

INSPECTION REPORT

THE OLDERSHAW SCHOOL

Wallasey

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105104

Headteacher: Steven J. Peach

Reporting inspector: David Morton
13154

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th February 2003

Inspection number: 251958

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Valkyrie Road Wallasey Wirral
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr I J Cubbin
Date of previous inspection:	September 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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19374	W Sheehan	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23926	D Howorth	Sixth form coordinator		
30512	M Bailey	Team inspector	Science (11 –16) Physics (sixth form)	
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
28178	J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (11-16) Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education (11-16) Provision for pupils with special educational needs The work of the special educational needs unit	
14521	J Hibbert	Team inspector	Geography History (11-16)	
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music (11–16)	
20192	T McDermott	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education (11-16)	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English	
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
31889	M Thomas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (11-16) French (sixth form)	
13623	J Waddington	Team inspector	Business studies (sixth form) Psychology (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
13189	P Walton	Team inspector	Design and technology (11-16)	
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Oldershaw School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16 and sixth-form students. It is bigger than most secondary schools, having 1236 pupils, including 148 sixth-formers. Overall, there is an equal number of boys and girls, although girls outnumber boys in Years 10 and 11. The school is the only maintained co-educational school in Wallasey and caters for children from the surrounding area and beyond. The background of pupils and sixth-form students is much more disadvantaged than the overall national picture; the percentage entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average; English is not the first language of a few pupils, but all are fluent in it. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and that of those with more considerable learning or behavioural difficulties and in need of regular support are above the national averages. Less than five per cent of pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times. The overall attainment of pupils when they start in the school in Year 7 is well below average. The school has gained an Artsmark Gold award. It is part of the Aspire Education Action Zone and benefits from the Excellence-in-Cities Initiative.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Oldershaw is improving rapidly and becoming a good place to learn. The school is much more effective than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Significant reasons for this are the energy and skills of the headteacher in raising the expectations of teachers, pupils, sixth-formers and parents. Teaching and learning are now good so that pupils do well as they progress through the school. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- It is a 'school for **all**'. It seeks to provide an appropriate education that meets the needs of all pupils and sixth-formers.
- The quality of teaching is good and as a result pupils and sixth-form students achieve well.
- The leadership of the headteacher has created a desire in pupils and adults to do their best. Most pupils want to learn and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils are well managed and their behaviour is good.
- Relationships are good amongst all who work in the school and so Oldershaw is a good place to learn.
- The comprehensive work of the Learning Centre plays a key part in pupils' development and is a very effective feature of the school.
- The contribution of art and design, drama and music to the cultural development of pupils is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards are not as high as they should be. Pupils' levels of literacy are below average.
- Assessment is not used enough to help all pupils learn effectively.
- In Years 10 and 11, vocational education is under-developed.
- Attendance amongst Years 10 and 11 is significantly below the national average.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in September 2000 is very good. It is no longer a school with serious weaknesses. The leadership of the school is now strong and effective. Teaching is vastly improved and the percentage that is good or better is now higher than the national average; in 2000 it was significantly lower. Overall, pupils' achievement is therefore

good where previously it was unsatisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is now good. This is a significant improvement as in 2000 it was deemed to be unsatisfactory. Attendance is now unsatisfactory rather than poor, but is still not high enough. Standards have improved steadily whilst remaining overall below the national average.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	E	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* National comparative data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available.

In national tests in 2002 at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science:

- results in English were below average and those in mathematics and science well below average;
- in comparison with similar schools, (*schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals*), results overall were above average; they were well above average in English, above in mathematics and average in science;
- given attainment on entry to the school, these results show that pupils' achievement, all-in-all, is good;
- there was little significant difference in the performance of boys and girls;
- over the last three years, results have not improved as quickly as they have nationally.

In 2002, results in GCSE and GNVQ examinations:

- results overall have improved steadily in the last few years at a rate similar to that found nationally, but they remained well below average when compared with all schools and should be better;
- in comparison with similar schools, results overall were average;
- girls did marginally better than boys, although boys were closer to the boys' national average than were girls to the girls' national average;
- a study of comprehensive data show that the achievement of pupils is good, especially that of the higher-attaining pupils;
- governors set demanding targets for 2002 and results almost met these targets;
- results in English literature and German were above the national average; results in art and design were also higher than those of other subjects in the school;
- the weakest subjects were business studies, design and technology, English language, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education; compared with other subjects in the school; mathematics and science also under-performed compared with the more successful subjects;
- results in vocational courses were average overall with several merits and distinctions.

In 2002, results in AS and A Level examinations:

* *It is not possible to make national comparisons*

- Advanced Level results improved considerably in 2002, although the failure rate per entry is still too high;
- AS results in 2002 were well below the national average for 2001;

- most students gain higher grades than expected in relation to their GCSE results; achievement overall, therefore, is good,

Standards seen during the inspection:

- standards are below average throughout the school; this shows improvement given well below standards when pupils started at the school in Year 7; these standards, therefore, represent, good achievement – that is, pupils make effective progress;
- usually good and sometimes very good teaching and the pupils’ desire to learn account for a secure improvement in standards since the previous inspection;
- standards in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are below average; however, steps have been taken to tackle improvement in these skills and there are signs that these are beginning to bear fruit.

PUPILS’ ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The atmosphere about school is secure, positive and orderly. There are hardly any incidents of inappropriate behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good and pupils respond well to the all-embracing climate of the school and develop as responsible young people.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Most pupils come to school willingly but just over one in ten are irregular in attendance and this keeps averages below national figures. As a result the learning of these pupils suffers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

- over a quarter of all teaching is very good or excellent; almost three-quarters of all teaching is good or better – this is a higher proportion than is found in comprehensive schools nationally;
- the school has improvement to teaching and learning at its heart and senior management and the best heads of subject have worked hard to encourage teachers to set themselves high standards;
- as they get older pupils learn to take responsibility for their own learning; from Year 11 onwards most pupils and sixth-form students research and plan work independently;
- the work of the Learning Centre has a significant and positive effect on the learning of pupils with learning, social or behavioural difficulties;
- most subject teachers identify those pupils who show special promise in the subject and provide appropriate challenges for them;
- teaching and learning are especially effective in physical education, religious education, art and design, drama, music, design and technology, history, science and English;

- teaching, and consequently learning, are least effective in ICT and mathematics;
- teachers of all subjects are increasingly aware of their roles in developing skills of literacy and pupils are gaining in confidence with their reading and writing; the teaching of numeracy and ICT across subjects is less well developed at present;
- sixth-formers value the quality of teaching they receive in the sixth form; three-quarters of all sixth-form teaching is good or better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is good overall, although in Years 10 and 11 the range of vocational choices at present is narrow. ICT is insufficiently developed in some subjects. Curricular provision for the sixth form is wide and varied and benefits from links with other institutions. Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in the sixth form and the school does not provide a daily act of corporate worship.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The Learning Centre provides pupils with very good support in small groups, yet pupils are included in all aspects of school life. They make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school is generally effective in providing for a small minority of pupils for whom English is not a first language. However, the occasional pupil who arrives at school unable to speak English is not able to be given immediate help.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils develop as responsible young adults owing to opportunities to work together in problem-solving or creative tasks. They consider important issues that demand moral responses and reflect upon their own place in a world in which difficult demands are made on their own thoughts and feelings.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Oldershaw values the well being of pupils since all adults working in the building show care and consideration. The administrative and caretaking staff, too, help to make sure that the school is a good and secure place in which to learn.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents are very impressed with the improvements made in the last two years. They find the school approachable and say they get good information about their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, with good support from established and new members of the leadership group, has worked with energy, purpose and vision in moving the school to its present improved and promising position. Key areas of teaching and pupils' behaviour have seen massive improvement and the ideas for the future development of the school are soundly based.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is well informed and effective. It has a clear view of the strengths of the school and areas for improvement and is giving solid yet demanding strategic support to the school's management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Processes of self evaluation are becoming embedded in the practices of management and governance. There is a long-term perspective based on a careful appraisal of the priorities for the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Expenditure is well managed to meet the demands of the school's plans. Governors have worked with the local authority to insist on principles of good value. They assist the school to try to ensure that personal qualities of all staff are used to their fullest potential.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Most parents believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children make progress because the school expects them to work hard • teaching is good • it is easy to make contact with the school • the school is well led and managed. 	<p>A small minority of parents believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discipline is not strong enough • there is either too much or too little homework • there are too few extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors agree with the positive comments of parents. Behaviour is now much improved on that seen in the previous inspection in September 2000 and in the judgement of inspectors it is now good. Neighbours of the school have remarked on the improvements made in recent months. The amount of homework set is about right and teachers try to ensure that lengthy projects are not required at exactly the same time in a number of subjects. Inspectors judge that not all teachers set homework consistently, and those parents who express concern about demanding homework not always being marked promptly have a point and this is an area for improvement. There is very good provision of activities for pupils to take part in, including rugby and other sports as well as a wide range of arts activities, the Aspire Leadership Clubs such as the Buzz newspaper, chess and ICT.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is of an average size with 148 students. There are almost equal numbers of male and female students. It is non-selective and some students who take advanced subjects in the sixth form have this opportunity that would not be available to them in some schools. Effective collaborative arrangements enable the school to offer a good range of advanced and vocational courses at various levels. About a third of students study vocational intermediate courses and leave at the end of Year 12. Year 13 is relatively small. One student is from an ethnic minority background but has no problems with English. Three students have particular needs but none require regular support. About half of pupils in Year 11 continue their education in the sixth form and a few students join from other schools. Standards at the start of Year 12 are well below average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students and it has some good features. Although standards and results are below average students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results because teaching is good. The sixth form successfully reflects the idea of 'A School for All', for it is open to all students who are prepared to commit themselves to their chosen courses. The sixth form is well led and managed and cost-effective. Nearly three-quarters of the students move on to further and higher education.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well in relation to their previous results.
- Leadership and management are good and ensure that students receive very effective advice, support and guidance.
- Students have very good attitudes to work that contribute to their good progress.
- Students respond well to being treated as young adults and this develops their confidence and self-esteem.
- The consortium arrangements provide a wide range of academic and vocational courses.
- Standards in art and design, including textiles, are above average.

What could be improved

- Standards in advanced subjects are not high enough.
- The use of assessment to tackle weaknesses in learning and improve understanding is inconsistent.
- Students do not always make good use of private study time to extend their independent learning.
- Communication skills are not sufficiently developed.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are well below average. Students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their standards at the start of the course. Assessment is unsatisfactory.
Physics	Good. Very good relationships between teachers and students create lessons in which teaching and learning are good. Achievement is good although standards are below average.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Standards are below average and represent satisfactory achievement. Attitudes to work are very good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
ICT	Satisfactory. Students achieve appropriately because they enjoy the course. Good use is made of resources in the community to enrich students' learning.
Art and design	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. The A Level results were above average in 2001 but declined in 2002. Standards at present are above average.
Geography	Satisfactory. Standards are below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good opportunities for fieldwork. Achievement is satisfactory given the students' starting points.
Psychology	Satisfactory. This is a new and popular course. Teaching and students' attitudes to work are good and learning is effective. Standards are average in Year 12 but below average in Year 13.
English	Good. Good teaching and learning, and positive attitudes from students enable them to achieve well. Standards are below average.
French	Good. There is only one student. Standards are above average because of good teaching that includes the effective assessment of the student's needs.

In 12 other subjects 13 lessons were seen. Teaching was excellent in GNVQ leisure and tourism and very good in design and technology and sport studies. It was good in chemistry, general studies, history, drama and theatre studies, media studies, music and GNVQ intermediate business and art and design. It was satisfactory in City and Guilds numeracy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Advice and the well-being of students are a strength. However, the use of assessment to tackle weaknesses in learning and improve standards is inconsistent across subjects.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The aim and vision for the future is to provide a more relevant curriculum in the 14-19 age range to match the aptitudes and aspirations of all students. Plans for this development are at a very early stage.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a friendly atmosphere and very good relationships.• The teaching is good.• Students appreciate being treated as mature young adults.• There is a wide range of courses that meet students' needs.• Students feel the quality of advice, support and guidance is very good and is valued by them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The learning environment in the sixth-form accommodation is not good.• The range of educational and recreational visits is limited.

Overall, students are very supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors feel that students' views are fully justified.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. By the time pupils reach Year 9, results in national tests in 2002, compared with all schools in the country, were below average in English. In mathematics and science results were well below average. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, however, results were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Over the last three years there has been little difference in the performance of boys and girls, although girls have had the edge in their English results. However, in each subject, boys have been closer to the national average for boys than have girls to girls' national averages. Overall, improvement by all pupils over the last five years has been slower than that found nationally. However, evidence shows that achievement has been good overall and success has been greater in the Year 9 tests than those taken in Year 6.

Results in national tests at the age of 14 in 2002

Subject	School results in relation to national results	Trend over last five years
English	Below average	Improvement in last two years
Mathematics	Well below average	Slight improvement in last two years
Science	Well below average	Apart from 2001, results have fallen slightly

Examinations at GCSE level in 2002

2. GCSE results have improved steadily over the last five years and most solidly in 2001 and 2002, despite still being well below the national average overall. This improvement has been at a similar rate to the that found nationally. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds the higher-attaining pupils matched the average in achieving five or more A* to C grades and all pupils performed at the average for A* to G grades. Higher attainers did especially well when compared with pupils from schools with similar attainment in the Year 9 national tests for their results were above the average when making this comparison. The overall performance of girls was better than that of boys but the difference is less than is often found. In addition, boys were closer to the national average for boys than girls were to girls' national averages. The 2002 GCSE results show that most pupils with learning difficulties make progress that is at least satisfactory; many make good, or even very good, progress. Those who are withdrawn for special help with reading and spelling make good gains.

GCSE results for all pupils in 2002

Subject	School results in 2002 compared with national results	Trend over recent years	Comments
English	Below average	Consistent	Increase in pupils achieving higher grades
English literature	Below average	Consistent	Few lower attainers entered
Mathematics	Well below average	Dipped on last year	Around a fifth achieve the higher grades
Science	Below average	Consistent	A third regularly achieve higher grades
Art and design	Above average	Consistent	Two-thirds achieve the higher grades

Subject	School results in 2002 compared with national results	Trend over recent years	Comments
Design and technology	Below average	Consistent	Higher attainers close to average
Drama	Average	Dipped in 2002	Usually around four-fifths achieve higher grades
French	Well below average	Steady	Around a third steadily achieve the higher grades
Geography	Well below average	Down on last year	Around half get higher grades
German	Average	Improving	Larger entry in 2002, 75 per cent achieving higher grades
History	Below average	Improving	Half achieve higher grades
ICT	Well below average	Slippage in percentage achieving higher grades	Less than a fifth usually achieve higher grades
Music	Average	Consistent	Small entry makes comparisons difficult
Physical education	Below average	Improving	Nearly half of entries achieved higher grades in 2002
Religious education	Well below average	N/A	Short course for all pupils started in 2002

Standards of work seen during the inspection

3. Standards overall are below the national average. Good teaching has raised the standards pupils achieve in comparison with their attainment on entry to the school. Day-to-day work, witnessed in lessons and pupils' books and files, indicate better standards than usually found in the school's GCSE results. Sporadic attendance of some pupils accounts for some of this difference, especially when course work is not completed. The school also considers that pupils require more experience of sitting formal examinations and has revised its organisation of internal examinations to tackle this possible cause. Teaching is better now than it was in the fairly recent past and its impact will take time to show itself at GCSE level. The 2003 results will be an early marker of such impact.

4. Standards of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are below average. Pupils' writing skills are limited and too few subjects currently seek to develop pupils' skills of numeracy. However, the school has responded well to the government initiatives in this area in Years 7 to 9 and work in lessons is showing some improvement.

Standards of work seen during the inspection

Standards of work seen	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Above average	art and design,	art and design, drama, music,
Average	English, history, modern foreign languages	design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, physical education
Below average	drama, music, design and technology, geography, religious education, physical education	English, science, religious education,

Well below average	mathematics, science, ICT	mathematics, geography, ICT
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Achievement: the progress pupils make in relation to their prior attainment

5. Pupils, year by year in recent times, enter the school with attainment that is well below the national average. A range of available data makes clear that pupils by and large achieve well in relation to this starting point. Boys achieve almost as well or better than girls in a number of subjects at GCSE level, especially in mathematics, science, design and technology, English, English literature, French and physical education. This is better than a recently identified national trend. This is in part due to the positive attitudes to learning being developed by the school and the more thoughtful ways in which lessons are structured. The efforts of the school in recent times, especially the improving quality of teaching, have helped to ensure that learning is effective and that pupils make progress in lessons that leads to good achievement over longer periods of time.

6. **Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well.** They succeed in all subjects at the same rate as other pupils. Progress is good in all subjects except English, geography, ICT and mathematics, where it is satisfactory.

