

INSPECTION REPORT

SPENNYMOOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Spennymoor

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114300

Headteacher: Mr K J Hall

Reporting inspector: Roy Hedge
2932

Dates of inspection: 17th – 21st March 2003

Inspection number: 254215

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 19 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Whitworth Lane
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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr F Walker

Date of previous inspection: 24th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2932	R Hedge	Registered inspector		Teaching and learning The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils or students taught? How well is the school lead and managed?
9424	J Cassidy	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30702	P Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11044	J N Hedge	Team inspector	English - Post 16 Special educational needs English as an additional language	
30512	V M Bailey	Team inspector	Science Physics - Post 16 Chemistry - Post 16 Educational inclusion	

11969	J Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology Business studies - Post 16	
29972	J W Webster	Team inspector	Geography	
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education	
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design	
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	
1210	W S Walton	Team inspector	Physical education Community links	
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	Modern Languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
23393	B Dower	Team inspector	English	
2458	A Hamilton	Team inspector	Sociology - Post 16	
3755	T Hulbert	Team inspector	Psychology - Post 16	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average comprehensive school of 705 boys and girls with a sixth form of 103 students. The standards reached by pupils by the time they enter the school in Year 7 are below average. In some years standards on entry are well below average. An above-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportions of students with special educational needs and for whom statements of special educational need are maintained are broadly average. The proportion of students of minority ethnic heritage is very low and none is at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school has Technology College status. There have been staffing difficulties in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a sound school. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form are all below average but pupils' achievements are satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and in the sixth form. Achievement at the end of Year 11 is good in comparison with similar schools. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at all stages though there are some areas of weakness. Leadership and management have not been sufficiently closely focused on raising standards through planned improvement in provision, but the new senior team, led by a new headteacher, has good plans in place now to take the school forward. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development and good provision for their care and guidance. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and learning are good: pupils make good progress in most lessons.
- The new senior team is well led by the headteacher and has the vision, determination and skill to succeed.
- There is very good care and concern for the wellbeing of individual pupils, whatever their needs and difficulties, based on good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Provision for ICT and religious education is very good.

What could be improved

- Provision for modern foreign languages and for music is not good enough.
- There is still much to do to implement plans for driving up standards.
- Boys underachieve in comparison with girls in many areas.
- More needs to be done to drive up standards of literacy and improve pupils' ability to speak fluently and at length about their work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Standards are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection in February 1997 and are not, at present, rising as quickly as they are nationally. This may in part be explained by a decline in standards pupils are at when they enter the school in Year 7. Boys still do much less well than girls. The quality of teaching is now better: there is less unsatisfactory teaching than there was. The school has responded well to the key issues for action following the last inspection. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very much better and meets requirements. Lesson planning has improved. Senior managers have now established clear plans for raising achievement. These need to be fully implemented to ensure that departmental managers play a full and committed part in driving up standards further. Provision for collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form still does

not meet statutory requirements. The school has not improved enough since the last inspection but the new senior team are capable of achieving substantial improvement in the future.

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	D	D	D	B
A-levels/AS-levels		D	N/A*	

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

*National comparison data for 2002 are not yet available

In national tests in 2002 at the age of 14 standards were well below average in English, below average in mathematics and average in science. This represents satisfactory achievement overall because standards on entry to the school three years earlier were below average, and the standard of pupils' verbal skills was well below average. In comparison with similar schools (*schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals*), results were average overall, below average in English, average in mathematics and well above average in science. Girls did much better than boys. Results over the last three years rose less than they did nationally.

In 2002, results in GCSE were below average but above the average of similar schools. Again, girls did very much better than boys. These results show that pupils' achievement was good; however, there are pockets of underachievement amongst boys. Governors set challenging targets which were not met. Results rose less than they did nationally. Results in art and design, business studies, mathematics, design and technology and geography were average; those in other subjects were significantly below national averages. In modern foreign languages standards were well below average. Standards in religious education were above average.

In 2001 (*national comparisons not yet available for 2002*), results in AS and A Level examinations were below average. Female students did much better than male students, though this is not always the case. The best results were in sociology and English literature. Results improved in 2002.

Standards seen during the inspection largely matched examination results from 2002, though standards in geography were above average. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are below average and many pupils have particular problems with speaking with skill and fluency about their work. Boys often try less hard than girls and their achievement suffers as a result. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, especially in ceramics, where they produce imaginative and technically advanced work

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. In most lessons pupils work well, though boys are less determined than girls.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in most lessons is good, though there are some challenging pupils, mostly boys, who disrupt lessons in the earlier years unless teachers manage them very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Most pupils develop into mature and sensible young people with a keen awareness of others.

Attendance	Average.
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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 since the previous inspection and are good at all stages. Around a quarter of all teaching is very good and occasionally excellent; teaching is good or better in six lessons out of ten; only about one lesson in twelve is taught in an unsatisfactory way. Where teaching is unsatisfactory it is almost always because teachers have failed to manage challenging pupils well enough for there to be satisfactory learning. Even in some lessons where teaching is good, some pupils, particularly boys, do not work hard enough. In the best lessons, in study skills with Year 11 or in mathematics lessons in Year 7 with higher-attainers, teachers achieve much better work and concentration from pupils by breaking down the lesson into a series of demanding, timed tasks. Many pupils enter the school with poor skills in writing or speaking about their work and limited determination to succeed. Teaching needs to address these issues with vigour from the beginning of Year 7. English teaching is good. Teachers are expert, plan carefully and know their pupils well. Even so, in a minority of lessons there is not sufficient intellectual challenge to enable the highest-attainers to make the progress of which they are capable. There is good teaching of literacy skills in English, but across the curriculum too many opportunities are lost to allow for good progress in pupils' abilities to write and speak with confidence and skill about their work. There is some very skilful and demanding teaching of mathematics in the early years, particularly to higher-attainers. In some mathematics lessons pupils are not managed sufficiently well to allow for good progress. Mathematics teaching is satisfactory overall. Science teaching is good and some science lessons are planned to make a contribution to pupils' literacy skills. Again, in a very few lessons, boys are not managed well enough. Elsewhere, teaching is generally good. There is very good teaching in religious education. In modern foreign languages there is some very good teaching of lower-attainers, but overall teaching in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory; as a result pupils make inadequate progress and achievement is unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, ICT, and physical education. History and music teaching are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and learning support assistants make an important contribution to learning. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good and is appreciated by the students. There is excellent teaching in sociology, as a result of which students do very well. Even so, across the sixth form as a whole, students do not work hard enough outside lessons and teaching needs to focus in a more concentrated way in raising pupils' aspirations to work independently.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. National requirements are met except that there is no provision for religious education in Year 12. There is good provision for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 and a satisfactory range of extra-curricular provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Provision has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is good academic support in lessons and in the specialist department.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The programme for personal and social education contributes well. There is good provision for moral education and social development, not least through the schools insistence on civilised values and behaviour. Provision for spiritual education is satisfactory and is supported well through assemblies and religious education. There is

	satisfactory provision for cultural development.
Aspect	Comment
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. There are high standards of care and very good management of behaviour and attendance. Checking on and supporting academic progress is satisfactory but form tutors are not sufficiently involved.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents think well of the school and relationships are satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. The new headteacher and senior team offer good leadership in planning strategies for raising standards by improving provision. Not all of their plans are yet embedded in what the school does. Heads of department are not sufficiently rigorous in their efforts to raise standards and they are not supervised well enough; the quality of teaching is not checked carefully enough to support improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. They support the school and know it well. Statutory requirements are met except for daily worship and religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Results of tests and examinations are not used rigorously enough to illuminate strengths and weaknesses or provide support for pupils. A start has been made and there are plans for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial management is good and financial plans are directed at achieving good value for money and improving provision. Best value is consistently sought in spending. Levels of staffing and resources and the quality of accommodation are satisfactory, except in music.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has high expectations of pupils. • Pupils make good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • Teaching is good. • The school is approachable if there are problems. • Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not always enough homework. • There is a limited range of activities outside lessons.

Parents think highly of the school and inspectors largely agree with their positive comments. Although the school does expect much of pupils, inspectors believe that there should be a more consistent attempt to encourage pupils, especially boys, to work harder when they first arrive and in the sixth form in particular. The range of activities outside lessons is somewhat limited, but is satisfactory.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Spennymoor sixth form is smaller than most. There are currently 103 students following one or two year courses. The number staying on has increased slightly although less than half of last year's Year 11 students chose to stay into Year 12. The sixth form takes a very small number of students from a neighbouring school. The sixth form aims to offer an inclusive curriculum tailored to meet the needs of its students. A good range of academic subjects is offered at AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A2 (Advanced) level as well as a number of vocational courses. Most students choose to take four AS courses or a combination of AS, VCE or GNVQ in Year 12 reducing to two or three A2 courses in Year 13. Small numbers of students are following a light timetable consisting of only one subject, possibly including a resit course. Most students complete their course although some leave part way through the sixth form to take up jobs with training. Fewer than half of students completing two year courses go into higher education. Smaller numbers go into further education and into employment. A very high proportion of students have part time jobs. There is one student with special educational needs and none with English as an additional language. There are very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Standards at the start of Year 12 are below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education. Results in advanced examinations have declined since 1999 but showed a slight improvement in 2002. Standards of work are below average and students' achievement overall is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is good: some is excellent. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of students and offers several subjects which attract very small numbers. There are few enrichment opportunities for students. The sixth form is cost effective.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in sociology and the standards students attain are excellent.
- The flexible curricular arrangements to meet students' needs.
- The positive views of students.
- The quality of personal and social support for students experiencing difficulties.

What could be improved

- Academic support provided by tutors is not rigorous enough.
- Many students, in particular males, do not use their free time productively.
- There are too few opportunities for enrichment: the tutorial programme does not cover personal and social education. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for RE.
- There is too little checking on the quality of teaching and to ensure that courses are properly planned.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Teaching is good and students learn well. Students' progress is hindered by weaknesses in algebra. Achievement is satisfactory.
Chemistry	Good. Results improved significantly in 2002. The subject expertise of teachers leads to good teaching and learning and students' achievement is satisfactory.
Physics	Satisfactory. Examination results have been well below average but improved in 2002. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but weak mathematical and independent working skills contribute to the underachievement of some students.
Business Studies	Good. Standards are below average. Good teaching enables students who begin the course with low attainment to achieve satisfactorily.
Art	Satisfactory. Standards are average and achievement satisfactory. Students' practical skills are good although understanding of the importance of analysis through drawing is below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students do not work hard outside the classroom.
History	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although there is some underachievement in Year 12, students' achievement is generally satisfactory.
Sociology	Excellent. Results at A2 were well above the national average in 2001 and were higher in 2002 when nearly three-quarters of students gained the grades A and B. Teaching is excellent with several outstanding features. Students achieve very well.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Teaching secures sound progress in Year 12 when the subject is new but there is insufficient challenge for more able students in Year 13. Standards are improving.
English Literature	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well given their starting point.

Teaching and learning in subjects that were sampled were at least satisfactory. Good teaching was seen in most subjects. Achievement is generally satisfactory. There is, however, a measure of underachievement in some subject areas in part because students do not work hard enough outside lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Academic support and guidance are not satisfactory. There is too little rigour in the advice students receive about how to improve their attainment. They are not given enough help to make the best use of their time outside lessons. Teachers, tutors, and head of sixth know students well and very good support is given to students experiencing personal difficulties.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership is satisfactory but management requires greater rigour. Pastoral support and guidance are very good and effort is made to provide courses to suit each student's needs. The role of tutors is not clear and should be more fully developed. The head of sixth is aware of what needs to be done and has made significant progress in tackling some of the issues. Provision for enrichment including the tutorial programme is narrow. There is too little checking on the quality of teaching to help improve standards.

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"> Teaching is good and teachers are approachable for help. The small size of teaching groups They feel comfortable and enjoy the social context. Good support is given to students who have personal or social problems. They are helped to study independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment experiences. Some students do not feel well advised about future career options. Some students feel that supervised study periods would be helpful.

Students are positive about the education they receive. The inspection team agreed with some of students' views.

The inspection found:

- the range of enrichment activities is limited;
- students are well supported when they apply to university but have to use their own initiative to get good access to a careers advisor;
- additional guidance on the use of non-contact time including additional tutorials would be very helpful in raising standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Results of national tests taken in Year 6, and the range of tests administered by the school indicate that students arrive in Year 7 at a standard which overall is below average. In some years, particularly in literacy, standards are well below average. There are particular problems with literacy. Very many pupils have difficulty with speaking at any length about their work. As they progress through to Year 9 their achievements are sound, but standards remain below average. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, standards in English were well below average, representing a fall from previous years, but satisfactory achievement given that literacy standards were well below average for these pupils at the end of Year 6. In mathematics standards were below average and in science they have consistently been average in recent years. In comparison with other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals standards were average overall, below average in English, average in mathematics and well above average in science. Girls did better than boys by a greater margin than is the case nationally. Results overall have not risen as much as is the case nationally.
2. Observations made during the inspection indicate that standards overall are below average by Year 9. In science, art, design and technology, geography, physical education and ICT standards are average. In religious education they are above average because of very good teaching. They are below average in English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and music. Achievement overall, though, is satisfactory.
3. GCSE results, as measured by annual points score, have not risen in-line with the national trend. Results in 2002 were below average but above the average of similar schools, that is schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes at Grades A* to C was also below average, and fell short of the reasonably challenging target set by governors. The proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE pass at grades A* to G was average in comparison with similar schools and the average of schools with similar standards at the end of Year 9 two years earlier. Results in 2002 were similar to 2001. Higher-attaining students achieve well. Double the proportion of girls achieve at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C as do boys, principally because they work concentrate harder and participate with more confidence in lessons and work harder in their own time.
4. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average in geography and religious education. In English, mathematics, science and music, standards are below average; in art, design and technology, physical education, and ICT they are average and in modern foreign languages they are well below average because of shortcomings in the quality of teaching and leadership. There is some outstanding work in ceramics by pupils with learning difficulties. Achievement is good overall.
5. Pupils enter the school with very poor literacy skills and standards of literacy remain weak in all years for many pupils. In some subjects pupils are not able to adapt their writing to the varying demands of the curriculum because opportunities for writing are limited. Apart from the work of the most competent pupils, writing lacks fluency and the number of older pupils who have problems with spelling, punctuation and grammar is

high. Reading standards are better and most pupils can read aloud accurately. Pupils' ability to speak at length about their work, with fluency and understanding, is very underdeveloped. This lack of skill, coupled with considerable lack of confidence, especially among boys, inhibits learning. Pupils find it difficult to learn from one another in discussion and lack the confidence to reflect and re-consider, or to develop the skills and appetite for independent learning. In many subjects and all years, their long-term progress is hindered in this way. Much teaching compensates by avoiding concentration on group or paired discussion, which improves the apparent pace of lessons, but has insufficient impact on the problem in the long run.

