. At the heart of the plan lies 'the experience of students in the classroom' and planning objectives to improve teaching. The management and organisation of learning and the learning environment are very well defined.
111. Financial planning is excellent. The allocation of funding according to agreed priorities is highly rigorous and very carefully considered. Financial controls are also excellent. The application of the principles of best value is exemplary. All expenditure is rigorously scrutinized to ensure the most competitive price. The principle of challenge has been very well applied to achieve best value, for example in cleaning services. The school makes very good use of the Technology Colleges Trust networks to consult about best value. As a result of thorough and skilful financial management, the strategic use of resources is excellent.
112. There are very good monitoring arrangements that provide regular opportunities for the senior management team to review the progress made in implementing the annual plan. The separate plan that relates to the school's specialist status as a performing arts college has very well-defined objectives by which success is measured very precisely. The arrangements to evaluate the annual school improvement plan are not so well developed because the objectives are expressed in terms of tasks to be completed rather than as measurable improvements in performance or provision.
113. The school has a very strong unity of purpose and direction because there is a very good balance of consultation and monitoring. As a result, the school's priorities are very well understood by all staff. This common purpose stems directly from the clarity of the planning and the very well-defined roles and responsibilities of senior staff, subject leaders and heads of year. The delegation of responsibilities is very well managed through well-defined line management that combines responsibility with accountability. A five-week cycle of meetings provides regular opportunities for all staff to contribute to the development of the school.
114. The heads of year provide very good leadership to their teams of tutors and manage the personal development of the students very well. Their very good management of pastoral care results in students' very positive attitudes in lessons and regular attendance.
115. Leadership and management are very good in many subjects and never less than good across the school. As a result, there is a very strong commitment to improve. Where they are very good, for example in science and modern foreign languages, there are very good arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching.
116. Provision for special educational needs is well led and managed. Improvements since the last inspection have included an increase in the number and quality of learning

support teachers and learning support assistants. The faculty reviews its performance but has no formal self-evaluation procedures.

117. The governing body makes a very effective contribution to the development of the school because governors have a very good knowledge and understanding of why the school is succeeding, as well as being alert to areas for improvement. The partnership with the headteacher and key staff is very good because there is a very good, shared understanding of the priorities for further improvement.
118. Governors are well aware of their aims for the school and are determined for the school to be successful. Their very good level of expertise and experience enables them to support the school very well. Through excellent relationships with the senior management team and all the staff they provide excellent leadership in shaping the direction of the school.
119. Staffing is well managed. Important strategic decisions are very well linked to the priorities of the school improvement plan, for example in the reduction of administrative tasks so that teachers can concentrate on improving the learning of their students. As a result, the number of technical support assistants has been increased and tasks such as public examination invigilation are no longer undertaken by teachers. The very effective use of learning support and technical support staff is a strength of the school.
120. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers deployed effectively in all subjects. The match of their skills and experience to the demands of the curriculum is good overall and very good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and music. Arrangements for performance management are well advanced. Staff development is very well managed and carefully linked to the priorities of improvement planning and also to individual needs within performance management, for example the development of ICT skills. Newly qualified teachers are very well supported. There is very good technician support covering most areas of the curriculum.
121. Resources for learning are very good. Funds are allocated through a bidding system. The school is particularly well resourced with computers and interactive whiteboards, which are becoming increasingly well used. The library, which at the time of the last inspection was inadequately stocked, is shortly to be extended. The stock of fiction is currently poor but will be upgraded with the new extension.
122. The management of accommodation is very good. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and further building improvements were in progress at the time of the inspection. The maintenance of the site is very well managed. Specialist facilities are now very good and particularly so in physical education, dance, drama and music. There is a well-defined programme for improvement. It is well maintained under the direction of an efficient site manager.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

123. Fred Longworth School makes very good provision for its students. In order to raise standards still further, the headteacher, governors, teachers and others associated with the work of the school should:

- (1) Set targets at age 14 in those subjects for which there are no national tests (paragraph 97) by:
  - using the standards described in the National Curriculum to identify what the students know, understand and can do in each subject on entry to the school at age 11;
  - completing these assessments before the end of the autumn term in Year 7;
  - identifying expected standards within schemes of work for each subject;
  - using initial and subsequent assessments to set individual annual targets.
  
- (2) Monitor the performance of different groups of students (paragraphs 97,197,198) by:
  - setting targets for different groups of students, including the more competent, competent and less competent.
  - tracking the performance of the gifted and talented students;
  - providing mentoring or similar support to each group;
  - analysing the performance of different groups of students, measured against prior attainment at ages 11 and 14.
  
- (3) Define more precisely measurable objectives in the school improvement plan in order to evaluate the effectiveness of planning decisions and expenditure (paragraph 112) by:
  - stating, in measurable terms, the impact on standards or quality that are intended as a result of management action.

In addition, consideration might also be given to:

- improving the performance of girls at age 16 in modern foreign languages and in the resistant materials course in design and technology;
- increasing the number of boys who choose to study drama and dance after age 14;
- providing guidance to help teachers' early identification of the full range of additional learning needs;
- provision for religious education in Year 11.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

162

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

44

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	12	61	52	36	1	0	0
Percentage	7	38	33	21	1	0	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

1292

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

178

#### Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

42

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

205

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

1

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

14

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

13

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	151	117	268

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	107	106
	Girls	96	85	83
	Total	180	192	189
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (71)	72 (71)	71 (69)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (46)	43 (49)	32 (37)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	104	68
	Girls	95	83	63
	Total	185	187	131
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (67)	71 (69)	49 (65)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (28)	28 (49)	17 (24)
	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	103	119	222

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	57	98	101
	Girls	75	116	116
	Total	132	214	217
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (55)	96 (94)	98 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.4 (43.2)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	18	100
	National	n/a	n/a

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	7
Indian	6
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	1264
Any other minority ethnic group	6

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	4	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	13	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)	75
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	630

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	22

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3,449,499
Total expenditure	3,462,484
Expenditure per pupil	2,781
Balance brought forward from previous year	178,074
Balance carried forward to next year	165,089

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	1292
Number of questionnaires returned	837

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	51	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	45	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	49	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	56	11	2	3
The teaching is good.	49	46	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	46	11	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	36	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	10	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	55	40	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	44	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	40	4	1	7

## 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 **good**.

#### Strengths

- Performance in English at GCSE is improving steadily.
- Students do very well in English literature.
- There is some excellent teaching of the subject.
- Relationships in the classroom are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The number of students who attain the highest levels and grades.
- The monitoring of teaching.
- Curriculum planning is not yet sufficiently detailed or consistent across all years.
- Accuracy in predicting test and examination results.