7. The efforts made by the school to improve pupils' skills of literacy, such as the paired reading programme and the support of the Learning Centre bear fruit with lower-attaining pupils. Enrichment programmes for pupils identified as gifted and talented have a positive and growing impact on higher attainers. A key reason for overall school improvement since 2000 is the recognisable achievement of its pupils.

Achievement and progress made by pupils:

Achievement	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11
Good	English, art and design, drama, music, design and technology, geography, history, religious education, modern foreign languages, physical education	science, art and design, drama, music, design and technology, history, religious education, modern foreign languages, physical education
Satisfactory	mathematics, science, ICT,	English, mathematics, geography ICT,

Sixth form

The achievement of students in relation to their starting point in Year 12 is good.
Standards and examination results are not high enough.

Students' achievement is good overall.

8. Attainment at the start of the sixth form is well below average and a considerable number of students would not be given the opportunity to take advanced courses in many sixth forms. Given this low starting point, standards improve and students achieve above what might be expected in relation to their GCSE performance. Learning is, therefore effective. There is no significant difference between the achievement of males and females.

Achievement summary table for subjects that were the focus of the inspection:

Achievement	Subjects
Good	Art and design, English language and literature, French, physics and psychology.
Satisfactory	Business studies, ICT, geography and mathematics.

9. Achievement is good in each of the four General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate level courses in art and design, business, health and social care and leisure and tourism.

10. **Students with learning difficulties and those from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve well.**

+++ A student requiring learning support gained outstanding grades at GCSE. This student is currently studying a full course at advanced level and making good progress in all subjects without the regular support from a curriculum support worker.

11. Course completion rates are improving in both the vocational and advanced subjects. So far this year the overall figure is over 90 per cent and all those who began Year 13 are continuing with their studies. The continuity from AS to A Level courses was low last year in art and design, English language and literature, mathematics and physics.

Standards of work seen during the inspection

12. **Standards of work are below average overall.** Nevertheless, these standards represent good achievement in response to good teaching and students' very positive attitudes to their learning.

+++ Occasionally students are absorbed by their work and reach high standards. For example, a student inspired by Rembrandt's interest in his own self-portrait created a visual and musical CD of high quality on the transformation of the human face during the ageing process.

Standards summary table for subjects that were the focus of the inspection:

Standards	Subjects
Above average	Art and design and French.
Below average	Business studies, English language and literature, geography, ICT, physics and psychology.
Well below average	Mathematics.

13. Subjects not inspected in depth that are strengths in the sixth form are drama and theatre studies, history, media studies, and sport studies at advanced level and GNVQ business intermediate level.

14. Standards of work seen in the four GNVQ intermediate courses are average.

Results in public examinations:

15. A-Level results have been either below or well below the national averages for the three years up to and including 2001. **They were well below the national average in 2001.** The performance of females has been higher than that of males reflecting the national picture.

16. **In 2002 the results improved significantly.:**

- The total average points score for each student rose from 9 to 12.
- The overall pass rate improved from 65 to 75 per cent.
- The performance of males was higher than that of females.

However, too many students still fail examinations and the number of the higher grade A and B passes is low.

17. The low numbers taking many subjects make comparisons with national subject data invalid.

18. In the new A Level examinations in 2002 all students entered gained a grade in art and design, business studies, ICT, French, geography, law, history, sport studies and drama.

+++ Results improved in business studies, ICT, design and technology, English language and literature, general studies, geography, law, history, sport studies and drama/ theatre studies. The lowest results in 2002 were in biology and chemistry.

19. The results in the Advanced Subsidiary examination at the end of Year 12 in 2002 were well below the national average points score for 2001.

20. GNVQ intermediate level results have gradually improved and were above average in 2001. Similar results were obtained in 2002 when 73 per cent of students gained the qualification. These results represent the success of vocational courses and reflect the good achievement of students who follow them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes are very good, pupils have an eager thirst for learning.
Behaviour is good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
Attendance is still much lower than usually found in secondary schools and punctuality in the morning and to some lessons is unsatisfactory.

21. Pupils' attitudes are very good. The majority of pupils display very good attitudes and a willingness to work. They settle down to work quickly and cooperate and contribute well in lessons. A particularly strong feature of many lessons is their eagerness to ask questions and find out more. These very good attitudes contribute positively to their learning in school. In discussion, many pupils mention the '*friendly atmosphere*' that now exists.

+++ A Year 7 mathematics lesson is one example where pupils were enabled to make good progress. They listened carefully during discussions, responded well to teachers' questions and were keen to answer.

22. Generally, behaviour is good and much improved since the previous inspection. The new behaviour management system has been fully implemented since September. Pupils know the behaviour system well and in discussion say how much the new policy has led to improved lessons. '*Teachers are stricter than they used to be and we can get on with our lessons much better*'. Where pupils' behaviour does not meet the school's expectations, it is dealt with fairly and within a systematic procedure. At lunchtimes, when pupils are queuing or moving around the building, behaviour is not as good as other times of the day. An unruly, noisy atmosphere exists that can be intimidating to some pupils. Exclusions have increased during the autumn term which is due to the school ensuring a rigorous introduction of the behaviour policy and procedures. Pupils acknowledge that bullying does happen in school but feel that any incidences are dealt with fairly and firmly.

+++ Year 11 pupils have been trained as prefects to help support younger pupils. This contributes to an atmosphere of older pupils taking responsibility for the relationships, care and support of younger pupils.

23. Personal development is good overall. In discussion, a Year 9 pupil described the school as '*a place in which you get lots of opportunities to make your life better*'. Pupils have been involved in the understanding of others less fortunate through well-planned personal, social and health education lessons and through charity work, for example, the collecting of shoeboxes in 'Operation Christmas Child'. Independent learning is good within lessons but outside of lessons, due in part to the lack of facilities, opportunities for pupils to extend their learning is limited. In particular the library is small for the size of school.

24. **Relationships are good.** In lessons many teachers and pupils display mutual respect. Most form tutors, through registration time and personal, social and health education lessons, have built up a strong relationship with their pupils. This promotes a good learning environment. In discussion one pupil stated, “everyone is gifted and talented at something”. However there are still instances where pupils do not take pride in their environment, for example, there is considerable litter around the building at the end of the lunchtime.

25. Although there has been some improvement in attendance, overall the schools’ attendance is still below the national average. This has a serious effect on some pupils learning. In addition many pupils arrive late to the morning registration/form period and this reduces the opportunity for useful discussions to take place.

Sixth form

Strong relationships exist between teachers, sixth-form students and pupils.
Students display an enthusiasm for learning in lessons.
Independent learning skills and study skills are not as good as they should be.
Attendance is below the average normally expected for sixth-form students.

26. Students have very positive views of the sixth form provision.
+++ In discussion they feel that all their needs are well catered for and there is a friendly atmosphere.

27. Students’ attitudes are very positive and they show a strong sense of enquiry. However some students have poor communication skills particularly when there is a debate and this leads to their contribution being less than would be expected.

28. In lessons students generally display good independent learning skills. For example, theatre studies students researched aboriginal life as part of a project. However students do not place sufficient emphasis on using their personal study time effectively. During non-taught time too many sixth formers prefer to socialise in the sixth form annex and little independent studying was observed during the inspection. Students consider non-taught time to be ‘free time’. The accommodation for sixth formers, both in the annex and the school library, is not conducive to promoting this working atmosphere.

29. Some students do not attend regularly and are late to lessons. This restricts the effectiveness of their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Teaching	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 and 11	Sixth form
Overall quality	Good	Good	Good

30. Teaching and learning have improved massively since the previous inspection in 2000. Taking the school as a whole, 96 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better, 73 per cent was good or better and 26 per cent was very good or excellent. Teaching in the main school, where in 72.4 per cent of lessons teaching was good or better, was better than the national average. In 2000, this figure was 44 per cent. This improvement, with its good effect on the achievement and behaviour of pupils, is a significant reason why the school is no longer deemed to have serious weaknesses.

31. In the last two years the school has placed a clear focus on teaching and learning and it is bearing fruit magnificently. A far-reaching school development plan has teaching and learning at its heart. Teachers have responded to government initiatives for Years 7 to 9 and

have considered carefully the approaches to a three-part lesson. They are more aware of how they should function in the most significant second part of such lessons. The difficult and skilled professional task of knowing how and when to intervene when pupils are working on given tasks is being tackled bravely and with much success. More emphasis is placed on setting lesson objectives, greater variety and purpose in activities and more involvement of pupils in their own learning. The key now is that teachers teach during the important second section of the lesson rather than simply manage the classroom. They spend sufficient time with individuals or groups to enhance their learning in real ways rather than checking just on quantity, behaviour or neatness of work.

+++ In a Year 11 mathematics lesson about simultaneous equations the teacher intervened with individuals to help where errors were made by checking pupils' processes and demanding reappraisal when necessary. A good knowledge of the subject allowed the teacher to do this in an interesting and stimulating way. In a Year 7 science lesson about renewable energy resources, the teacher and a learning support assistant moved round groups and through their own confident use of ICT skills gave pupils the means to cooperate and support each other as they matched examples of renewable energy found by computer with the script of their textbook. This group of lower attainers worked with enthusiasm as a result of careful and demanding support and questioning as a crucial part of the teaching. In a French lesson with a small group of Year 8 pupils with learning difficulties, pupils achieved well as a result of skilful use of flashcards with individuals and pairs, as pupils were challenged to respond to a demanding worksheet. They were helped in this way to elicit meaning from phrases in French that were new to them. Individual pupils were motivated and interested throughout a demanding lesson.

32. Teachers remind themselves how pupils learn. This reappraisal of their practice accounts for much of the improved teaching now found in the school. Efforts to give boys tasks that suit their need for quick gratification have raised boys' performance closer to that of girls. All pupils, especially average and below-average attainers now get more practical work as teachers realise most pupils enjoy working actively and focus their concentration more readily, even in subjects not immediately thought of as practical subjects.

+++ In a topical lesson in religious education with Year 9 about war and peace in which pupils were required to form their own opinions about whether war could ever be right, pupils had to respond to contrasting pictures by making positive and negative lists. This led to discussion about causes of conflict and the ways of solving them through communication and compromise. This discussion was never abstract and therefore pupils considered practicalities, some of which they could relate to their own lives. Pupils in a Year 9 history lesson were required to write a descriptive paragraph about living conditions in Victorian towns, after studying an extract from Dickens and Hogarth's painting of 'Gin Lane'. Throughout the session the teacher skilfully encouraged pupils and stimulated their thinking through posing questions and discussing their writing with them. At the end of the session pupils read out a selection of their writing. Their descriptions were vivid and lively and in one case the class was moved to applaud the writing of one of their classmates. In a personal, social and health education lesson, Year 7 pupils were fully engaged in a game of snakes and ladders designed to identify healthy eating habits and healthy lifestyles. Making decisions was the name of the game, and the teacher prepared pupils well to make the game purposeful. At the third part of the lesson, when summing up their learning, pupils themselves wrote their own responses to the stated objectives for the lesson, as a result of their experience of the game.

33. The quality of teaching of pupils with learning difficulties is good. Their needs are included in the planning of all subjects. The needs of individual pupils are explained very clearly in their programmes of work together with strategies for meeting them. However, these are largely confined to literacy and behaviour and departments do not specify ways in which they might add to pupils' learning. Nevertheless, in practice subjects provide support

either by giving suitably adapted work or by paying particular attention to those in need of it. Curriculum support workers are effective in lessons when they are present, but they lack degrees of competence in some practical subjects. When pupils are withdrawn from class to be taught individually or in very small groups teaching is good: teachers or curriculum support workers follow structured programmes and keep pupils on-task in a friendly and very purposeful way.

34. Occasionally, the quiet reflective lesson as an example of direct teaching to the whole class raises pupils' experience to a level where feelings and thoughts come together and pupils become aware of their own learning through experience.

+++ In a Year 10 science lesson about reflex actions, the teacher built up a nerve pathway for reflex action on the board in a way that engaged the attention of pupils in consideration of which of their senses was the quickest in giving a reflex action. Very good, energetic and confident teaching allowed pupils to sense meaning before trying it out in practical work.

35. In a small number of lessons, teachers show a limited repertoire of teaching skills. In such instances learning is usually less effective. This was sometimes a feature in around a fifth of lessons that, whilst satisfactory, did not sufficiently engage or extend pupils' learning. It was certainly the case in those lessons, less than five per cent, which did not really work effectively. Teachers could not sufficiently help pupils to explain their responses to aspects of lessons and it was not clear what was meant to be achieved in the lesson. The short-term goals for the lesson were not always clear.

+++ In a top set for Year 11 French, the reticence of the pupils caused the teacher to give too many answers which in itself demotivated the pupils further. Lack of challenge diminished interest. In a mathematics lesson with Year 11, the teacher did not start off well and as a result the lower-attaining group did not properly engage with the lesson where objectives to do with equations were again unclear. The teacher mismanaged two difficult pupils so that the others also lost interest. In a Year 9 science lesson about cause and effect, a teacher who did not know the class struggled to manage some boys' distracting behaviour. This was partly due to the concept behind the lesson being too difficult for the class.

36. Matching work to pupils' learning needs is always evident in the majority of teaching so that there is less likelihood of pupils failing to engage with a lesson's objectives. This is linked to successful use of assessment to determine the planning of lessons and how differering learning needs within a group might be met.

+++ In a Year 7 drama lesson about extending facial gesture for impact, as often found in Greek theatre, the teacher made the objective of the lesson crystal clear by his own demonstration, involving pupils chosen at random to help him. He had planned this carefully so that all pupils would be absolutely clear what the lesson was about. Pupils were immediately keen to try work themselves, building a sequence of interactions between Chorus and actors in the Greek style – a complex notion. Pupils with learning difficulties as well as the higher attainers understood the learning objectives and at the end of the lesson were able to evaluate whether they had learned what had been intended. One boy with learning difficulties had none in this lesson and said 'I could feel it in my face' by way of explanation of the success of his work.

Sixth form

A strength of teaching in the sixth form is the excellence of the relationships between teachers and students.
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Teachers are skilful at involving students in significant discussions often of a complex nature.
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37. In the sixth form, teaching is good or better in 74.5 per cent of lessons. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection where it was only deemed good in five subjects. It is a challenging sixth form in that its open and inclusive policy means that some

traditional approaches to scholarship are inappropriate. The sixth form here is a place to teach and a lecture will rarely work. The percentage of good teaching meets that need across all subjects and accounts for the good relationships that have been established. Students experience success. This is owing to the attitudes of the students in response to effective teaching that matches their differing learning needs.

+++ In a Year 12 drama lesson students contributed well based on their previous learning in a discussion on the style of theatre encouraged by Gordon Craig whilst a Year 13 class energetically embraced the principles of clowning as a style related to Brecht in readiness for the creation of an assessed version of 'Oh What a Lovely War'. In both instances a feature that led to the success was the trust the teacher had earned from the group that their efforts would be valued. Similarly, in a Year 13 art and design lesson, the teacher was very skilled at making students articulate their intuitive feelings in tentative approaches to their own fine art work. In a textiles lesson with Year 13, students were keen to share assessment criteria with the teacher, especially in the written work that supports their work with materials. The high expectations of the teacher match the students' learning needs and aspirations for when they leave the sixth form.

38. The best teaching is well-focused, moves at a demanding pace and clear objectives are known by students and checked at the end of the lesson or module of work to see if they have been met. Teachers know the students well and the best teaching has distinctive features. In practical work students understand clearly what is required of them and stick to tasks that are often challenging.

+++ In an English lesson with Year 13, the objective was to unpick how language makes a person laugh. Students were fully involved and felt able to ask questions for clarity in areas they were unsure about. Activities such as telling jokes and playing consequences gave students a very good grasp of how humour in conversation works. Levels of motivation were high because they were involved and challenged by reference to theories of humour introduced by the teacher. In a Year 12 French lesson with a single student this teaching situation creates different problems for the teacher when discussing the use of the subjunctive in expressions of necessity. This is a complex concept and difficult without the interplay of a group. However, within the various activities of the lesson the teacher used assessment techniques skilfully to help the student understand where he was successful and where further challenging work needed to be undertaken. Both of these lessons were practical as preparation for extended writing; as such the teachers had considered how best to meet the learning needs of the students

39. The features that characterise the best teaching and learning in the sixth form are similar to those observed elsewhere in the school: teachers make the most of students' willingness to learn; they share their enthusiasm for the subject and bring their own personality to the lesson; they know the effectiveness of active learning; they value the usefulness of reviewing success and areas for further work at the end of the lesson; they encourage independent learning, effective planning and skilled questioning, thus maintaining high expectations in themselves and the students. When teachers are enthusiastic about their subject this is transferred to students. At the same time teachers are aware of their responsibilities and have, therefore, a thorough knowledge of the examination specifications and how best to meet them. Students are well prepared for the examinations and teachers understand fully what students need for success.