6. Standards of numeracy are below average though higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 reach a high standard. Older pupils use more subtle statistical ideas well, analysing and displaying data appropriately. In design technology and in science, however, the use of numeracy is mundane and needs some improvement. In science, for example, pupils are generally competent in drawing appropriate graphs but need more practice in applying and rearranging formulae. In this area some pupils lack confidence.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. Of 16 pupils in Year 8 who entered the school reaching level 3 or below in English in national tests, 13 had progressed by at least one level by the end of the year. Of 32 pupils in Years 10 and 11 who entered the school at a similar level, 25 had improved by at least one level by the end of Year 9. The 13 pupils on the special needs register in Year 11 in 2002 averaged five passes at GCSE. There is little difference in the achievements of boys and girls with learning difficulties. Progress in lessons is good but would be improved further if greater attention to literacy and numeracy featured in the practice of all teachers. There are no areas in which achievement is unsatisfactory. Achievement is very high in ceramics in Years 9, 10 and 11. These pupils with learning difficulties produce imaginative and technically accomplished work of a very high standard.

Sixth form

8. A level results were below average in 2001 but were better in 2002. Female students did very much better than males, though this is not the case every year. Results in sociology were well above average in 2001 and in 2002 seven out of the ten students gained passes at grades A or B. Results in English literature were above average in 2001 and in 2002 six out of nine students gained passes at grades A or B.
9. These results represent satisfactory achievement overall. Students enter the sixth form at a standard which is below average. Boys' standards do give some cause for concern. Many students, particularly boys, do not work hard enough. Many waste considerable amounts of time in school outside their lessons. Some students are also hindered in their progress by a reluctance or inability to talk with fluency and skill about their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils attend regularly and have positive views of their experiences and learning opportunities. The school uniform code is complied with, creating a clear sense of identity and a positive image of the school. Attitudes overall are good, though some pupils do not work consistently hard. Boys in particular are sometimes content to work at a leisurely pace and are sometimes reluctant to allow others to identify them as working hard or with enthusiasm. This limits the standards some pupils reach.

11. Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. At busy times there is some minor bumping and barging at bottlenecks and on narrow corridors but this is well managed and creates few problems. In lessons, behaviour is generally good. Disruption is rare, but the school has some challenging pupils who need firm management. In some lessons where teachers do not manage pupils well, learning can be interrupted. This is most common with boys in Years 8 and 9. Pupils do sometimes behave in an unacceptable way and 64 of them, mostly boys, were excluded on a temporary basis in the last full year before the inspection. There were four permanent exclusions in that period but none in the current year.
12. More serious misbehaviour in the form of bullying or other oppressive behaviour is rare and where it occurs the school manages it well. In lessons pupils demonstrate a consistent ability to relate to the experience of others in a mature way. In a Year 7 religious education lesson, for example, pupils were able to achieve a real understanding of what pilgrimage to Mecca means to Muslims. They show very good respect for the feelings and beliefs of others, most obviously in religious education lessons.
13. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are generally very good. Teachers treat pupils with consideration and respect and pupils respond very well. Pupils' personal development is very good. By the time they reach Year 11 and the sixth form, most pupils have developed into responsible and mature young adults. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities in school. There is an increasingly active school council which gets involved in a variety of decisions and actions. The council has its own budget which helps it tackle problems, and publicise charitable events.
14. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all aspects of the life of the school. They respond positively to the respect shown them by teachers who know them well. Their relationships with teachers are very good and they appreciate the encouragement they receive and recognition of their efforts. Consequently they work hard. The ability of these pupils to maintain concentration and involvement in French in Years 7 and 9, for example, is very good. Year 10 pupils repay the confidence shown in them in science. They work confidently and independently with a well- developed sense of responsibility and attention to safe practice. Pupils working in ceramics in Years 9 and 11 gain considerably in self-confidence from the very high quality of what they achieve.
15. Attendance is broadly average. On a typical day over nine out of ten pupils are in school.

Sixth form

16. Students are positive about the sixth form. They speak well of their studies and say that they enjoy their time in the sixth form. They particularly appreciate the small size of teaching groups, the access they have to teachers and the good relationships with them. They enjoy the friendly and social ambience provided by the common room. Indeed, when inspectors checked, about four times as many students were socialising in the sixth form area as were studying in the working areas. Many do not recognise the considerable effort required of them if they are to be successful in their studies and do not work hard enough outside lessons. They do not take opportunities for independent research to widen their knowledge and understanding. Students, often male students, do not participate at all confidently in discussion and recognise their own lack of assurance. Some students, however, do work hard and independently in some subjects, and when given opportunities to participate generally respond well to

the challenges with which they are presented. In an excellent sociology lesson students were keen to express their ideas but also ready to listen to and consider the views of others. Students taking English literature were often to be found at computers working on essays during the inspection.

17. There is a sense of community in the sixth form. Students generally respect the sixth form facilities and help to keep them in reasonable order. The range of enrichment activities is not great but some students do take part in activities outside lessons, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Community Sports Leader Award. A few serve the school community well, for example by helping younger pupils as mentors or by coaching football teams.
18. Attendance at school is generally satisfactory even though most students have part-time employment. Punctuality to lessons is less good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good at all stages. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching is now good in all years. Of the lessons with Years 7 to 11 observed during the inspection, only about one in twelve was taught in an unsatisfactory way. In six lessons out of ten teaching was good or better and in about a quarter teaching was very good or excellent. As a consequence of this good teaching, pupils made good progress in six out of ten of the lessons observed during the inspection with Years 7 to 11.
20. The school has a significant number of challenging pupils but they are generally well-managed in lessons. Lessons are carefully planned and discipline is good. Many students arrive in Year 7 at a standard which is well below average. Many, particularly boys, have difficulty in concentrating, literacy standards for many are well below average and there is a reluctance or inability to speak fluently about work. In spite of these difficulties, teachers' skills mean that behaviour in lessons is generally good: students concentrate and work hard. They make progress. Even so, discipline is not always sufficiently firm, especially with boys in Years 7 to 9 and inspectors saw a number of lessons where learning was unsatisfactory because teachers were not able to establish good concentration and focus from their pupils. Even in some lessons where teaching is good pupils, again mostly boys, work at a leisurely pace and are often reluctant to appear to be trying hard. Many pupils lack confidence in their own ability and do not readily volunteer answers to questions, which hinders progress. This is particularly true of boys. Girls concentrate better and focus on their work with more determination. As a result, they achieve much better. In the past few years, disaffected boys have underachieved in GCSE examinations. Learning is at its best where teachers plan lessons which are broken down into a number of short tasks which pupils have to attack with some pace. Teachers need to work hard and collectively to impress upon pupils from their first days in the school that it is necessary to work with concentration and determination if they are to achieve well.
21. English teaching is good. Teachers know their subject well and establish productive relationships in lessons. Pupils are managed well and pupils' attitudes are good. In some lessons the work is not challenging enough for higher attainers, so the progress they make is unsatisfactory. There is good teaching of literacy skills in English but there is insufficient focus on raising the quality of pupils' writing, and more especially their ability to talk fluently and at length about their work in most other subjects.

22. Teaching and learning in mathematics are satisfactory. In the best lessons there is good planning and considerable intellectual challenge for pupils who are fully involved in lessons often based on probing and stimulating questions. As a result, pupils are drawn into these sessions, their attitudes are very good and they make very good progress. However, in some lessons, where some pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes are not effectively challenged by teachers, learning becomes unsatisfactory. Where pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory it is usually boys who cause some disruption and this slows down learning.
23. Teaching and learning have improved in science since the previous inspection. Most lessons are stimulating so pupils work hard and make good progress. Objectives for lessons are clear and pupils understand them. Teachers use their subject expertise to good effect with clear explanations. Literacy skills are developed well and teachers emphasise the correct use of key scientific words. In a very few lessons the challenging behaviour of a small number of boys is not sufficiently well-managed, though mostly discipline is good.
24. The quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is reasonably consistent. Teaching and learning are very good in religious education, based on excellent subject knowledge on the part of the teacher, imaginative use of a variety of teaching methods and high expectations of what can be achieved. As a result, progress in lessons and achievement over the long term are very good. Teaching is good in art, design and technology, geography, physical education, ICT, and citizenship. History and music teaching are satisfactory.
25. In modern foreign languages for Years 10 and 11 teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils do not make enough progress in lessons. Many pupils under-achieve because teaching is not firm enough and does not expect high standards from them. This applies in particular to pupils of higher attainment who are not yet confident in speaking or understanding French. By contrast, lower-attaining pupils in these years achieve well because firm teaching, well tailored to their needs, ensures that they learn fast. These pupils are fairly confident, for example, in saying in French which foods are good or bad for their health, and why. With other younger pupils in modern foreign languages teaching and learning are satisfactory.
26. Throughout the curriculum teachers plan their lessons carefully. They give considerable thought to ensuring that the work they prepare is appropriate for students at different attainment levels. Higher-attainers are generally challenged in lessons and many achieve well in GCSE examinations.
27. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Teachers know pupils well and relationships are good. Teaching responds well to pupils' learning needs and in some subjects, for example physical education, has regard for very specific needs. Learning would be improved if all teachers took greater account of individual education plans (IEPs) in meeting individual needs and of the need for a general improvement in standards of numeracy and literacy. Co-operation between teachers and learning support assistants is good. In an ICT class, for example, it ensured the full inclusion and good progress of a Year 9 pupil with considerable learning difficulties. Some very well-structured and demanding teaching promotes excellent learning with Year 10 and 11 pupils with learning difficulties in ceramics. The learning support assistants know pupils well and fulfil their support role well in lessons. Overall the quality of their work is very high. They run catch-up groups for pupils for whom literacy is a problem and their knowledge of the requirements for this work is very good. They establish a challenging but secure environment in which pupils are confident and readily produce their best

work. Very imaginative and challenging teaching which makes excellent use of a range of teaching aids results in very good learning in modern foreign languages in Years 7 and 9 and in study skills in Year 11. Teaching is supported well by individual literacy booklets and there is a very informative handbook about the different needs of pupils and methodologies to meet them.

Sixth form

28. Teaching is good in about six lessons out of ten and very good or excellent in about a quarter. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching. As a result students make good progress in lessons. Excellent teaching in sociology promotes learning very successfully. Sociology teaching is very well planned and organised and very demanding. Students respond appropriately. They are determined to achieve well and work hard. There is good teaching and learning in mathematics, chemistry, business studies and English literature. There is satisfactory teaching in physics, history, art and psychology.
29. Despite this generally good teaching and the good progress made in most lessons, achievement is only satisfactory. This is because many students, particularly males, do not work hard enough outside lessons. Teaching needs to focus more closely on setting demanding, challenging expectations of what students might achieve.

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

30. Since the previous inspection the school has put right the main areas of reservation about the curriculum. This is particularly true of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties who now enjoy a good range of experiences by way of an alternative curriculum from the age of fourteen.
31. Overall, the school provides all pupils with a satisfactory range of learning experiences up to the age of sixteen. In their first three years in the school pupils study all subjects of the National Curriculum. ICT is taught as a separate subject, or element of a course, up to the age of sixteen though there is insufficient time for the subject in Years 9 to 11. Nevertheless, all pupils have acquired a good range of computer skills by the time they move to the next phase of their education, or into the workplace. All pupils follow good courses in religious education and personal, social and health education. Appropriate to its status as a technology college, the school makes good provision for the teaching of design and technology. Pupils can choose between a wide range of technology subjects, including textiles and product design, which they are required to continue up to the age of sixteen.
32. Pupils who are good at mathematics in Years 7, 8 and 9 are extended so that they are undertaking some of the work normally covered in the year above. These “fast-tracked” pupils will take the first part of the GCSE examination in Year 10. This is spurring them on to work hard and achieve well. In science lessons pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are doing an interesting course in developing their thinking skills.
33. Pupils who have proved themselves to be competent at learning French in Year 7, nearly half the year group, start German as a second language in Year 8. As at the time of the previous inspection, this arrangement is still proving to be unsatisfactory. The time allowed for French is split between the two languages and is not enough for these pupils to make good progress in either one. Because of this very few choose to continue with German into Year 10 and there are currently no pupils doing both

languages after the age of fourteen. In geography pupils would benefit from opportunities to go off the school site to do fieldwork and see things at first hand in Years 7 to 9, though there are good opportunities later.

34. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is good and provides well for the needs of all pupils, even those who have become disaffected with conventional subjects. Pupils who are capable of a straight academic curriculum follow a course of GCSE subjects. They have the option of dropping some subjects and taking up new ones such as business studies and child care. The school is aware of the need to make the curriculum at this level even more flexible by allowing pupils to choose a combination of academic and vocational courses. Pupils who are keen to pursue their physical education to a higher level would benefit from a GCSE course beyond the basic programme that everyone follows.
35. Pupils who struggle with a purely academic programme continue with the main subjects but also do more vocational courses such as leisure and tourism, business or child care at a foundation level. Some of these also spend time at a local college on practical or manual courses. The focus with these young people is more on preparing them for the world of work and equipping them with essential skills for life and they report that their motivation and enthusiasm for learning has improved. In this respect the school is catering well for its pupils.
36. Provision for students with special educational needs is largely in mainstream lessons and is supported by the grouping of pupils according to their levels of attainment for lessons. Groups catering for those with the greatest need are often small and the system works well. Good progress is made in small-group sessions – three lessons each fortnight – for pupils in Years 7 and 8 with low test scores, which concentrate on literacy and numeracy. Lessons include both classroom activities and the use of computer software, which helps to maintain pupils' concentration.
37. There is extra support for pupils with learning difficulties through sessions in registration times targeted on specific weaknesses, confidence-building work in lessons and at lunchtime and some withdrawal of pupils from English lessons for individual help. Older pupils benefit from a weekly lesson using specialist computer software, for ICT coursework or for support in other subjects. There is good use of the inclusion unit to provide for pupils with short-term problems and to reduce the level of exclusions.
38. The good practice which exists in English for helping pupils whose literacy skills are weak is not consistently applied by all subject areas. In ICT strategies to improve literacy standards are very well planned and implemented and pupils are encouraged to present and discuss their work formally in class. Such good practice does much to improve speaking skills. Science makes a significant contribution to raising literacy skills through the provision of writing frames and prompt sheets to support pupils in recording experimental reports and investigative coursework findings. Pupils have many opportunities in religious education to discuss the beliefs of others and to talk at length about a range of social, moral and spiritual issues. Such good practice is not universal, however, and opportunities are often missed to improve literacy standards. In one subject, for example, written work was poorly structured and no provision was made to correct it. In another, pupils' poor command of technical vocabulary was inadequately addressed.

