

INSPECTION REPORT

BELVIDERE SCHOOL

Shrewsbury

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123570

Headteacher: Mr Mel Bamford

Lead inspector: Dr Faysal Mikdadi

Dates of inspection: 20th-23rd October

Inspection number: 258563

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	800
School address:	Crowmere Road Shrewsbury Shropshire
Postcode:	SY2 5LA
Telephone number:	01743 235073
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Chela Anders
Date of previous inspection:	20 th October 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a small 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive about a mile from Shrewsbury town centre. It has just become a specialist technology college. There are 800 students on roll, with slightly more boys than girls. Students are mostly of white United Kingdom origin with a few from ethnic minority groups and very few who have English as an additional language. Students come largely but not exclusively from less affluent homes, though the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below average. About a quarter of students have special educational needs, which is well above average. Students join the school with broadly average attainment.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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32229	Mary Comer	Team inspector	
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Design technology, information and communication technology
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science
1522	Rev William Keast	Team inspector	
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education
32367	Joanna Pike	Team inspector	Art, citizenship
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25352	Geraldine Taujanskas	Team inspector	Religious education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school which is consistently improving and does most things well.

Students' attainment is above average overall especially in Year 11. Students make good progress in Year 9 and often very good progress in Year 11. Teaching is good. Students respond well to their teachers and they work conscientiously. The school's leadership is good and the headteacher provides a relentless drive to raise standards. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students start with average standards and achieve well to reach above average standards.
- Students achieve very well in English and mathematics and well in most other subjects.
- Provision in religious education is as still unsatisfactory (as it was in the previous two reports). There is still no daily act of worship. As a result of these two incidents of non-compliance with the legal requirements, school governance is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is good with teachers working very hard for their students.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in physical education, design technology (food) and art and this affects what can be achieved.
- As a result of the Technology Specialist Status, the school now provides opportunities for outstanding teaching of systems & control and electronics.
- Information and communication technology is under-used although this improving as a results of the Technology Specialist Status.
- Students' behaviour is very good within a warm and caring school.
- The school works very well with its parents.

IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. The school now meets statutory requirements in art, music and modern foreign languages. Assessment is sound although students need to be given more advice on how to improve. The still does not comply with the legal requirement to teach religious education and to hold a daily act of worship. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
	A	A	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement is good overall. Attainment in all years is average or above in all subjects except for information and communication technology and religious education. As a result of the good teaching, students make good progress. The school adds considerable value to the students' education.

Students' personal qualities are developed well. Students behave very well and show a good attitude to their learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted, although there is further scope for enhancing students' awareness of spiritual issues and cultural diversity. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the students' education is good.

Teaching is **good** in almost all subjects and **very good** in English, citizenship and music. As a result students work and achieve well and they enjoy coming to school. Students with special educational needs work very well.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes recently introduced expanded opportunities for following vocational courses. Students with special educational needs receive extensive opportunities to study appropriate courses both at the school and the local college. There are very good links with parents. Students are well cared for and teachers expend great deal of energy helping them. Students are encouraged to give their views although some feel that they are not listened to.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. The headteacher provides strong leadership providing a clear vision for improving standards. Subject leadership varies. It is outstanding in design technology and information and communication technology, good in most other subjects and satisfactory in art and modern languages. Religious education currently has no subject leader.

Management is satisfactory with a strong focus on teaching by everyone including senior managers. Governors do not ensure that the school carries out its statutory duties of teaching religious education and providing a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both parents and students invariably speak highly of the school and of its provision. Parents believe that the school has made significant improvements over the years. Students consistently speak about teachers being the main strength of the school. They also believe that the school allows them to speak out although a few feel that they are not listened to.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are to:

- Ensure that accommodation is improved in order to improve provision in physical education, design technology (food) and art as well the opportunities for sports activities.
- Improve students' skills as well as the provision for information and communication technology through a wider use of computers.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that religious education is provided for all students in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that all students experience a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. By the end of Year 9, the students' overall standards of attainment are above average in most subjects, including English, mathematics, science, geography and history. They are also above average in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages and music and well above average in design technology. In other subject areas and years attainment is average except in information and communication technology and religious education. With the new Technology Specialist Status recently gained, information and communication technology is beginning to have an impact on students' achievement. Religious education provision suffers from a lack of subject leadership and a lack of specialist teaching. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. Girls and boys do equally overall and students from ethnic minority backgrounds do at least as well as other students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- Achievement by students with special educational needs is very good.
- Standards of work seen during the inspection were good.
- Students have good language and mathematical skills.
- Gifted and talented students have not been identified in order to offer further challenges.
- Attainment in information and communication technology and religious education is below average.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35 (33.1)	33.3 (33)
mathematics	37 (34.5)	34.7 (34.4)
science	34.7 (32.9)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 108 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	66 (61)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (92)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45.9 (46.2)	39.8 (39)

There were 108 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Students join Year 7 with broadly average knowledge and skills. Attainment has risen in recent years, as the school has become more popular in the community because of the steady improvements that it has made over the last few years. A significant minority join the school in Year 7 with low literacy skills and their achievement is very good because of the very good provision in English and in literacy across the curriculum. The school receives fewer higher attainers than most schools.

2. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics, science, geography and history. They are average in art, citizenship, design technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Standards are below average in information and communication technology and religious education although in information and communication technology standards are beginning to improve through the enhanced provision brought about by the recently acquired Technology Specialist Status.

3. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average in English, mathematics, science, art, citizenship, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music and well above average in design technology. Standards are average in art, below in information and communication technology and physical education. No judgement could be made about standards in religious education because the subject is not taught in Years 10 and 11.

4. Standards of attainment in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science are consistently above average. All students, including those with special educational needs make rapid progress in their first year at school. Such rapid progress puts the school as one of the best performing within Shropshire. Such progress is all the more impressive given the very low standards that the school suffered from a few years ago.

5. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are good. In English students are successfully encouraged to discuss and read for pleasure, and an effective literacy group promotes literacy across other subjects well. Numeracy skills are very good in mathematics although their use varies across other subjects. Numeracy is effective in science, design technology, geography, history, information and communication technology and religious education. Students' competence in using computers is not as good as in literacy and numeracy. It is satisfactory mainly because students do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology and are only satisfactory primarily because of not having sufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology. This is caused by the rapidly increasing numbers of students taking examination courses in Years 10 and 11. The recently acquired Technology College Status is beginning to resolve this issue as the number of computers is set to increase.

6. Students come into the school with average standards and in many cases leave with above average results which means that they make very good progress and achieve well. Students' achievement is very good in both key stages in English and in Key Stage 4 design technology. It is good in Key Stage 3 science, mathematics, citizenship, geography, history and physical education and in Key Stage 4 mathematics, citizenship, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music. Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects except for Key Stage 3 art, information and communication technology and religious education and it is poor in Key Stage 4 religious education.

7. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. During lessons they progress very well with the very good support of learning support assistants. Over time, students gain significantly in knowledge, skills and understanding. This achievement is enhanced by the activities that students carry out outside the classroom especially in social and personal skills. The very small number of students from a minority ethnic background achieve as well as other students.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Behaviour is generally very good in lessons, around the school and when out on trips. Attitudes to learning are generally good. The school is good at promoting moral and social values, but opportunities are missed to promote spiritual and cultural awareness. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour in and around school is generally very good.
- Students enjoy coming to school and joining in the range of activities offered.
- Expressive Arts make a particularly good contribution to personal development.
- Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Opportunities are missed to generate spiritual awareness or celebrate cultural diversity, leading to occasional thoughtless remarks.

Commentary

8. Attendance and punctuality are good and the school works closely with parents and carers to ensure it remains so. Most students are keen to learn, enjoy school and gain tremendously from their participation in sport, dance, music and drama. Year 11 students, for example, worked with great application on their performance piece "Sparkleshark", improving noticeably as they warmed up.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.7
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.9
National data	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year for which national figures are available.

9. Relationships are generally very good, both between students, and between students and staff. The small number of students from an ethnic minority background or who have special educational needs are well integrated into the daily life of the school, although odd thoughtless remarks suggest a lack of awareness among both staff and students. Most students fully understand and adhere to codes of conduct, but occasionally feel they are not treated fairly over incidents of bad behaviour.

10. The attitudes of students' with special educational needs to their work are very good. They really enjoy what they are doing. They speak well of the provision made and respond well to what is being offered. They are proud of their special educational needs area and visit it regularly to take part in all kinds of activities. Attendance is good. Much is done to enhance their personal skills and values. Students know how to behave and they have very good relationship with each other. They take pride in their status as 'special' students and work hard to achieve. They occasionally behave childishly and can sometimes be unco-operative although this is relatively rare. Students believe that they are given opportunities to speak their mind although a few of them do not feel that they are listened to during school council meetings.

11. The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values is good overall, but with some weak areas. Spirituality and self-awareness are not generally well-developed, although expressive arts contribute well. Assemblies have no act of collective worship, thought for the day or pause for reflection. Religious education in general is a weakness in the school and does not make the contribution it should to developing insight, knowledge, and compassion for others. Indeed, several teachers of the subject find that they are battling poor behaviour and unpleasant attitudes in lessons, since religious education is not taken seriously. Moral and social values are much better promoted, through for example, extensive group work in learning, a fruitful collaboration in drama with the local special school and a large number of residential trips. Students generally work very well together and

act as terrific ambassadors for their school on concert tours or during language trips abroad. Cultural values are adequately developed, through the wide range of activities pursued by the expressive arts department. It is particularly active in encouraging theatre visits and the appreciation of a wide range of musical styles. Most, however, are European and there is little reflection or celebration of the other ethnic backgrounds of students in the school. Students themselves appear to know little of other religions (despite the imminence of Diwali and Ramadan). There is no evidence, for example, of Black History month or the considerable contribution of the Welsh to local culture and history. Staff lack awareness of cultural diversity.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of students on roll	No. of fixed period exclusions	No. of permanent exclusions
White - British	672	96	1
White - Other	17	0	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed - White and Black African		0	0
Mixed - White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed - any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean		0	0
Black or Black British - African	3	1	1
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say		0	0
Information not obtained	109	16	11

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is good. Students of all abilities make good progress and those with special educational needs make very good progress. This success is caused by the teachers' hard work, the very good learning ethos created by the school, the school's strong inclusion policy and the very effective links with the school's local community and with its parents.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good and often very good. This enables students to learn well and make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are hard working and very committed to ensuring that their students achieve well.
- Students respond well to their teachers and do their best to improve their work.
- Although assessment is largely sound, insufficient effort is put into telling students how they can improve their work.
- Learning support assistants provide very good support to students with special educational needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 101 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (2%)	30 (30%)	42 (42%)	22 (22%)	5 (5%)		

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

12. The quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching stands out as particularly good in English, art, citizenship and modern foreign languages. Ninety five per cent of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better. Those lessons that were unsatisfactory were mainly taken by non specialist teachers.