40. Sixth-form teaching shows the same adept use of questioning as seen elsewhere in the school. It is well focused and draws out students' knowledge in order to develop understanding. Probing questions often take thinking to higher levels. The best teachers have an instinctive ability to intervene with a question or remark when necessary to move thinking along.

41. The improvement since 2000 is largely due to the way the school has focused on learning. Staff training has been directed towards encouraging students to think about how they learn and to be fully involved in their learning. Teachers in subjects across the curriculum have moved away from a style of teaching that used to rely too often on unexciting tasks, unimaginative planning and too few opportunities for students to think for themselves. Lively teaching is a particular feature of many lessons and bears fruit in how well students achieve in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form.

42. A third of sixth-form students follow work-related vocational courses at a local college of further education and several training agencies. The success and popularity of these courses bears witness to the appropriate teaching these students experience off site.

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

Equality of access to the curriculum is very good.
The quality and range of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are good.
The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
There are very good links with partner institutions.
The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in that ICT is not used in all subjects to support learning.

43. **At the heart of the school's philosophy is its commitment to provide equality of education for all pupils.** This is witnessed in many aspects of school life, not least in the design and future vision for the curriculum. This notion of including all in a 'School for All' is a notable strength of the school, even though there remains a need for further development of an all-inclusive curriculum model.

44. **The quality and range of the curriculum are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.** The time allocated to the curriculum meets national recommendations. The school now complies with requirements for the provision of religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is, however, still no corporate daily act of worship for all pupils. The introduction of citizenship into the curriculum is at an early stage of development and the relationship between this subject area and personal, social and health education has been mapped. The school now has a very good programme of personal, social and health education that contributes well to students' development and is taught by form tutors. There are good arrangements for pupils to find out about life opportunities beyond school through its careers education programme. The school is beginning to consider the implications of national guidance on 14-19 education, but at the time of the inspection, little tangible policy development and implementation had taken place. The school can rightly point to some success, however, as a result of its introduction of national policies in Years 7 to 9, notably teachers' use of the three-part lesson.

45. Although the full programme of study for ICT is insufficiently in place, notably within the mathematics curriculum, the curriculum is enhanced by the provision of ICT as a separate subject and there is good breadth and balance achieved in the overall entitlement offered to students.

46. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a satisfactory and growing range of courses and opportunities for all students to broaden their experiences. There is opportunity to study GNVQ part one courses in business and health and social care. There is an effective alternative curriculum provided to students for whom it is clearly suitable; this is work-related and makes very good use of a local college of further education and vocational training centres. This means that there are opportunities for developing skills in areas such as

construction and engineering. This programme has had a positive effect on the self-esteem of students.

47. **The Learning Centre provides very good support for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties.** These pupils are fully included in all parts of school life. Pupils with particular difficulties in literacy receive appropriate extra help either individually or in very small groups. There is a well-organised paired-reading system where older pupils and sixth-formers, who are trained in the job, help younger pupils to improve their reading. There is, however, limited extra help provided for pupils with numeracy difficulties.

48. **There is very good provision of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum and provide additional learning opportunities.** The weekly programme covers sport, the arts and community-based activities. Amongst the range of opportunities are a breakfast club that facilitates educational and social inclusion and is contributing to improved attendance. Membership and participation rates are high in areas as diverse as chess, pop choir, physical education. Thirty pupils are currently participating in an anti-bullying project which also involves partner schools; during the inspection a volunteer group of Year 11 pupils performed drama about bullying to a high and telling standard at a Year 9 assembly. Learning for students is enhanced and extended by a range of coursework clinics operated by most departments. The school has also been successful in securing additional resources to extend opportunities for the personal development of students through the local Aspire Education Action Zone and its mentoring in the spirit of the Excellence-in-Cities initiative.

49. **The school has very good relationships with partner institutions.** There are established links with local teacher training providers and the school is used routinely as part of training across a wide range of subjects. There are strong links with the higher education sector in respect of performing arts and this has had a positive effect on the participation of boys in drama clubs and other activities including annual school productions such as 'Grease'. Curriculum continuity for primary to secondary transfer is well considered and the school has been granted additional resources to take forward a range of initiatives. This has involved exchange of teachers developing together the content of the Year 6 curriculum in primary schools and the Year 7 curriculum at Oldershaw.

Sixth form

50. **The curricular provision is good in the sixth form.** A wide range of 19 academic AS and A Level courses and one Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course are provided in the school. This range is extended through good collaboration with two other schools with sixth forms, the local college of further education and training centres. The consortium provides a wide range of four GNVQ intermediate courses, a GNVQ foundation course, two City and Guilds level 1 courses and two further advanced subjects.

51. The curriculum is very responsive to local circumstances and the multi-site provision is very well planned and provides coherent programmes of learning. Vocational courses are successful.

52. However, because students are at other sites for half or full days it means that they cannot mix vocational courses with an advanced subject. This limits the spirit and purpose of the curriculum reforms introduced two years ago. The provision has created two distinct groups of students, those on vocational courses and those taking academic subjects.

53. Another effect of having two discrete groups of students is that the third on vocational courses do not take the broad general studies programme that includes the provision of religious education. In this respect the curriculum is unsatisfactory although it has improved considerably since the previous inspection.

54. For advanced level courses, options provide opportunities for students to select up to four subjects and all take and are entered for general studies. In Year 12, most students take four subjects to AS level. In Year 13, most continue with their studies in three subjects to A2 level but a small number take four.

55. Most students have the equivalent of at least one day each week outside lessons. They consider this to be 'free' time rather than for private study. Despite a series of useful sessions on research by the librarian this time is not being used effectively to raise standards.

56. Equality of access and opportunity are excellent. The fundamental aim of the school is to ensure that each individual is offered the greatest opportunity to learn and achieve. The open access policy to the sixth form reflects this and allows many students to take advanced subjects who would not have this opportunity in many sixth forms.

57. **However, the rigour of advanced subjects does not match the needs and aptitudes of all students.** As a result the pass rate per entry at AS and A Level examinations is lower than that usually found. At A Level some classes are too small for meaningful debate and the effective sharing of ideas. The school is at an early stage of rationalising its sixth-form provision to enable students to take both academic and vocational courses more carefully matched to their needs and aspirations. At the same time this review will provide more continuity and progression in the 14-19 age range with the introduction of more vocational courses in Years 10 and 11.

58. **There is a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.** These promote good relationships and make an effective contribution to students' personal development. The range includes time-tabled physical recreation, fund raising events and day trips. Students feel that the range and extent of trips could be broadened. There are opportunities to take responsibility for younger pupils through paired reading, the provision of the 'Breakfast Club' and some students are trained mentors. A new and exciting development is their involvement supporting pupils in primary schools as part of the 'Aspire' project.

59. **The provision for students with learning difficulties is good** and these students achieve well and successfully complete their courses.

60. There is no space to have a daily act of collective worship for all students. Nevertheless, assemblies take place in the weekly tutorial period.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and sixth-form students

Opportunities to broaden aspects of pupils' personal development have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

The school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and sixth formers. However, spiritual development is a key feature in many subjects.

61. Pupils are given good opportunities to consider and reflect on difficult thoughts and feelings about themselves and relationships with others and what they see in the world. Opportunities during acts of collective worship are used sensitively to raise pupils' self esteem and promote a positive ethos.

+++ A Year 7 assembly on 'treating people how you would like to be treated' was performed confidently and attentively watched by other pupils.

62. All teaching in religious education lessons provided a spiritual dimension. This spiritual dimension was also evident in other subjects. Music lessons are enjoyed greatly and pupils spontaneously applaud the work of others.

63. The school is effective in teaching right from wrong. Often in lessons moral issues are debated.

+++ In science lessons ethical discussions on genetic engineering and the moral dilemmas that this causes are debated. In history pupils have investigated the issues relating to child labour in the 19th century. In a Year 8 ICT lesson there was an enthusiastic debate on credit card fraud and the possible ways of preventing it.

64. All members of staff foster good relationships between pupils. In lessons teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively and collaboratively in pairs and groups. Geography residential field trips give pupils the opportunity to study with pupils from other schools. In physical education lessons many opportunities exist for pupils to exercise leadership, responsibility and practise giving constructive criticism.

+++ In English a lesson on the impact of a paralysing accident and the effects this can have on a person's life were sensitively discussed. At the end of the lesson one pupil said, "There's a person behind every disability".

65. The school council has become more active and is currently investigating ways of improving the school's external environment.

66. Most subjects promote cultural development well. In many lessons different cultural issues are raised. In history, pupils have researched the way different cultures have contributed to medicine. In food technology different cultures are celebrated. In a French lesson the importance of cheeses to French society was discussed. Through religious education lessons pupils visit Christian and non-Christian places of worship.

Sixth form

67. Sixth-form students are actively involved in the life of the school. For example they help to run the morning breakfast club, mentor younger pupils and raise monies for charities. This helps them to mature as individuals and contribute to the school community.

68. There are good opportunities for personal development for those students participating in the general studies programme. Students on this course have had the opportunity to visit an art gallery and theatre and these visits are much appreciated. They also value opportunities to reflect on world issues.

+++ In a Year 13 general studies lesson on globalisation, students debated enthusiastically the reasons for and against losing the pound sterling in favour of the euro which led to further understanding of the social and cultural issues in Europe.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Very good procedures have been introduced to improve behaviour.
Good procedures exist to track individual pupil's attendance.
The welfare and monitoring of pupils is a strength of the school.

69. Teachers know their form pupils well and spend time learning about them. This helps to promote a good caring atmosphere. The schools pastoral aim is to 'ensure each child is known and to provide a sense of belonging'. The school has achieved this aim well. In discussion, pupils said '*You can speak to the teachers about anything*'. The induction days for Year 7 pupils provide them with a very good settling down period and these pupils

commented that *'It was a fun way of getting to know the school, meeting people and making friends'*.

70. Health and safety and child protection procedures are very good. Concerns raised at the time of the last inspection have been fully addressed. The governing body, caretaker and school staff all carry out their duties diligently and monitor health and safety issues carefully. Pupils' knowledge of their own health and safety is good. In personal, social and health education lessons they learn about the requirements for healthy living.

+++ In a Year 8 lesson on solvent abuse the emotional, moral and physical implications were very successfully explored.

71. Procedures for promoting good behaviour have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now very good. In discussion with staff and pupils they all recognise this improvement and that the behaviour of a few does not now impede learning for the rest. The quiet room, and careful supervision of identified pupils, plus the support of the learning support unit and mentors has resulted in a calmer atmosphere. The school's anti bullying policy aims to create an environment which fosters security, confidence and independence. This is beginning to happen and any incidences of concern or exclusion are carefully analysed by gender and ethnicity.

+++ In physical education lessons it is especially stated that there is no tolerance of any sort of abusive language directed at any minority groups. This is in keeping with overall school policy.

72. The school has increased the strategies to promote good attendance. The attendance clerk, through a first day contact system, alerts parents immediately to any non-attendance. The computerised system is used effectively to monitor pupils' attendance on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Various rewards schemes are in place to promote good attendance including class rewards and individual rewards. Attendance is often discussed during year group assembly time and form periods. The educational support staff and learning mentors are also involved when required to promote positive attitudes to attendance. However attendance and punctuality are still unsatisfactory and affect pupils' continuity of learning.

Assessment

Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' attainment and progress are good.
The use of assessment to tackle weaknesses in learning and improve understanding is inconsistent in teaching.
There is insufficient use of target-setting, in all subject areas, in order to raise standards

73. The school has corrected many of the problems identified by the previous report and made good progress against the key issues of raising standards of achievement and improving the quality of teaching. The assessment, recording and reporting policy is however, insufficiently clear in highlighting the pupil's role in the assessment process or in establishing guidelines rigorous enough to ensure that all teachers are aware of the important differences between 'assessment for learning' as opposed to 'assessment of learning'. Centralised systems for collecting, analysing and communicating information about test and examination data have been improved. Assessment practices are good in science, history, art and design, design and technology, music, theatre studies and religious education, satisfactory in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography and unsatisfactory in physical education and ICT. There is better understanding of how pupils are performing and what they should do next, within most subject departments, because regular records are kept and passed on to the next teacher. A very thorough review has been undertaken into the marking practices and record keeping of the mathematics department, for example, and the inspection confirms the school's findings expressed in its own review. Pupils are interviewed

and offered help on a regular basis in years 10-11 but target setting has not yet been used rigorously enough at department or pupil level to drive up standards.

74. Most subjects use National Curriculum levels accurately. The exception is in ICT. Reports to parents are good and communicate clear messages based on levels or GCSE grades.

75. Only a few teachers have had training in using assessment so that all pupils' learning needs are met. Pupils are insufficiently involved in self-assessment exercises and as a result many do not have a clear understanding of how they learn. Representatives from all groups of pupils could clearly communicate what they had learned in a drama lesson concerned with the importance of facial expression in the Greek theatre. Similarly clear understanding was evident in a history lesson devoted to the treatments used at the time of the Great Plague of 1665. However, not all pupils made such impressive gains in learning, for example in an English lesson devoted to assonance and alliteration. In what otherwise appeared a good art and design lesson only the higher attainers had learned how knowledge of the GCSE examination criteria could help them to improve the standards aimed for.

76. The special educational needs coordinator tracks the progress of pupils with learning difficulties closely. The school thus recognises specific difficulties that pupils have and provides suitable help. Pupils' individual programmes of work are of good quality: they explain pupils' needs clearly, provide suitable targets and suggest appropriate strategies for teachers to follow. They concentrate largely on literacy and behaviour and not enough attention is paid to pupils' numeracy needs. Annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational need are carried out according to the regulations and pupils receive the support that is prescribed.

Sixth form

Assessment

Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' attainment and progress are good.
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The use of assessment to tackle weaknesses in learning and improve understanding is an inconsistent element of teaching.
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77. Since the time of the previous inspection the school has improved the collection and use of assessment information to amend the planning of courses so that all students' learning needs are met. Communication systems within the school and with parents have been strengthened. Governors are now actively involved in this process. There is still a need, however, to use information about students' strengths and problems more effectively to help them to reflect themselves and take more responsibility for their own time management and planning. Many also need to develop better communication skills. Currently a number of students enter the wrong type of course and retention rates are lower than they should be in some subjects. Although the sixth form has not recently been a priority, the established procedure of sending regular progress reports to parents has continued and acted as a good model for the main school.

78. There are weaknesses in sixth-form mathematics where very little marking of students' work provides information on how to progress towards the completion of course modules. In this subject, assessment procedures are not rigorous enough. Written feedback to students could be more helpful in art and design, music, ICT and mathematics. No analysis of students' standards of attainment have been done in science in order to establish how well students are doing in the subject by comparison with past performance. Students

are not always sufficiently involved in the assessment process. This is directly related to the teacher's perceptions of the need for students to have this responsibility.

+++ In an excellent lesson in art and design, the teacher made the learning intentions very clear, helped the A Level students to identify success criteria in the preparation for the examination paper and finally gave them time to reflect and pose questions. These Year 13 students learned to face and understand personal problems as a first step towards overcoming them. By contrast in another art and design lesson Year 12 students resisted the teacher's evaluation of their problems. They did not see the reason for spending time in writing notes in order to communicate ideas. Unlike the first example they had not had time to recognise that this was important in their work and therefore were unwilling to change their established practice.

Advice, support and guidance

Very good pastoral care of all students is an important priority for staff.

Very good careers advice supports students' aspirations.
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There is no procedure for knowing which students are on the premises when not in lessons.

79. There is a clear induction process for all students entering the sixth form. In Year 11 an options evening is held to support parents and pupils. At the beginning of the academic year each student is given appropriate time with staff to discuss their courses and aspirations. This gives staff a very good opportunity to identify any students with concerns and offer them whatever support is required.

80. A particular strong feature of the sixth form is the emphasis placed on promoting self-belief. For example, an assembly was devoted to a guest speaker explaining the values of being involved in children's activity camps around the world. This emphasised that there are many opportunities for students to become more appealing to potential employers.

81. The majority of students felt they had been given very good career advice. This starts with personal interviews in Year 11. Support is given to students applying to universities or for jobs. In discussion, students felt that the sixth form provided good preparation for the next stage in their careers.

82. As in the main school, attendance is not sufficiently good for all students. The head of sixth form carefully monitors attendance and discusses any concerns with students and parents. The computerised attendance system allows the school to know when students are in lessons. However, there are no systems in place for students to sign in and out of the premises during their non-taught periods and this is a concern in case of an emergency.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Parents have very positive views of the school.

Parents feel that the partnership with the school has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
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Regular reports about their child's progress are posted to parents.

83. Parents have very positive views and the majority feel the school expects their child to work hard. A greater number of parents now feel better informed than at the time of the previous inspection. The home-school association actively supports the school and an enthusiastic group of parents helps to raise funds.

84. The school works closely with parents. Meetings are arranged prior to pupils starting school and specific meetings are held to help parents and pupils when selecting Year 10 and Year 12 options. Attendance at these events is good.