39. The expectation in the school's literacy policy is that all teachers will develop those skills in their teaching and that good practice will be recognised and shared throughout the school. The literacy co-ordinator has worked hard to implement the policy. Training sessions have been organised for teachers and through her informal contacts with departments and her work in lessons she has done a great deal to raise the profile of literacy in the school. She does, however, need the support of a more formal checking mechanism to ensure that there is a consistent approach by all teachers to improving standards of literacy and that practice is reviewed and evaluated regularly.
40. The school has appreciated the need for a common policy for teaching numeracy across the curriculum. There has been some training for all teachers and this has had a positive effect in some departments. The best practice is in ICT where there is clear awareness of the importance of numeracy learning and this is incorporated into most lesson plans. In geography there is also good practice and pupils in Years 7 to 9 are confident in displaying data in a variety of ways. Overall, the issue of teaching numeracy has been addressed appropriately and shows some good practice but still needs further development.
41. All pupils follow a very good programme of personal, social and health education which includes aspects of citizenship and careers education. The course is led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who contributes, alongside year managers, to the teaching. Its clear aims have been translated into comprehensive and well-designed schemes of work which are regularly reviewed and updated. These give very good guidance for teachers and suggest interesting and diverse activities for lessons but there is flexibility for teachers. A Year 11 lesson, for example, was switched to a helpful session on time management designed to support the urgent need to help pupils complete GCSE coursework. Sex education, drug abuse and personal development are strong elements and the course is enriched by visitors and outside agencies. Pupils' achievement is regularly assessed. Monitoring of lessons would ensure greater consistency in the programme's overall effectiveness. Careers education increases in prominence from Year 9. The careers advisor contributes to the taught careers element incorporated within the wider programme. She is regularly available to offer individual counselling and interviews all Year 11 students. Two week work-experience opportunities are well established. The provision for careers education is good.
42. The range of extra-curricular activities is good when judged against the school's circumstances and is regularly reviewed. The school is part of the Out of Hours network which has its own evaluation procedure. The physical education department is a strong contributor across age ranges both for boys and girls, with an emphasis on team sport. Opportunities in music are developing. Pupils who take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award carry out service in the community and expeditions as part of their award. The school is introducing a more co-ordinated approach to lunchtime activities, particularly the availability of ICT. Homework and revision clubs support academic work. Others offer recreational pursuits or enrichment. The Drama Club, for example, has written and is rehearsing an anti-bullying sketch for use in assembly.
43. The school makes very good use of the local community for pupils' benefit. This is true, for example, of pupils in Year 10 and above who have many contacts with businesses and other organisations in the community in the course of vocational programmes and through work experience. There are very strong links with business people in the area who make regular visits to the school to talk to pupils about the world of business, to interview pupils for work experience placements and even to act as mentor-advisers to pupils in Year 10. Relationships with the police, fire service,

hospitals and drug support groups are also very good and result in frequent contacts with professionals who share their expertise with pupils of all ages.

44. In the same way, the school has very strong connections with other schools and colleges. A good relationship has been forged through the joint bid for technology college status with the other secondary school in the town, and they share curriculum projects and meet to discuss them. This partnership extends to primary schools with whom the school has direct ICT connections, giving them technical support and keeping in regular contact both actually and "virtually". Children from the primary schools, therefore, are thoroughly familiar with their next school by the time they join in September.
45. Each year group has three assemblies each fortnight which are led by senior staff including year managers. Topics covered during the inspection included "loving one another", topical issues and "working with others", but little attempt is made to involve pupils in their delivery. Opportunities to reflect and occasional prayers made them valuable occasions but they were neither acts of worship nor frequent enough to satisfy statutory requirements. Daily tutor time is often poorly used and there is no unifying element to these two corporate activities.
46. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but relies heavily on the very good contribution of religious education, the prolific displays of students' art work, many of which reflect an awareness of spiritual values, and on assemblies. Year 10, for instance, was moved by the personal story of a teacher whose father had been a stretcher-bearer in the war. Earlier in the term the school had responded to the death of a pupil bringing comfort and solace to classmates and friends united in grief. In a different way, the atmosphere and sense of expectancy with which a Year 7 class received replies to their letters to pupils at a French school and their subsequent realization that so much of their different lives had overlapping elements were impressive.
47. The provision for pupils' moral development is good and builds from the example set by staff and the code of behaviour published in pupil planners. It is strengthened by a positive system of rewards and a programme of personal and social education lessons which engages pupils in moral issues and gives them the opportunity to explore conflicting viewpoints. Moral questions are often considered in other curricular areas, as in a Year 7 English class where the reading of *Oliver Twist* led to a discussion of its social setting. Significant sums are raised by charitable events and the pupils support five children in underdeveloped countries through Action Aid.
48. The provision for pupils' social development is good. School visits strengthen relationships as do activities like the study skills day for Year 11, the technology day for Year 7 and the many competitions organised by the design and technology department. Social development is particularly strong in physical education and in the special educational needs department, which works hard to develop the confidence and self esteem of lower-attaining youngsters. One member of each form serves on the school council whose influence is boosted through its delegated funding. Others act as librarians, stewards at parents' evenings or are involved with the induction and support of new pupils.
49. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Awareness of pupils' own cultural heritage comes through several curricular areas and knowledge of other cultures is gained especially in geography, where they are taught to reflect on cultural differences and the impact of new technology on society and cultural life both nationally

and internationally, and in religious education and art, the latter's contribution strengthened by its links with Japan. The school promotes ethnic understanding and tolerance through its assemblies and the religious education programme. The school has made some progress towards the inclusion of multi-cultural issues in schemes of work in other subject areas.

Sixth form

50. The sixth form offers a broad curriculum that caters well for the needs of its students. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects which can be continued at AS and A2 level, students can take sociology, psychology, business and economics and a choice of four vocational courses leading to intermediate and advanced qualifications. The curriculum is now broader and more relevant to sixth form students than it was at the time of the previous inspection. There is now good equality of access by all students. The amount of teaching time for each subject is slightly lower than is usual in most schools. Those students interviewed were happy with the courses they had chosen.
51. There is a very narrow range of additional activities beyond these subjects. Small numbers of students attend programmes to improve their key skills and some choose to take general studies at AS level in Year 13. Work experience was recently arranged for all students. A small number of students take part in the community sports leaders award but timetable arrangements limit take-up. The introduction this year of a fortnightly programme has strengthened study skills in Year 12 and careers guidance in Year 13 but wider coverage of personal and social education remains thin. Small numbers of students increasingly choose to be involved with the main school through coaching and take responsibility for school teams: some are trained as counsellors and work with younger students as part of the school's anti-bullying strategies. For most students, however, there are too few opportunities to exercise responsibility or show initiative to support social development. Outside these areas there is very little provision through the curriculum for most students to broaden and enrich their experience. There is no regular session of recreational sport and the school does not offer a course in religious education in the sixth form. In this respect it is not fulfilling its statutory obligations. In Year 12 students take either three or four AS level subjects, or a vocational subject. Many of them have more than a third of their school week not in lessons. By their own admission, some of these students find it difficult to make best use of this time and would benefit from more guidance on how to study productively.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The quality of individual care for any pupils experiencing difficulties is very good. The school tries very hard to meet pupils' needs and is reluctant to exclude pupils, preferring to work as long as possible to maintain pupils' education.
53. Procedures for monitoring and managing behaviour are very good. Tutors, year managers and senior staff work hard and successfully to maintain good relationships based on mutual consideration and respect between pupils and staff. There is a clear code of conduct which is firmly maintained. The school takes a very strong stance against bullying and has the services of a project worker who is able to spend time with victims and perpetrators to work towards the long-term solution of problems. School policy is applied effectively in the few instances that occur and involves parents, children and staff working together.

54. Sanctions for inappropriate behaviour can include admonishment, detention, removal from class through fixed term to permanent exclusion. An internal inclusion unit is in its third year of operation and works with individuals (with full parental involvement and consent), who have been assessed as likely to benefit from close working on behaviour and attitudes whilst maintaining normal curriculum activities. In this way it is hoped to continue educating and assisting students to overcome behavioural problems. A system of awards for work, effort and behaviour is used effectively to recognise and reward achievement by pupils.
55. Health and safety issues are addressed systematically and effectively by regular review, involving staff and governors. Matters requiring attention are carefully considered and appropriate remedies applied. Staff take their responsibilities seriously and are quick to intervene if they detect a potential problem.
56. A senior member of staff has overall responsibility for child protection issues, including liaison with external agencies. Guidance is given to staff, including those new to the school, through an appropriate mix of documented policy and training. Year managers are involved and aware of specific cases where close monitoring is required.
57. Checking on pupils' academic performance is satisfactory, but is much less well-developed. The role of the form tutor has not involved this responsibility. As a result, there is insufficient focus by tutors in their work on reviewing pupils' overall progress and suggesting ways forward for pupils so that they can improve the standards they reach. Tutors do not maintain good information about pupils' past academic record, or use analysis of assessment data to enable them to work with pupils to help them improve. A more robust approach to this aspect of the tutors' role would help in the drive to raise standards. The arrangements for monitoring the academic performance and welfare of pupils with special educational needs are strong and much improved since the last inspection.
58. The recent designation of a member of staff to monitor attendance and make early contact with parents of missing or late children is already paying off in increased attendance and better understanding of the causes of poor or non-attendance. Through close working with the educational welfare service, inroads are being made into tackling the more difficult problem of systematic or parentally-condoned absence. Early analysis indicates that there have been worthwhile gains at both the individual and school levels, with successful re-integration of some students who might otherwise have become completely disaffected.

Sixth form

Assessment

59. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Assessment is closely linked to examination requirements and students' progress is checked through coursework and examination questions. Their work is regularly and accurately assessed and students are given good feedback on their progress and how to improve. There is particularly good marking and feedback in chemistry, psychology and in English. In business there are very good systems for checking on students' achievement. Students value the feedback they are given and are comfortable in approaching teachers for additional help.
60. There have been some very recent and positive developments in the use of assessment data to help check on students' progress. Data to predict the grades

students should achieve are given to subject heads and one-to-one reviews of progress and opportunities for setting targets by students and their subject teachers are held twice in each year. These systems are quite new, in need of further development and are not yet part of established practice. As yet not all teachers are convinced of the value of assessment data or understand how to use it to guide their planning. Predictions are not yet entirely reliable and in psychology, for instance, are often higher than the work seen would suggest. Students are aware of their predictions which are based on GCSE results and performance on the course and say they find their reviews useful.

Advice, support and guidance

61. Students value the informal support and advice they receive from teachers who know them very well and have a genuine interest in their welfare. Most students found the information and advice about course opportunities provided before they joined the sixth form helpful. Advice about alternative provision is satisfactory and as a result of guidance procedures only a small number of students renegotiate their course programmes at the beginning of sixth form work and most follow the course through to examination. Most students agreed that they were helped to settle well in the sixth form. In discussion Year 12 students said they felt that their post-16 options had been presented to them fairly although the demands made of them by teachers vary.
62. Too little time is allowed for tutors to meet with their students. Although some good academic support and guidance in one-to-one review was observed during the inspection, in the main tutors do not have enough opportunity to get to know their students or use available time well. Tutors do not, for instance, provide an overview of attainment and progress in students' reports. Many students are unaware of the demands of sixth form work. They work well in lessons but in many subject areas they do not make effective use of time outside lessons to both extend and consolidate learning. Some students have a great deal of non-contact time which they do not use effectively. There is not enough guidance or supervision to help students make the best use of their 'free' time. The quality of academic advice and guidance of students does not adequately support them because teachers, and particularly tutors, do not check rigorously enough on the progress students make in all their subjects and agree strategies to help them. The newly introduced programme of personal and social education for both Years 12 and 13 is so far limited mainly to careers issues and does not adequately provide for study skills and personal and social education. Some students felt they were not advised well about their future options. They have access to careers advisers and up-to-date reference materials but have to use their own initiative to get access to a careers advisor. Students felt well-supported when they apply to university.
63. Arrangements to check on students' attendance are satisfactory. Punctuality to lessons is less good. Sixth form tutors check on attendance daily and have records of students' study leave. The head of sixth form follows up concerns if students are underachieving because of poor attendance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The school's aims clearly indicate a desire to work in partnership with parents. One third of parents who returned pre-inspection questionnaires, and who attended meetings with the inspection team were supportive of the school, and felt it was improving.
65. Letters from school keep parents informed of events and give information about school life. The school works hard to ensure that the information is presented in a style likely to appeal to parents so that the letters are read and understood. Information about the curriculum for parents is clear and comprehensive. Reports to parents about pupils' progress are generally satisfactory and provide information on attainment and targets, and commentaries on achievement and potential.
66. Parents are kept well-informed of arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and of any changes which are proposed for them. They receive copies of all individual education plans and may comment on them. They are informed of the outcomes of all reviews and are invited to attend the annual reviews of pupils for whom statements of special educational need are maintained. Parents usually attend these meetings. The school maintains good contact with parents where it has any cause for concern and parents are encouraged to inform the school of changes at home which may affect pupils. The co-ordinator attends all parents' meetings and seeks to meet the parents of all pupils with learning difficulties.
67. Some parents help out in school, in assisted reading sessions for Year 8 children for example, and in working directly with Year 9 children who have misbehaved. Pupils with special educational needs are well-supported by parental attendance at reviews.
68. The school has a revived parents' association which helps build relationships, engages in fund-raising and provides a social forum. There are fund raising activities in school which involve students and staff in raising monies for the school and external charities.
69. Parents think well of the school and relationships with parents are satisfactory.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. Overall management is satisfactory. A new headteacher has joined the school in the last year. In addition, the leadership team has been reorganised and new appointments have been made. The new team is led well by the headteacher; its members have complementary strengths and the blend of vision, determination and skill to make successful, substantial improvement to provision in the future. Planning is now good and focuses attention clearly on strategies to raise standards by improving the quality of provision. Very good priorities for development have been identified. Financial planning is good and supports plans for improvement effectively. There are good systems for ensuring good value for money in the school's spending.
71. These plans are beginning to change what the school does to improve achievement. Last year's GCSE results were analysed carefully to identify areas of underachievement. There is extra help for pupils likely to be at the borderline of grades C and D at GCSE. Good strategies such as revision weekends and days set aside for completing coursework are aimed at raising standards. More generally, the school is reviewing the structure of its day, the curriculum for Years 10 and 11, has taken steps to improve discipline in lessons and is introducing the national strategy for Key Stage 3.
72. Even so, there is still much to do. The quality of direction and supervision of heads of department by senior staff is not sufficiently robust. In modern foreign languages and

music, leadership and management have not been effective and too little has been done about this by senior staff in the past. Plans for the line-management of heads of department need to be given effect as soon as possible. Overall, heads of department are not yet taking enough responsibility for standards and quality in their departments. There is too little checking on the quality of teaching in order to identify and improve ineffective practice or share and learn from excellence. The school is only just beginning to use assessment data effectively. Recording data from national tests and examinations has been haphazard and little analysis was done or used until this year. Steps have been taken to rectify this situation. At present, though, not all heads of department routinely analyse assessment data about their pupils in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision or to guide and improve the quality of support for individual pupils.