13. Teachers know their subjects well and plan effectively. They encourage their students to do well and have high expectations of them. The result is that students work hard to do well and rise to their teachers' challenge especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers successfully insist on good behaviour. Students respond by remaining on-task and trying to please their teachers. Homework set helps the students' learning and is usually quickly marked and returned. Marking is accurate. There is insufficient guidance given to students on what they precisely need to do to improve their performance. Students enjoy their work although they are not often given opportunities to work independently. On the few occasions when they are, they respond well.

14. Teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in art and information and communication technology. It was good in mathematics, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education and it was very good in English, citizenship, design technology and music. In Years 10 and 11 teaching was satisfactory in science, art and physical education. It was good in mathematics, design technology, geography, history and information and communication technology. Teaching was very good in citizenship, modern foreign languages and music. Teaching in religious education in Years 7 to 9 was unsatisfactory because teachers lacked expertise in using the scheme of work given to them. Religious education is not taught in Years 10 and 11.

15. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers mark regularly and accurately. In many cases they do not tell their students what they need to do to improve further. The main weakness in assessment lies in the fact that not all teachers use the data provided to enhance assessment and to plan further lessons.

16. The quality of teaching of students with special educational needs is invariably very good. Both teachers and learning support assistants know their students well. Work is mostly well-matched to individual needs. Teachers have high expectations both of behaviour and of performance. The result is that these students speak very highly of their teachers and feel considerably enabled to do well.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. It is **good** in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National strategies are well used to enhance the curriculum.
- Lower attaining students benefit from a curriculum that matches their needs.
- There are wide Key Stage 4 choices for all abilities.
- Extra-curricular provision is good.
- Religious education provision is unsatisfactory overall and it does not meet statutory requirements in Key Stage 4.
- Accommodation for sporting activities is severely lacking and this has a negative impact on the students' physical development.
- The shortage of time in expressive arts and of staff in French means that students lose out in these subject areas. Despite this GCSE results modern foreign languages have been consistently average and rose significantly in 2003.

Commentary

17. Overall, the curriculum provides students with a suitable range of courses. Some areas of weakness have been addressed and the curriculum in a number of subjects improved. National strategies have been used well to design the content and teaching of English and mathematics. The recent conferment of specialist college status provides further impetus for enhancing achievement in technology subjects, lower attaining students benefit from the good Entry Level geography course while there is a choice of syllabus in GCSE history. The continuing carousel arrangements for the expressive and performing arts in Years 7 to 9 do not enable essential skills to be developed fully due to shortage of time. Lower attaining students in French have fewer periods than required in years 8 and 9 due to staffing problems. The curriculum in religious education is unsatisfactory in all years and breaches statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11.

18. There has been considerable recent expansion of provision for Years 10 and 11 including GCSE, GNVQ and Entry Level courses leading to Asdan accreditation. This is enabling students to select a wide range of combinations and provides opportunities to pursue clear career paths, for example in the performing arts. Students with special educational needs attend courses that match their needs and aspirations through very good curricular links with the local college. The curriculum is responsive to the requirements of year groups and early indications demonstrate that the increased flexibility has improved the attitude and motivation of lower attaining students. Students follow dual award courses in science and there is an opportunity, which is supported well by students, to follow courses in one or two separate sciences after school.

19. There is good extra-curricular provision in physical education, which has helped students perform with distinction at all levels, and in the performing arts which gives students a host of opportunities to develop their talents, for example in preparation for the School Arts Festival and through choir and orchestra trips abroad. There is also a good range of trips to France and Germany to help students practise language skills. Gifted and talented students have been identified in the technology department and can participate in an after-school club.

20. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Recent improvements have diminished vandalism from outside the school and saved substantial expenditure, but the lack of indoor facilities for physical education results in a bias on games and a lack of development of other key skills. There is an insufficiency of computers to satisfy growing demand and to support

effectively the cross-curricular use of information technology. The very recent conferment of Technology College status has had limited impact to date in this respect as the school awaits the appointment of an information and communication technology specialist to undertake staff training. Changes are beginning to happen with the appointment of an additional technician and with new resources.

21. In recent years the school has built up valuable and extensive partnerships with industry at home and abroad. Especially significant have been the links with Alcoa which have produced substantial funding while providing opportunities for Year 10 students to undertake work experience. Students taking a GNVQ in manufacturing receive mentoring from other local firms. Links with local schools are growing; the expertise of the school drama staff is helping children of a special school and the wider community is making increasing use of school facilities in the evening.

Care, guidance and support

This is a warm and caring school where staff know their students well, although there are some inconsistencies in the management of bad behaviour.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The induction of students into Year 7 is very good.
- Careers guidance is very thorough, especially in Key Stage 4.
- Students with special educational needs feel well supported, and enjoy school.
- Office and other support staff are cheerful, efficient and very hard-working in helping daily routines run smoothly.
- There are some inconsistencies in the pastoral system leading to differential treatment of bad behaviour.
- The school is active in seeking students' views through the school council, but students sometimes feel that their opinions are not valued.