124. When students enter the school in Year 7 their verbal scores in standardised tests are below average. Girls' reading is above average and they are consistently ahead of boys on entry but the gap has narrowed since the last inspection. Students make good progress and results in national tests at age 14 have been above average over the last three years.
125. Results in the national tests at age 14 dipped slightly in 2001. They were broadly in line with the average for all schools nationally, as well as for similar schools. Both the boys and the girls did less well than their age group nationally. Performance was slightly lower than in mathematics and science.
126. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average in English. The proportion of students attaining A\* and A grades was below average and lower than in the previous year. Girls did better than boys. Nearly 20 per cent more girls than boys gained grades A\*-C in 2001, although the performance of boys is improving. The girls obtained a higher proportion of grades A\* and A than the boys. Less competent students achieved well.
127. Results in English literature were also above the national average in 2001 with more students achieving the highest grades. The gap between the boys' and the girls' performance in English literature is similar to that in English. In both examinations the girls do very much better than the boys at the highest grades. The department enters nearly all students for both examinations and significantly more for English literature than is usually the case nationally. Results in media studies were above the national average, with nearly 70 per cent achieving grades A\*-C.
128. Overall, there has been good improvement in GCSE results at age 16.
129. Students make good progress and reach average standards at age 14. Good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11 and at age 16 standards are above average. Achievement overall is good. Boys make better progress as a result of strategies introduced by the department which include the use of writing frames, a more structured approach to tasks and the careful choice of topics more likely to appeal to

boys. Overall, students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well at GCSE.

130. Standards in speaking and listening at ages 14 and 16 are higher than are usually found nationally. Many are confident speakers and very good listeners because they concentrate very well. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students were presenting book reviews to the class. More competent students were able to express and develop their opinions about character and the author's use of language. They were able to make the presentation interesting and lively. Less competent students gave only brief, sometimes stilted, accounts of the narrative. Students listened carefully throughout. Many are keen to express their ideas and often ask questions in lessons. They continue to make good progress and become more confident so that in a Year 11 lesson, for instance, less competent students were able to express quite complex ideas about a war poem in discussion. Girls are generally more fluent than boys.
131. Standards in reading are broadly in line with those expected nationally at ages 14 and 16. Most lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 begin with time for personal reading and the department has a range of initiatives to encourage students' reading. They read from a wide range of material and many enjoy this opportunity, using their time well. Most read aloud quite competently and with good understanding but they do not always read very expressively. They become increasingly discerning readers as they move through the school. In a Year 9 lesson they were able to analyse and discuss the purpose, presentation and style of writing. They are able to illustrate their points with reference to the text. By Year 11 they read a wide range of more advanced texts and demonstrate good understanding of the ways in which meaning and information are conveyed in different styles of writing.
132. Standards in writing at age 14 are broadly in line with the expectation nationally. Many make good progress with spelling, punctuation and grammar and in their ability to express their ideas in a range of contexts. In Year 7 the impact of the new national framework has resulted in improvements in the technical aspects of language. More competent students write very fluently. Less competent students, including some with special educational needs, produce much briefer work, use a narrow range of vocabulary and syntax, and express more limited ideas. Work is not always completed and presentation is weak. At age 16 the most competent students express sophisticated ideas in their writing. They are able to develop and sustain a point of view and support it well with quotation from the text. They write at length, sometimes with originality and flair. The best work is cogent and critical. They use ICT well in the presentation of their work. Many less competent students make good progress in basic skills, although ideas are often expressed with limited vocabulary and provide little interpretation of character.
133. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Some excellent teaching was seen but occasionally it was not more than satisfactory. It was better in Years 10 and 11 than in the earlier years because of teachers' close familiarity with the requirements of the GCSE examination. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
134. The very best lessons were characterised by extremely skilful questioning based on excellent knowledge of the subject and presented with genuine enthusiasm, resulting in very effective learning. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, the teacher's energy and the very lively and enthusiastic presentation, together with very searching questioning, encouraged and stimulated less competent students to participate at a very high level in discussion of *Dulce et Decorum Est*. Students' interest was stimulated and they shared the teacher's pleasure in the material.

135. Teachers generally have very high expectations and carefully judge the pace at which the lesson proceeds so that students are constantly challenged and their understanding improved. Learning in a Year 7 lesson was excellent because the teacher posed skilfully probing questions, concentrated on extending vocabulary and moved the lesson on briskly. As a result, students' appreciation of a Ted Hughes poem, their understanding of metaphor and their grasp of new vocabulary progressed considerably.
136. In most lessons the management of students is very good. Excellent relationships in the classroom are based on warmth and respect so students respond very well and are confident to participate and ask questions. Teachers know students well as individuals, plan lessons carefully and use good quality resources. An appropriate emphasis is placed on preparation for tests and examinations. Students are aware of the criteria for success and are well prepared. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together. In some lessons teachers use resources which are well adapted to suit students at different levels of competence in English as well as students on the special educational needs register.
137. All teaching is at least satisfactory but there are some areas for improvement. In those lessons where teaching materials are not specifically adapted, students with special educational needs do not make as much progress as they might. Some lessons do not start with a clear statement of objectives so students are not sure what is to come. Neither do they end with a resume of the ground covered. Some tasks are routine and the time allowed is not well judged. Opportunities are not always taken to let students know how they are doing in lessons
138. Leadership and management are good. The subject is taught by a well-motivated and committed team who share ideas and resources. Good support is provided for new and student teachers. As a result, the department functions very effectively. There is good delegation of responsibility. There are, however, some areas in need of attention. The new Framework for Teaching English is up and running in Year 7 but is not yet apparent in Years 8 and 9. There has been some very good curricular development recently but the points raised at the last inspection with regard to the need to plan detailed and consistent schemes for all years have not been fully addressed. The use of assessment data is improving across the department. Students, especially in Years 10 and 11, know which level or grade they are working at and a record of achievement has been introduced for younger students. However, assessment is not yet sufficiently well integrated into lesson planning. Departmental predictions of performance in the National Curriculum test and at GCSE have been unreliable in recent years. The department monitors students' work each term in line with school practice but teachers are not observed in the classroom so important opportunities for improving classroom practice are lost.
139. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Students make better progress and results have improved at GCSE. The proportion of very good teaching has risen. The department has developed some effective strategies to address the underachievement of boys in English.