73. Governors play a satisfactory part in leading and directing the school. They are well-informed and supportive. In the main they carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively and work closely with senior staff, though the requirements for daily worship and religious education in the sixth form are not met.
74. Provision for special educational needs is well managed and the co-ordinator provides clear leadership and direction. Changes made since the last inspection have brought improvements in the quality of learning and progress, though, as yet, teachers do not always take enough account of IEPs in their lesson planning. Communications in the school are very effective and the co-ordinator is very sensitive to changes in the needs of individual pupils. There is a very close working relationship between members of the department. Provision fulfils statutory requirements. The Code of Practice is well-established, documentation is complete, personal files are well-kept and reviews are well-informed and up-to-date.
75. Overall the school is appropriately and adequately staffed with qualified teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum though there are barely enough teachers for physical education. There have been some staffing difficulties in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages in the recent past but these have largely been resolved. Departments are satisfactorily resourced except that in music the workstation for GCSE and A level work is unreliable and with insufficient computing power available. Accommodation is satisfactory except that there is only one classroom and no practice rooms for music.

Sixth form

76. Overall, the leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students are positive about their experiences. Standards overall are below average although in most subject areas students make good progress in lessons and achieve satisfactorily by the end of their courses. About half go on to higher or further education. The pastoral support and guidance of students are very good and considerable effort is made to provide a range and combination of courses to suit each student's needs. The head of sixth form provides energetic and highly committed leadership. He knows students well and has their confidence. He is aware of the present shortcomings and has made significant progress in tackling them. There is, however still work to be done. The present arrangements for academic guidance of students do not serve all their needs. The role and responsibilities of tutors are not clear and as a consequence their approach is inconsistent. The tutorial programme is not yet properly developed and does not cover study skills. Many students do not use their free time productively and most importantly, they do not have a clear understanding of the demands of work at sixth form level. There has been considerable effort to improve the range of enrichment

activities but even so provision is narrow. Despite the clear evidence of students' success in some subject areas and lack of success in others, there is too little checking on the quality of teaching in order to support and encourage good practice or to improve weak areas to raise standards. Overall, there is a need for greater rigour in the management of the sixth form to make students fully aware of the demands that successful sixth form education makes of them.

Resources

77. Accommodation for the sixth form is good although the study room is in need of refurbishment. Students have a large, bright common room and a small room where careers information is held. There is plenty of space for students to use for private study as well as a number of networked computers. Some students make good use of computers in a nearby teaching room and on the library corridor. The library is a pleasant place for students to work but is used as a teaching area. The number and range of books to support advanced work are inadequate. Departmental resources are satisfactory for teaching sixth form courses.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. The school now has plans in place to improve the quality of provision and drive up standards. Senior staff and the governing body should persevere in the full implementation of these plans. In particular, they should:

- (1) ensure that provision for modern foreign languages is improved by:
- carefully monitoring the quality of teaching in the department and offering support and training to ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well;
 - supervising and improving the quality of leadership and management of the department in order to establish consistent dedication to raising standards;
 - making sure that pupils have a fuller experience of the language they are studying through the use of ICT.

(Paragraph numbers 4, 25, 136 – 142)

and ensure that provision for music is improved by:

- supervising and improving the quality of leadership and management of the department in order to establish consistent dedication to raising standards;
- making sure that courses are properly planned so that achievement is raised;
- making sure that pupils are assessed against the objectives of the National Curriculum for music and that pupils know how to improve;
- improving the quality of accommodation and resources needed to carry the subject forward.

(Paragraph numbers 75, 143 – 146)

- (2) ensure that plans to raise standards are carried through into the consistent practice of the school. In particular:

- that there are clear systems in place for the supervision of heads of department, to make sure that the leadership and management of subjects are consistently focused on strategies to improve pupils' achievements;
- that tutors are also fully involved in reviewing the progress of their pupils and helping them to improve their work;
- that all teachers consistently use analysis of test and examination results to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and also to inform the advice and support they give to individuals and groups of pupils;
- that there are robust systems in place, in which heads of department are fully involved, for checking on the quality of teaching and taking steps to guarantee improvement.

(Paragraph numbers 57, 72, 91, 97, 102, 106, 123, 142 and 146)

- (3) ensure that all departments plan carefully to raise the quality of boys' work and standards of attainment, principally by raising expectations of what they might achieve and how hard they should work.

(Paragraph numbers 1, 3, 9, 92, 94, 100, 103, 136 and 153)

- (4) work to raise the levels of confidence and ability of all pupils to learn through writing and speaking fluently and reflectively about their work by:

- fully implementing the National Key Stage 3 Strategy;

- planning for all departments to concentrate more closely on giving pupils opportunities to improve the quality of their thinking through discussion so that they can shape and challenge ideas;
- creating many more opportunities for students to speak or make presentations at some length so that they become more confident.

(Paragraph numbers 5, 21, 38, 39 and 89)

Sixth form

- (1) ensure that the role of sixth form tutors includes the responsibility for careful academic support and guidance for their students;
(Paragraph numbers 60, 62 and 76)
- (2) ensure that students are appropriately guided to make best use of their free time to improve the quality of their work and their capacity for independent study;
(Paragraph numbers 16, 29, 76 and 173)
- (3) improve the quality of the wider curriculum so there are better opportunities for enrichment and religious education beyond students' examination courses;
(Paragraph number 51)
- (4) ensure that there are robust systems in place, in which heads of department are fully involved, for checking on the quality of teaching and taking steps to guarantee improvement.
(Paragraph numbers 72, 76 and 210)

Assessment of special educational needs

79. Assessment arrangements were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Now they are a strong feature of the school.
80. The co-ordinator has close links with partner primary schools and is fully aware of the known special needs of pupils entering the school. This information, together with the results of national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 and tests administered by the school on entry provides a good basis for determining the initial needs of new pupils. It informs decisions about the make-up of special groups to receive additional support, especially for literacy and the allocation of the time of the learning support assistants. All pupils for whom statements of special educational need are maintained and those needing support beyond what the school can offer alone have IEPs. Where the co-ordinator considers it will be helpful, other pupils receiving school-based support are also provided with IEPs. These plans are of good quality. They are user-friendly, provide a good picture of a pupil, set out sensible, realistic targets and appropriate methods to achieve them. All teachers have copies of IEPs and of the register of special needs.
81. Teachers may refer pupils who give cause for concern to the co-ordinator at any time. Support assistants prepare weekly reports on pupils and there are daily discussions of arising issues by the special needs team. IEPs are provided for new pupils during their first term in the school. Staff are invited to comment on IEPs and encouraged to report progress and problems. IEPs are reviewed twice yearly. All pupils are given work, effort and behaviour grades each term that are analysed by year managers who work with the co-ordinator to provide information about pupils on the register and others who cause concern. Pupils are involved in the reviews and target-setting process and they make a contribution to assessment of their progress. Annual reviews of pupils for whom statements of special need are maintained are properly conducted and well-informed. Parents and pupils attend these reviews, together with educational psychologists, local education authority support staff and careers advisors as appropriate.

Links with the community

82. The school has established a number of links with outside agencies which enhance educational opportunities for pupils or pupils in other schools or members of the community.
83. In-line with expectations of schools with technology college status, links have been made with the other local secondary school and 15 primary schools. These have enabled the development of the use of ICT through networked provision, improving access to an expanding body of information and training for teachers. A learning shop has been provided in the town, primarily to give advice and guidance about careers and educational opportunities. It has extensive ICT facilities that are completely supported by school ICT staff and is networked to the secondary schools, two primary schools and special schools in the town. In addition to guidance, it offers ICT courses, from basic to advanced. Most are staffed by the local college but the school does provide staff where necessary. In addition the school has taken membership of *CISCO Academy* which is now financially self-supporting. One-year courses, staffed by the school, are offered on two evenings each week primarily for sixth form students and unemployed local people.

84. The school has been involved with secondary schools in a neighbouring town to develop a network to improve sharing of good practice. This scheme is now to be extended on a county basis.
85. A computer link with a local youth centre enables the school to contribute to educational programmes for long-term excluded pupils in the area, such as the use of dedicated software to improve literacy.
86. Close working with local businesses brings benefits in the organisation of work placements, activity days, careers information and mock interviews. About 20 business people work as mentors with pupils in Years 10 and 11 with the aim of improving confidence and raising aspirations. The school is currently working with small businesses to organise a technology challenge project for Year 9 pupils. The school has also been very successfully involved in the Young Enterprise scheme.
87. There are close links with local colleges which aim to improve the range of possible study for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Eight pupils are attending college for one day or a half day each week following vocational courses. About 30 pupils from each of Years 10 and 11 attend vocational taster courses at a local college for a half day each week.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	126
	Sixth form	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 - 11

Number	7	28	43	39	6	3	0
Percentage	5	22	34	31	5	3	0

Sixth form

Number	1	9	20	13	1	0	0
Percentage	2	21	45	30	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 to Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	705	103
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	162	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 to Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	143	3

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	1.2

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	59	47	106

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	31	32
	Girls	29	29	34
	Total	50	60	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (59)	57 (57)	62 (67)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (31)	33 (37)	28 (34)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	27	42
	Girls	36	24	37
	Total	62	51	79
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (56)	48 (62)	75 (61)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (19)	31 (31)	24 (23)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	16	23

	Average point score per candidate	7.6	14.1	12.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4

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	701	66	4
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	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: Years 7 - 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.84
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

Education support staff: Years 7 - 13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	293

Deployment of teachers: Years 7 - 13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.1
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Average teaching group size: Years 7 - 11

Key Stage 3	24.9
Key Stage 4	21.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
	£
Total income	2,389,696
Total expenditure	2,374,632
Expenditure per pupil	3368
Balance brought forward from previous year	105590
Balance carried forward to next year	120654

Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	705
Number of questionnaires returned	193

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	50	9	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	42	53	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	53	11	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	53	18	5	0
The teaching is good.	31	56	5	1	6
I am kept well-informed about how my child is getting on.	33	51	11	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	47	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	40	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	28	54	13	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	35	50	4	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	53	7	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	37	19	4	13

Totals may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils learn well in lessons because of the predominantly good teaching. • There has been an improvement in the standards of work seen compared to what was attained in national tests and examinations. 	
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards attained in national tests and examinations are too low. • There is insufficient rigour and a lack of consistency in the approach to improving accuracy in pupils' writing and their confidence when speaking. 	

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in NC Tests and GCSE	Well below average	Well 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	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since previous inspection	Satisfactory

88. Teaching and learning in English are good. Pupils are learning well in lessons because the recent staffing difficulties have been overcome and there is now stability and continuity in the teaching. This accounts for the improvement in standards seen in lessons compared to recent results in national tests and examinations. It is also the reason why the progress seen in lessons was better than the satisfactory levels of achievement over time. Teachers have a good command of their subject and plan lessons well. Relationships with pupils are strong and effective classroom management provides the framework for pupils to display positive attitudes and good behaviour. Teaching would be even better in a small number of lessons if there were more effective provision for the learning needs of the more competent pupils. A Year 10 poetry lesson was seen, for example, in which copying and colouring were the fare for such pupils and as a result they were not challenged sufficiently. There needs to be a consistent and rigorous approach to tackling the weaknesses seen in many pieces of writing. Too little attention is given in lessons to addressing the lack of confidence of many of the pupils when speaking in formal situations. There is no significant difference in the relative progress made by boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over time.
89. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 9. Pupils have improved their ability to write in a range of styles for varied purposes. Standards of writing remain below average, however, because the work of all but the most competent pupils is marred by inaccuracies of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils enter the school with very poor reading skills but they progress well and by Year 9 they are understanding increasingly difficult texts. Speaking skills are not so well developed and remain below

average because pupils lack confidence and so are not fluent. Listening skills are satisfactory and at expected levels because of the good behaviour.

90. Achievement continues to be satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have developed their analytical skills and this is reflected in their work on the set texts. Their extended writing is well-organised and by Year 11 they are able to present and support their views effectively. The standards of work seen by the end of Year 11, although below average, are an improvement on what was attained in the 2002 examinations. Weaknesses remain in the accuracy of some of the writing, however, and there are still some pupils whose speaking skills are not at expected levels.
91. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department has managed the subject well during the period of staffing difficulties. There has been improvement since the previous inspection in developing pupils' listening skills and in the use of computers for research and for drafting and presenting writing. The management of pupils' behaviour has also improved and there is not the disruption which was seen in some lessons during that inspection. Leadership of the subject would be better if there was a stronger sense of unity and common purpose. Teachers are working hard but at times in isolation from each other. They need to be brought closer together to address in a consistent and concerted way the weaknesses in pupils' writing and speaking.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is good learning in the lessons taught by permanent specialist teachers. • The learning by high-attaining pupils, especially in Year 7, is very good. 	
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient use of computer facilities within the subject. • Assessments of pupils' work are not related to the National Curriculum and are not used to set targets. • There needs to be more effective monitoring of teaching in order to spread best practice. 	

Summary of key inspection judgements:

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

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

Commentary

92. In 2002 the Year 9 national test results were below average. Girls obtained better results than boys, a trend which has continued for some years. GCSE results at the

end of Year 11 in 2002 were also below average. Here, the gap between boys and girls had narrowed, and results were broadly similar. The standard of work seen during the inspection was, in some cases, much better than recent examination results. Higher-attaining pupils in all years are producing work that is well above average and in Year 7 are producing work of a very high standard.

93. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is generally below average. Achievement overall is satisfactory. However, higher-attaining pupils, especially in Year 7, are currently making excellent progress in lessons. Work in other classes, especially those taught by non-specialists or a succession of supply teachers, has lacked the challenge that is evident in the work of high-attainers and the amount of work covered is barely adequate.
94. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory, although inconsistent. The best lessons are well-planned, teachers challenge pupils with difficult questions, and pupils are fully involved in the lesson which have probing and well-paced question-and-answer sessions. As a result, pupils are drawn into these sessions, their attitudes are very good and they make very good progress. However, in some lessons, where some pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes are not effectively challenged by teachers, learning becomes unsatisfactory. Where pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory it is usually boys who cause some disruption and this slows down learning.
95. The National Key Stage 3 strategy to improve pupils' skills in using numbers is having an effect on improving learning, especially in Years 7 to 9. However, although the numeracy starter sessions are effective in most lessons, the final part of the lesson, where learning is checked, is not always effectively planned. Some marking lacks helpful comments and there needs to be a greater consistency with marking across the department. The use of homework is also erratic, with some groups having been set very little. There needs to be a greater emphasis on key mathematical words during lessons.
96. The departmental practice of setting pupils by ability is effective in allowing less competent pupils to work in small groups. Where learning support assistants are deployed they are effective and this leads to satisfactory learning by pupils with special educational needs.
97. The leadership and the management of the department are satisfactory. After a period of considerable staffing difficulty the situation is now stable, with a team of teachers capable of making necessary improvements, led by a new head of department. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are satisfactory although there are few opportunities for teachers to see other departmental members teach – something that would aid the spread of good practice. The regular assessment of pupils is satisfactory, but the recording of marks and the setting of targets for pupils need to be improved. Reports to parents follow school practice but the information (especially targets for pupils for improvement) is sometimes slender. The use of computers is patchy and needs to be more consistent across the department to match the good practice evident in some lessons.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Good relationships and classroom management mean that pupils enjoy science and have a positive attitude to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils, particularly boys, underachieve in their GCSE course.
- Marking of written work does not give pupils sufficient information on how to improve their work.
- Homework is not being used effectively to raise standards as it is insufficiently challenging.

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	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	Satisfactory

Commentary:

98. Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection. In most lessons, stimulating teaching motivates pupils to work hard so that they learn well. Objectives for lessons are clear and pupils understand them. Teachers use their subject expertise to good effect with clear explanations. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson in which pupils had to investigate the dissolving of magnesium in acid. A very well-planned and organised lesson proceeded at a brisk pace. Pupils were challenged to think, enjoyed the experimental work and achieved success.

99. There is a good practical emphasis in the teaching, with structured development of skills. By the end of Year 9 pupils can discuss the nature of independent and dependent variables. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining pupils can describe and interpret patterns in their results and evaluate their reliability. Lower-attaining pupils have difficulty in using their scientific knowledge to explain patterns. Literacy skills are developed well with an emphasis on the correct use of key scientific words. Pupils' graphical skills are well-developed but pupils need more practice in manipulating formulae in physics. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and support assistants and generally make the same progress as other pupils.

100. Teachers manage their classes well, ensuring generally good behaviour. In a very few lessons the challenging behaviour of a small number of boys distracted others. In a minority of lessons a lack of pace meant that pupils were insufficiently challenged. Pupils lack confidence in their own ability and do not readily volunteer answers to questions, which hinders progress. This is particularly true of boys. Girls concentrate better and focus on their work with more determination. As a result, they achieve much better. In the past few years, disaffected boys have underachieved in GCSE. An Applied Science course has been introduced, with a greater emphasis on coursework. This has increased motivation, so boys' progress has improved.
101. Although pupils learn well in lessons, they find it difficult to recall previous work. They lack self-motivation and study skills. Staff give generously of their time to support pupils' revision in Years 9 and 11. However, the development of independent study skills from Year 7, through stimulating homework which reinforces learning in lessons, will help to raise achievement. Marking of work is thorough but comments do not show pupils how to improve.
102. Science is well led and managed and the curriculum carefully planned. The department is enthusiastic about the introduction of national initiatives in Years 7 to 9. However, more rigorous checking of the quality of teaching and learning is needed to share good practice and to provide consistency across the department. Extra-curricular activities in science are a strength. In a Year 7 science club two teachers and the two laboratory technicians were fully involved in supporting the pupils, who were making Cartesian divers. The pupils were having fun and developing an interest in science. The integration of the technicians into the science team has a positive impact on the science provision.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The teaching of ceramics to lower-attaining pupils leads to very good progress.
- ICT is well taught in Year 9
- The GCSE results are consistently amongst the best in the school.
- There is a strong shared commitment to develop the subject further.
- The display of artwork in the school supports pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of drawing so that pupils can analyse and record from observation.
- The use of sketchbooks for investigation into methods and materials and the world around us.
- More regular and formal monitoring of teaching and learning.

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	Average	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	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary:

103. There is good teaching by specialist teachers, who have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that challenge pupils. There is a strong emphasis on highly finished work in a wide variety of processes, sometimes at the expense of developmental work. Year 9 pupils make good progress using computers and specialist software. The least capable pupils in Years 10 and 11 make very good and sometimes excellent progress. Teachers meet their special needs with skill and dignity, preparing specific work for them, and creating a climate of mutual respect and high expectations. The pupils in turn proudly produce large-scale, high quality ceramic sculpture. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress and above average numbers gain the highest GCSE grades. Homework is not sufficiently challenging to allow pupils to develop away from the sometimes inhibiting gaze of their classmates. Behaviour in lessons is usually satisfactory but girls concentrate better than boys and are more productive. As a result, they achieve significantly better examination results.
104. Pupils learn well and enjoy their artwork and by the end of Year 9 achievement is good. This is because teaching is good. However, poor behaviour led to poor learning in two lessons, where the teacher's class control was not forceful enough. Pupils quickly improve their understanding of design and composition through two and three-dimensional media but their grasp of the basic skills of drawing is inconsistent. Year 7 pupils made excellent progress when drawing observed tonal portraits of their classmates, whereas Year 9 pupils progressed more slowly when drawing from photographs of Gaudi's architecture.
105. Achievement continues to be good in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results are consistently amongst the school's best. Most pupils respond well in carefully managed lessons. Their work is strongly influenced by European and American art although they lack a personal view of these artists. They find talking about their own work difficult and their written work tends to be descriptive rather than evaluative, sometimes with uncorrected errors. Visits to Durham's Gulbenkian Museum and the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle help pupils recognise and respond to the different spiritual and cultural content in Chinese, Japanese and Indian art. Drawing skills remain under-developed. Pupils have firm views of how their work will look but sketchbooks lack the degree of investigation, experimentation or development of ideas expected at GCSE. Few refer to their sketchbooks as they work. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory but the procedures for setting targets to improve their performance require review.
106. The leadership of the subject is good. The head of department has a clear view of future developments in his subject and he and his staff are working together to raise standards yet further, although the monitoring of teaching needs more rigour to ensure consistent learning. There are good links with primary schools to promote continuity of study. Development planning is focused on raising attainment but the details of the cost, resources and staffing necessary to implement the plans or to recognise their realisation are vague.

107. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Teaching and learning have improved to good and sometimes excellent. Lower-attaining pupils now make very good progress.

CITIZENSHIP

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning are good. • Projects are interesting and challenging. • Leadership of the subject is very good. • There is very good whole school and community involvement. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far, only a few subjects are planning for and teaching citizenship in their lessons. • There are no arrangements for assessing pupils' competence in citizenship.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement over time	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	N/A	N/A
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
Improvement since the previous inspection	N/A

Commentary

108. The study of citizenship is a new requirement for all schools this year. The school has decided that pupils should learn about citizenship through all the other subjects in the school including personal and social education. The school has also recognised the role which the whole school, outside and community activities can play in helping its pupils to become better citizens. It has made a good start in introducing this subject and the teacher co-ordinating it has a very good grasp of what and how the pupils should learn.

109. All subjects in the school have identified where they can help to teach areas of citizenship and some subjects are already acknowledging this in their departmental plans. ICT, religious education and personal and social education are very good examples of thorough planning. In addition to these, science, history and English also include aspects of citizenship in their lessons. For instance in English, pupils discuss social deprivation and crime when studying *Oliver Twist*. Pupils study contemporary events in history, the effects of alcohol on behaviour in science, and making choices about what they can and cannot afford in personal and social education. In most other subjects planning has not reached this point yet, and to be thoroughly effective this now needs to happen. This is acknowledged as the next stage in the co-ordinator's plan.

110. Teaching, where observed in these lessons, is good overall. Lessons are well-planned and managed with interesting tasks and projects. Teachers are willing to tackle challenging and difficult issues, such as abortion, and show they can handle them sensitively and objectively. Pupils are well-informed about such issues and demonstrate that they can empathise with others in challenging circumstances. They are attentive, listen well and concentrate. They show they can take many issues seriously.
111. The school offers a wide range of whole school and community activities for the pupils. This is a particularly strong feature of the provision, pervading much of the ethos of the school and contributing well to pupils' personal development. Moral issues are discussed such as the present war in Iraq. There are charity days, theatre visits and projects, and assemblies. There is an elected school council, which meets every half term to discuss and decide on issues about which the pupils feel strongly. Council members are expected to feed back information about decisions made to other pupils in their forms. The council has its own budget. Pupils also have opportunities to learn about and explore many social and moral issues such as equal opportunities, crime awareness and divided families in a highly interactive way from theatre visits and workshops.
112. Currently there is no procedure for assessing pupils in citizenship, although discussions are continuing among teachers on a county-wide basis. This procedure is expected to be in place by the end of the academic year.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good subject knowledge of experienced staff ensures good learning.
- Good achievement results from good pupil attitudes and teachers' commitment.
- Good management of pupils leads to good relationships with teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Assessments of pupils' work are not related to the National Curriculum.
- There is insufficient emphasis on hydraulics and pneumatics.
- Marking in Years 7, 8 and 9 contains too little comment to guide improvement.

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	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	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Commentary:

113. Pupils enter the school with a broad range of practical skills but overall attainment on entry is below average. By the end of Year 9 standards are broadly average. Good teaching leads to good learning, so pupils improve their knowledge and understanding of the design process. Teachers plan well and pupils experience a broad range of materials and develop their making skills. In 2002 boys out-performed girls, reflecting the impact of strategies being used successfully to raise boys' attainment. Additional teacher-led support and guidance helps pupils with learning difficulties to achieve at a similar level to other pupils.
114. By the end of Year 11 performance in GCSE is similar to the average figure for all design and technology subjects nationally. Previous years show a similar picture. The results in two areas, textiles and graphical products were above average. In electronics pupils matched the national picture. In food technology and resistant materials results were below average. There was a difference between the performance of boys and girls. The difference mirrors the position for the same pupils when they were assessed at the end of Year 9.
115. Achievement through years 7, 8 and 9 is good. Pupils' practical skills are underdeveloped when they arrive in the school. Using hand tools accurately presents a considerable challenge for a large number of pupils. Although they have had some exposure to the design process their understanding is not well-developed. During their first three years pupils work in various materials, improving accuracy to realise their final, chosen designs. Although the use of ICT is limited pupils do experience aspects of computer-aided design and computer aided manufacture. There is very little work in hydraulics and pneumatics.
116. Achievement continues to be good through the upper years amongst all groups of pupils. Those taking food and resistant materials achieved better than predicted results given their levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. For some pupils the preparation of coursework folders presents a challenge. Below-average levels of literacy impact on the quality and depth of analysis and evaluations. Quality in practical work is higher; in textiles, for example, some pupils work to a very high standard. There are equally good outcomes across the other aspects of the subject.
117. Work is planned well to address the needs of all pupils. Teachers work to improve basic skills, particularly in the first three years. Good relationships and teachers' knowledge of pupils ensures that they are well-managed. Good levels of independence are evident in practical areas such as food and textiles, reflecting the overall good attitudes in the subject. Systems to check how well pupils are doing are not highly developed. There is a lack of consistency across the department. The school policy is followed for marking work but there is no reference to National Curriculum levels. Comments do not always indicate clearly how pupils can improve the quality of their work.
118. The leadership of the department is satisfactory and the day-to-day management is good. The whole design and technology team is committed to helping pupils achieve. Since the last inspection progress has improved along with teaching and the attitudes of pupils. Developments in these areas together with enhanced accommodation and resources indicate good improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils generally achieve well. • Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are generally well-planned. • The department has very good ICT facilities and makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills. • Pupils remain on task, are well-behaved and work hard. • Opportunities for fieldwork in Years 10 and 11 are very good. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievement of the most capable pupils at GCSE is not good enough. • There are too few opportunities for off site fieldwork in Years 7 to 9. • The monitoring of teaching to iron out the few inconsistencies is not rigorous enough. • There are no geography courses in the sixth form.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Above average
Achievement over time	Good	Good
Results in NC Tests & GCSE	Above average	Above 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	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

119. Pupils enter the school with a thin awareness of geography, especially of place. Guided by a progressive syllabus, they make good progress so that, by the end of Year 9, attainment is close to average. They are beginning to use terminology accurately and can describe and explain, for instance, the three sectors of industry. Less capable pupils and those with special needs make similar progress because teaching styles are adapted to the broad bands in which they are taught and individual needs are understood well.

120. GCSE results in 2002 were average and better than pupils' results in most other subjects. As in recent years, this added value represented very good achievement when compared to prior attainment. Girls outperformed boys but by a much narrower margin than nationally. The small proportion of low grades demonstrates the effectiveness of strategies to help less capable pupils. On the other hand, the small

number of the highest grades indicates that the achievement of the most capable pupils was not high enough. A revision programme with residential elements for the current Year 11 is designed to improve results further.