Commentary

22. Parents and students alike feel this is a supportive and caring school where they are encouraged to work hard and achieve well. Students with special educational needs are very well treated and make very good progress because of it. Procedures for child protection are strong and well-managed, including the induction of teachers new to the school. Despite some of the difficulties posed by the accommodation, such as narrow corridors and a lack of indoor space, everyday routines are well managed and the environment is clean and tidy. There are safe working routines in practical subjects. However, despite considerable discussion in school council meetings, students remain concerned about the toilets and catering facilities.

23. There is a very thorough induction into Year 7, ensuring a seamless transition for Year 6 students. Students are closely monitored through a well-understood system of rewards and sanctions, and where necessary may be referred to learning mentors, the school nurse or pastoral staff. Nearly all feel there is an adult they can turn to for help. However, there are differences in the way the pastoral system is used, meaning that some departments refer any bad behaviour to the heads of year, some almost never do, and some - such as the mathematics department - are proactive in sending out initial 'concern' sheets for information-sharing. Some students perceive the end result as unfair, feeling that boys are targeted more than girls and that expectations for them are lower. The assistant headteacher in charge of pastoral matters currently has a timetable too overloaded to enable him to monitor this effectively.

24. Students with special needs are very well supported and have good links with a local special school. They enjoy school and are offered a good range of curriculum choices - for example, access to entry level geography GCSE. In collaboration with the special school they have produced a herb garden. Students have also been given design challenges in Years 10 and 11 from a local special school. Autistic children too have been largely well integrated with their peers.

25. Careers guidance is good, and very good in Key Stage 4, ranging from an introduction to the careers library in Year 9, through extensive preparation for work experience in Year 10, and a variety of speakers who come into Year 11 to focus their minds on life after Belvidere. As a result, students feel they have been well advised to make the right choices. Students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities for following vocational courses in the local college and they receive very good support and guidance in planning the next stage in their education.

26. The school attempts to canvas the views of students through the school council. Students have been instrumental in effecting changes through requests to the governing body, for example the provision of a drinks machine and changes in the uniform. Two students are elected to the governing body to put the students' point of view. Some students, nonetheless, felt that their suggestions were not always readily translated into action. Students with special educational needs are treated with considerable dignity and they are given opportunities to have full discussions of their life in the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **very good** links with parents, the local community and local schools and colleges. These links are outstanding in the expressive arts.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Two-way links with the community and partner institutions are excellent in expressive arts.
- Links with local industry are very good in technology.
- The range of sporting links through physical education is good.
- Parents and carers receive very good information, though some showed concern over the way in which progress was reported to them.
- The Governors' annual report has some omissions of statutory material.

Commentary

27. Parent and carers are generally very supportive of the work of the school. They feel that teaching is good, that their children are making good progress, behave well and are expected to work hard. The school is approachable and parents' views are regularly canvassed and respected; office staff are extremely efficient at responding to requests and sorting out problems. Very good information is provided for parents, including a professional-looking prospectus and detailed annual reports, which give a clear indication of standards and how students can improve. Some parents, however, were unhappy about the standardised computer-generated nature of these reports. The governors' annual report to parents omits some necessary information, such as Key Stage 3 assessment results and targets for Key Stage 4 examinations.

28. The school has tremendous links with its local community, which considerably enrich and support students' personal development. In technology there is very good liaison with a range of local manufacturing industries such as printing and food processing. Belvidere students are happy to demonstrate their skills – for example in computer-aided design - when younger children and their parents come for open evenings. In physical education there are good opportunities for students to participate in a range of sports, such as regular football fixtures (including a successful and highly prized team for students with special educational needs). A group of Year 11 girls have negotiated the use of a gym and exercise classes in town, which has in turn encouraged some to continue with a fitness program. Effective links with parents enhance the progress and development of students' with special educational needs.

29. There are outstanding links with the local community and partner institutions through music, drama and dance. A very hard-working team of staff organise a wealth of arts activities: they direct musicals, run a jazz band, host the County Youth Orchestra and choir, and organise the annual Arts Festival based at the school. With energy, enthusiasm and ingenuity they involve more than half the school and many staff in various performances, including overseas concert tours, theatre trips and reciprocal visits by local drama groups. An active link with the local special school in drama has great benefits for both groups. Parents also help, for example with costumes. Through teamwork, performance and appraisal of their work, students grow visibly in confidence, enthusiasm and self-esteem, which in turn raises the profile of the school and encourages participation in the schools they visit.

30. Links with schools and colleges for the transition of students in and out of Belvidere are very good. Personal visits by pastoral staff to feeder primary schools, coupled with a very thorough induction program, mean Year 7 students adapt quickly and comfortably to secondary school life. Year 10 and 11 students are given helpful careers advice linked with visits from college and Connexions representatives; the majority feel that they are offered helpful guidance and make appropriate choices for post-16. There are also some good curriculum links between Belvidere and other schools: for example, the special needs teachers and design technology have links with the local special school, and there are collaborations with Key Stage 2 teachers in literacy to ensure common expectations.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides **strong** leadership, giving the school a clear sense of direction. Management systems throughout the school are **satisfactory**. The governors have not ensured that the school meets statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a relentless drive to improve standards.
- The senior management team and key staff are very hardworking and provide good leadership.
- The school's technology college development plan is outstanding.
- The induction of new staff is effective.
- The governors are not ensuring that the school is meeting statutory requirements.
- The school development plan is not an effective tool for school improvement.
- Many whole school systems are not consistently used or fully in place.