## Drama

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students learn to work independently and evaluate their work.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is a strong focus on improving examination results.
- Commitment to extra-curricular activities is high.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results.
- Recruitment of boys to the course.

140. In the last three years results at GCSE have been below average but very significant recent improvements in the teaching, leadership and management of the subject have brought about a rapid rise in standards that are now above average.
141. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 because the quality of teaching is consistently very good and all students have one lesson a week between the ages of 11 and 14. Boys do particularly well, often demonstrating good oral skills. All students have an above average grasp of dramatic vocabulary and conventions. They work very well in groups and listen well to each other. For example, in a Year 9 lesson students explored the use of movement in stylised drama. Many demonstrated a good degree of self-discipline and creativity as well as good knowledge and understanding of dramatic techniques, which they applied imaginatively and confidently.
142. An above average number of students choose to study drama after age 14. There are currently four groups. Nearly all achieve well, making good progress in lessons and reaching above average standards at age 16. They do so because their theoretical knowledge is very good and they work with each other in a mature manner. Their technical knowledge and understanding are particularly good and they apply these both in developing their performance and in evaluating their work. They work well together to develop character and narrative using techniques such as role-play and flashback. They also make good use of space and movement in their work.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good. In the best teaching, tasks are clearly defined at the outset, explanations are clear and links are made to previous lessons. Teachers use demonstration well. In Year 9, for example, the imaginative creation of a tableau engaged students' attention very well. They responded with suggestions and interpretations of a Wild West saloon.
144. Group work is very well managed. Teachers use a good range of methods including thought tracking to record students' response. Tasks are well sequenced so that students build on their previous ideas. Relationships are very positive and students' confidence develops well. Assessment criteria are built into lesson planning and evaluation is very well used to focus students on improving the standard of their work.



145. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal development. Many topics have a strong moral, social and cultural dimension that develops a good understanding of self and others. Provision is further enriched by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including theatre visits and rehearsals for productions.
146. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of future development for the subject along with a careful analysis of what needs to be tackled. Action planning is very strong and identifies a comprehensive range of strategies to raise standards. Very good use is made of assessment data. Ambitious targets have been set.
147. At the time of the last inspection results at GCSE were average. Results have declined in the last three years. The department now has new management and new teaching staff. There is a revitalised emphasis on raising standards and provision is very much improved. The subject is very well resourced; very good technical support is provided and accommodation is excellent.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- Good levels of achievement.
- High expectations of behaviour and effort.
- Relationships between staff and students.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The use of the library to extend learning.

148. Results in national tests at age 14 in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average for all schools and well above average for similar schools. There has been steady improvement over the last four years but results dipped slightly in 2001. In the most recent tests the boys achieved better than girls. The results for mathematics are above those for both English and science.
149. GCSE results in 2001 were above average and represented a good level of achievement. Until this year the mathematics department has adopted a cautious approach to GCSE examination entry, allowing only the top set and a small number of other students to follow the higher tier papers. This has restricted the number of students who could aspire to the higher level grades. The number entered for the higher tier paper has increased significantly this year.
150. Achievement is good. Students' progress is very well supported by the regular assessments that include individual targets and are linked to very good reporting arrangements. Differences between boys and girls overall are marginal, except that girls present their work more carefully and boys are prone to freehand sketches and muddled working, which lessens the value of their notes for revision purposes.
151. Standards of work seen throughout the school were above those expected nationally at ages 14 and 16. The National Numeracy Strategy has sharpened the skills of the younger students and their good behaviour and attitudes enable them to make good

progress in lessons. At age 16 the high quality of teaching had a marked beneficial influence but poor number and computational skills result in below average standards of less competent students. Some competent students at age 16 do not achieve higher standards because they do not promptly recall information learned previously. For example, these students initially could not recall the general formula for calculating the area of a triangle. Very high standards of work were seen in the coursework of the most competent students, for example extending the work to a consideration of differential calculus methods when studying gradients to non-linear graphs.

152. Students with special educational needs achieve well. The well-managed setting arrangements result in a good match of work to meet their needs.
153. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Within this, examples of very good teaching and learning were seen throughout the school. At age 14 nearly all students learn well because lessons are well planned to provide a variety of well-paced activities, using a good range of resources. Care is taken to link the subject matter of the lesson to what has been learned previously. Relationships are at least good, and often very good. Consequently, there is a very positive response to the high expectations set and nearly all show a lively interest in what they are doing. Levels of concentration are very good and many learn at a good pace because the interactive whiteboards are very well used, sometimes holding the students spellbound.
154. Leadership and management are very good. Teamwork is very good and management tasks are equitably delegated. Students' progress is rigorously monitored and the information is well used to improve provision, for example by increasing the number of students entered for the higher tier papers at GCSE. Teaching schemes address the requirements of the National Curriculum well. Documentation is thorough. The IEPs for pupils with special educational needs are well used. The head of department has not yet begun the systematic monitoring of lessons, so that the existing good practice is not shared sufficiently widely.
155. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. Results have continued to improve and there has been very good improvement in the use of ICT. The use of the library as a teaching resource remains unsatisfactory.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above those expected nationally at age 16.
- Results at age 16 are in the top five per cent when compared with similar schools.
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Relationships are very good.
- Very good teaching helps all students to learn very effectively.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for students to find things out for themselves.