121. Teachers relate very well to pupils, who enjoy geography. There is no longer any evidence of ineffective management. Consequently pupils work hard, remain on task and willingly participate in lessons although their spoken contributions, especially those of boys, can be too brief. Poor literacy skills are often exposed with a by a lack of clarity and depth in writing. Teachers are developing effective strategies to tackle these weaknesses. Precision when answering questions is encouraged, especially in GCSE classes, and terminology is used well.
122. Lessons are well-planned. A Year 7 class looked at the effects of earthquakes using a carefully chosen video of California. It was careful sequencing which drove learning because the mix of activities gave the lesson pace. Consequently, pupil interest was sustained. A "virtual" field trip to Stromboli may not have given a Year 9 class detailed understanding of vulcanicity but was wholly appropriate for a less capable group. Innovative planning of this ICT-led project engaged pupils and involved them in research so that learning focused on gains in knowledge of Italy as well as numeracy and literacy skills in the planning of the expedition.
123. Enquiry exercises are well used elsewhere in Years 7 to 9 and, whilst valuable, are no substitute for traditional fieldwork which brings reality to the curriculum and fosters social development. Learning is less secure where lessons are driven by textbooks and so lack rigour and pupils are not sufficiently challenged. The monitoring of teaching is insufficiently developed to identify and rectify these occasional weaknesses.
124. The department is ably led but the entire teaching team comprises senior members of staff with many other responsibilities so that the time scale for putting well-considered and appropriate development plans into practice is unduly extended. The department has its own system for pupils to record their progress and this informs assessment generally and helps in target setting. There is no opportunity to study geography in the sixth form.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils are managed well in lessons.
- There are good classroom relationships.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning to bring all lessons up to the standard of the best
- Assessment, to ensure that pupils have clear targets for improvement.
- Pupils' speaking skills.
- Boys' written work.
- The scheme of work and lesson-planning to ensure that due attention is paid to the development of historical enquiry skills.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
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Standards of work seen	Below average	Average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Results in GCSE		Average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership of the subject		Satisfactory
Management of the subject		Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection		Satisfactory

Commentary

125. All pupils who were entered for GCSE in 2002 passed. Girls' performance overall was better than boys but proportionately more boys than girls passed at the highest grades. The performance of most pupils was better than predicted. Results were significantly better than in 2001.
126. The attainment of a majority of pupils in Year 9 is below average. Many have a reasonable grasp of basic facts about the past but their understanding of how to use historical sources is weak. They can describe past events but their ability to explain causes and consequences and to interpret or evaluate sources is underdeveloped. The standard reached by higher-attaining pupils is average. They know that historical events may be interpreted in different ways and understand the importance of reliability of evidence. Girls' attainment generally is higher than boys because they are prepared to take more care with their work. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties make appropriate progress in lessons and their achievement is satisfactory.
127. Most pupils in Year 11 have a sound knowledge of the themes studied and they can write a clear narrative of historical events. They are less confident in analysing past events and describe rather than analyse historical sources. Their course work indicates a good level of application and interest. In lessons, girls' attainment is higher than boys, especially in written exercises. Boys' work is often brief and superficial and does not always reflect their potential.
128. Teaching is satisfactory and on occasion good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, manage pupils well and set clear objectives for lessons. The pace of some lessons is slower than it need be, generally because the teacher over-explains the task and pupils are delayed in settling to work. Teachers have widened the range of classroom activities since the last inspection and have developed useful support materials for pupils with learning difficulties. Good teaching in Year 9 on the First World War helped pupils to think about the reliability of historical evidence and they made evident progress in understanding the importance of motive in understanding the past. Other aids to learning which help to develop pupils' literacy skills, such as the use of writing frames, are not consistently used and good opportunities to develop speaking skills are sometimes missed. Written work is regularly marked but comments do not always indicate clearly how improvements may be made. Teachers' good relationships with pupils often enable them to respond to particular interests effectively.
129. Management and leadership are satisfactory. Schemes of work implement requirements for the content of the National Curriculum but are less clear about the development of historical enquiry skills. Future developments focus on raising attainment, but the plan does not tie this closely to training and curriculum

development. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection in class management and resources, though the use of ICT is still underdeveloped.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality leadership and very good management are taking the department forward very effectively. • Assessment and recording systems make a very good contribution to the raising of standards. • There are very good systems and practice for supporting pupils' development in basic skills and citizenship. 	
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient discrete subject teaching for pupils in Year 9. • There is inadequate timetabled time for Years 10 and 11 to improve standards. • Time needs to be managed more effectively to gain full benefit from the three-part lesson. 	

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	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		Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection		Good

130. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of ICT skills, the majority of them at a lower standard than expected for their age. By the end of Year 9 pupils are in-line with the national average with boys doing slightly better than girls. By the end of Year 11 pupils have further developed their ICT capability. Comparing the results in the General National Vocational Qualification Part 1 with unconfirmed results for 2002, pupils achieved similar success to pupils elsewhere. Girls attained a greater number of passes than boys.

131. Achievement in the first three years is good. Pupils benefit from the well-planned programmes which enable them to improve on the basic skill levels they have when

they arrive in the school. Very good procedures to monitor progress have worked well to raise the attainment of boys in particular in years 7, 8 and 9. These are yet to work through the upper years as is reflected in the 2002 examination results. Pupils are confident in the use of the hardware and even the lower-attainers have a sound working knowledge of the generic software. Most pupils in Year 7 have little difficulty in creating spreadsheets to perform simple calculations. Year 9 pupils use Powerpoint with confidence but are let down at times only by difficulties with literacy. Standards by the end of Year 11 are only average because of the very limited lesson time available for pupils to generate the work necessary to meet the requirements of the external qualification. Given the time constraint, pupils' levels of achievement are good.

132. Overall the quality of learning and the quality of teaching are good. Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding well as a result of the very good subject knowledge of teachers and the well-planned lessons. Detailed lesson planning supports pupils' broader development very well in basic skills and citizenship. Lessons are clearly explained and pupils are made aware of what is expected of them. Adoption of the three - part lesson structure is having a positive impact on how well pupils work and what they achieve. On occasions, time management falters which limits the quality of plenary sessions. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes are almost always good. The department makes very good use of the information gained from assessments.
133. The subject leader has a very clear idea of what he wants to achieve for the subject. He has ensured that the department has fully embraced the targets set by the school. The subject not only benefits from strong leadership but also is fortunate to have a team of committed specialists who work well together. Much has been achieved in a short period of time. However, with responsibility for ICT, business education and cross-curricular ICT, the pressures are considerable.
134. Achievement has improved since the previous inspection. There is better provision for Years 7 and 8. Year 9, however, does not receive an equitable amount of discrete teaching. Pupil attitudes have improved and are no longer a problem in discrete lessons. Teaching is now good. Overall there has been good progress.

Cross-curricular ICT

135. The recent developments in accommodation and the increase in the number of computers throughout the school have helped to improve the use of ICT through subjects. The favourable ratio of pupils to computers ensures that access is much improved. Most subject areas plan for the use of ICT. Geography makes very good use of ICT, taking full advantage of the adjacent suite of computers. Pupils are able to make full use of equipment outside normal lesson times. There is also good use in art, English, music and science. Some subjects make satisfactory use of ICT to support learning but it is a developing picture, particularly in history, mathematics and religious education. The new suite of computers being installed in the design and technology area will improve the current limited use. ICT is underdeveloped in modern foreign languages where planning is weak and pupils are not receiving their entitlement. The majority of teaching staff are trained in the use of ICT. Audits have been carried out to establish both subject use and staff competence. The school has made a very good start to introducing the Key Stage 3 strategy in ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Some of the teaching of French is very good, even excellent. Pupils, many of them lower-attainers, learn very well in these lessons.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning a foreign language and behave well.
- An annual visit to France and exchanges of pen-friend letters help to motivate younger pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in French at GCSE are too low.
- Teaching overall is unsatisfactory and too many pupils, especially those of higher attainment in Year 11, are not achieving as well as they should.
- The modern foreign languages department lacks strong leadership focused on the raising of standards and sharing of good practice.
- Pupils do not benefit enough from the use of ICT and other means of extending their experience of foreign languages.
- There is unsatisfactory provision for German as a second foreign language.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

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

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

Commentary:

136. Standards among pupils doing French in Years 10 and 11 are currently too low. Many are underachieving because teaching is not firm enough and does not expect high standards from them. This applies in particular to pupils of higher attainment who are not yet confident in speaking or understanding French. A group of around ten such

pupils, mostly girls, try in lessons to concentrate and work hard, but the restlessness of the majority holds them back. By contrast, lower-attaining pupils in these years achieve well because firm teaching, tailored well to their needs, ensures that they learn fast. These pupils are fairly confident, for example, in saying in French which foods are good or bad for their health, and why.

137. In Year 9 standards are below the national average overall, but the majority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily given their prior attainment. Teaching on the whole is satisfactory at this stage and pupils are keener to learn. Girls are doing better than boys because they take more care with their written work. Boys, however, are just as eager to answer questions in class and they make similar progress in their spoken French. The teaching that works best is very clear, controlled and imaginatively planned so that pupils can move forward at their own pace and they know by the end of each lesson what they have learned. In one excellent lesson, for example, a group of low-attaining Year 9 pupils, most of them boys with learning difficulties, picked up a lot of new words in French for the rooms in their house. They were able to recall them and pronounce them confidently. This was entirely due to very effective teaching that did not put up with second best and made sure they were actively occupied all the time.
138. All pupils need to hear more of the foreign language in the classroom, both from the teacher and on tape. Many of them do not have enough chance to practise and repeat new language in lessons because teaching is not planned carefully enough to give them such opportunities. As a result of this, pupils do not speak with enough confidence and their pronunciation is too English-sounding. In their writing higher-attainers often show a fair grasp of grammar and vocabulary. Lower-attainers in particular, but all pupils in general, would benefit from using more ICT both to help present their work better, and to bring a fresh dimension to their language learning. Most pupils do not receive enough homework.
139. Pupils of all ages rise to the occasion when they are taught well. They are mostly well-behaved and co-operative. When teaching really motivates them they are usually attentive and mature. They clearly enjoy the process of learning. Even when teaching is poorly planned, pupils in the lower years are mostly sensible. When the teaching lacks firmness and clarity, however, pupils lose respect and talk through the teacher. In such lessons too little learning takes place.
140. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are very excited to have started writing to pen friends in France and Germany. They learn a lot from this. The annual trip to France for younger pupils also helps to keep them motivated, as does the good system of awarding Year 9 pupils who are giving up French an accreditation at the end of the year. Keen linguists in Years 10 and 11 would also benefit from opportunities to broaden their interest in learning French through extra reading and communications with French people.
141. Arrangements for pupils to learn German as a second foreign language are currently unsatisfactory, as they were at the previous inspection. The time pupils have for each language is not enough for them to make adequate progress in either one. Few pupils study German beyond Year 9, and none are doing both German and French.
142. The modern foreign languages department currently lacks a clear vision for the future and the collective will to raise standards by improving teaching. The very good practice in the department is not shared through observation and analysis. The important reservations expressed in the previous report about the overuse of English and the infrequent use of homework have not been put right. Unless the department finds fresh vigour in tackling these deficiencies it will not be well placed to improve.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards of composition are improving.
- Many pupils enjoy music.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE and A level courses are not planned in detail for pupils to develop their musical skills systematically.
- Pupils do not know how well they are doing in relation to the expectations of the National Curriculum or how to improve.
- Leadership and management are not good enough.
- The computer workstation for GCSE and A level is unreliable with insufficient power to cope with the software.
- Accommodation, keyboard and computer resources are unsatisfactory and there are no small practice rooms for group work.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Below Average	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	Unsatisfactory
Management of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Commentary:

143. Teaching and learning in music are satisfactory overall. Some features of teaching are good but in one unsatisfactory lesson difficult pupils were not managed and did not learn effectively. Teachers are good at their subject and present interesting and imaginative ideas and projects, especially for pupils' composition. Pupils enjoy music and in most lessons they behave well, working with purpose and effort. This has much to do with their musical preferences and there is a marked difference between boys and girls. Boys in Year 9 particularly enjoy composing on computers, whereas the girls

prefer composing lyrics and songs. There is some good work here: composing is a growth area in the department. All pupils are provided with good individual support, which helps them to improve. Many pupils, however, find it difficult to sustain concentration without the teacher present, particularly the lower-attainers. Cramped conditions and faulty keyboards do not help. A few higher-attainers are not challenged sufficiently, but most make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils do not know how well they are doing in relation to the expectations of the National Curriculum. To improve they need this information. They need to discuss and assess their work together when they listen to what has been rehearsed in the lesson. They do write about their work at the end of a project though. They also write about their feelings for music. Overall the standard of literacy is satisfactory, but pupils find it difficult to talk fluently and analytically about music.

144. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 9. From a low starting point pupils make satisfactory progress but still achieve below average standards. Higher-attainers compose as many as three parts for their pop song ostinato. Boys use computers well to do this. Girls' groups compose lyrics and a melody for their song, which they perform well. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 now use computers regularly for their composition. This is a welcome recent innovation but there are no keyboards and amplification system yet. Lower-attainers have some good ideas but find that the inability to keep a steady pulse means their ensemble breaks down. Those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They are supported appropriately in class and many find they cope as well as others in the practical work.
145. Achievement continues to be satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards are below average overall, but there are some strong performers, for instance on guitar and clarinet. These pupils are amongst 40 learning to play instruments in the school. Some pupils are at a very elementary stage on keyboards but are making some progress. Composition is the strongest component, but pupils have to use an under-powered and unreliable computer for this. More reliable computers are needed. The course also needs to be planned in detail before pupils make the necessary progress to raise standards further.
146. Since the previous inspection standards have declined and the department has gone backwards. The department has gone through a difficult time and there has not been enough support from senior staff in the past. The new management of the school is fully supportive in its desire to see music thrive in the school and plans are in place for the new academic year. There is still much to do.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- A significant proportion of teaching is very good.
- The attitudes of boys are very positive.

Areas for improvement

- Learning and the achievement of some girls are limited by unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour.
- Not all pupils have the same amount of time in Years 10 and 11 and there are no opportunities for GCSE work.
- The level of staffing prevents the further development of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement over time	Average	Good
Results in examinations	N/A	N/A
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Good	Very good

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

Commentary

147. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Much of the teaching of boys is very good. Teaching is enthusiastic and demanding. A strong pace is maintained and learning objectives are met. Demonstrations and explanations are very clear. Relationships are excellent. Students are generally well-motivated, feel appreciated and work hard. They listen carefully and use practise opportunities purposefully. As a result, learning is very good. Year 7 pupils made very good progress in learning the triple jump technique and mature Year 11 boys worked independently, maintaining high standards and commitment in circuit training. Poor motivation and behaviour adversely affected the learning of some girls in Years 7 and 8; too much time had to be devoted to the management of these pupils. Teachers know pupils very well and have arranged special provision to meet specific individual needs. The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs is good.
148. By Year 9 levels of attainment of boys are better than girls. Teachers' assessments against national criteria in 2002 indicated that standards being reached by both boys and girls were below average although the proportion of boys reaching a high standard was about at the national average. The proportion of boys expected to reach a high standard this year exceeds that of girls. Boys make good progress in lessons in table-tennis and indoor athletics.
149. Standards of boys' work in Year 11 are average. In 2002 most boys completed a unit in the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) tests and many went on to complete further units. By contrast few girls complete further units. Pupils make good progress in lessons. A group of girls, many with learning difficulties made good progress in a weight-training session and boys provided evidence of good progress in an AQA assessment of the major training module.
150. Some individual pupils reach very high standards at international and county level in a range of sports and school teams compete successfully in local and county competitions.
151. The attitudes of boys towards physical education are very positive. They are enthusiastic and anxious to learn. They co-operate well with the teacher and each other in paired and small-group work. They respond very well to the confidence teachers show in them and the encouragement they receive. Attitudes of girls are less consistently good. In Years 7 and 10 they are well motivated, listen attentively and work enthusiastically and productively. A significant number of girls in Years 8 and 9 are poorly motivated and behaved. They take too long in preparing for a lesson and their

listening and concentration skills are poor. Their behaviour is immature and they make little effort to engage seriously in set tasks.