Commentary

31. The chair of governors has a good working relationship with the headteacher. The governors appreciate the hard work and focus of the headteacher in raising achievement. The governing body has healthy mixture of expertise and experience amongst its members. There are appropriate committees with delegated powers. Although governors are kept informed about the school through meetings and reports, only a few governors visit the school regularly. There is no formal links with subject departments. Governors tend to query rather than challenge decisions. The governors have not fulfilled their legal obligations in ensuring that the school holds a daily act of collective worship or that religious education is provided for students in Years 10 and 11. Governance is, therefore, unsatisfactory.

32. The headteacher is a powerful role model for the school, he leads by example. He is extremely committed and maintains a high profile around the school and in the community. He knows the school well, including individual students. He has high expectations for all. The headteacher is focussed on students achieving high standards, and sees the key role of staff to be teaching lessons. As a consequence of the latter, the headteacher and senior staff carry heavy teaching loads. He maintains close contact with subject heads of department in order to identify underachievement of students and take action. The senior management team have appropriate responsibilities, but are occasionally stretched in carrying them out consistently. They share the headteacher's vision and work very hard in moving the school forwards.

33. The school development plan does not have a strong focus on raising students' achievement. The priorities identified do not totally echo those perceived by the school. For example, the school has identified the need to develop a whole school assessment system, yet this is not included in the plan. Additionally the plan does not give sufficient detail for each priority to support its progress, in terms of breaking each priority down into steps with clear measurable outcomes. Conversely the Technology College development plan and application provide clear strategic direction to this aspect of the school. Each aspect has crisp priorities, with clearly described steps and outcomes.

34. Opportunities for professional development of staff are insufficient. Some staff have not had appropriate training to prepare them for their roles or to continue to maintain their expertise. There is no system for sharing good practice and the absence of regular observation of lessons further limits this. Neither are there opportunities for staff to visit other schools and view best practice. The school has not linked teacher appraisal coherently with its current monitoring system or the continuing professional development needs of the staff. This lessens its impact in improving the quality of teaching. New staff, including newly qualified teachers, are prepared well before starting at the school. They also receive good support and guidance while they settle into the school.

35. There is a formal system for monitoring teaching and learning through monitoring students' work and planners. The system does not include lesson observation apart from the observations necessary to meet the performance management requirements. There is a slight overlap of roles between heads of departments and a senior member of staff in monitoring students' work. The pastoral system is not always consistently applied. For example, when students' behaviour causes concern, they may get referred to their subject staff, their head of year or the teacher on call. This leads to inconsistency in response. The school does not have a whole school assessment system, and this has led to different departments having different approaches.

36. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides very good, quiet and unassuming leadership. Learning support assistants and students speak highly of him. He leads by example and gives learning support assistants many opportunities to develop. He appraises their work and sets up appropriate training. He is an outstanding organiser and manager. The only relative weakness is that he currently has a very high teaching commitment (27 periods) which militates against him giving sufficient attention to strategic developments. This must be put in the context of a school where all senior managers have a heavy teaching load. This is a strong philosophical belief by the headteacher: Teaching is top priority and all else can take a back seat. It works well although it puts considerable pressure on middle managers. In the case of the special educational needs co-ordinator this situation is a temporary one caused by the high number of Year 7 students who need support this year.

37. The school's financial planning is efficient and relates well to its developmental planning. Best value principles are effectively applied by a very good business manager. She also manages finances very well. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2001 to March 2002

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,072,209
Total expenditure	1,877,336
Expenditure per pupil	2401

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	145,047
Balance carried forward to the next	194,873

PART C: SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Overall, provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good because well planned and varied lessons hold students' interest.
- Students receive very good advice about the strengths of their written work leading to rising standards in Key Stage 4.
- Lessons in Years 7 to 9 have improved because of the very good leadership and management and the focus on the need to improve standards of middle and higher attaining boys.
- Lower attaining boys are not challenged enough in some lessons to sustain their interest and work rates.
- Students are not given enough advice to help them understand clearly what they need to do in order to improve further.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

38. Results in national tests taken in Year 9 are good overall, and have risen faster than the national trend over three years. Girls do better than boys, in line with the national picture. Results also demonstrate very good and improving achievement. They are very good when compared with similar schools. They are similar to science but below mathematics.

39. The proportion of those gaining higher grades A*-C in GCSE English is above that found nationally. English literature GCSE results match the national picture overall, while the proportion gaining higher grades is below. In both subjects, girls do better than boys and students' attainment is lower than in their other subjects. The most recent GCSE English literature results rose, although those in English fell.

Standards and achievement

40. By the end of Year 9 standards of speaking and listening are very good. This is because very well planned lessons enable students to clarify their own ideas and to come up with answers and suggestions within strict but stimulating time limits. Standards of reading are good. Teachers question students well, giving them individual coaching and prompting so that they summarise and decipher meaning confidently. Standards of written work seen in Years 7 to 9 reflect those found in tests. Students' writing is good, because the tasks they are set are varied enough to hold their interest and challenging enough to stretch them. They write with understanding and enthusiasm for the books they read, analyse advertisements perceptively, and produce vivid descriptive accounts.