156. Results in the national tests at age 14 in 2001 were close to the average for all schools. Compared with similar schools, the percentage of students at Level 5 was well above average; the percentage at Level 6 was above average. Improvements in standards

- exceeded the national trend between 1999 and 2001. During this period there was very little difference in the results obtained by the boys and the girls.
157. GCSE results at age 16 in 2001 were well above the national average and an improvement on the previous year. They were in the top five per cent when compared with similar schools. Nearly all students achieved at least grade E. The percentage of students gaining A\*-C grades in double award science was high. The few students entered for single award science also achieved very well. Boys and girls obtained similar results.
  158. When students enter the school, standards in science are close to the national average. At age 14 standards are above average and students achieve well. They use their good grasp of scientific ideas very effectively to develop further understanding. Teachers' high expectations ensure that students work hard and achieve well. Occasionally students are too reliant on teachers for information and fail to extend their understanding sufficiently. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson on acids and alkalis, a few students lacked confidence in their own ability and gave up easily. There are not enough opportunities for all students to find things out for themselves. When they are given the opportunity to carry out investigations, students respond very well. This was the case in a Year 7 lesson, in which they developed very good skills in making and testing predictions about how well sugar dissolves in water.
  159. At age 16, standards are well above those that students are expected to reach nationally. They make very good progress because many have a very good grasp of scientific ideas that they apply successfully to unfamiliar situations. In a very good lesson on inheritance, competent students were able to determine the probable occurrence of inherited conditions from their understanding of underlying genetic factors. Very effective teaching methods, combined with constant challenge and good encouragement, ensured that all students achieved well.
  160. Students make very good progress because the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are very well taught. Consequently, written work is of a consistently high standard. The consistent teaching of key words helps students to gain confidence in the use of scientific vocabulary. This helps them to think more precisely. Good teaching enables students to develop a range of numerical skills that they are able to apply successfully.
  161. Boys and girls make similar progress throughout the school. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. Learning support assistants provide effective help in lessons. Teachers organise the work well to meet the needs of different groups of students. For instance, in a very good Year 10 lesson, the teacher's very clear and patient explanation of the nervous system resulted in less competent students learning to understand how the body is able to react to its environment. They made similar progress to other students in the class.
  162. Students respond positively in lessons and behave very well. They usually enjoy the work and are keen to learn. Students help one another and co-operate very well with their teachers. Very good relationships contribute considerably to the high standards reached by students.
  163. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is particularly successful in Years 10 and 11, where confident use of subject knowledge and very high expectations help students to gain very good understanding of scientific principles. Lessons are very effectively planned and students know what is expected of them. Teaching provides a very good balance of challenge and support. This was found in an excellent Year 11 lesson on the atom. The teacher captured the interest of students extremely well and

used an excellent combination of questioning and description to develop their understanding of electronic configurations. Very skilful use of ongoing assessment ensured that all students achieved well.

164. Teachers have a very good awareness of individual students' needs. Marking is very thorough and provides useful comments to help students improve. Very good use is made of end of module test information to set individual learning targets. A self-assessment system is used very effectively to help students understand how well they are achieving. Although progress is very well monitored, ongoing information about individual students' achievements is not always communicated sufficiently between teachers. More formalised arrangements need to be considered, particularly where classes are shared.
165. There is very good provision for ICT. The number of computers has increased since the last inspection. Students now have very good opportunities to access information and are encouraged to do so. The use of electronic systems for capturing data is well established. While some students make very good use of computers to present their work, this is not a strong feature at present. The use of the interactive whiteboards that have been introduced is having a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
166. Leadership and management are very good. There are successful strategies for raising standards, particularly for improving the standards attained by boys at age 16. The monitoring of the work of the department is very effective and the outcomes are used systematically to plan future developments. There is a strong and shared commitment to further improvement. The whole department works very well together as a team, including the technicians who contribute significantly to the very good standards achieved. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. In particular, teaching schemes now support students' learning much more effectively. Accommodation has also been improved considerably and technician time increased.

## ART AND DESIGN

The overall quality of provision in art is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The very good teaching.
- The monitoring of the subject's performance and the action taken to raise standards.
- The very good accommodation and learning resources.

### Areas for improvement

- The identification of gifted and talented students and the strategies to raise their attainments in the GCSE examination.
- Drawing skills at age 14.

167. On students' entry to the school at age 11, standards are below those expected nationally. Achievement at age 14 is good because students follow a well-planned and structured course. As a result, standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally at age 14.
168. At age 14 the large majority use a range of techniques, including information and communication technology, to select and record images, to explore and develop ideas, and to develop design sheets and finished pieces. Standards in ceramics are good. Whilst drawing skills are weaker overall, the more competent are able to draw well from

observation. Boys and girls achieve similarly well, as do students with special educational needs because they are well supported by their teachers.

169. There has been a very good improvement in the proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examination since the previous inspection. Results in 2001 were in line with the national average, marking a slight dip after three years of improvement. Less competent students achieved particularly well.
170. Standards are above national expectations at age 16. Achievement is good as all students benefit from the very well-structured teaching of skills. Boys and girls achieve similarly well, as do students with special educational needs. They use a wide range of techniques and media to gather images, investigate ideas, experiment and develop designs for pieces of work in two and three dimensions. Drawing from observation is less well developed than other techniques to develop and explore ideas. They use ICT very well to modify their images. For example, a boy working on the theme of 'Metropolis' used layers of photographic images, artists' work and his own drawings to make a very complex image, which became part of a bigger work. Less competent students also achieve well and produce lively design sheets exploring themes and their ideas. They are strongest in their use of colour, pattern and designs; their drawing from observation is much weaker.
171. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. There was more very good teaching seen after the age 14 than in other year groups. In a Year 10 lesson it was excellent. Basic skills are particularly well taught by breaking them into small steps and using demonstration and instruction very effectively. Resources are very well used as teachers build a gallery resource each term for the chosen theme, using loan services as appropriate. Students use the whole lesson productively because tasks are clearly defined and lesson targets set; very good pace results.
172. The students' very good attitude to the subject and the very good relationships between teachers and students make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. In the best teaching, students are encouraged to consider carefully their intentions for their work. They are challenged to experiment and develop their own solutions. As a result, students work with more confidence and independence. In a Year 10 lesson, students had visited the Lowry Gallery and had completed a series of studies and investigations, including some very good use of ICT. Both in the introduction and in the discussions that the teacher had with each student, there was a very strong emphasis on the students' own plans and intentions for their work. As a result, they were able to move to the next stage of its development.
173. Leadership and management are very good. Policies set out a clear vision of the place of art and design in students' personal development. These are put into practice consistently. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. All issues from the previous report have been addressed. The raising of standards has been a priority within improvement planning and has led to very good improvements in curriculum planning. This is regularly monitored for its quality and impact. Despite lacking much natural daylight, the suite of rooms provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Displays provide very good learning resources and celebrate students' successes. The lack of specific technician support means teachers must spend time doing routine tasks, such as loading the kiln and preparing materials.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Positive student attitudes to learning and an eagerness to learn.
- Overall improvements in GCSE results.
- Team of hard-working staff with the capacity to improve.
- The very good use of ICT.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching methods to extend students' thinking skills at age 14.
- Provision for the gifted and talented students.
- Planned opportunities to develop numeracy skills.