85. The quality of documentation is good overall. Pupils' annual reports have improved considerably and include detailed information about a child's progress and areas for improvement. The regular interim progress reports providing summary information are extremely helpful for parents in providing a snapshot of their child's academic and personal progress. The prospectus and governors' annual report are well-written, informative and meet statutory requirements.

86. In line with the newly introduced behaviour policy, form tutors monitor the use of homework diaries regularly. Year 11 pupils recognise how much they rely on them to help them to manage their workloads.

87. When there are any concerns about a pupil's behaviour or attendance, parents are soon contacted. This two-way partnership demonstrates the school's commitment to involve parents. Opportunities are provided for parents to participate in a range of adult classes including fine art and ceramics. Communications with parents are good. There is a termly newsletter which provides detailed information about the school's activities. This is favourably received by parents who consider themselves well informed on policy developments such as new approaches to behaviour and associated sanctions and rewards.

88. The Learning Centre works closely with the parents of pupils with learning difficulties. Parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and are consulted if a particular need arises. Similarly, parents are free to approach the school if they have particular concerns. They are properly invited to annual reviews, although the percentage who attend is low.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The headteacher has provided very good leadership that has created in all who work in the school a new sense of pride and purpose.
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Governors are well informed and fully involved from the early stages of decision making.
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The school is now evaluating its own performance in order to be a constantly improving school.
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89. **Leadership is very good.** The headteacher had only been in the school a fortnight at the time of the previous inspection. He has now been in post for two and a half years. He has evolved a very clear vision of how the school should develop: one in which teachers, pupils, sixth formers and parents are confident and have now a sense expectation that Oldershaw can become the best comprehensive school in the area. This would place it in the category of a school in a disadvantaged area that succeeds against the odds. It is well on the way to fitting such a description. The leadership group provides loyal support to the headteacher. It plays a full part in providing good leadership in addition to its members carrying out their various management tasks efficiently. New initiatives are well thought out and closely geared to the needs of the school.

90. The leadership group has devised suitable and effective ways to develop and improve the school, with constant emphasis on raising the standards of teaching, learning and behaviour. The policy of including all teaching staff in discussions about development and change helps to motivate staff and allows them to play a part in shaping the school's future. In particular the headteacher sets the tone by frequently being around the school, talking to pupils and students, and listening to them with interest, so that he provides a model for the way in which he expects pupils and adults to behave towards each other.

91. The school development plan is a clear document that shows that great care has been taken to identify areas that need to be developed and decide on suitable strategies. Improvements to teaching and learning are at the heart of it and already its impact is

positively clear. Management at all levels has improved greatly since the previous inspection. Teachers commented on the way teamwork within departments has grown since then. This teamwork is particularly evident in the creative and performing arts and humanities faculties.

92. Heads of department, overall, are effective and heads of year very effective in leading colleagues towards improvement and consolidation of key aspects of the school. The successful improvement in behaviour in school owes much to the detailed implementation of school policies by the heads of year through the lead they give to form tutors. However, subject heads and heads of year are not as articulate as they should be in seeing their own work as part of the overall school thrust to improve learning and teaching, raise standards and develop a radical curriculum. Too isolated an approach works against the vision of the headteacher, governors and leadership group.

93. **Governors are well informed and involved in all major aspects of school policy.** They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are becoming more aware of the school's daily life by being linked to faculties and occasionally observing lessons. All governors are determined to ensure high standards, for example in their rigorous approach to the appointment of new teaching staff. However, they do not fulfil their statutory duties to ensure that all pupils have a daily act of worship or that an adequate amount of religious education is taught in the sixth form.

94. **The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties is very good. The Learning Centre is a strength of the school.** There is an efficient system of keeping records, making good use of technology. There is effective communication with other departments of the school, mainly through the agency of the year heads. The various activities of the Centre such as the withdrawal system, the paired-reading and the breakfast club are well organised. Very good use is made of the curriculum support workers, who have a variety of responsibilities within the department.

Finance

95. The school's finances are well managed by a capable bursar and her assistant. There are good systems in place to ensure that funds are not misused. Expenditure is planned carefully to reflect the priorities of the school's development plan. Governors are increasing their involvement in determining the way in which money is spent. They monitor spending regularly and effectively. Spending reflects carefully the aims of the school, for example to provide appropriate courses so that more students continue their education after the age of 16. When initiatives are funded, targets are agreed. These targets provide a good means by which the school can assess how well it has spent money.

96. The school receives money for local and national initiatives. This money is spent very effectively to raise standards. One good example is the Aspire Education Action Zone programme that is widening the choices of courses available. Because of the improvements since the previous inspection, especially that in the quality of teaching and learning, the school gives good value for money.

97. The school is working closely with the local authority to meet the principles of 'best value'. Governors have looked into ways they might get more for their money. A good example is the contract for computer support. The school wishes to make more administrative use of new technology than it is able to do at present.

Staffing

98. The school's staff performance management process is well structured and is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers and teaching assistants thrive on a vigorously delivered programme of professional development, taking account of

individual, department and whole-school priorities. The headteacher, leadership group and governors have worked hard to recruit, train and deploy staff appropriately. Their efforts have been enhanced due to partnership with the Aspire Education Action Zone. The school is adequately staffed although there are a few subjects taught by non-specialists and some subjects with classes with more than one teacher taking them; this makes continuity of learning difficult. The quality and range of the support staff are strengths of the school and provision is further enhanced by consortium links in the sixth form and the contribution made by the Aspire Education Action Zone staff to the curriculum, staff training and extended provision of the school.

Accommodation

99. The school accommodation has improved and the new building enables more effective learning to take place. However the accommodation in the old building is unsatisfactory for some lessons, especially mathematics, and this affects pupils' learning. In discussion a pupil commented, *"In mathematics lessons, classrooms are too crowded and you can't concentrate"*. Provision of independent study areas are required for the sixth form.

Resources

100. Resources for supporting pupils' learning are satisfactory overall. Most subjects have sufficient good textbooks but there are some deficiencies in geography and citizenship. Resources to support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties are very good. The number of computers in the school has increased substantially since the previous inspection, but many of these are proving unreliable.

Administrative and caretaking staff

101. Administrative and caretaking staff take a full part in the life of the school and are rightly valued highly by management and governors.

102. The school is a well run and orderly place. Teachers, pupils and students get very good support from the administrative and clerical staff who make a good first impression on visitors.

103. Although pupils are careless with litter, this is managed well by school policies that seek as soon as possible to train a more responsible attitude in pupils. Despite this unnecessary thoughtlessness, the caretaker and his staff have created and maintain a very clean and welcoming environment which pupils and staff consider to be a good place in which to learn.

Sixth form

104. **Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** The sixth form implements the school's aims and is 'Open to All.' There is a total commitment to providing a good education and equal opportunities for all students; many of who would not have the chance to study advanced courses in other sixth forms. The provision is largely successful and the sixth form is cost effective. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

105. The sixth form has come through a difficult period owing to the long-term absence of its head and assistant. This was concurrent with the introduction of a completely new curriculum and at a time when the school had serious weaknesses. Nevertheless, against this background, the new headteacher has led and managed the sixth form well. He and a newly appointed assistant headteacher, with responsibility for the 14-19 curriculum, have a clear vision for future development. This is firmly rooted in improving standards and results, and in rationalising the provision to meet the needs and aspirations of students more closely.

106. **The examination results are analysed in detail using a commercial package.** The school and governors know the relative strengths of subjects. They are aware of the good and weaker features of the sixth form and are active in their role as critical friends. However, they have not yet fulfilled their statutory duty to ensure that the locally agreed syllabus for religious education is provided for all students.

107. However, these developments and improvements are not yet underpinned with a quality framework against which to check progress and take stock of their success. For example, there is not yet a planned pattern in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

108. **Pastoral care is very strong** even though there is still a vacancy for the head of the sixth form. The assistant headteacher and a team of eight tutors provide very good educational and personal support and guidance for students.

109. Keeping track of teaching and learning across subjects is at an early stage and is the responsibility of the senior management team. The checking of attendance is not sufficiently rigorous so that the school does not know at any given time which students are on site.

Resources

110. Resources for supporting students' learning in the sixth form are satisfactory overall. Those students with learning needs have access to very good materials and equipment. Most subjects have sufficient and good quality textbooks, however, provision of suitable textbooks is poor in business studies and psychology, in particular.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

111. The school has already identified areas for improvement in its development plan. In order to give this development a strong and successful focus, the governors, headteacher and staff should concentrate on:

- (1) raising standards, and continuing to pay especial attention to pupils' standards of literacy by:
 - being much more rigorous in the use of assessment to help pupils learn more effectively;
 - improving attendance further still and seeking to increase the proportion of work-related and vocational educational courses in Years 10 and 11 to attract reluctant attenders.

(Paragraphs: 4, 7, 25, 33, 44, 46, 72-76, 94, 122-124, 132, 137, 169, 182, 188, 204, 213)

Sixth form

- (1) raising standards by:
 - using assessment consistently to tackle weaknesses in learning and improve understanding;
 - ensuring students make good use of private study time to extend their independent learning;
 - developing further students' communication skills, especially in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

(Paragraphs: 8, 12, 28, 39, 55, 77, 78, 82, 94, 215, 222, 224, 228, 229, 245, 261)

THE LEARNING CENTRE AND THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

Teaching is good and pupils make good progress in lessons

The excellent accommodation contributes to the work of the Centre.
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The Centre is very well led and managed.
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Mentors provide a very valuable service.
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112. The Support Unit for pupils with special educational needs provides very well for the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is housed in the Learning Centre, newly opened in September 2002, and the work of the Centre gains from the excellent accommodation.

113. There are two very small classes for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Pupils receive some lessons from their form tutor and go to other specialist staff so that they receive the full national curriculum. Teaching is good in these classes and pupils make good progress in lessons. Teachers' management skills are very good and pupils generally behave well. For example, in a design and technology lesson pupils used tools safely. They focus on what they are doing as lessons are well planned and conducted in a firm and encouraging way. Curriculum support workers are effective in providing necessary assistance.

114. Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is normally for a much shorter period than for younger pupils. The system is sensibly flexible so that pupils are sometimes in their usual lessons and sometimes in the unit. Although work at a suitable level of difficulty is provided, the system is not yet refined enough to ensure that academic progress is not obstructed. Efficient use is made of staff, in that curriculum support workers supervise work that is provided by the pupils' teachers.

115. A short-term referral room is in the Centre for pupils whose behaviour is such that they are in imminent danger of being excluded. This provides a useful opportunity for pupils to take stock as they know the seriousness of the next step. However, although pupils are provided with work, there is insufficient provision to ensure that it fits into their normal schoolwork.

116. Mentors provide a very valuable service in guiding pupils through their problems. The pupils they support value them highly: they see them as adults in whom they can confide and who give them very helpful advice and support. Their documentation and records are of a high order and reflect their professionalism. A pilot peer-mentoring programme is in existence in which older pupils act as mentors to younger ones. This is a well-organised system with the mentors receiving good training. It brings personal benefits to the mentor as well as the pupils being mentored. The adult mentor in charge is well aware of the possible dangers of such a scheme and has appropriate safeguards in place.

117. The Centre is very well led and managed. The procedures for admitting a pupil into it are good and involve close contact with the relevant teachers and with parents. Parents are always kept fully informed. Records are kept well and documentation is full. A close check is kept of pupils in the Centre and their progress is recorded. Work is well delegated to curriculum support workers and mentors as appropriate. Not enough is yet done to ensure that pupils in the Centre do not fall behind in some of the subjects not covered in the Centre. It is too early yet to measure how successful the Centre is but indications are significantly promising.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	135
	Sixth form	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	34	60	31	6	0	0
Percentage	3	25	45	23	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	8	22	10	1	0	0
Percentage	5	19	51	23	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1088	148
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	530	47

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	251	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	70

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.2
National comparative data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	109	138	247

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	52	49
	Girls	78	53	50
	Total	125	105	99
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (62)	43 (43)	40 (39)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (34)	22 (21)	11 (16)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	59	48
	Girls	80	70	52
	Total	121	129	100
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	50 (56)	52 (50)	40 (40)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (23)	15 (24)	8 (18)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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
	2002	124	109	233

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	33	97	104
	Girls	34	84	91
	Total	67	181	195
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	29 (28)	78 (83)	84 (94)
	National	50 (48)	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	28.6 (27.5)
	National	39.6 (34.3)

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	43	65
	National		N/A

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	13	24	37
	Average point score per candidate	14.08 (8.5)	11.04 (10.04)	12.1 (9.5)
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	23	23	46	1	2	3
	Average point score per candidate	76.1	84.4	80.2	0.0	70.0	27.0
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

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

** National comparative data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available.*

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1197	180	3
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	87.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	600

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	21.5
Key Stage 4	22.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4 178 036
Total expenditure	4 281 136
Expenditure per pupil	3 125
Balance brought forward from previous year	135 153
Balance carried forward to next year	32 053

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	29
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.6
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	1236
Number of questionnaires returned	393

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	54	11	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	38	53	6	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	46	15	5	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	51	12	4	2
The teaching is good.	30	59	6	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	49	7	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	39	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	56	10	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	29	52	7	2	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	52	7	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	46	9	4	10

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

ENGLISH

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils achieve well by Year 9 compared with their attainment when they enter the school. • Good teaching leads to pupils making good progress in lessons. • Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to learn. • Good leadership and management are leading to more effective teaching and learning. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE examination results are not high enough. • Procedures for evaluating how well pupils make progress are inadequate.
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Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	average	below average
Achievement over time	good	satisfactory
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	below average	below average
Quality of teaching	good	good
Quality of learning	good	good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	good	good

Leadership of the subject	good
Management of the subject	good
Improvement since the previous inspection	very good

118. **When pupils enter the school their work in English is well below average.** They do well to reach average standards by Year 9. In national tests for 2002 results were below the national average but were above the national average in the previous year. Boys did less well than girls but were less far behind than they are nationally. The overall trend has been more sharply upward in the last three years than the national pattern of improvement. Test results are better than those in mathematics and science. They are also better than those achieved by schools with a similar background.

119. Results in English GCSE examinations were below average in 2002 and have been consistently so in recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades has increased. The lowest-attaining pupils have achieved less well because few have been entered for GCSE examinations, particularly English literature. These results are better than those in mathematics but less good than those in science. Comparing GCSE results with what those pupils achieved in Year 9 national tests shows that they achieved well in Years 10 and 11.

120. **Current work seen is average overall. Achievement, therefore, is good overall.** Pupils in all years express their ideas clearly and listen well to others when talking in pairs or small groups. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are sufficiently confident when talking to the class to recount anecdotes or develop arguments at length. Pupils read competently. In Years 7 to 9 they can analyse newspaper articles and advertisements. Reading Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' they grasp plot and character and respond well to the imaginative

language. They understand how narrative is constructed in short stories and novels. In their own writing they can engage the interest of readers. In Years 10 and 11 pupils write for a variety of purposes. Higher-attaining pupils are aware of their audience and show good skills in lively stories and articles. However, limited expression means that many pupils only write effectively in a conversational mode. Substantial numbers do not effectively organise their work in paragraphs. In Years 10 and 11, therefore, the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory rather than good. Nonetheless, there being more pupils in Years 7 to 9, overall achievement in English is good. Pupils with learning difficulties produce well-presented written work. They make good use of ICT when drafting their work but elsewhere its use is sporadic.

121. **Teaching and learning are good.** Teachers relate well to pupils and are keen to involve them fully in lessons. As a result pupils are eager to learn, behave well and enjoy their work. New units of study in Years 7 to 9 are helping pupils improve their standards of work in English. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is now also good but teachers' expectations have in the past often been lower. Pupils have achieved lower than average proportions of the highest GCSE grades in part because they were not required to tackle adventurous or demanding tasks. Current teaching is more lively and challenging.

+++ In an excellent Year 11 lesson lower-attaining pupils came to a vivid understanding of relationships in Barry Hines' 'Kes' by representing key characters and moving nearer to or further away from Billy according to the perceived closeness of the bond.

122. Good teaching would be even more effective in raising standards if procedures for checking how well pupils are making progress were better established. This would lead to planning that more clearly met the differing learning needs of all pupils. The recently appointed head of department is helping all teachers to work more closely together. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, especially in the quality of teaching.

Basic skills: contributions made by other subjects to pupils' competence in literacy

123. Standards of literacy are below average. However, most pupils have sufficient skills to meet the reading demands of subjects, especially when reading for information. Pupils generally organise and present their written work well. They can make appropriate use of ICT skills to prepare and present their work.