This is a consequence of very good teaching, featuring a wide range of reading, conscientious marking of written work. Girls do better than boys, where some lessons do not challenge lower attaining boys enough to sustain work rates consistently for whole lessons. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because teachers know their capabilities and adapt work well to their needs while still maintaining high expectations. They are also helped very well by additional staff in classrooms who help them with well-focussed questioning and prompting.

41. In Years 10 and 11 overall standards are above those found previously in English and match those found in English literature. Students write well about a good range of plays, poems, novels and short stories, justifying their opinions with aptly chosen quotations in coherently structured written assignments. This ensues from supportive and clear guidance on where strengths lie, although advice lacks focus on what is needed to do to improve further. Higher attaining students write with fluency and confidence, while gifted and talented students make mature, balanced and well-illustrated judgements about set books, because teaching has drawn out in them the expectation and ability to consider ideas and character in depth. Lower attaining students benefit from challenging assignments matched well to their levels of understanding.

42. Achievement is very good throughout the age range because teachers expect all students to make the maximum effort and question them regularly to make sure that they are trying their best.

Teaching and learning

43. The quality of teaching is very good. Well planned and varied lesson activities keep students involved and enthusiastic, and very good questioning and prompting helps them to consolidate and extend their knowledge. Teachers mark books with useful comments on how well students are doing and enable them to achieve well by ensuring that they have opportunities to reflect upon their own learning through written self-assessment.

Leadership and management

44. The subject is very well led and managed by a new appointee whose vision for its future development is based upon a highly astute analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Rapid steps have already been taken to improve the teaching of boys and to develop assessment. These are having a beneficial effect upon the quality of teaching, leading to standards which have improved since the last inspection.

Literacy across the curriculum

45. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are generally good. In science there are good opportunities to improve writing because teachers give students well-judged assistance to structure their reports coherently, and to locate specific information in texts. In design technology, teachers lack awareness of students' literacy standards. They do not pitch resources such as worksheet and instructions at a suitable level, so that students have difficulty in understanding what is required of them. Physical education examination work is presented inconsistently as a consequence of teachers' lack of clarity about the standards of writing required. Discussion work is promoted well in music, mathematics, history and geography, but it is not well focussed in religious education, where opportunities are missed to explore concepts and ideas. English teaching makes good use of national initiatives to provide for an apt mixture of discussion, reading for pleasure and information and writing in classes, which extends and consolidates well a range of literacy skills. A well-led literacy group has identified the needs of students well and done good work to share effective teaching methods.

Drama

46. The subject was sampled. Drama results at GCSE were below the national average for 2002. Standards of drama in work seen are better and match national expectations. Students demonstrate very good attitudes to work in lessons, but their use of space and control of body language is slow to develop because teaching does not plan to draw out their own ideas and involvement as much as it could. Extra curricular work is good and drama productions add greatly to the life of the school.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were very good.
- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of the very good teaching.
- Deficiencies in the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 impede progress for many students.
- Development processes are weak.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	AVERAGE	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

47. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages at level 5. They fell in 2003 to well below average, largely due to a slump in boys' results with substantial numbers being withdrawn from the subject. The number of students attaining level 6 is consistently below average; in part this reflects over-cautious assessment.

48. Standards in French at GCSE were average from 1999 until 2003 when they rose to well above average. There was little difference between boys' and girls' performance this year, but fewer boys sat the examination. GCSE results for the smaller number of candidates for German remain well above average.

Standards and achievement

49. Overall, standards of work seen are broadly average in French in Years 7 to 9. The department places emphasis on the acquisition of oral skills, especially in Year 7 and students can speak on a suitable range of topics. They do not, however, learn a sufficient range of structures to write in any depth. A more balanced coverage of skills in Years 8 and 9, coupled with good teaching and regular homework enables higher and middle attaining students to progressively make up the ground. By the end of Year 9 higher attaining students are achieving well in speaking and listening. Lower attaining students in Years 8 and 9 are below average as they receive only one lesson per week. The scheme of work for students of German is not adapted to enable higher attaining students to make sufficient progress over two years. Consequently, standards in Year 9 are below average.

50. Standards in French are above average in both Years 10 and 11 and in Year 11 in German. Students respond well to the skilled teaching, which challenges and supports them to give of their

best. Lessons are characterised by good humour and mutual respect. Students are attentive and productive. Their work is well organised and homework is marked with care. The recent switch to modular courses is benefiting middle and lower attaining students as they have regular opportunities to improve the quality of their work. As a result achievement is good.

Teaching and learning

51. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers demand that students answer in full sentences and help them improve the quality of their pronunciation and accuracy. Mime, gesture and visual aids are well used to ensure that students understand. Lesson content is expertly linked to prior learning and the topics and structures are well developed by suitable activities to reinforce the acquisition of new language. Students are given ample opportunities to assess their progress in lessons. Assessment is less good in Years 7 to 9 as students’ awareness of their levels is less assured.

Leadership and management

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to high standards and to transmitting to students an enjoyment of languages, but weaknesses in strategic focus and the structures to support departmental development, for example monitoring and in-service training, encourage a short-term approach. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, as standards have broadly been maintained in spite of some staffing difficulties.