174. At age 14 overall standards are broadly in line with those that are usually found nationally. Students display an eagerness to learn, and work collaboratively. Well-planned practical tasks provide good opportunities to develop student design skills; creative skills are sound but analytical skills need extending. Graphics skills are developed consistently in all areas and ideas are effectively communicated. Standards in systems and control are satisfactory at age 14 but circuit design needs to allow for accurate assembly. Standards of accuracy and finish need to be improved in resistant materials.
175. GCSE results in 2001 were close to the national average and show a significant improvement since 1998. Standards in textiles, systems control, child development and graphics are good. The underachievement of boys is being tackled successfully. Coursework folders are developed systematically and progress effectively monitored. Research skills are good. A very good balance is achieved between the use of commercial materials and freehand sketches. Students are confident developing a range of ideas and ongoing evaluation is improving. The analysis of ideas includes good technical detail. More emphasis needs to be placed on the development of working drawings. Product evaluation is consistently good. ICT is effectively used and is permeating all aspects of students' work. Assessment and target setting techniques are developing and coursework management is good.
176. Curricular time, although slightly below the amount usually found nationally, allows students to gain relevant technological experiences. Units of work are well thought out and provide broad experiences. Practical areas have been effectively and thoughtfully refurbished although floor space is limited in textiles. Deployment of equipment and resources has been completed to a safe standard. Overall, literacy skills are well developed but key terms need a stronger focus in all practical areas. Students are confident answering questions, but listening skills in Years 8 and 9 are sometimes unsatisfactory. Students need to be constantly encouraged to apply their thinking and learn for themselves. A numeracy policy is required to support improved standards.
177. Good use of ICT is raising standards and further improving the quality of learning. Software is well used in the planning of assignments and many students are gaining good experience in the use of computer-aided design and manufacture. They develop good levels of skill in these areas.
178. Attitudes to work are good. Students adopt safe practices and provide a good level of support for one another during practical work. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the extension of thinking skills and initiative in the completion of open-ended tasks.

179. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. It was satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teaching in health and social care was very good. Good subject knowledge results in well-planned learning with clear objectives. Very good use is made of exemplar work in displays to illustrate the standards that are expected. Most tasks are well matched to the students' levels of competence but extension work for the gifted and talented needs to be more precisely defined. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but do not currently include baseline data in Year 7 against which to measure subsequent progress at the end of each year.
180. Leadership and management are good. There is effective delegation of responsibilities. Priorities are well defined in the subject improvement plan. Review procedures are used to inform staff development. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning requires a sharper focus. A more structured approach to the development of thinking skills will help students to increase their understanding. Technical support time across the subject is satisfactory. Excellent use is made of outside agencies, for example in Health and Social Care. The recent refurbishment of accommodation has been very well managed.
181. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved and the provision of resources and accommodation is much improved.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results indicate good achievement at age 16.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress.
- The provision for fieldwork.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching.
- Assessment and target setting at age 14.

182. Standards on students' entry to the school are below the national expectation, Level 5. Students make satisfactory progress, achieving standards that are broadly in line with national expectations at age 14. Most students make satisfactory gains initially in knowledge and understanding of place, distance, direction and map skills. Their progress is satisfactory as they learn how to use case studies to develop a deeper understanding of contrasting human environments and physical processes.
183. Approximately half of the students choose to study the subject after age 14. They achieve well at age 16, deepening their subject knowledge, their understanding of process and their capacity to use skills to extract and to portray that knowledge and understanding.
184. GCSE results at age 16 in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average. These results represent good achievement since students' entry to the school. The girls did better than the boys. The difference was similar to that nationally. The students' performance was similar to that in their other subjects.

185. Students with special educational needs achieve well because teaching materials are well matched to their needs. They are well taught in a small group within the setting arrangements with a good level of skilled, additional support. In 2001, all obtained a grade at GCSE. Although there is no formal identification of gifted and talented students, good strategies to challenge the most competent have resulted in increasing numbers of higher grades at GCSE.
186. Whilst there are variations between groups, students generally enjoy geography. They contribute to lessons with enthusiasm, collaborate well in group work, support their peers and accept responsibility when working independently. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary and they are polite and thoughtful. Exercise books are generally well cared for and students value the attractive displays which feature in several parts of the suited accommodation. GCSE coursework is invariably completed and the pace and productivity of their work is a reflection of the very good relationships in lessons.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
188. In the very good lessons all participate well and enjoy their learning. For example, Year 7 students made very good gains in knowledge and understanding by assembling a jigsaw of the world and using their developing atlas skills to name major features. Learning proceeded at a very good pace because questions were very well used to consolidate and extend their understanding. The resources were very well matched to the needs of the students.
189. In the best teaching seen in Year 11 there was a very good level of challenge that sustained the interest of the students throughout the lesson. A revision lesson was made interesting by the good use of case studies and high expectations ensured that all were fully involved in the lesson and learned well. In a Year 10 lesson students made very good gains in understanding because the cause and effects of insulation and maritime influence were very well explained through the well-planned use of everyday objects such as a torch, globe and washing-up bowl.
190. The satisfactory teaching and learning lacked this creativity. There was more emphasis on completing exercises from the textbook and the completion of worksheets. Teaching did not engage the students' interest and expectations were no more than satisfactory. As a result, most made satisfactory gains in knowledge but had little opportunity to apply it in order to demonstrate understanding. For example, in a Year 9 lesson the students had gained information about pollution from the Internet but spent the best part of a lesson using stencils and felt-tip pens to add titles to a poster.
191. Leadership and management are good. There are satisfactory arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are very well used. There are very good arrangements for fieldwork and very good provision for GCSE revision courses. The subject improvement plan is satisfactory but does not place enough emphasis on improving standards. Assessment procedures at GCSE are good with well-defined links between marking and assessment. Such links remain unsatisfactory for students' work at age 14. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.



## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Good achievement at GCSE in 2001.
- Good leadership and very good management.
- Very good teaching results in imaginatively planned learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to review their own progress in lessons.
- The use of data to monitor the progress of particular groups of students, particularly at age 14.
- The development of students' analytical skills through more use of numerical data.