124. The teaching of basic literacy skills across the curriculum is good. The school literacy policy ensures that all teachers know how to support reading and writing in their own subject. Staff training and departmental reviews have helped to achieve this. A school coordinator is helping to raise awareness of literacy issues. The school has introduced spelling dictionaries for all pupils in Years 7 and 8. Implementation of the national literacy strategy is proceeding well. Departmental policies for literacy are making an impact on lessons in some areas of the curriculum, notably in English, science, mathematics, history, drama, physical education and design and technology. Keywords are displayed in all learning areas but teachers make varying use of them in lessons. Opportunities for reading are limited in most subjects.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The use of the new approaches to learning in Years 7 to 9 are being implemented well.
- Pupils have good attitudes in response to good teacher-pupil relationships.
- Teachers planning is good; it results in good progress in many lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are too low.
- Assessment is not used well enough to track pupils' progress.
- Insufficient use is made of computers to support pupils' learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	Well below average	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

125. **Overall, teaching and learning in mathematics are satisfactory.** However, there are still some lessons where they are unsatisfactory; this is usually as a result of weak management of pupils.

+++ In a Year 11 class with 12 lower-attaining pupils, the teacher did not set clear expectations about behaviour. The schools' behaviour policy was not applied and as a result many pupils did not work well on their tasks. Only a small proportion increased their understanding of solving simple equations.

126. Although pupils are tested regularly, the marking of work in exercise books differs from teacher to teacher. Few marks or levels are recorded in pupils' books and teachers' written comments are not usually helpful in telling a pupil what progress they are making or how to do better. Not enough use is made of information about pupils' earlier standards in tracking pupils' progress.

127. **Good lesson planning ensures that work is provided that helps pupils learn.**

+++ In a Year 7 class of pupils with learning difficulties, the teacher provided a range of activities to develop pupils' understanding of reflecting shapes. The teacher questioned the pupils very well to link the work with pupils' previous work on symmetry. In addition, the materials used ensured that pupils were able to concentrate on the skills involved.

128. This is an example of effective teaching that helps such pupils make progress that is no different from that made by other pupils.

129. Pupils' numeracy skills are well below average. Number and algebraic skills are generally weak. Most pupils have difficulty doing calculations in their head and few are confident in solving equations. By the end of Year 9, the higher-attaining pupils can use these skills well, for example to draw graphs of algebraic functions. In Year 10, average-attaining

pupils lack confidence in dealing with percentages. Pupils' data handling skills are better. In Year 11 pupils use a range of tables and charts in their data handling projects for GCSE examinations.

130. **Overall, achievement is satisfactory** as pupils move through the school. Teachers build well upon what pupils already know. Skilful questioning helps pupils with their understanding. Teachers regularly ask pupils to explain their answers. By explaining to the rest of the class, they gain confidence in talking to a group of pupils and using appropriate technical language.

131. Government initiatives are applied well in lessons. The objectives of the lesson are clearly identified at the start of the lesson and starter activities are being used effectively to develop pupils' mental skills and review their learning. Teachers use a range of resources to help pupils learn.

+++ In a Year 11 class, with 28 higher-attaining pupils, the teacher used an overhead projector very effectively to recap pupils' understanding of solving simultaneous equations. In a Year 9 class, with 14 lower-attaining pupils, pupils worked in pairs to order words associated with probability.

132. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection. Most of the weaknesses found at that time have been tackled with some success, although a number still remain. Computers are still not used effectively to support learning and as a result the subject does not fully meet its requirements. The subjects' priorities for development are still not clearly focused on raising pupils' standards and assessment is still not rigorous enough in keeping track of pupils' progress.

Basic skills: contribution made by other subjects to pupils' competency in numeracy

133. A satisfactory contribution is being made by other subjects to developing numerical skills. Pupils' standards are well below average when they enter the school in Year 7. The school has adopted the government's recommended approaches in Years 7 to 9 and the strategy is beginning to have some effect on raising standards. There is appropriate emphasis on the development of mental skills and understanding. However, these standards are having less effect on what pupils achieve in other subjects. For example, in science pupils experience difficulties drawing graphs accurately and using percentages when dealing with energy changes. In art and design and design and technology pupils are not always accurate when measuring. Teachers have been made aware of the new developments and a coordinator for the development of numeracy across all subjects has recently been appointed.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection and are now good.
- Pupils' overall achievement is now good.
- Very good relationships and classroom management mean that pupils have a positive attitude to science.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are not high enough.
- Pupils do not receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- Teaching methods do not always adequately meet the learning needs of all pupils

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Well below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Good
Results in NC tests & GCSE	Well below average	Below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

134. In the majority of lessons, **enthusiastic teaching** motivates pupils to work hard so that they learn well. Teachers use their subject expertise to good effect in communicating scientific concepts clearly in language pupils can easily understand, so that pupils develop an understanding of scientific terminology. They manage classes skilfully so that generally pupils behave well and are not distracted from learning. Lesson aims are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and this focuses their learning. Pupils' concentration is maintained by a variety of tasks involving them in practical activities. Their good response in volunteering answers to teachers' questions contributes significantly to their learning.

+++ In a Year 10 lesson on reflex actions lively delivery of a well-planned lesson resulted in very good learning. Pupils' attention was engaged at the start of the lesson, they investigated several reflex actions and compared reflexes using different senses, working at a brisk pace. By the end of the lesson they had a good understanding of the nervous pathway of reflex actions.

135. Pupils' practical skills are below average. High-attaining pupils do not use scientific theory sufficiently in their coursework. Low-attaining pupils have difficulties understanding the control of variables. Literacy skills are developed well with an emphasis on the correct use of key scientific words. Numerical skills are less well developed. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support from teachers and support assistants and generally make the same progress as other pupils.

+++ In a Year 7 lesson on renewable energy resources pupils prepared their own Power-Point presentation selecting images from Encarta and writing information to accompany them. Supported by the teacher and classroom assistant pupils maintained concentration well. The low-attaining pupils developed both their scientific knowledge and their ICT skills in this imaginative activity resulting in good learning.

136. **The quality of teaching and learning has much improved** since the previous inspection. Of lessons seen, 71 per cent were good or better. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is better than that in Years 7 to 9. Sometimes teachers do not match resources and activities well enough to meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Where tasks are the same for pupils of all attainment levels, the higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make inadequate progress. In a minority of lessons the pace is insufficiently focused and so pupils do not make as much progress as expected. In the first three years in the school many classes are taught science by more than one teacher. This lack of continuity hinders effective learning. The new national initiatives in Years 7 to 9 have only recently been introduced in science and have yet to have an effect on learning.

137. When pupils enter the school their standards of work are well below average. By the end of Year 11 standards have risen, although they are still below average. This represents **good overall achievement**. Marking of written work is thorough, but there are few comments that show pupils how to improve. Pupils have poor self-study skills and so the

extra revision lessons provided before tests and exams boost their confidence and their learning. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and there is stimulating provision for enrichment of their curriculum outside lessons. The significant improvement in science provision since the previous report hinges on the better teaching and learning which has enabled pupils to make good progress through the school.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practical involvement of pupils in citizenship activities. • The school has completed the audit of citizenship aspects of the curriculum. • All pupils in the school follow a course of personal social and health education which includes many aspects of the citizenship programme of study. • Several subject areas contribute to teaching different aspects of the citizenship programme. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How all the elements of citizenship will be taught is not specified at present. • Ways to measure how much progress is being made in lessons are not in place. • It is not clear who is responsible for assuring the quality of teaching of citizenship.
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	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Not available	Not applicable
Achievement over time	Not available	Not applicable
Results in NC tests & GCSE	Not available	Not applicable
Quality of teaching	Not available	Not applicable
Quality of learning	Not available	Not applicable
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Management of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Not applicable

138. **The pupils in this school are already well on the way to becoming good citizens.** The elemental requirements of the national curriculum are met. Arrangements for reporting the subject to parents will follow the school reporting pro-forma.

139. The school has carried out an audit of existing provision. This audit has recognised aspects of the citizenship curriculum already being delivered in different subject areas, and has identified the additional work needed to fill any gaps. This work is being developed but is not yet fully in operation.

140. Citizenship is delivered in the main as a component of the school's existing programme for personal, social and health education. Some aspects, such as teaching about the functioning of the economy, both local and national, are delivered within the teaching of English, history and geography. There is at present no working method of ensuring that all aspects of the citizenship curriculum are being taught well.

141. The school undertakes a schedule of personal, social and health education activities during one period per week. In some lessons, aspects of the required citizenship curriculum are noted in the planning of teaching. The team of form tutors assigned to the programme

within personal, social and health education have received some training in the delivery of citizenship under the guidance of senior staff, though some feel insecure in their delivery.

142. Citizenship is acknowledged in all years. It is part of a collaborative venture involving the Aspire Education Action Zone family of 11 primary schools and the Oldershaw High School. External links with elected representatives at local level have been made to demonstrate democracy in action. The school draws well on its local community, particularly the local constabulary, the Aspire Education Action Zone, and Wirral Regeneration to raise awareness of local issues and to contribute significantly to addressing these. There are good links with partner institutions, particularly in terms of healthy living and to support and enhance opportunities for learning. Many pupils are aware of the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society. There is a democratically elected school council, to which each form in the school sends two representatives.

143. There is no clear line of accountability for the subject, two middle managers being responsible for combining different aspects of teaching and learning. There is insufficient management time available to keep track systematically of and weigh up the quality of learning. The practice of pupils completing satisfaction surveys, and staff undertaking self-evaluation of the modules they teach is common in personal, social and health education, but this system lacks the necessary objective robustness to track the effectiveness of the disparate aspects of citizenship.

144. Ten lessons of personal, social and health education were seen, two in each year group. Teaching was good overall, better up to Year 9 than up to Year 11. Pupils made progress in developing their negotiating skills in arriving at a balanced conclusion, improved their listening and speaking skills when reporting back, showed good skills in resolving conflicts, and raised their own awareness of their social responsibilities in regard to drug abuse. There were no variations in the rates of progress of different groups of pupils.

CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

145. The arts have a clear collective identity within the school. Artsmark Gold was awarded to celebrate the achievement in all of the arts practised in the school. The links between subjects lead to a useful coherence of common concepts and understanding of common features such as notions of form, shape and contrast. The arts are characterised by the energy and enthusiasm of all staff who are well led by heads of subjects. They link well together in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, the current focus being on a forthcoming production of 'Grease'.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10-11.
- In 2001 the standards gained in the higher A*-C grades at GCSE level were above average.
- All groups of pupils, from a low standard on entry to the school, achieve well by the end of Years 9 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT to aid pupils' communication skills.
- Sketchbooks are not developed sufficiently to encourage thinking.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good
Leadership of the subject		Very good
Management of the subject		Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection		Very good

146. Many pupils enter the school with below average standards of drawing, painting and knowledge about artists. By the end of Year 9 standards reached are generally above average. The most recent teacher assessments record average attainment but inspection findings consider these judgements to be too low.

147. Above average standards are maintained in Years 10-11 as pupils specialise in graphics, observational drawing and painting or art textiles. **Art and design and art textiles results at GCSE make a significantly positive contribution to standards in the school overall.** In 2001 the higher A*-C grades were above the national average. Over the past three years pupils in this subject have done significantly better than in most of their other school subjects. In 2001 and 2002 boys performed better than boys' averages nationally. Progress from Year 7-11 is good.

148. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7-9 and generally very good in Years 10-11. Teachers have very good knowledge, plan effectively and have high expectations. Pupils benefit from this expertise and gain in confidence and self-esteem. Good schemes of work, open-ended tasks and good resources ensure that higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils in particular create very individual textile panels related to the artists or cultures studied. In fine art most pupils study still life groups closely and learn to use colour and tonal shading sensitively to render planes or curved surfaces in their drawings. Sketchbooks are used well for research, drawing from observation and experimenting with different materials, but not for recording key technical words or for writing notes about processes covered or strengths and areas for development. Low literacy levels affect some pupils' ability to understand written texts and during the inspection this led to some Year 11 pupils not fully understanding the examination criteria being shared with them by the teacher.

149. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is very good with the Artsmark Gold Award well deserved.** Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal relationships are generally good. In Year 7 girls and boys with considerable learning difficulties need regular support from more than one learning assistant as they exhibit very challenging behaviour. **+++** The collage landscapes they have produced previously indicate that they are more productive when engaged in practical tasks rather than when filling in self-assessment forms that have little meaning for many of them. A similar all boy group in Year 8 has made good progress in constructing clay masks based on a study of gargoyles.

150. Computers are used well for research and for homework but no evidence was found of pupils using them for producing designs or presentations. Key technical words are displayed and referred to in lessons but written work is more limited than might be expected and spelling is poor. No exemplar sentences are displayed to encourage pupils to write in different styles or for different purposes.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Standards are amongst the best in the school. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is very good overall; it is based on a sure knowledge of drama and theatrical conventions.
- Pupils are learning effectively with commitment and enthusiasm.

Areas for improvement

- To maintain high standards of behaviour with the most challenging groups.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Excellent
Leadership of the subject	Very good	
Management of the subject	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

151. Standards of work seen during the inspection improve as pupils move through the school. Much of the work in Year 11 is above average, in contrast with the 2002 GCSE results which were average. Over recent years, however, results in drama have been amongst the best in the school. By Year 11 teachers rightly insist on a discipline to the work that encourages the best qualities of performance. This was seen in the work of several groups presenting their examination pieces.

+++ Two groups presented polished work based on two plays by Willy Russell ; 'Blood Brothers' and 'Our Day Out'. The work had a particular Liverpool focus and in one group linked to some of the work of the Beatles. The strength of these presentations was in the power and commitment of the acting. Pupils, as actors, had a powerful presence and good communication with the audience. They had devised thoughtful touches and the use of symbolism, notably in the shared use of a pair of John Lennon glasses to mark key moments. The quality of the drama in this lesson bears testimony to the excellent attitudes of the pupils to their work and their generous support of each other. Very good teaching was evident in the ways pupils managed a variety of conventions, sustained character and pace in their work. When using Russell's text pupils had the skills to interpret it faithfully. Russell's comedy was well realised by one of the groups.

152. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. They achieve success owing to their own efforts and particularly skilful teaching. The teaching has an excellent grasp of the opportunities to extend pupils' thinking and feeling through engagement in character. Expectations are high. 'Commedia del 'Arte' is brave with Year 8 and not fully successful owing to a small group of pupils finding it difficult to find the discipline necessary for essentially comic work. Greek tragedy with Year 7 is equally demanding, but the structure of the lesson was more assured and pupils worked well. This sense of adventure in the work brings the sort of dividends seen in Year 11 and their Liverpool plays and also in Year 13's willingness to spend time in clowning improvisation in

readiness for 'Oh What A Lovely War'. The point is well understood by the department that a wide and rich experience of a variety of dramatic conventions and forms provides a background on which future work can build.

+++ Year 11 produced outstanding work around a scene from Berkoff's 'Metamorphosis'. This was introduced with the help of the teacher's well prepared PowerPoint presentation. This created a good climate for learning. Pupils were quick to tackle a demanding and physical task with creative energy. The teacher moved within groups teaching effectively and giving support to meet differing learning needs.

153. This support is a strength of the drama teaching. Pupils are continually assessed and the work in lessons is designed to meet varying individual needs, the same task is set but with appropriate and different support from the teacher. As a result, teachers attempt to meet the learning needs of the full range of pupils – from those with learning difficulty to those who are judged to be gifted and talented. The outcome is that pupils of different individual starting attainment achieve well and work continuously towards their potential.

154. Drama is taught in a large, well-designed studio that is well equipped for performances. Additional lessons take place in a dedicated room and a few lessons occur in the hall. The studio is a valued resource and well used by the department. Lighting is used by pupils in lessons to enhance aspects of their work. The department's members work well together as a team, observe each other's practice, learn from this and are generous in support of each other. This is due to the very good leadership of the head of performing arts.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 11.
- Teaching and learning are good and result in all pupils making good progress.
- Pupils really enjoy music in and out of the classroom.
- Leadership of the department ensures that pupils learn their music by doing, and receive as much contact as possible with professional musicians who play and compose in a wide variety of styles.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not use the information from tracking pupils' progress to plan sufficiently for raising standards.
- In some lessons pupils lose concentration when too long is spent on one activity.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good	
Management of the subject	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

155. Pupils attain standards by Year 9 that are below average. Given the low starting point for the majority, **pupils achieve well at this stage**. Higher-attaining pupils recognise the chord changes in a pop song. They play the keyboard keeping very good time together, aware of their role as soloist or accompanist. Lower attaining pupils are unsure of the meaning of some musical words. Although they describe the music they hear, they find it difficult to analyse how the mood is achieved.

156. **In Year 11, standards are above average**. Pupils make good progress through this stage. They compose interesting and varied music. They play instruments ably and some sing very movingly.

157. Teaching and learning in music are good overall. Boys and girls, those with special learning needs and those who are musically talented develop well as young musicians and achieve well. Because of the teachers' expertise as practising musicians, they are able to identify quickly and very effectively what every pupil needs to do to improve.

+++ In a Year 9 lesson using a variety of means, counting the beats, explaining, demonstrating and encouraging, the teacher helped pupils get their playing right. Two pupils with special learning needs made keen progress. "Sing those three notes then play the chord with the third", teacher demonstrates and pupil tries, "now try playing it with your partner playing the melody" teacher continues to sing with them indicating where the strong beat is – "Well done!"