MATHEMATICS

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising, particularly at the end of Year 11.
- Students make good or very good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The planning of the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is very thorough.
- The monitoring of teaching and sharing of good practice is under-developed.
- The marking of students’ work is inconsistent.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

53. In 2002, the results in the national tests of students at the end of Year 9 were well above average nationally and in comparison with similar schools. Although results in 2003 are a little lower overall because of a lower ability cohort, the results at the higher levels have been maintained. When students' attainment at the end of Year 6 is taken into account, the results show that students achieved very well. The proportion of students gaining a GCSE grade A* - C in 2002 was well above the national average, with students achieving particularly well. This proportion has significantly increased in 2003. Generally, girls performed better than boys.

Standards and achievement

54. Lessons observed and work scrutinised confirm that standards overall are above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. No difference was observed between the achievement of boys and girls. Students are achieving well, and some very well. In a Year 9 lesson on negative and fractional indices, high standards of work were seen, and students achieved well in a Year 11 lesson on trigonometric functions. The presentation of students' work is very good and covers a wide range of topics at all levels.

55. The quality of teaching and learning within the department is good. Features of good teaching are the strong subject knowledge of the staff which resulted in good questioning of the students, the organisation of lessons and range of teaching methods which generally challenged students' understanding, the support given to students by the teacher and learning support assistant when present, and the good relationships which exist between staff and students, so that students can answer questions without fear of getting them wrong. These good features, together with good behaviour and attitudes, contribute to good learning. Students are generally well motivated and focused on the task in hand. Evidence of some over-directed teaching results in students being less independent in their learning, and opportunities were missed for developing students' understanding; for example, in an algebra lesson, when the answer was $x + 3$, the opportunity to explain why $3x$ was incorrect was missed.

Leadership and management

56. The leadership and management of mathematics are good. The head of the department leads an effective team of staff who are mutually supportive. The development of schemes of work has been approached systematically and planning is very thorough, particularly for Years 7 to 9. The focus on the national strategy has contributed to the standards achieved. The department development plan is based on raising levels of achievement through the improved delivery of the curriculum. For example, the use of information and communication technology in delivering this subject is currently unsatisfactory, but the arrival of new resources, such as a class set of laptop computers, graphic calculators, and two interactive whiteboards is imminent. The assessment of students' learning is good, with summative assessment being well developed. Students know what level they have achieved in every topic test and they say that helpful feedback is given. However, the marking of books is inconsistent, with diagnostic remarks being offered in some instances and not in others. Day-to-day assessment positively affects planning. The monitoring of teaching and the opportunity for sharing good practice across the department are not currently undertaken. Literacy across the curriculum is effective, with speaking and listening skills, especially the correct use of mathematical terminology, being constantly encouraged. The interactions between staff and students are a strong element of lessons.

57. The accommodation and resources for this subject are satisfactory. A new venture for the department is the planned visit to Wrexham by Year 8 students to the 'Maths Magic Technic Quest Show' based on problem solving. Some students also participate in the National Mathematics Challenge with success.

58. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have risen, lower ability students have more confidence in basic numeracy, students have an understanding of their level attainment and their presentational skills are much improved. However, information and communication technology is currently still insufficiently used.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Other departments have not developed plans to improve numeracy skills, although some examples of good practice were seen, particularly in science, where there is good emphasis on graph work and recording data. Other examples were observed in design technology, history, geography, information and communication technology and religious education. Missed opportunities for extending students’ numeracy skills were seen in art, where to create a grid the end of a ruler was used instead of measuring along the side, and geography, where, in an outline for coursework, the key was incorrectly given numerically.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the hard working department.
- Examination results which are above the national average, particularly for students in Year 9.
- Good use of the department’s student database to monitor students’ progress.
- Good opportunities for investigative practical work and standards obtained.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

60. Results in Year 9 national tests in 2002 showed further improvement from the low values of 1999. These results were above average, when compared to all students nationally and match those with similar prior attainment. Students attained less well in science than in mathematics but results were comparable to English. Overall, boys attained better than girls. In 2003, the presence of a weaker cohort has resulted in a fall in the percentage of students with a grade of Level 5. The proportion of students with high grades has however been maintained. Results in both years have comfortably exceeded the department’s targets and indicate that levels of achievement are broadly satisfactory.

61. At GCSE, the 2002 results for grades A*-C increased to 63 per cent, which is above the national average of 50 per cent. However, the proportion of students with grades A*-B is well below the national figure. This is attributed to the department’s policy of only entering the top set for the higher tier papers, which carry the higher grades. In these examinations, girls now perform better than boys. Students’ science results compare less favourably with their results in other subjects, particularly for boys, suggesting that not all students are achieving as well as they should. In 2003, a weaker cohort resulted in a decrease in the A*-C pass rate.

Standards and achievement

62. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above average. Notebooks are particularly well presented. The work is very well marked and graded. Praise is given for good effort. Targets are limited to behavioural or action terms as opposed to specifics on how to improve. The very good links with the teacher assistants ensure that those students who have been identified as having special educational needs make reasonable progress in science. The department is starting to use word displays and a variety of strategies to emphasise the use of key words in science. The high standard of wall display, including samples of students' work, provides a rich environment for learning and recognises the efforts made by students.

Teaching and learning

63. During the inspection, half of the lessons seen were good or better, one being excellent. As a result, teachers were able to concentrate on teaching the learning objectives, indicated in the thoughtfully produced lesson plans. The better lessons were characterised by the presence of confident, enthusiastic teachers who stimulate the students by the manner in which they engage them with varied and interesting activities. These lessons include good use of the interactive white board for power-point style presentations. The pace of such lessons is brisk and students are constantly faced with active learning opportunities through expert use of questioning techniques. The plenary sessions are well used to reinforce the learning objectives and enable the teacher to judge the progress made by all students. An example of one of these lessons relates to the thermal decomposition and uses of limestone. The success of the lesson was due to the interest created in the topic and the constant challenge presented through the teacher's interaction with the students. As a result they achieved well.