192. Standards at ages 14 and 16 are broadly in line with those usually found nationally. Students make good progress in lessons because teaching is very good overall with some excellent features. Their very good attitudes to work, coupled with the teachers' skills in creatively using all available resources in lessons, results in learning that is enjoyable and interesting. As a result, they achieve well.
193. GCSE performance in 2001 was slightly below the national average but not significantly so. Half of the students obtained grades A\*-C, below the national average, but nearly all obtained grades A\*-G, slightly above the national average. A large number of less competent students took the GCSE examination in 2001. These results therefore represent good achievement.
194. In each lesson observed all students were very keen to offer responses to questions posed by teachers. Orally they are very confident and keen to demonstrate the range of knowledge they have. The majority of students are skilled at using a wide range of source material and are able to make clear deductions from both textual and pictorial evidence. As a result of the very good use of a wide variety of source material, all students are able to produce extended pieces of written work that include well-reasoned arguments based on historical fact.
195. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is often excellent. Excellent lessons are characterised by highly creative teaching where learning is enlivened and students gain a vivid understanding of historical events through role-play and where opportunities are provided for students to work independently, in pairs and in small groups. Very good teaching is characterised by carefully planned lessons, which engage the interest of the students from the moment they enter the classroom. In these lessons teachers are skilled at using 'quick-fire' question and answer techniques to probe how much knowledge has been retained from previous sessions. Learning is very good when students are set a wide range of different tasks to both capture their interest and extend their knowledge. In all lessons teachers displayed excellent subject knowledge which enabled all students to gain a thorough understanding of the key elements of each topic. All students make good progress as a result of such highly imaginative teaching.
196. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is now much greater use of ICT for research and to present work. A framework is provided to guide students who find it difficult to organise their extended writing. All teachers are fully committed to

improving literacy skills. From Year 7 onwards written work of both a creative and factual nature is produced. Homework is set regularly and often students are required to carry out detailed research to extend their knowledge of the unit of work being studied in class. These aspects of provision help many students to make good progress.

197. To raise standards further, the department needs to review the way in which it uses the variety of data available within the school to track the progress of students. The department has introduced successfully into Years 7, 8 and 9 regular assessment opportunities, the outcomes of which are judged against nationally agreed criteria. Information gained from analysing last year's GCSE results indicated that students attained lower grades in the second written paper. As a result, the scheme of work for current Key Stage 4 students has been adjusted to allow more time for revision.
198. Students are involved in a process of formally reviewing their own progress and setting targets for improvement three times over the course of the academic year. The department now needs to provide students with the opportunity to be involved in reviewing their own learning within each lesson. The school uses a commercial package to make judgements about the standards achieved by students as they enter Year 7. The results gained from these assessments are used to predict the standard each student should attain at the end of Years 9 and 11. At present the department is not using these predictions to monitor the progress made of either individual or groups of students as they move through each unit of work. As a result, teachers are not in a strong position to quickly identify and rectify underachievement. The implementation of a numeracy strategy across the department would assist students in further developing their analytical skills.
199. Overall, leadership and management are good. Management is very good. Very detailed schemes of work have been produced and are regularly reviewed and amended to ensure that the needs of the students are met. The faculty improvement plan places a high priority on raising achievement. Very good teamwork results in a shared commitment to continuing improvement. This common purpose is reinforced by effective communication within the faculty. There is a strong emphasis on monitoring the work of both staff and students. The current upward trend in student achievement, particularly in Year 11, can be directly attributed to the leadership and management skills of the head of history.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching in the separately taught courses.
- Good use of ICT resources in other subjects improves learning.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good technical support.

### Areas for improvement

- Timetabled lessons in Years 8 and 9.
- Assessment procedures to promote students' greater self-knowledge of their learning.
- The proportion of girls choosing to study the subject after age 14.

200. Standards at ages 14 and 16 are broadly in line with those that nationally students are expected to reach. Approximately one third, nearly all of whom are boys, choose to study the subject after age 14, more than twice as many as do so nationally. GCSE results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average. Just over half of the students obtained grades A\*-C, an improvement on those of 2000. GNVQ results were above average.
201. Students learn quickly and make good progress in individual lessons in Year 7. However, they are only able to benefit from a six weeks course in Year 7. Consequently, they are dependent upon opportunities to use computers in other subjects. While many of these opportunities are good, students' overall achievement at age 14 is unsatisfactory due to lack of distinct curricular time in which to acquire and apply the necessary ICT skills, knowledge and understanding to become independent learners. At age 14, the most competent students produce well-laid-out work, making good use of their word-processing skills and can import images into their text to add impact to their presentations. They use spreadsheets and know how to use Internet search engines well. Less competent students, including those with special educational needs, have appropriate practical skills for their capability in using the keyboard and the mouse.
202. At age 16 many students can apply a good range of skills in a variety of projects. The most competent students achieve very high standards. Achievement is good. Most use a good range of programs and are competent in using word processing, spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing software, with good relevant Internet use. They decide on the most relevant programs and know about commercial application, for example when solving problems of storing and recalling information for an estate agent. Some of the most competent students have designed and developed web pages for use on the school Intranet or for examination projects. The most competent students plan and draft their coursework and achieve higher grades as a result. The less competent students produce less work and briefer evaluations.
203. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Nearly all students learn well because planning is thorough, and the tasks set are topical, interesting and well related to their interests. Very good use of resources, including the interactive whiteboard, enables all students, including the less competent and those with special educational needs, to understand more easily what they need to do and make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on presenting a business letter, the whiteboard and work card were very well used to instruct students how to insert watermarks into text and graphics work.
204. Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to give clear explanations and pose challenging questions, as in the Year 11 lesson on graphics. As a result, students are well motivated, work at a very good pace and, in Years 10 and 11 in particular, make good gains in understanding and knowledge. Good humour prevails in most lessons and students generally are well known by the teachers. Teachers make regular checks on individual progress in lessons and provide students with good support and guidance. This ensures that all students are included and involved in lessons. The classroom assistant and technicians provide an invaluable contribution to students' learning.
205. Leadership and management are good. Priorities for development are well defined within the subject improvement plan. The high commitment to raising standards is well illustrated in the well-managed additional opportunities provided at lunchtimes and beyond the normal school day.

206. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and technical support. The quality and range of ICT resources are much improved and much higher than is usually found nationally.