158. Pupils work hard. In a listening task in Year 10, pupils were challenged well to listen and analyse how the mood was achieved. To do this, pupils used correct musical terms confidently. Appropriate overhead slides gave them opportunities to read aloud quite fluently in class.

159. In a lesson where there was little variety and too long was spent on one activity, pupils tended to lose their concentration quite easily. The teachers have a careful system for keeping track of pupils' progress. The department recognises that it can improve these procedures, however, especially in using information that will help plan for pupils to achieve even better standards. Pupils enjoy music. They enjoy playing instruments and benefit from listening to others play and sing.

+++ In a Year 9 lesson three girls sang with guitar accompaniment. Care and support for each other, indicative of the strong relationships that are fostered, was evident on this and many other occasions. In a Year 11 lesson pupils were visibly moved when two girls sang their prepared pieces. Every pupil is valued.

160. The department is lively and has improved well since the previous inspection. A new recording studio is attractive to many pupils especially the boys. The leadership of the department is very good, emphasising practical music-making in class, in instrumental lessons, and in the choir, various bands and productions. The quality of work outside the classroom is very good. Parents regarded the Christmas Concert as inspirational. Pupils get as much exposure as possible to professional musicians who play and compose different styles of music, including African Drumming. The team of instrumental teachers give of their own time to ensure the progress of pupils they teach. Pupils also benefit from using the Learning Lighthouse Centre to compose music using the excellent computer resources there.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good. As a result learning is also good.
- Over time pupils are achieving well in the skills of designing and manufacturing products.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to work. This has a direct impact on their learning.
- By Year 9 although standards are below average they have risen from Year 7.
- In Year 11 standards are average. They have risen from below average on entry in Year 10.

Area for improvement

- Standards are not yet high enough.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good.
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good.

161. **Teaching and learning are good.** Lessons are very well-planned. In Years 7 to 9 teachers make effective use of their knowledge to motivate and encourage pupils to acquire new skills. In lessons teachers use good questioning skills to encourage the pupils to think about their understanding of design and manufacturing processes.

162. **Standards are below average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement.** When pupils enter the school in Year 7 they have widely differing experiences of design and technology. However by the age of fourteen pupils have made progress and achieve well. Below average pupils struggle with their knowledge of electronics. However, they are confident in using vacuum-forming techniques and soldering skills. The higher-attaining pupils do well. They produce good final design ideas with good use of colouring techniques and lettering styles to illustrate their ideas.

+++ In a Year 9 food technology lesson pupils were focusing on a GCSE assignment in preparation for the end of year test. The very good materials, the excellent teaching which involved very focused questioning, very high expectations of all in the class and a measured pace all provided a very positive environment in which pupils had to think very hard about practical planning issues.

163. **Standards are average in Years 10 and 11.** In the GCSE year many pupils talk about what they are good at and what are their weaker areas in design and manufacture. **Their overall achievement is good.**

+++ In a Year 11 graphics lesson, pupils arrived making many demands on the teacher for their individual product designs. The lesson was highly productive and learning was very good. Pupils knew what they had to do and what they must improve on to raise their standards. This was a direct result of the teacher's skill in marking work to be more sure of what pupils know and understand of graphic products.

164. The independent work of the higher-attaining pupils is good. However all higher-attaining pupils need greater challenges in their work to push them to still higher levels. These pupils are consistently good at annotating work with good research skills and ideas sheets. They make good use of ICT to enhance their work. Below-average pupils continue to struggle with research activities and find planning on paper very difficult to carry out successfully. Numeracy skills are not strong.

165. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because of:

- the good teaching and curricular support they receive;
- the very well matched projects carefully thought out to suit the needs of pupils; this is especially so in Year 7 and 8 nurture groups;
- the expectations that teachers have of them.

166. The department has focused on raising pupils' standards. This is gradually having a positive effect. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection, but there are continuing frustrations with access to ICT facilities.

HUMANITIES

167. Humanities are seen in the school as an area of human experience that shares common concepts and themes about the nature of being human in a lived environment. Without diminishing each discipline, members of the faculty seek to draw connections, especially in Years 7 to 9, between the areas of study. This leads to some, especially higher-attaining pupils having a holistic view of human existence.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 since the previous inspection. • The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good. • Pupils' behaviour is effectively managed, especially in Years 7 to 9. • Pupils have good access to fieldwork. 	
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and results in GCSE examinations are not good enough. • The monitoring of pupils' progress and the setting of targets for improvement are under-developed. • The quality of teaching in some lessons in Years 10 and 11 is not good enough. • Written work lacks substance. 	

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Well below average
Achievement over time	Good	Satisfactory
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Good	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject		Satisfactory
Management of the subject		Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection		Satisfactory

168. **The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good as teachers have developed effective skills and strategies for managing pupils' behaviour and can keep potentially difficult groups on task.** Lessons are well planned and there is a clear focus on encouraging pupils to think. This is achieved through good questioning by the teacher and well thought out and often imaginative activities. In these lessons pupils make good progress and generally have a positive attitude to learning.

+++ In a lesson on global warming the teacher ensured all pupils, however reluctant, gained some understanding of global warming. This was achieved as a result of good classroom organisation, firm but positive behaviour management techniques and well devised activities.

169. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is satisfactory although a consistent approach to behaviour management is not always as evident as in Years 7 to 9. This limits the progress some pupils make. Lessons are generally well planned with appropriate resources. This was particularly the case with a Year 11 fieldwork lesson on a shopping survey in the local community where the teachers made sure that all pupils were fully involved. Pupils need encouragement to participate actively in lessons and they often lack confidence. This was particularly evident when pupils undertook the shopping survey. They clearly found this challenging. Marking is helpful and indicates clearly what pupils have done well and what has been omitted but there are no clear targets for improvement.

170. **Standards are average by Year 9; pupils' achievement is good.** When pupils enter Year 7 they have differing experiences of geography but, by the age of 14 pupils, have made good progress. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of geographical topics such as volcanoes and tourism and are developing their use of geographical skills, for example, the use of maps. Higher-attaining pupils describe geographical features and provide explanations but often these lack detail. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress and can produce some good work on, for example, the consequences of tourism. Written work is generally well presented and shows pupils have made an effort; however, it sometimes lacks substance and extended writing requires further development.

171. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well below average although there are examples of individual higher-attaining pupils producing excellent pieces of work as in the case of an A* pupil from last year. In Year 11 there are examples of good work on glaciation from higher-attaining pupils but often their written work lacks depth. The work of lower-attaining pupils shows a basic level of geographical knowledge and understanding but the answers to questions are underdeveloped.

172. In Years 7 to 9 pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they are well managed and supported.

+++ Geography makes a positive contribution to pupils moral and cultural development through the study of, for example, life in a shanty town, the effect of tourism on the environment or the effect of physical disasters on rich and poor countries. The range of fieldwork activities contributes well to pupils' social development.

173. The department makes good provision for fieldwork. Pupils have opportunities to carry out, for example, a weather survey and investigations into shopping in a number of locations. Recently pupils were also involved in the Wallasey Regeneration Competition in which they had to make a presentation analysing the growth and decline of New Brighton. Their work in this competition was "highly commended".

174. There is a clear emphasis in the department on improving standards and the quality of teaching. Strategies to improve teaching and develop pupils' thinking skills are being implemented consistently and are beginning to have a positive effect. A more consistent approach to improvement in Years 10 and 11 is less evident.

175. Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved in Years 7 to 9, particularly in the management of pupils' behaviour.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, particularly teachers' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Learning is good and some pupils are producing very good written work.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the subject are good.
- The leadership of the subject is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards and results in GCSE examinations should be higher.
- The process for keeping track of pupils' progress is under-developed.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

176. **Teaching and learning in history are good and this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.** Lessons are well planned and teachers are enthusiastic about teaching history. They motivate and encourage pupils to learn. High expectations and the good management of pupils' behaviour create a positive learning environment in lessons where pupils make good progress. Pupils show interest in their lessons and enjoy learning. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend learning.

177. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 standards are well below average but pupils make good progress and achieve well by the age of fourteen. Pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of history and the higher-attaining pupils produce some excellent pieces of extending writing on historical topics. The department's focus on developing pupils' writing skills is resulting in an improvement in the overall quality of written work. Pupils show an interest in history; for example, two Year 9 pupils produced a CD-ROM on how New Brighton has changed over time as their homework on local history.

+++ In a Year 9 lesson on the living conditions in Victorian cities the teacher used sources from art and literature to stimulate pupils' imagination in preparation for a piece of written work. The teacher's enthusiastic approach and helpful feedback encouraged the pupils to

write some very interesting descriptions of life in a Victorian city. The pupils showed appreciation of each others work and, at one point, applauded when one pupil's work was read out.

178. **Standards are average in Years 10 and 11 and results at GCSE have improved since the previous inspection. Overall achievement is good.** This is a result of good teaching. Pupils work productively in lessons although the progress of some pupils is limited by their poor literacy skills. In lessons pupils use historical sources to develop their understanding of the past and their discussions on topics such as the Great Plague and aspects of life in the American West show they have a good level of historical knowledge.

179. **The written work of higher-attaining pupils is often very good.** It shows their ability to explain, for example, aspects of the development of medicine in a clear and coherent way. The work of average and lower-attaining pupils shows a satisfactory level of historical knowledge and the facility to analyse historical sources. There is often less detail and more limited explanations in the work of lower-attaining pupils. The quality of work produced by pupils generally shows effort and care.

+++ In a Year 11 lesson on the Great Plague of 1665 pupils developed their understanding by interrogating source material and engaging in an ongoing discussion with the teacher. This stimulated their thinking and at the end of the lesson all pupils felt positive about their learning and thought they had made progress.

180. The well-structured lessons and adapted materials support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties who make good progress in lessons.

181. Good opportunities are provided for pupils moral, social and cultural development through studying such topics as slavery, child labour in the nineteenth century and medicine through time in different cultures. Good displays enhance the classrooms and celebrate pupils' work.

182. The leadership of the subject is good. The teachers work well together and share practice. Strategies to improve teaching and pupils' extended writing have been implemented effectively and have led to improvements in pupils' progress and standards. This area is to a degree under-developed, however, as insufficient planning is in place that requires teachers to keep track of pupils' progress.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- All pupils in Years 7 to 11 now receive their entitlement to religious education.
- Pupils in all years are achieving well.
- Teaching and learning are good
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work are below average.
- GCSE results are well below average.
- Marking is not linked sufficiently with the assessment system.
- The system of observing teaching to bring about improvement is not rigorous enough.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC tests & GCSE	N/A	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitude of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good

183. When pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 their standard of attainment is well below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Their standards improve so that by Year 11 they are closer to the average although still below it. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are better than those indicated by the 2002 GCSE short course results, reflecting improvements that the department has since made.

184. By Year 9 pupils have some knowledge about world faiths and apply what they know to everyday life, for example in a study of the causes and effects of crime. In Years 10 and 11 pupils explore personal and social topics with awareness. For example, they understand Christian and Muslim approaches to family life, evil and suffering, and starvation. Most pupils understand how religious belief shapes people's approach to life. Pupils' written work is not as good as their oral responses.

185. **In all years teachers emphasise the need for pupils to think about the subject rather than simply learn facts.** For example, teachers do not stop at teaching pupils what an Imam does but also require them to work out what qualities he might need. When a visitor spoke to a Year 8 class about life as a Muslim, pupils had previously prepared searching questions to increase their understanding.

186. **All the lessons seen were at least good with some being very good.** All teachers know their subject well. They use a range of methods to keep pupils interested. There is a good pace to lessons with strict time limits imposed on tasks so pupils keep their concentration. Above all, teachers set very challenging tasks. Most of these features appeared in a very successful Year 11 lesson.

+++ Pupils began by watching a video about a Christian aid agency. Well-planned questions focused them on the key features of the video with the teacher insisting on the correct use of technical terms such as 'long-term aid'. Pupils then wrote a page in the diary of an aid-worker based on what they had seen. The teacher checked their understanding from what they were writing and this allowed some discussion. Homework extended learning by requiring pupils to research a Muslim aid web-site.

187. **Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.** This is because teachers are aware of their needs and provide them with suitable work. There are occasions, however, when they are set the same work as the rest of the class and sometimes this makes too many demands of them. The high level of challenge ensures that gifted and talented pupils make good progress. The only pupil seen for whom English is not the first language copes well. The department is aware of the under-performance of boys compared with girls and has amended the syllabus in order to appeal more to their interests.

188. Teachers keep a satisfactory check on how pupils are doing. They use a system similar to National Curriculum levels. Pupils understand it and therefore know how much they

are improving. The marking in exercise books, however, is not linked to this system although comments are aimed at showing pupils how to improve.

189. **Pupils in all years now receive their entitlement to religious education.** This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Since that time teaching has improved and consequently pupils' achievement is better. Departmental leadership and management are much better: weaknesses have been identified and suitable actions taken. The department's plans now include the use of ICT to improve learning, and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Lessons are observed to improve teaching further but the system is not rigorous enough. There are not enough specialist rooms and this limits progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good management has led to the good improvement that has been made since the previous inspection and there is capacity for this to continue.
- Pupils learn well about how society works as well as learning technical skills.
- Good relationships in classes help pupils to learn.

Areas for Improvement

- Standards are not yet high enough.
- Pupils have difficulty describing their work.
- Work does not always stretch higher attaining pupils.
- Targets set for pupils are not always attainable.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in NC Tests and GCSE	N/A	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

190. **Pupils bring a real desire to learn to lessons.** They enjoy using computers and are very keen to learn about the ways in which technology changes the way we live. Pupils in Year 8 were interested to discuss how computer fraud could be prevented. They showed mature ideas about how measures to make credit cards more secure might infringe personal rights and freedom. Pupils in Year 10 wanted to know what National Insurance paid for when they were using a spreadsheet to produce pay slips. These very positive attitudes help them learn and lead to good relationships in class. Pupils know that lessons will be interesting

191. Although pupils talk about the subject with great enthusiasm, many have difficulty explaining their work both orally and in writing. This means that they often omit a great deal of important information from the work they produce for examinations. Teachers are aware of this but pupils need more reminders to include examples, to list advantages and disadvantages and to give reasons for their choices. There is not always enough time for teachers to help pupils with this. Low levels of numerical skills also hold pupils back.

+++ A Year 10 group had difficulties when working on a spreadsheet because they did not know how to calculate percentages.

192. Computer tests are used to check what pupils have learnt. However, these tests do not cover everything taught in ICT. This leads to teachers having inaccurate information on how well pupils are doing. As these tests also give targets for pupils to aim towards, some of these targets are too demanding. The school is now aware of this. Combining information from teachers with the test results will improve the quality of information teachers use and give pupils better targets.

193. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of achievement. The school is taking very positive steps to work with primary schools to help raise attainment. One teacher spends half a day each week working in primary schools. She uses computer programs primary schools do not have and also works with teachers to develop their skills.

194. All pupils in ICT classes are given the same work, even though they may be at very different levels.

+++ This leads to higher-attaining pupils not always being given work that challenges them sufficiently. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because they do the easier parts of the work and teachers spend time with them to help them learn.

195. Many pupils enjoy attending computer clubs at lunchtimes and after school. Here, pupils use computers for recreation, for continuing work from lessons (not just ICT) and for research. Good provision is made for pupils in Year 11 when 'coursework clinics' are held during school holidays. This allows pupils to work intensively on their projects and to gain additional help from teachers. Good provision is made for pupils with special gifts and talents, as when they spend a week at a residential centre working on computers for part of the time as well as taking part in outdoor pursuits.

196. The head of department was absent from the school through illness during the inspection. Since the previous inspection, he has introduced new teaching programmes. These are well suited to the needs of pupils. He has changed the examination pupils take in Year 11 to one that better fits the time available. He has introduced a very rigorous programme of monitoring teaching. Regular classroom observation means that good practice can be spread and any concerns swiftly tackled.

Basic Skills: contributions made by other subjects to pupils' competency in ICT

197. The use of ICT in all subjects is being developed by a group of teachers. Currently, good use of computers is made in religious education when pupils research the Internet to find out about the charity work of world religions. Pupils use computers to prepare presentations on projects undertaken jointly with history. Pupils use computers extensively in science. For example, they use computers to measure the rates of chemical reactions and use spreadsheets to analyse information about the solar system. Less use is made in other subjects. At the time of the inspection, insufficient use was being made of ICT involving mathematical understanding and the interpretation of information.

198. The school now has considerably more computers than it had at the time of the previous inspection. A very capable technician maintains these. However, too frequently, there are problems with computers because the workload is now too great for one technician. This leads to pupils not being able to use computers when teachers planned to do so.