152. At present there is uneven allocation of time for Years 10 and 11 so some pupils have better opportunities to pursue activities in breadth and depth than others. Staffing provision is not generous which constrains opportunities for curriculum and staff development. There are limited opportunities for lesson observation and staff development. The extra-curricular programme is mainly given over to team activities and there is no provision for GCSE work. The arrangements for the gathering and use of assessment data are good. The standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained except that the attitudes and levels of participation of girls have deteriorated.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Management and leadership of the subject are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Most pupils have very positive attitudes.
- All pupils have the opportunity to gain accreditation in the subject.
- GCSE results are above average.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills.
- Conclusions to lessons need better planning to ensure that learning is effectively reinforced.
- ICT is underused as an aid to learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement over time	Very good	Very good
Results in examinations	N/A	Above average
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of pupils to their work	Very good	Very good

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

Commentary

153. All pupils can gain accreditation in the subject. In 2002 over half were entered for the short course GCSE examination. The remainder were entered for a Certificate of Achievement. Results at GCSE were above average. Girls' results were better than boys', though boys' results were better than the national average for boys. These results were a significant improvement over 2001. All pupils entered for the certificate of achievement gained accreditation. These are very commendable results, especially since the time allocated to the subject is relatively low.

154. Most pupils in Year 9 have a sound understanding of key features of religion and how belief is expressed in action. They show good understanding of religious and moral questions. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. The achievement of most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, is very good. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
155. Most pupils in Year 11 have good knowledge of the moral teaching of the religions they study and can explain their own ideas clearly. The written work of girls is generally of a higher standard than boys, but boys' answers in class often show insight and evident thought. The achievement of most pupils is very good. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and their achievement is good.
156. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and on occasion excellent. The teacher's very good subject knowledge enables her to use a variety of imaginative approaches. Excellent teaching in Year 9 used visual stimuli to help pupils explore their responses to suffering. The use of music in this lesson created an atmosphere of reflection in which pupils worked with intense concentration.
157. The subject is making a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Very good teaching in Year 10 on the sanctity of life, enabled pupils to relate this to previous lessons on abortion and euthanasia.
158. Very good planning of lessons enables pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress. Clear explanations and good support materials in a Year 11 lesson helped pupils with learning difficulties to understand some of the causes of poverty and carefully structured tasks gave them practice in making notes of key points.
159. In a minority of lessons opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills are missed and hurried conclusions do not effectively reinforce learning. The time allocated to the subject is lower than the recommended figure. For lower-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 it is considerably lower. Progress and continuity for these pupils are adversely affected and there is great pressure on the teacher to ensure that they have a realistic chance of success in the Certificate of Achievement.
160. The head of department is a committed and experienced teacher. Management and leadership are very good. There is a clear focus on raising standards. Assessment based on levels of attainment is being introduced in Years 7 to 9. Resources are good except for ICT. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The subject is making a significant contribution to pupils' personal and intellectual development and the ethos of the school.

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 tables 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	8	38		0		0.6	
Chemistry	7	100		29		2.7	
Biology	7	71		0		1.6	
Physics	4	75		25		2.0	
Textiles	2	100		0		1.5	
Economics & Business	17	82		12		1.6	
Art	8	75		13		1.8	
Music Technology	1	100		0		2.0	
History	7	57		14		1.0	
Sociology	19	100		89		4.7	
Psychology	12	50		8		1.4	
English Literature	8	100		13		3.0	

At the time of writing, national comparisons for 2002 were not 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	4	100		25		7.0	
Chemistry	4	100		75		7.0	
Biology	2	100		50		5.0	
Physics	6	83		17		3.7	
Business AVCE Single Award	4	75		0		2.5	
Economics & Business	8	75		25		3.8	
Leisure & Recreation AVCE Single Award	9	100		11		4.0	
Health & Social Care AVCE	1	100		0		4.0	
Art	7	100		29		6.3	

Music	1	100		0		6.0	
Music Technology	5	80		20		4.4	
History	6	83		33		4.3	
Religious Education	2	50		0		2.0	
Sociology	10	100		70		8.0	
English Literature	9	100		67		7.8	
French	3	100		0		4.0	

At the time of writing, national comparisons for 2002 were not available.

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business GNVQ	5	100		0		0	
Health & Social Care GNVQ	2	100		0		0	

At the time of writing, national comparisons for 2002 were not available.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

161. The inspection focused on mathematics, chemistry and physics. Biology was sampled. A2 examination results were below average in 2001. They were better the following year. AS results were similar. There was some underachievement in 2001 but in 2002 students achieved the grades expected for them. Very small numbers of students took the subject, though there are more this year. In the lesson seen teaching and learning were good. A small proportion of students who began the course continue to the examination.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Strong teacher – pupil relationships result in high levels of interest and commitment.
- The teaching of the subject by well-qualified staff is good.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little checking on the quality of teaching in order to spread good practice across the department.
- The amount of time for GCSE resit lessons is too little.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory
Results in examinations	Well below average

Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

162. A2 results in 2001 were well below average. There was no clear trend to results in previous years and in 2002 students did much better than in 2001. The numbers of pupils attempting A2 exams at the end of Year 13 has been very small making statistical analysis unreliable. In recent years the achievement by students has been at least satisfactory, and in some years very good, although the small cohort of pupils who sat the A2 exam in 2001 did not achieve as well as expected.
163. Post-16 courses offered include A level mathematics, GCSE resit and key skills numeracy. The A level course is modular but students have no choice of which modules they will study. The help and guidance given to pupils in Year 11 is good and enables students to make an informed choice about A level work. As a result, the take up for A level mathematics is generally fairly low but few pupils start the course with inadequate qualifications. Most students complete the course. The numeracy component of the Year 12 key skills course is not popular and only four students are taking the course this year. Provision for GCSE resit mathematics is unsatisfactory. There is only one lesson per week which means that students lack motivation and lessons are often poorly attended.
164. Teaching and learning are good. Only two teachers take A level classes currently and their knowledge of the subject is good. Lessons are well prepared and organised and involve all students in appropriate discussion. The small class sizes mean that all students can get help when they need it and as a consequence learning is good. However, technical weaknesses in algebra slow down the progress of some students.
165. Students' attitudes to the subject are positive. They say that teachers are accessible away from the classroom and are helpful and approachable. The feedback given to students through regular marking and discussion is pertinent and helpful, and enables students to improve their understanding of the subject.
166. The A level course is self-contained so independent learning in the form of research is rare. Computer facilities are rarely used in teaching and learning A level mathematics although many students are gaining confidence in the use of graphical calculators. Students admit they find it difficult to work outside the classroom.
167. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The course is well organised and there are clear schemes of work. Marking is thorough and helpful, although the recorded marks are not used to set targets for students. There is too little checking on the quality of teaching in order to spread good practice across the department, especially for teachers new to A level work. The department uses good and up-to-date textbooks but these should be supplemented with more exercises, as currently students do not have sufficient practice in mathematical techniques.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- A level results improved significantly in 2002.
- Good teaching in well-structured lessons leads to good learning.
- Supportive teacher-student relationships lead to students' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not contribute sufficiently to their own learning in lessons.
- Students have weak independent study skills.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory
Results in examinations in 2001	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

168. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The teaching is enthusiastic and sustains students' interest and enjoyment. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding enables them to explain concepts clearly, and to build on students' previous knowledge. Very good relationships create an environment in which students are comfortable in asking for help and can learn effectively. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are well-structured with clear objectives and a brisk pace. Marking of written work is thorough and detailed.
169. In a Year 13 revision lesson on acid/base equilibria, students were given a list of what they must know and be able to do in this topic. A series of questions to be answered covered these key points. Using his knowledge of common misconceptions the teacher stressed the need to show all steps in the calculations. When students had difficulties the teacher took them back to first principles and helped them to work through problem questions themselves, rather than doing the work for them. The pace was brisk and focused, keeping students thinking throughout the lesson, and resulted in very good learning.
170. Students lack confidence in their own ability and are not very responsive when answering teachers' questions or in asking questions themselves. This hinders their progress. In a Year 12 practical lesson on volumetric analysis, the teacher reviewed the need for accuracy. When students were not able to explain what was needed, the

teacher broke down the procedure into simpler steps and through question and answer checked that students knew exactly what to do and why. Students were then able to carry out the experiment carefully and confidently.

171. More opportunities actively to discuss and debate topics would increase students' scientific curiosity and improve their learning. The teaching methods seen during the inspection involved whole-class teaching and although this was effective and learning was good, there were insufficient opportunities for students to progress at different rates depending on their learning needs. Where tasks are the same for students of all attainment levels, higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make less progress. There are not enough opportunities for the development of independent learning skills and many students are too reliant on their teachers.
172. In 2001, only four students took the A level examination, but all passed. Results were below the national average and some students underachieved. In 2002, the same number of students took the examination and all passed. There was, however, a significant increase in the proportion of higher grades A and B, and achievement was satisfactory. The take-up of the subject has increased and most students complete the course.
173. Leadership and management of the subject are good and assessment data is used effectively to check on students' progress. They enjoy chemistry and are appreciative of the extra support given in teachers' own time. However, students have weak study skills and do not find it easy to work on their own out of lessons. Their files are disorganised making learning from them difficult. The amount of homework set is not demanding enough to reinforce learning.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding enables clear explanations of physical concepts.
- Students' positive attitudes to work are in response to supportive teacher-student relationships.

Areas for improvement

- Students could achieve more.
- Students do not contribute sufficiently to their own learning in lessons.
- Students have weak independent study skills.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Below average
Achievement over time	Unsatisfactory
Results in examinations in 2001	Well below average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Good

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

Commentary:

174. Teaching and learning in lessons are satisfactory. In good lessons, teachers clearly focus students' learning on the lesson objectives and explain how they fit in with previous and future work. Teachers' very good subject knowledge allows them to explain new topics clearly to develop students' understanding. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson on astrophysics. The teacher's enthusiastic description of the background to Hertzsprung and Russell's work led to students' positive interest and enhanced motivation. The well-structured lesson developed students' understanding of stellar evolution. In a practical lesson students were investigating the magnetic force on a current-carrying wire. They worked carefully to obtain accurate results and then processed them using ICT. Written work is marked regularly and in detail.
175. In a Year 12 lesson on alternating current, the teacher had to work hard to convince the students that they already knew a lot about this topic. The students lacked confidence in their own ability and had poor recall of previous knowledge. When the teacher asked them to draw a phase diagram, students said they could not do this. The teacher insisted they try and most students proceeded to draw correct curves. The students lacked self-motivation and needed to be pushed to think for themselves. The teacher's encouraging and supportive attitude developed students' confidence and built on their previous knowledge so that they were able to make satisfactory progress.
176. Sometimes, teachers do not involve the students enough during the lessons; they provide them with the required knowledge and skills but their questioning does not allow students to contribute to the development of the lesson. In these lessons higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged.
177. In spite of the satisfactory learning in lessons, some students underachieve. Many start the course with only grade C in GCSE science. They have weak mathematical skills and often the depth of their understanding of physical concepts is insufficient to allow them to apply their knowledge in examination questions. Students have weak study skills and do not find it easy to work on their own out of lessons. As a result, there is a measure of underachievement in spite of satisfactory learning in lessons. Students do not get enough practice in numerical examples to give them sufficient confidence when tackling examination questions. They enjoy physics but do not find the work easy.
178. For the past few years A level results have been well below average. There was some improvement in 2002, in the proportion of students achieving the higher grades A and B. The standard of work of current students is better than that indicated by students' results in the A2 level examinations. Almost fifty percent of students on the AS course have dropped the subject although all those who took the AS examination last year have continued on to the A2 course. Management of the subject takes insufficient account of students' progress at an early stage, and of developing strategies to raise achievement.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

One lesson of design and technology was sampled in which teaching and learning were good. This is the first year in which this course has been offered.

BUSINESS

179. The focus for the inspection was AVCE business. The A2 combined business and economics course was sampled. In the lesson seen teaching and learning were very good. The subject is popular with students. In 2001 eleven candidates were all successful at A2. The following year students did less well. Results at AS were similar.

Business

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

Strengths

- Specialist, experienced and newly qualified staff, provide good teaching which results in good learning.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject give clear direction.
- Systems for checking on students' performance to improve their work.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment and achievement.
- Insist that students take a more rigorous and responsible approach to their studies.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Below average
Achievement over time	Average
Results in examinations in 2001	Below average
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

180. Students enter the course with a lower level of attainment than seen for advanced courses nationally. Standards of work seen during the inspection together with the results for 2002, for which there are as yet no national comparators, suggest that the level of attainment is below average. There are no results for 2001 as this is a new specification and so no trend can be identified. Only four students are currently taking the course in Year 13 and only four students completed in 2002, the first year of the award. Analysis based on such small samples is unreliable.
181. Some students have experience of the subject prior to beginning the advanced course but others do not. They develop a sound knowledge of business, which they apply with a degree of competence to the local, national, and international business environments. They are able to recall aspects of business theory but have some difficulty in using the technical language to explain things clearly. Interpreting financial data in order to comment on the general health of a particular business proved to be particularly challenging. In discussion most students were able to describe the various aspects of a marketing campaign and made a sound evaluation of a range of national campaigns. Students make satisfactory progress throughout the course.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers employ a broad range of teaching methods and try hard to stimulate learning and establish a stronger work ethic amongst students. In the main attitudes of students are satisfactory but some are not very committed to study. There is a conflict between employment and education for some students: this has an impact on attendance and, therefore, on overall achievement despite the best efforts of teachers. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and provide good support in both written and oral forms to develop good learning. They make good use of the limited local business infrastructure to provide learning opportunities for students. Local businesses are visited and used to good effect in assignments.
183. Students find the course challenging and appreciate the support they receive. Whilst recognising the level of challenge, they do not, however, take the opportunity to read around the subject to broaden their knowledge and understanding. There are very good procedures in place to monitor how well students are achieving. Individual needs are identified and met as far as is possible. The relatively small numbers enable teachers to gain the confidence of students and develop teaching methods to suit individual learning styles. Students relate well to one another and enjoy good rapport with teachers.
184. Despite a relatively short period of time in post, the subject leader has made a very good impact on both leadership and management of the subject and on information and communication technology across the school. There is a clear vision for the subject. The sense of cohesion in the department is indicative of a strong, supportive and committed team with a good combination of experienced and newly qualified teachers deployed to their strengths.
185. There has been some change since the last inspection. All specifications have been revised, personnel have changed and the school has now become a single site institution. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

186. One lesson of the AVCE course in ICT was sampled. A very high proportion of students completed the course. One Year 13 lesson was observed in which teaching and learning were good. Attainment was broadly average. Students were involved in multi-media presentations.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

187. One lesson was sampled in which there were students from both Years 12 and 13 taking leisure and recreation AVCE and travel and tourism AVCE. Teaching in this lesson was good and the teacher managed each group of students well. This is the first year of the travel and tourism course. Nine students took the leisure and recreation course in 2002. All were successful: one student gained an A grade.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