### **The use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum**

207. The additional funding linked to the school's specialist status as a performing arts college has resulted in greatly improved provision of ICT resources. These are well used in many subjects. The ratio of computers to students is very good and well above national average.
208. There is excellent use of ICT in music to record, store and retrieve students' work. This provision contributes to the high standards at age 14 when students select and mix tracks to explore the texture and structure of music composition. There is particularly good use made of interactive whiteboards in many subjects.
209. In other subjects ICT is generally well used, and particularly so in art and history.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching expertise.
- Very good leadership.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The confident use of the target language.
- The range of writing activities, particularly for the most competent students.

210. Standards are broadly in line with those that students are expected to reach nationally at ages 14 and 16. Achievement is satisfactory. Those students who have identified special educational needs progress satisfactorily and are generally well supported in lessons.
211. GCSE results in 2001 were close to the national average in French but below average in German. In the two previous years, results in French had been above average at GCSE level. Results in German were consistently below average during this period. In both languages a small minority are reaching the highest grades. Overall, these results indicate satisfactory achievement.
212. In many schools German is studied as a second language by the most competent linguists. Nearly half of the students take German at this school, whereas approximately one-fifth do so nationally. Consequently, the proportion of competent and less competent students is much higher at this school. It is for this reason that results are below average.
213. Achievement is satisfactory at age 14. Grammar is taught in context. Students are encouraged to work out rules for themselves and apply them. The use of a variety of tenses from Year 8 is exemplary amongst all ability groups. Listening and reading tasks are readily understood and students are taught techniques in answering skills, for example how to pick out key words and phrases. There are opportunities to practise

oral skills, using question and answer. Many make good progress in pronunciation and fluency as a result of regular opportunities to repeat words and phrases.

214. Achievement is satisfactory at age 16. Reading comprehension is good. In oral work many are reluctant to answer and lack confidence in role-play exercises. The more competent manipulate the language and answer more fully. Students understand basic vocabulary and the need for accuracy but much work lacks depth in content and vocabulary and includes a narrow range of expression, even in the work of the most competent.
215. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It was very good in lessons seen for students between the ages of 11 and 14. Excellent teaching was observed on one occasion.
216. In the best lessons, students were fully involved from start to finish. A strength of the teaching is the thorough planning and sequencing of lessons. Very good use is made of a wealth of ICT and other resources. Teachers model the target language very well so that students appreciate good standards of expression and pronunciation.
217. In the best lessons high expectations are set because the target language is very well expressed by the teacher and the skills of the foreign language assistant are very well used. Consequently, the students recognise good standards of expression and pronunciation. They respond very well, working very hard and concentrating hard. As a result, they make very good gains in knowledge and skills. The best learning resulted in extended, imaginative written work, including jokes in French and 'interviews' in German that required a creative response. It also featured the very good use of ICT in the presentation of graphs, menus and letters.
218. Many students respond very well to the high expectations that characterise the best teaching. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson about recycling, less competent students worked at a very good pace to complete a survey, driven along by the encouragement and expectations of the teacher. Difficult grammar was well grasped in a Year 9 German lesson for more competent students because very good questioning techniques enabled them to understand and recall the patterns of the language.
219. Where teaching is satisfactory there remain too few opportunities for students to use French or German spontaneously because not enough time in the lesson is spent in oral activities. The range of written tasks is too narrow, involving in the main the consolidation and reinforcement of new grammatical constructions. Such work relies heavily on the completion of textbook exercises directed by the teacher with an unsatisfactory degree of challenge for the most competent.
220. Leadership and management are very good. New leadership has recently given new impetus to a well-established team of specialist teachers. There has been a recent departmental evaluation and the development plan is linked well to school priorities. Teaching and marking are monitored regularly. Individual student profile booklets have been produced as part of performance management, alongside topic booklets for the examination groups. Both are aimed at involving students in their learning and raising standards. Languages are promoted at every opportunity. Links with primary schools are very good.
221. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The profile of languages has been raised and effective planning, plus new technology and good teaching are having a positive impact on learning.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very effective, enabling good progress by all students.
- The use of new technology is excellent in supporting learning.
- There are excellent additional opportunities to develop performance skills.

There are no significant areas for improvement

222. Standards in music are high at ages 14 and 16. Statutory teacher assessments at age 14 are well above average. The most competent achieve very high standards. Girls do better than boys, as is the case nationally.
223. Approximately one-fifth of the students choose to study music after age 14, a proportion well above the national average. GCSE results in 2001 were well above average and students did significantly better than in their other subjects. Almost one half of the students obtained the highest grades A\*/A, a proportion well above the national average and an indication of very good achievement by the most competent students. The boys' results have improved significantly. In 2001 they were higher than the girls' were. Overall, these results are an impressive achievement and are amongst the highest in Wigan Local Education Authority.
224. Nearly all students achieve very well. The progress of students with special educational needs is good in all years because many activities help to improve their span of concentration. For example, a student who showed considerable behavioural problems in earlier years became enthusiastic about music, learned an instrument, chose to continue studying music at the end of Year 9 and joined the junior brass band.
225. Many make very good progress because they make frequent use of computers to extend the range and improve the quality of their work. Progress made in composition is particularly striking. Through early familiarity with musical software, students become proficient in using to good advantage a wide range of sampled sounds. They learn to distinguish, choose, combine and manipulate these imaginatively, so that at age 14 they can create 'film music' that illustrates good learning about structures, sonorities and textures.
226. At age 16 students achieve well in a 20-minute test in 'unprepared composition'. Completed compositions, developed over time, are presented well through good quality recordings and generally well-written commentaries. The work of the most competent students shows imagination and an effective synthesis of previous learning, for example in the creation of 'minimalism blues'. Less competent students rely on software to produce stave notation, but many are conversant with this through the regular exposure to it in earlier years and especially through playing instruments and singing.