199. The school has made good progress in training teachers in the use of computers and nearly all teachers have completed this training.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The leadership of the head of faculty is providing a clear sense of direction.
- Teaching and learning have improved.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of challenge for some higher attaining pupils is not sufficient.
- Marking should be used more consistently to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen:	Average	Average
Achievement over time:	Good	Good
Results in NC tests and GCSE examinations	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitude of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

200. Results at GCSE in French and German in 2001 were significantly below the national averages. Results for 2002 show an upward trend but are likely to remain below the national averages.

201. **In work seen, the standard of work of pupils in Year 9 is average. In the light of below average prior attainment, achievement is good.**

+++ Pupils show a readiness to learn. By the end of Year 9 higher-attaining pupils have a good range of essential vocabulary and grammar in French. Many are starting to use past and future tenses in their speech and writing.

202. In view of the delayed starting point in Year 8 for studying German, achievement is satisfactory, although their writing is less well-developed. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties are making good progress. They identify and understand accurately specific items of information from short extracts of French on familiar topics. They make brief but appropriate responses to their teachers with comprehensible pronunciation.

203. **The standard of work seen by pupils in Year 11 is average, sustaining good achievement overall.** However, not all higher-attaining pupils demonstrate good knowledge of vocabulary or sound understanding of grammar. Higher-attaining pupils speak well in situations controlled by the teacher but are not so confident when asked questions of a general nature based on previous learning. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties have satisfactory listening and speaking skills though their pronunciation is only approximate at times. In written work, there is an increasing range of vocabulary, grammatical expression and use of past tenses by higher attaining pupils. Lower attainers are developing well the basic language and structures needed for the Foundation level of the

GCSE and are making good progress. Standards of work seen in German were average and given pupils' prior attainment progress is satisfactory.

204. **Overall, teaching is good.** Lessons are prepared thoroughly and are clearly structured. The management of pupils is good. In most lessons, teachers provide a variety of appropriate activities which enable pupils to make good progress. However, with some groups of higher-attaining pupils there is the tendency to teach to one level and not to discriminate between individual pupils' needs. Marking of pupils' work is regular with good examples of positive, helpful comments by teachers to help pupils improve their written standards but this practice is inconsistent across the Faculty. There were some good examples seen of the use made of ICT to enhance pupils' language skills and the presentation of their work.

+++ One Year 7 class carried out a survey on pet ownership and used ICT to illustrate the results. This was the culmination of the prior use of pupils' language skills to arrive at the research figures.

205. The teaching of modern foreign languages is making a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills by encouraging them to think about language patterns and sounds.

206. The head of faculty has identified areas for improvement and is developing with colleagues a shared vision relating to the raising of standards. The faculty follows school's requirements for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and achievement, but pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do to raise their standards. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching is now consistently good throughout the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The good quality of specialist teaching ensures good learning.
- Pupils' very good attitudes in lessons contribute strongly to the progress they make.
- Pupils' achievement over time is good.

Areas for improvement

- Links between assessment results and curriculum development are not strong enough.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic.

	Year 9	Year11
Standard of work seen	Below average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC tests & GCSE	N/A	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

207. **Achievement over pupils' five years at school is good.** Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with standards well below the national average. By the end of Year 9, teacher

assessments indicate that standards have improved to below average. By the end of Year 11, overall standards are at the national average. In 2002, standards at GCSE were below the national average, but were well above the average for the school.

208. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. It is very good or better in half of the lessons seen. One excellent lesson was seen. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

+++ In an excellent and very exciting Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils with very low levels of prior attainment made very rapid progress in response to challenging tasks set by the teacher. Their vibrant and innovative group sequences were carried out using all the available gymnastic equipment. Spinning, rotating and twisting movements, inverted and erect balances, and weight transfers were carried out with enthusiasm and energy in a totally safe and secure environment. Pupils cannot yet successfully build extension into their movements and balances due to limited prior experience and knowledge. Good teaching is rapidly addressing this situation, and pupils are learning quickly and effectively.

209. Common strands of all the very best lessons are the clearly stated learning objectives which ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn, and the range of the methods used by the teachers to ensure that pupils know how they are going to learn.

+++ In a very good Year 9 girls' hockey lesson, pupils were fully engaged in learning by the clarity of the stated learning objectives which gave pupils a secure picture of what they were required to learn, and by challenging and progressive tasks and practices set by their teacher.

210. In all years, pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. They arrive promptly, listen carefully to guidance and instruction, and work with enthusiasm. Their levels of concentration are good, and are sustained by the variety of the teaching methods used. There are no variations in the rates of progress made by different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because the work set is thoughtfully planned and meets their particular needs well. The higher-attaining pupils make good progress because they are persistently challenged to improve the quality and precision of execution of their work. Most pupils apply their performance skills well in competitive game situations, and both girls and boys are effective participants. In GCSE lessons, pupils are well motivated, show good practical technique, have a good theoretical understanding, and are tactically aware.

211. The teachers are a well-balanced and experienced team who place high value on personal standards of behaviour, fair play, and commitment. This underpins pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement. A good range of open access extra-curricular activities, including rugby, gives pupils of all ages the opportunity to engage successfully in activities which will extend their skills and interests. Assessments are not yet linked to curricular development and the planning of teaching. The monitoring of teaching is carried out, but in an informal manner.

212. The department is taking steps to improve the development of assessment procedures since the previous inspection and in the use of the information on pupils' performance to secure improvements in standards. All other areas noted for development in the previous inspection report have been successfully tackled, including plans for enhanced facilities for physical education. Strengths have been maintained.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	33	*	0	*	0.8	*
Chemistry	9	22	*	0	*	0.3	*
Biology	12	58	*	0	*	0.8	*
Physics	5	80	*	0	*	2.0	*
Design and technology	5	80	*	0	*	1.0	*
Business studies	14	57	*	0	*	0.9	*
ICT	2	50	*	0	*	1.0	*
Physical education	3	66	*	0	*	1.6	*
Art and design and textiles	13	69	*	0	*	1.5	*
Music	5	60	*	0	*	0.8	*
Drama and theatre studies	8	100	*	12	*	2.0	*
Media studies	13	77	*	15	*	2.1	*
Geography	5	60	*	0	*	0.8	*
History	15	67	*	0	*	1.0	*
Law	2	100	*	0	*	1.5	*
Psychology	2	50	*	0	*	1.0	*
English language and literature	20	80	*	0	*	1.6	*
French	5	40	*	0	*	0.4	*

* National comparative data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	50	*	0	*	3.0	*
Chemistry	4	25	*	0	*	1.0	*
Biology	7	43	*	0	*	0.8	*
Physics	5	80	*	0	*	1.6	*
Design and technology	6	67	*	33	*	4.6	*
Business studies	5	100	*	0	*	4.0	*
ICT	5	100	*	0	*	4.8	*
Sports studies	2	100	*	0	*	5.0	*
Art and design and textiles	17	94	*	29	*	5.0	*
Drama and theatre studies	5	100	*	0	*	3.2	*
Media studies	6	50	*	0	*	1.6	*
Geography	2	100	*	0	*	5.0	*
History	3	100	*	33	*	5.3	*
Law	2	100	*	0	*	2.0	*
Psychology	6	67	*	0	*	2.0	*
English language and literature	16	94	*	0	*	4.25	*
French	2	100	*	0	*	4.0	*
General studies	34	59	*	12	*	2.6	*

* National comparative data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Intermediate	2002	School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	12	74	*	42	*	0	*
Leisure and tourism	4	100	*	50	*	0	*
Health and social care	7	57	*	14	*	0	*
Art and design	5	40	*	0	*	0	*
ALL GNVQ Intermediate	28	67	*	40	*	0	*

* National comparative data for results in 2002 are not yet available.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

NB: In the tables in the subject reports that follow, results of 2002 examinations for each subject are judged by inspectors using their professional judgement in relation to 2001 national averages. This is because actual 2002 comparative national data is not yet available.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and physics. The most recent results in both biology and chemistry were the lowest in the school. It was not possible to see a lesson of biology but a lesson in chemistry was observed. The teaching was well planned and questioning well used to get students to clarify their thinking. Students started from a low base of knowledge but made good progress in a lesson where their confidence increased in the use of orbital electron configurations.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject ensures clear explanations of new skills and concepts.
- The very good attitude of students helps them overcome difficulties.
- Teachers plan well to develop students' knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment is unsatisfactory; marking is not thorough and students' knowledge and understanding is not assessed regularly enough.
- Standards are too low; many students start the course with lower levels of skills and less knowledge than the course assumes.
- Teachers' questioning does not involve weaker students sufficiently.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in 2002 examinations	Well below average	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory	
Management of the subject	Satisfactory	
Care & guidance	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Insufficient evidence	

213. **The standards of work seen reflect the examination results and are well below average, although the progress students make in relation to their starting point on entry to the sixth form is satisfactory.** A high proportion of students begin the course with well below average standards. They have taken on a more demanding range of mathematical skills than they did in GCSE examinations.

214. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned; teachers clearly focus students' learning on the lesson objectives and how they fit in with previous and future work. Teachers explain new topics clearly to develop students' understanding.

+++ In a Year 13 class with 2 students, the teacher referred students regularly to the skills developed in previous work so that they could be applied to the work they were doing on differential equations. Questioning involved both students and the teacher ensured that students' skills were suitably reinforced at each stage of learning.

215. **The use of assessment is unsatisfactory.** Teachers' marking is not thorough and students' knowledge and understanding of work covered is not assessed regularly enough. As a result students are not kept well informed of how well they doing or what they need to do to improve their standards.

216. Teachers pose appropriate questions to develop students' understanding but sometimes not all students are involved. Some are reluctant to contribute due to their lack of confidence in recalling work developed earlier.

+++ In a Year 12 lesson about functions, the teacher focused too often on the responses of the higher-attaining students in the group who offered suggestions readily. The involvement of the other students was not targeted effectively to ensure that they understood well enough the techniques being developed.

217. **The achievement of students is satisfactory.** The take-up of the subject in 2001 was good and most students completed the AS course even though only about one-third were successful. Only three students continued to study the subject at A2 level. The positive attitudes of students ensure that they try hard even when they find some of the concepts difficult.

218. Teachers are well deployed to ensure that their strengths are used effectively. Results of previous examinations have been used effectively to review the modules taught. Lack of success with the mechanics module last year resulted in a change to discrete mathematics for the present Year 12 students. The future planning for the subject does not include priorities for the sixth form.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Very good teacher-student relationships lead to a constructive learning environment.
- Teaching and learning in lessons is good.
- Students' overall achievement is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work and examination results are too low.
- Students have weak self-study skills.
- The number of students taking up physics in the sixth form is low.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Well below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in examinations	Well below average	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good

Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
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Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Care & guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

219. **Teaching is enthusiastic.** Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding enables them to explain physical concepts clearly, and to build on students' previous knowledge. Very good relationships give an effective learning environment in which students are comfortable in asking for help when they feel the need.

+++ In a Year 12 lesson students were investigating the conditions for diffraction using water, radio and light waves. The teacher explained the aims of the lesson and the various activities in a clear and lively way. He questioned students on their previous GCSE knowledge and stressed the greater depth of knowledge required for AS level. Students worked through the activities with confidence at a purposeful pace. The teacher's awareness of some students' weak numeracy skills enabled him to provide structured support. Students made good progress in their understanding of diffraction.

220. **Opportunities for the development of practical skills are good.** Lessons are well planned and organised and students show positive interest, working conscientiously. A student with learning difficulties is well supported and is making appropriate progress.

+++ In a Year 13 lesson on Fields, students constructed a current balance, took measurements and plotted a graph of force against current in order to calculate the flux density. They worked confidently, carefully and in a focused way. Instructions were clear and the lesson was well planned and organised. The teacher developed students' understanding by stressing "think about what you are trying to find out".

221. In some lessons a slow pace limits learning. The teaching methods seen during the inspection involved whole-class teaching with insufficient opportunities for students to progress at different rates dependent on their learning needs. The higher-attaining students are insufficiently challenged in their thinking. Marking of written work is thorough but does not contain enough information to help students improve their work. Students have weak study skills and do not find it easy to work on their own out of lessons. The school is aware of this and teachers are generous with their time in giving extra lessons. Students have poor retention of facts, which means that they find it difficult to apply their knowledge. There is insufficient emphasis on reinforcement of knowledge with regular testing and review at the end of each lesson to consolidate their learning.

222. The A-level and AS examination results in 2001 were well below average. The standard of work seen in Year 13, however, is better than that shown by A Level results of previous years, which have been gradually declining. The overall achievement of students relative to their prior performance at GCSE is good. The retention rate during both the AS and the A Level courses is good. However, only about half the students from the AS course go on to study physics at A-level.

223. Assessment data is not used effectively to keep track of students' progress so that under-achieving students can be given extra support. The subject is well led but there is a need to identify specific strategies for further development in order to raise standards.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subject was the focus of the inspection. The school offers design and technology in this area. One lesson was seen. Results at A2 level improved slightly last year and were well below average in 2001. In design and technology in Year 13, overall standards are above

average. Achievement from entry into Year 12 is good and consequently portfolio work in Year 13 is of a good standard. Students are clearly making gains in their understanding of product design at this level. Students are confident in their manufacturing skills. They are appreciative of users' needs and are well able to discuss the suitability of designs.

BUSINESS

The focus subject for the inspection was advanced business studies, but intermediate GNVQ business was sampled. Results in this examination were average and this reflects good achievement in relation to students' standards on entry to the sixth form. In 2002 nine of twelve students gained the qualification and five achieved merits. In the lesson observed the majority of students made satisfactory progress and teaching was effective. Students have positive attitudes and the standards they achieve are average.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Students' attitudes to work are very good and contribute positively to their learning.
- Good planning reflects the learning needs of all students.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are not high enough.
- Learning opportunities outside the classroom are unsatisfactory and these need to be developed to give students more access to the workplace.
- Resources to support independent learning are inadequate and the library cannot provide the range of written and electronic materials to develop a proper awareness of the subject.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	AS	A level
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average.
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory.
Results at A level	Well below average	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory.
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory.
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good.

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory.
Management of the subject	Satisfactory.
Care & guidance	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory.

224. Although no national benchmarks for 2002 were available for comparative purposes, the performance of candidates in terms of A-E pass grades was broadly similar in 2002. Declining numbers do not allow for comparison of the performance of boys and girls. In both years, students performed less well than in their other sixth-form subjects overall.

225. **Standards of work seen are below average; this represents satisfactory achievement compared with students' starting point when they began in Year 12.** Numbers staying on to Year 13 within the subject are good.

226. During their study students become increasingly confident in their use of business terminology and have a satisfactory grasp of key concepts. Knowledge of topical issues, however, for example the impact of possible war in the Middle East on western economies, was unsatisfactory. In work scrutinised, limited use is made of real vocational contexts. There is a tendency for too much reliance on secondary sources in the limited range of research work undertaken. Only the highest-attaining students view the business world through the alternative perspectives of different stakeholders, for example in analysing a case study evaluating the business options for setting up an additional restaurant outlet.

227. Teachers know their subject well and support individual students. Lessons are mainly well prepared. Relationships are very good and maintain the momentum of working. There is careful use of questions but these are not always targeted to include the more diffident students. The pace of some lessons is slow and does not always take into account the range of potential within teaching groups.

228. Basic skills of numeracy are well taught, such as profit ratios and break-even formulae. There is an appropriate emphasis on speaking and listening. Teachers adopt effective strategies in ensuring comprehension.

+++ In a lesson dealing with the re-launching of mature brands in the confectionery sector, students made satisfactory progress in identifying ways in which companies could effectively extend product life-cycles.

229. Research skills are under-developed. Students need to be challenged by a wider range of course-work activities for assessment purposes. Use of assessment data to inform curricular planning is under-developed and the department as a consequence has still to produce and implement strategies to tackle under-achievement.

230. Attitudes to the subject are good. Students are keen to do well. There is good progression into higher education. When given the opportunity, students show interest and enthusiasm in working collaboratively. In discussions, students confirm that they feel well supported in their studies though access to resources. However, resources in the library were felt to be problematic in this subject. This means the development of students as independent learners is restricted.

231. There is clear planning of courses that enables staff to work coherently. Extra-curricular enhancement is planned for, for example in visiting speakers and links with local employers. This is insufficiently broad to support learning, particularly for those whose previous experience of the subject is limited.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on information and communication technology. No other courses were seen.

Information and communication technology

Overall, the provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students develop a very good understanding of how computers affect their lives.
- Students learn well from visiting speakers, residential programmes and links with the local community.
- Teachers and students work together very well.

Areas for Improvement

- Standards are not yet high enough.
- Students have difficulty writing about the work they have done.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to carry out their own research.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS level	A level
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results AS and A2	Below average	Average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Good
Care & guidance	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

232. The judgements about examination results above are based on very small numbers.

233. Students start the course with lower levels of attainment than are found nationally. This is because they have not had as much teaching in Years 10 and 11 as many students in other schools experience. Because of this, students say that they find the work in Year 12 much harder than in Year 11. Nevertheless, they are very pleased with their choices. What especially pleases students is that the teaching gives emphasis to the social and moral sides to the subject whilst not neglecting the technical skills.