188. Health and social care AVCE was sampled. One lesson was seen in which teaching was good. All seven students are girls and all have places in higher education to study for careers in care. The course has been running for some years though only very small numbers are entered for examination. They have all been successful.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

189. The focus of the inspection was on art and design. Music technology was sampled. There were no candidates for this new course in 2001. In 2002 five students were entered for the A2 examination – four students passed, one gaining a B grade. One lesson was observed in which teaching was satisfactory. At present there is not enough equipment for the subject.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- A level results are amongst the best in the school.
- The head of department's commitment to working with colleagues to further develop the subject.
- Displays of artwork in the school.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of drawing for different purposes.
- The use of sketchbooks for investigation and experimentation to increase development work.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of art and artists through personal research.
- Students' commitment to their work outside lessons.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Below average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory
Results in examinations in 2001	Average

Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

190. The small number of students taking A2 in 2001 achieved results which were in-line with the national average. The following year results were not as good. The department's results are amongst the best in the school. The number of students who choose to study art is growing and the majority of those who begin courses continue to the terminal examination.
191. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average. Students' inability to draw for different purposes: to record particular information, develop ideas, experiment with two and three-dimensional composition, and to plan work, is slowing their progress. Sketchbooks are not used well to develop ideas, or for investigation and experimentation into methods or materials. Sometimes students do not bring sketchbooks to lessons. Much of the work is strongly influenced by the work of famous artists and visits to the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art in Durham, or the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, museums with which the department has close links. Students are skilful at manipulating a particularly ambitious and wide range of methods and materials and work increasingly on large-scale canvas and boards. Work on display in the public areas of the school adds considerably to the learning atmosphere. Students enjoy art and have good relationships with their teachers.
192. Students have a wide range of ability and some struggle with the A level course. The most creative produce original work and make connections between their own work and that of famous artists. One student, influenced by Henry Moore's drawings of people huddled together in the London Underground to escape air raids, made rapid progress when he developed his Cubist-like drawings into clay sculpture. Others are less inquisitive. A student working with Aztec colours was unable to express an opinion although she had recently visited an exhibition of Aztec art in London. Students do not work hard enough outside class, make little progress between lessons and so limit their achievement.
193. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students make too little use of a sketchbook for experimentation and investigation into the world around us. Their teachers have good subject knowledge but fail to insist on sketchbooks at the heart of the subject. This leads to students relying rather more than is usual on guidance from their teachers instead of accepting responsibility for future developments in their work. Students often have a preconceived view of how their completed work will look, so that innovation and discovery are less evident than is usual, mainly at the expense of finished, highly polished work. Much of the work reflects British, European and multi-cultural art but there are few references to County Durham's rich religious, political and industrial tradition. Students lack the personal view of art gained from reading and personal research, so necessary at this level. A girl making use of her love of ballet and planning a strong image from a photograph of herself, knew little of Matisse's or Degas' portrayal of dancers.

194. The curriculum in art is good and students use many two and three-dimensional processes including specialist computer software. Students' work is assessed well and teachers give individual tutorials to review progress and agree short and long-term targets. Leadership of the subject is good and the head of department is ambitious for art. He and his colleagues are working towards raising students' achievements. Development planning also focuses on raising standards but gives too few details about what should be done or how to measure success. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Examination results now meet the national average: sketchbooks continue to be underused.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history, sociology and psychology.

History

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

Strengths

- The teacher has good subject knowledge.
- Students have a positive attitude to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Not all lessons are intellectually challenging.
- Lesson plans do not allow sufficiently for encouraging students' speaking skills.
- Written work contains too little evidence of analysis.
- Comments on written work give too little advice on how to improve.
- There is inadequate analysis of assessment data to set clear targets for attainment.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Average
Achievement over time	Satisfactory
Results in examinations in 2001	Average
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

195. Relatively small numbers of students have been entered for A level examinations in recent years. In 2001 attainment was average. In 2002 results were lower than in 2001. Two candidates did significantly less well than predicted and results overall were

lower than predicted. In 2001 results at AS level were above average. In 2002 results were not so good as in 2001. The small numbers make comparisons of the standards reached by male and female students unreliable.

196. There is only one student on the current A2 course. Written work shows the capacity to draw information from a range of sources to present a connected narrative of events which is clear and chronologically sound. Essays indicate good subject knowledge but do not always give succinct reasons to support the conclusions reached and tend to narrate events rather than analysing the causes and consequences of historical developments. Progress is being made in acquiring subject knowledge, achievement is satisfactory, and attitudes towards the subject are good.
197. The standard reached by a majority of students at AS level is average. This is more evident in written work than in work done in class. Descriptions of events and personalities from the past are clear and detailed, based on good subject knowledge. Students are weaker at expressing their ideas in class discussions and some are not confident in using statistical information. Progress is being made in knowledge and understanding of the past and though there is underachievement in some lessons, achievement overall is satisfactory. Students have a positive attitude to the subject and although their contribution to class discussions is often brief and undeveloped, written work indicates that they work hard at the tasks assigned to them. There is no evident difference in the standards reached by male and female students.
198. The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons is satisfactory. The teacher has good subject knowledge and lessons enable students to extend their knowledge of the past through written exercises, clear exposition and material from a variety of historical sources. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, there was insufficient intellectual challenge and ineffective attempts to promote discussion. Consequently students did not make the progress they could have made, given their prior attainment in the subject. Students' work is regularly marked, often with useful and encouraging comment, though this does not always explain clearly how they might improve.
199. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Planning for the introduction of the AS courses has been done carefully and the scheme of work is well-organised. Leadership is satisfactory. Targets for improvement have been set. The school now has a great deal of data on students' performance. This is not currently used as well as it might be in analysing performance and setting further targets for improvement.

Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **excellent**.

Strengths

- A2 results were well above the national average in 2001. They were even better in 2002 when 70% of students attained A or B grades.
- In 2001, two-thirds of students obtained A or B grades at AS : the following year 90% of a large entry gained A or B grades.
- Teaching is excellent and inspires very good learning and progress by students.
- The attitudes of students are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of self-assessment by students.

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Well above average
Achievement over time	Very good
Results in examinations in 2001	Well above average
Quality of teaching	Excellent
Quality of learning	Excellent
Attitudes of students to their work	Excellent
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

Commentary

200. Students' results at A level have risen steadily in each of the last three years. In 2001 and 2002 all students achieved a pass; in 2002 70% of students achieved grades A or B. All students were graded at AS in 2001 and 2002. In 2002 seventeen of the nineteen students entered for the examination – 90% - gained A or B grades including almost two-thirds who obtained an A grade. In the last two years the average points score at A and AS level has significantly exceeded the national average. Many more girls study sociology than boys; only two boys studied sociology in the last three years.
201. Standards are well above average. In Year 12 students have very good knowledge of differential attainment in social classes. Students can use correct terminology and understand key concepts including for example, labelling, stereotyping, self-fulfilling prophecy and determinism. In Year 13 they have a very good grasp of the main theoretical explanations of crime and deviance and can build on this information to develop a critical understanding of the uses and limitations of official criminal statistics. The volume, variety and quality of work in students' files are impressive. Their notes, worksheets, extended essays and written answers to examination questions indicate very good levels of knowledge and understanding across a range of topics. Year 13 students have a good understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. Students are competent in the use and interpretation of statistics, analysing findings and coming to conclusions based on evidence. Files are very well organised and provide a valuable learning resource. Students are well used to locating and re-using authentic material from newspapers, journals and magazines. Presentation of work is very good.
202. The quality of teaching is excellent. It rests on a very confident, secure intellectual grasp of knowledge and skills, expertise in sociological methodology as well as a capacity to develop students' thinking and problem solving skills through clear explanations of concepts, theories and principles. Skilled use is made of contemporary events for illustrative purposes. Lessons are very well structured. Precise planning and excellent use of timed activities result in a driving, sustained pace of work – much ground is covered. Questioning is rigorous and spurs students to think more searchingly. Homework is used very effectively. Regular assessment and detailed marking show students how to refine their skills even further in their written answers. Written comments are very helpful. Students recognise the value of the constructive feedback they receive. Although students understand the assessments used by the department, the use of self-assessment is not fully developed. Expectations of students are very high and are substantially achieved.
203. Teaching of such high quality results in very good learning by students and is further enhanced by very good relationships between teacher and student. Students show

interest and enthusiasm. They are keen to express their ideas and ready to listen to, and consider the views of others. They increasingly read round the subject and use books, magazines, newspapers, and ICT to advance their learning. The attitudes of students as seen in their work rate, concentration in lessons, work files and courteous disposition are excellent. Overall, students make very good progress.

204. Leadership and management are of a very high calibre ensuring a clear educational direction and focused on raising students' attainment and the quality of their learning. Homework is set weekly: the amount and specific tasks vary from learning definitions for a test, to completing notes or answering past examination questions. Revision homework is set throughout the course. Realistic but challenging targets are set. These initiatives, combined with excellent teaching have been very effective in raising standards.

205. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Results have shown a significant and consistent improvement over the last five years.

Psychology

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

Strengths	
•	Detailed marking and high quality advice helps students make progress.
•	Students appreciate the dedication of staff and respect their specialist subject knowledge.
Areas for improvement	
•	Some teaching does not provide a sufficient level of intellectual challenge
•	Unclear lines of management responsibility reduce the impact of monitoring and analysis of teaching and learning

Key judgements

Standards of work seen	Satisfactory
Achievement over time	Satisfactory
Results in examinations in 2001	N/A
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Good
Leadership of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Management of the subject	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	N/A

Commentary

206. A visiting college lecturer teaches most of the course, which is college-designed. There is good additional teaching and tutorial support provided by the school.

207. Psychology is a relatively new subject in the school. In 2001 the single candidate completing the A Level course obtained a pass grade. The standards achieved in 2002, as reported by the school, indicate that in AS (Year 12) two thirds of students who entered for the exam obtained A-E pass grades.

208. Students in Year 11 receive a description of the A Level course but do not have an opportunity to sample the styles of teaching and learning. Most find the change in approach from GCSE very challenging. Many feel slightly overwhelmed by the reading demands and the new ideas and specialist terms they meet. The school encourages all students with a genuine interest to start the subject but, in each of the last two years, about a quarter did not complete the course. Some leave the school for work and a large majority of those who remain are girls. Students make satisfactory progress and those entering the course with lower GCSE grades achieve well. Work seen confirms that standards generally are rising as students and teachers come to understand the assessment processes, especially for the practical coursework.
209. Overall teaching is satisfactory. Marking is particularly effective. Very detailed written advice and summaries of the standards they are achieving help students' make progress. They know their predicted grades, but these are often higher than the work seen would suggest. Teachers are very good at using students' own personal experiences to relate to key theories. However, this anecdotal approach extends through both years and tends to discourage students from developing more advanced skills of analysis. They can usually suggest simple examples that link with research findings but do not sufficiently analyse and compare differing theories. This loses them marks in the longer exam questions. The course is carefully structured, but does not sufficiently encourage independent reading or learning, especially by students in Year 13. The school helps AS students to buy additional textbooks, but the department does not have any library of specialist psychology books, journals or articles. This limits the range and challenge of the course and there are no planned visits to conferences or from specialist speakers. Students appreciate the good one-to-one support from their caring teachers but only meet with their college-based tutor weekly. They do not know how to make e-mail contact with the college and report that this delay reduces the quality of some of their assignments.
210. The use of the college-school link has resulted in provision of an extra, and increasingly popular, A Level course. Because of the way the subject has been added to the sixth form curriculum, there has been virtually no subject leadership or management, beyond making appropriate timetable and exam entry arrangements. This has resulted in some significant shortcomings that are now affecting standards. These include:
- No systematic checking on the quality of teaching and learning;
 - Information on student performance is not used to modify course planning;
 - Failure to identify weaknesses in the tutorial links with the college;
 - No clear strategies for improving overall standards.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

211. The focus of the inspection was on English literature. French and German were sampled. Very small numbers are entered for French and German at A level. Standards in the current Year 12 French and Year 13 German are well below average. Teaching is satisfactory but students do not learn fast enough and have too much elementary work to cover. As a result they are under-achieving.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Examination results at A2 in 2001 were above the national average. Students did better in 2002.

- Teaching is good and students achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for students to discuss their ideas and opinions.

Standards of work seen	Below average
Achievement over time	Good
Results in examinations in 2001	Above average
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

212. Students enjoy lessons in English literature although they find the subject difficult. They are careful and attentive listeners but are very reticent in lessons and although they respond to questioning they do not spontaneously volunteer ideas. Students, particularly in Year 13 recognise their lack of confidence in expressing their own views. They are sensible and serious students and work quite hard.
213. Students learn well because, overall, teaching is good and some is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject so that they are able to challenge students' thinking and move ideas along confidently. They are able to present and comment on texts authoritatively. They focus well on extending students' knowledge and use of literary vocabulary. Students are set appropriately demanding essays and are aware of the examination requirements. Lessons are well-planned and organised, and the best lessons ensure that students develop, express and challenge each others' ideas. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students each prepared a different Keats poem to present to the class and in Year 12 students used hot-seating as a means of exploring their ideas about the characters of Laertes and Fortinbras in *Hamlet*. Students do not always have enough opportunity, however, to be involved in discussion and are expected to listen, or work alone for a considerable proportion of their time. Relationships are good and students value the level of support which teachers give. Work is mostly marked well and comment is careful, thorough and helps students to improve. Students are given very useful notes to provide a context to the texts studied although it is not always clear whether good use is made of them.
214. Students' achievement is good. In recent years all students have been successful in the A level examination and in two of last four years results have been above, even well above national average. In 2002 students did particularly well: all students attained A,B or C grades. In the present Years 12 and 13 overall standards are currently below average. Most students are able to comment on character and theme in the texts they study. They understand the use of symbolism in *The Glass Menagerie* and can make comparisons between novels. They are increasingly able to draw on evidence from the text to support their point of view. The few high-attaining students write extensively and show a thoughtful and perceptive level of understanding in their work. Most students, however, do not focus their ideas well in their writing, expression is clumsy and exploration of ideas limited.

215. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Assessment data are beginning to be used to predict grades and to provide students with targets. Work is accurately assessed. Students are given helpful feedback and have a good idea of the level at which they are working. The arrangement of teaching time for the course is somewhat disjointed. Most of the course is taught by one teacher and supplemented by a minor contribution from two others. Although this has been successful in the past it does not provide sufficient opportunity for good staff development across the department. The use of this short, once a fortnight contribution to teaching a specific topic does not make for good learning. Although individual lessons are well-planned, teaching at A level would benefit from a more rigorous approach to the overall planning of the subject and wider opportunities for the development of teaching and learning styles. Students would benefit from opportunities to visit the theatre to support their studies.