227. Standards of performance are high. Students throughout the school gradually become confident, fluent and, in the best cases, expressive and creative. They improvise very well, for example in 'scat' singing. Many make very good progress in performance skills because there is very good provision for individual and group tuition from visiting staff. In addition, there are many opportunities to perform in groups beyond the normal school day. Many also make very good progress in listening to and appraising music but this is a weaker feature for some at age 16.
228. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is very good teamwork and technicians are very well deployed. Enthusiasm, energy and a 'can do' philosophy prevail, with teachers working hard to ensure that facilities are available and heavily used to extend learning time beyond lessons and school hours.
229. A particular strength of the consistently very good teaching is the excellent use of computer-aided resources, including interactive boards, to sustain the interest and concentration of the students. Teachers know the individual needs of their students well and establish very good relationships. High expectations ensure very good behaviour and attention in lessons that proceed at a challenging pace, with no time lost.
230. Planning is also very good, with monitoring and assessment of students' progress at a good level overall and improving.
231. Aspects for improvement include the more frequent monitoring of GCSE students' files, to ensure accuracy and understanding and promote higher standards in listening. Occasionally, the tendency for the teacher to talk whilst students are listening to a piece of music reduces the quality of their listening skills.
232. Leadership and management are very good because the high quality of provision in lessons is combined with excellent provision at other times, including many opportunities to take part in visits and performances. The initiative shown to gain and maintain specialist college status remains strong. The requirement as a specialist college to work with partner schools and the wider community is very well managed. Funding allows increasing numbers to benefit from instrumental tuition, including some primary school children and some non-specialist staff, in order to promote further an appreciation of the value of the arts. As a result, there is a very effective contribution to the fulfilment of the aims of the school.
233. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Resources for computer-based learning are now excellent. Priorities are well defined within the subject improvement plan that is well linked to the arts development plan and school priorities.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- Relationships in lessons are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Delivery of theory work for the GCSE course.
- Students' use of ICT in their work.
- Marking of students' work.

234. Standards at age 14 are broadly in line with those that students are expected to reach nationally. In some aspects the more competent students produce excellent work, including highly imaginative dance that is founded on very good technical skills. They analyse work very effectively.
235. Standards in tennis are very good. Tasks are very well matched to the different levels of competence. As a result, all make good progress. The more competent achieve excellent standards. They can volley consistently well to both forehand and backhand as well as imparting topspin or slice. Their skills are well above those usually found nationally. In cricket and athletics students reach expected levels.
236. GCSE results in physical education at age 16 in 2001 were above the national average but not significantly so. Those in dance were well above average. Current standards of practical work are higher than those that students are expected to reach at age 16 but written work is weaker.
237. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Sometimes it is excellent. In the best teaching, for example in dance and tennis, the students are given responsibility, make decisions and exercise initiative well. As a result, they make very good progress. Lessons always start promptly. Teachers generally have high expectations of students and the good relationships between them contribute significantly to high standards. Very occasionally, poor lesson organisation causes too much inactivity with an insufficient degree of challenge.
238. All students, including those with special educational needs, have very good attitudes. They invariably behave well in lessons. They co-operate and collaborate well. As a result, they make good progress. Rates of participation are extremely high and students, boys or girls, rarely miss lessons without valid excuses. The department's dress code is very well observed.
239. Excellent provision for extra-curricular activities contributes significantly to the above average standards. Various activities for boys and girls are organised, both during lunchtimes and after school. Some go on to reach very high standards in sport after leaving school. A large number of boys and girls achieve well in competitive sport. This is particularly so in tennis and swimming, where teams have reached the final stages of national competitions. Many students, including those with special educational needs, participate regularly in these popular activities.



240. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work closely as a team. Monthly meetings are held and recorded. Really excellent displays throughout the department both celebrate students' achievements and contain important information for them. Accommodation is very good, particularly indoors. The sports hall, gymnasium, dance studio and fitness studio are all of high quality, all being well maintained and clean. These facilities make a significant contribution to the good standards achieved.
241. Since the last inspection improvement has been very good. Facilities have been greatly improved by the addition of a new dance studio and exercise suite. Changing rooms and showering facilities have been completely refurbished and are very well appointed.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching motivates students very well.
- Very good results at GCSE.
- A very good contribution to students' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Timetabled provision in Year 11.
- Refinement of the new assessment strategy.
- Target-setting in reports.
- Provision for gifted and talented students.

242. Students achieve well to reach standards that are broadly in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. They achieve very well to reach above average standards at age 16. The well-planned provision makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through widening their awareness and understanding of concepts and issues, particularly those concerning cultural diversity.
243. In their oral work many demonstrate above average levels of knowledge and understanding. Achievement is good at age 14 because students are being encouraged to succeed in the full range of skills defined in the locally agreed syllabus. As a result, most have a good knowledge of Christianity and other world religions and apply that knowledge to everyday experience. Many learn with enthusiasm because the subject matter is presented in a way that engages their interest well. Their progress in lessons is good because they make connections between current and previous learning.
244. Achievement is very good in Year 10 but the subject is not studied in Year 11. Students' responses in Year 10 are generally in line with the GCSE pass standard because many continue to be enthusiastic about their learning and generally demonstrate strongly that they can apply religious ideas to such situations as marriage and divorce or in the way that they discuss the origins of good and evil. Their success is rooted in their previous experience at age 14. They recall this earlier learning well.
245. All follow the GCSE Short Course in religious studies, approximately one-quarter choosing to take the final examination. These students show a high degree of commitment by attending additional lessons after school. Their results have been outstanding, with 94 per cent obtaining grades A\*-C in 2001 within an overall pass rate of 98 per cent. Despite significant restrictions in the amount of curricular time available,

many of the other students achieve standards broadly in line with the requirements of the agreed syllabus.

246. Achievement by students with special educational needs is always above average because the work is well planned to match their needs, with frequent opportunities for individual attention. As a result, their written work and oral responses are good.
247. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. In lessons seen it was never less than satisfactory. Much is imaginative and stimulating. As a result, the students are highly motivated, their level of interest and concentration is high, they work very well with each other and learn at a very good pace.
248. The very good teaching methods include plenty of opportunity to use ICT, including interactive whiteboards, and well-planned provision to develop students' literacy skills. As a result, many produce thoughtful and reflective written work of high quality that shows a good understanding of the technical language of the subject.
249. Marking is consistent and informative. It helps to set challenging standards. Assessment procedures define these well for the majority but not for the gifted and talented. Procedures are generally well linked to reporting arrangements but do not define points for improvement with sufficient clarity.
250. Leadership and management are very good. Very good long-term planning has resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are higher because very good planning, the creation of a very good range of resources and well- managed assessment procedures have established high and shared levels of interest and expectation. Despite this very good range of improvements in provision and performance, the school still does not comply with statutory requirements because religious education is not included within the Year 11 curriculum.