+++ Very good evidence was provided when a Year 12 lesson started by the teacher asking students what they thought of a ban on mobile 'phones in New York. One student was visibly surprised to hear this. In this lesson the teacher also gave students a list of web sites which had news items which involved ICT. Students discuss such issues readily with the teacher, so developing their ability to support an argument. Students in Year 13 effectively learnt about computer systems by considering computer disasters. One example was highly topical: the failure of the computer system designed to speed the processing of asylum-seekers.

234. Students have difficulties describing their work with the detail the examination requires. Although, with prompting, students can evaluate their projects, they do not do this automatically. Although teachers regularly reminded them of the need to record every step as they solve a problem, students often forgot to do so.

235. A very relaxed, yet purposeful, atmosphere helps students feel at ease in ICT lessons, even when the work is highly challenging. This is brought about through the teachers' precise knowledge of the needs of individual students. Students value their teachers and will readily ask for assistance. However, students would develop the skills of

working on their own more if given greater opportunity. For example, Year 13 students were told exactly where to find information in a textbook when they were fully capable of finding it for themselves.

236. A major contribution to students' learning is the wide range of inputs to the course. **+++** During the inspection, the school's ICT technician helped students to learn about computer networks. The teacher amusingly and expertly adopted the role of a complete beginner in a very effective 'double act'. A speaker from a local university told students about the uses of computers in medicine and students learnt about the use accountants make of computers from a representative of the Local Authority. A residential visit to the Lake District combined effective development of computing skills with recreational activities that allow teachers and students to develop even better relationships.

237. Although students take the same number of modules in both years, they have more lessons in Year 13. This increases the pressure on students in Year 12, when most take more subjects and may be a reason for many students not continuing their studies for the second year. In Year 13, the allocation of time for the course is appropriate.

238. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection because students' progress is no longer unsatisfactory and their work is now at the expected levels.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subject was the focus of the inspection. However, sport studies advanced level and GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism were sampled. All four students taking leisure and tourism gained the qualification last year and two achieved merits. In the lesson seen students were working towards an additional Community Sports Leader Award. With excellent guidance from the teacher they planned and managed a five-a-side football competition with a group of Year 7 boys. The event was very successful and enjoyed by all taking part. During the next lesson the teacher structured a very effective self and group assessment of the activity that enabled all students to produce a coherent written evaluation of their contribution. Standards are above average and achievement is good. One lesson of physical education was sampled. As a result of very good teaching based on a range of methods, students gained a clear understanding of the complexity of the factors influencing trends in international sport. They learned about the range of different political imperatives found in East Germany and Australia, and the media driven financial largesse underpinning professional sports in the United States. Students made very good progress in the lesson. There was a significant improvement in the A2 results in 2002 and all 5 candidates passed the exam.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subject was the focus of the inspection. In 2002 four out of seven students gained the full GNVQ intermediate qualification in health and social care and one achieved a merit. At present there are 19 students on the course from the three schools in the consortium. It was not possible to see a lesson. Students' work on a case study of a client demonstrates that they successfully analyse health patterns into diet, stress, exercise and smoking and that standards are average. In relation to their GCSE results the students are achieving well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design, including textiles but lessons in drama and theatre studies, media studies, music and GNVQ intermediate art and design were observed. In 2002 all entries in drama and theatre studies passed A2 and AS level. Two

lessons were seen in this subject and illustrated the very good expertise of the teaching and the energy and enthusiasm that made it effective. Learning in sixth-form drama is very good and leads to very good achievement by students. A2 results declined in media studies but the AS results were an improvement on recent years. In GNVQ two out of five candidates gained the qualification. In the lesson observed teaching was good and students learnt well in the pleasant workshop atmosphere. Standards of work seen are below average. Examination results for 2002 reflect a similar picture although Year 12 students achieved better than those in Year 13. There were no students taking the A level examination in music in 2002, but four out of the five students taking AS level in the same year achieved a grade between C and E. In a Year 13 lesson observed, teaching and learning were good and both students made good progress in their understanding of composers' styles in writing for films, and in how to select and assemble information for an essay. Students relied too heavily on the teachers' analysis of the quality of sampled essay answers, instead of doing this themselves. Standards overall are below average but the quality of their instrumental performances are expressive. Good provision for art and design students on the GNVQ course is evident in the range of activities offered by the participating schools. Students enjoy meeting those from other sixth forms and also learn actively from visits such as the one recently undertaken to the Tate gallery in Liverpool. In the lesson seen however, not all students needs were fully met. With a three-hour provision lower-attaining male students would have benefited from more variety in the strategies used and higher attainers who admitted '*often being bored*' needed an extra challenge.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The achievement of students in fine art and textiles is good.
- The standards attained in painting and decorative textiles are above average.

Areas for improvement

- Students need to improve self-assessment skills in order to continue to develop the creative process they have been through.
- Students need to make a record of their creative journey in order to communicate more effectively with others, including the examiner.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards of work seen	Above average	Average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in AS and A 2	Below average	Above average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very Good
Management of the subject	Good
Care and guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good

239. Art and design and art textiles are strengths of the sixth-form provision. Students achieve well, often from a lower knowledge and understanding of art and design

processes on entry than might normally be expected. In 2001 results were above average for the higher A-B grades but this was not maintained in AS examinations in 2002.

240. Numbers taking the subject vary considerably year to year but most of those who start the course go on to complete it. Success in students' achievement is due to the quality of fine art and textiles teaching they receive. Pupils also benefit from the profiling records maintained by teachers, the support they receive from Aspire and the female art technician. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations. Art textiles teachers set exciting open-ended tasks which build on previous experiences but allow students to develop personal interests and draw on the work of contemporary artists and designers. Teachers plan learning experiences well, concentrating on individual student's needs.

+++ In an excellent painting and modelling lesson with Year 13 students, the teacher helped individuals acknowledge and come to terms with recognised personal problems such as time-keeping, planning and communication.

241. Gains in understanding improve learning. Students recognise the value to themselves and this understanding helps them to satisfy examination requirements. Where the teacher tries to help students too much rather than giving them the time to understand why they need to change, student resistance slows progress. This happened in a Year 12 lesson when all groups of students failed to recognise the importance of making a clear written account of research undertaken, and thought processes developed in producing their work. These students have yet to understand that communicating their ideas with the teacher and examiner is an essential part of the course requirements. One gifted and talented male student said 'I trust miss but I want to experiment more. I'm not ready to explain because I'm still working on ideas. I don't need to explain myself. I know what's in my mind....the examiner I suppose is different.'

+++ Later that day the same student demonstrated his excellent electronic animation, complete with his own sound track, of the ageing process using his own self-portrait. His teacher had explained to the viewer that the starting point had been the student's interest in Rembrandt's self-portraits. The viewer was disappointed to find no reference to this in the presentation. The student learned more about the importance of good lines of communication from this encounter with a real audience for his work.

242. Current students have gained considerably in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education from the active links that are in place with Hope University and their visits to the Liverpool Tate gallery. A past student of the school, who is now a practising graphic artist, regularly works alongside them. She has for example, raised interest in the use of ICT for graphic purposes but current resources limit further progress. Fewer male students take the course compared with females. The introduction of ceramics may help to redress the balance with male students often excelling in three-dimensional work but female students also benefiting from the new facilities. Sketchbooks are used well for recording observations or experimenting with materials. Too few students make regular notes of initial or developing ideas. As a result sketchbook pages show discrete activities rather than a clear record of the processes students have been through. Developing better records of their changing ideas is a first step towards understanding the need to communicate more effectively with others.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and psychology but a lesson in history was observed. In 2002 the results in history improved at advanced level and all three students passed the examination. Standards in Year 13 are below average but represent good achievement in relation to the students' GCSE results. In the lesson seen teaching and learning were good. Students used good resources to deepen their awareness of the various interpretations of Stalin's contribution to making the Soviet Union a modern state.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the subject which is used well to support students' learning
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are good
- Good opportunities for fieldwork are provided

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment
- The provision in lessons of more opportunities for students to engage in active learning and develop their oral skills
- Further development of the use of information on students' progress in planning and teaching

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Well below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in 2002 examinations	Well below average	Below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Care & guidance	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

243. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Activities in some lessons stimulate students' thinking and help them to organise their knowledge and understanding of, for example, the context and impact of the Kanto earthquake. Teachers' good knowledge of the subject is used effectively to provide explanations of difficult concepts and to develop students' understanding. Students are motivated and work well in lessons although some appear to lack the confidence to get involved in class discussions.

+++ In a Year 12 lesson on atmospheric circulation the teacher provided meaningful explanations, linked them to students' learning in other subjects and to students' own experiences. This helped to develop their understanding of some difficult concepts. One higher-attaining student responded very well and engaged in an interesting discussion with the teacher. He clearly used learning from other subjects to help develop his understanding of the topic. The other students were less confident and were less communicative for most of the lesson.

244. There is a significant range in the ability of students who study geography at both AS and A level and numbers of students taking the examinations are sometimes low. These two factors do have an effect on standards. Not all AS students go on to study the A Level course. The performance of students at AS level in 2002 is likely to be well below average. Only two students took the A Level examination in 2002 and both passed and went on to university to study geography. Overall the achievement of students is satisfactory.

245. The written work of higher-attaining students shows satisfactory knowledge and understanding of geographical topics such as population but ideas and explanations are often

not worked through in sufficient detail. There are some examples of good work from students including fieldwork. Lower-attaining students struggle with developing an adequate understanding of some topics that they cannot explain clearly. Marking does not always convey clearly to students what they should focus on to improve.

246. The department provides students with the opportunity to take part in a residential field course with students from other schools. This makes a very positive contribution to their sixth-form experience and contributes to their social development. The department has a weather station which is used to support the teaching of some topics.

247. Leadership gives a clear focus to raising standards and strategies are being put in place to achieve this but are not yet resulting in a significant improvement.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good this and helps the pace of students' learning, particularly on the AS course.
- Attitudes to learning are good and this has a positive effect on the standards that students achieve.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are not high enough.
- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are limited and this reduces the students' awareness of applied aspects of the subject.
- Induction arrangements are not sufficiently refined to meet the learning needs of those students whose attainment on entry to the course is below the national average.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Average.	Below average.
Achievement over time	Good.	Good.
Results in AS & A level	Well below average	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good.	Good.
Quality of learning	Good.	Good.
Attitudes of students to their work	Good.	Very good.

Leadership of the subject	Good.
Management of the subject	Good
Care & guidance	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Not applicable

248. GCE A Level psychology is a new course. Numbers taking the examination were very small in 2002 and no A or B grades were achieved. The candidate entry does not allow for meaningful comparisons between the performance of boys and girls.

249. These results represent good achievement when judged against the attainment of students beginning in the sixth form, which is well below average. The department should continue to check the appropriateness of attainment on entry to ensure that both the AS and A Level programmes match the aptitudes of students.

250. Retention rates are good. Induction arrangements are underdeveloped, though the majority of students interviewed felt they were adequately supported in their studies and welcomed the fact that staff gave freely of their time outside lessons. Students apply themselves well and persist with difficult topics such as experimental work dealing with memory and interference.

251. In the work seen, standards that students achieve are about average in Year 12 but below average in Year 13. This reflects the lower standards achieved by students at entry to the sixth form for the latter group. In Year 12, students have at least a satisfactory working knowledge of some of the principal debates in the subject, for example, nurture versus nature in cognitive development. Their evaluative skills develop steadily during this time and they become increasingly confident in their ability to test out a range of hypotheses including those associated with Holmes and Rahe's Social Adjustment Scale. At A Level, students begin to develop the skills necessary to undertake simple experimental work but progress in this area is restricted by lack of appropriate laboratory facilities and test equipment. Knowledge associated with ethical principles and the basis for these and the empirical practices relating to different approaches to research methodology is also not secure.

252. **The quality of teaching is good and the variety of activity and pace of lessons help learning to be effective.** Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. The good and positive attitudes of the students help them to achieve well and make progress from an insecure starting point.

+++ In a lesson dealing with stress, students were given good learning structures to deepen their understanding. Teaching approaches placed good emphasis on investigative skills. Students become increasingly aware of the need to produce conclusions based on evidence.

253. There are limited opportunities to deepen understanding through revision classes. Guidance does not focus sufficiently on career paths within psychology. Students are not given the opportunity to experience applied aspects of the discipline, for example within education and clinical fields.

254. There is a suitable vision for the development of the subject. The scheme of work at AS level is well articulated. There are no specialist teachers. This now needs to be reviewed if the department is to make further progress and continue to meet the needs of an increasing number of students.

255. Resources are poor and this disadvantages the learning of students. The money available for resources is insufficient. The library is inadequate and contains only one psychological text. There are no specialist rooms for the teaching of psychology and this severely limits opportunities for experimental work.

256. Psychology was not offered as part of the sixth form programme at the time of the previous inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English and French.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good so that all students in lessons make good advances in learning.
- Informative marking helps students to understand what is required in examinations.
- The average level of examination results improved in 2002.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results and standards in lessons are not high enough.
- Procedures for evaluating how well pupils make progress are inadequate.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	AS	A2
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in GCE A-level examinations	Below average	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Care & guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	satisfactory

257. **Set against their well below average levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form the achievement of students in English language and literature is good.** A Level English language and literature results in 2002 showed a marked improvement on the previous year but were still below the national average for 2001. No student achieved either an A or a B grade. Compared with their results in GCSE English examinations at the end of Year 11 students overall achieved a little below expected levels in the 2002 A Level examinations, but given the greater demands of the course most did well.

258. Work seen during the inspection is below average. Students enjoy their research work on spoken language and their grasp of linguistic terminology is consistently good. Original writing is also a particular strength. However, they show when talking in lessons that they lack confidence. Their range of expression is limited and they are not practised in making a case or pursuing an argument. In written work too, although students show good evidence of careful research they do not make the best of their material and even in Year 13 there are frequent examples of students making unsupported assertions in essays. Students do not always organise their notes effectively so that their folders do not provide good support when they revise for examinations.

259. Teaching and learning are now good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and are successful in giving students a secure grasp of what the course is about. Students quickly acquire a sense of responsibility for their learning. Teachers plan lessons well and are concerned that students should be made well aware of examination

requirements. Where students are fully involved in lessons the pace of their learning is better than when they are passive listeners.

+++ In a good Year 12 lesson students in pairs gave presentations to the rest of the group on their analysis of the language used in two extracts from writing by Roald Dahl and Lewis Carroll. They responded very well to the challenge and produced thoughtful results.

260. Students are very positive about the course and feel that teachers give them good information beforehand so that they can make a well-guided choice at the end of Year 11. They work hard to ensure that their notes are thorough and detailed. They particularly enjoy writing their own creative assignments. They have great respect for their teachers and feel that they are treated like adults. English language and literature is a popular choice for A Level study. However, staff changes last year led in Year 12 to higher levels of absence and more students than usual dropping out. Year 13 students were largely unaffected and all continued to the end of the course.

261. Teaching continuity was affected last year because of staff changes. The newly appointed head of department together with the teacher responsible for organizing sixth-form English have plans to improve the ways in which students' progress is traced and supported. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the previous inspection although examination results have not improved.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- There is effective assessment of the individual student's needs.
- The student has a very positive attitude.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities are needed for the student to speak at length

Summary of key inspection judgements

	AS	A Level
Standards of work seen	Above average	N/A
Achievement over time	Good	N/A
Results	N/A	below average
Quality of teaching	Good	N/A
Quality of learning	Good	N/A
Attitude of students to their work	Good	N/A

Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Care and guidance	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

262. Over the last three years, 12 candidates have been entered for A Level, nine of whom successfully gained grades D or E. Although getting reasonable grades, students did not get the higher grades and consequently the average points scores over this period have been consistently below the national averages. Results for 2002 show 100 per cent A-E success for the two A Level candidates, with one C and one E grade. There is currently one student taking the AS course in Year 12 and there are no candidates in Year 13.

263. **Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average.** The student engages confidently with good pronunciation in open conversation, although he could be given more opportunity to speak in French at length. He responds appropriately to unpredicted questions and has a good range of vocabulary. Achievement at this stage in the sixth form course is good. The student is beginning to come to terms with discussing abstract topics. He is reading and understanding texts from a wide range of sources. He is using the Internet well in order to carry out independent research into coursework topics and is coping well with the demands of extended writing. There are some weaknesses in the use of tenses but most mistakes arise from attempts to use more complex structures.

264. **The teacher has a good command of the language and sets an appropriate challenge to the student by using French extensively during the lessons.** High expectations are reflected in the insistence on grammatical accuracy. The teacher knows the student well and has a very good understanding of the student's learning needs. Consequently, the student is aware of his own strengths and weaknesses. He responds with interest and is working hard to make progress and to achieve success.

265. There is a clear well-planned scheme of work. The transitional stage from GCSE to AS is carefully planned to cater for the student's needs; these are supported with good resources.