Leadership and management

64. In the previous report, the department had few areas requiring attention. Since then the largely good standards have been maintained and improved on, particularly in the Year 9 national tests, where there is a very close match of teacher assessment to test results. This match is due to the continued development of the department's student database. This enables teachers to monitor the progress of students over time and to identify those who are underachieving or who need additional support. There is a greater proportion of good quality teaching. Practical skills continue to be well developed in all year groups. Appropriate attention is given to "writing up" experiments, training in the use of prediction, analysis and evaluative skills. More opportunities for such work have been created through the new lower school scheme of work. The head of department provides very good leadership of the department coupled with a clear vision for its future development. Day to day management is also very good. The department is particularly fortunate to have a team of dedicated, hard-working teachers with a wide range of talents and experience and is well served by a hard working technician. The department is keen to develop the modern technological based approach to the teaching and learning process. It has yet to fully obtain the resources for this.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning of control technology and systems are outstanding.
- Students have inadequate access to computers in the school.
- There is insufficient use of cross-curricular ICT.
- There is a lack of specialist ICT teachers.
- The management of ICT is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below Average	Below Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Outstanding
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

65. End of Year 9 assessments were below average in 2002 and in 2003. GCSE results were below average in 2002, however they increased in 2003. However, the school enters students for the GNVQ in information and communication technology. The rate of success of the GCSE and GNVQ combined puts the results above the national average.

Standards and achievement

66. Students' achievements in using computers to control devices are outstanding because of the high quality teaching they receive and the facilities in the new technology building. In a good Year 7 lesson observed, the progress of students with special educational needs was good, due to the intensive support given by the learning assistant and the teacher. In all of the lessons observed the students' attitudes and behaviour was never less than very good and often excellent. In the past younger students have not had sufficient time to use computers. Consequently, by the end of Year 9 their achievements are below average.

67. By the end of Year 11, students' achievements show improvements. This can be linked to the very good range of software and facilities that have been made available. In Year 11 lessons, students were observed making very good progress, due to the good teaching. Very good standards of work were seen and included web page designing, database work, control technology and desktop publishing linked to a suitable theme.

Teaching and learning

68. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they effectively use the new technology to make the work more accessible and interesting. The school does not have any specialist ICT teachers. Some Year 11 students have two teachers for their examination work to enable all skills to be taught effectively.

69. A recent change to the timetable has improved the time available for the subject in Year 7; other year groups still have less than the usual time for the teaching of ICT. Additional time to use ICT in other subjects is limited by insufficient access to ICT rooms. The good teaching seen in Year 7 now ensures that all students make the expected progress.

70. Teachers do not have access to information on the students' prior achievements in reading and numeracy. This is limiting the effectiveness of lesson planning. The work of younger students is not effectively co-ordinated and assessed from other subjects and ICT teachers do not know what students are achieving in ICT in other subjects. This makes reporting difficult for teachers.

71. In the Year 11 lessons, teachers provided advice on how coursework should be approached; this makes the work manageable for students. Teachers share the assessment and marking of GCSE work using smart-board technology. This keeps students effectively on target.

Leadership and management

72. The head of department is recognised as a leading practitioner in the teaching of technology and his expertise is beginning to have an impact since the recent award of Technology Specialist Status. Combined with the skill of a competent network manager, the school has established a solid ICT infrastructure. The school has very good monitoring systems to prevent Internet abuse. The ICT system does not as yet allow students to e-mail work between home and school. Curriculum plans do not include detail of how the national improvement strategy will be integrated into teaching. Teachers have not received appropriate training. Since the last report many of the issues identified have not been addressed.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. There is unsatisfactory management of cross-curricular ICT. Students do not have enough access to computers to apply the skills they learned. This is because numbers have increased in the teaching of examination courses. When ICT skills are used, for example in science, this is not contributing to their ICT progress assessment. The responsibility for managing cross-curricular ICT is not well-enough defined. Many of these issues are now being addressed by the recent outstanding Technology College Status bid.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and they have gained well above average GCSE results in 2002.
- Good teaching succeeds in involving students and meeting their needs well.
- Efficient leadership and management have ensured that the subject has succeeded well over several years.
- There is insufficient systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to fully share the very best practice.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to use computers.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

74. Examination results were well above average in 2002. Although at a lower overall level, those for 2003 show good achievement in A*- C grades and reflect well the standards currently being reached.

Standards and achievement

75. Students enter Year 7 with average standards. Most students make good progress and achieve well by Year 9 and those continuing to Year 11 sustain progress and achievement. Most Year 9 students have a good knowledge of physical and human processes, understand the impact that these have on the quality of life in different places and can identify patterns. In Year 11, the majority can explain the interrelationship between different factors that influence for example, the location of industry and use their knowledge well in decision-taking exercises. The good response of most students makes a strong contribution to their achievement.

Teaching and learning

76. Most lessons start briskly and maintain a good pace, so that time is used well. In many lessons, teachers succeed well in communicating their own enjoyment of geography to students, so that their involvement enhances achievement. Questioning is often used well to test students' learning and give them the help that they need. Because of effective marking and verbal feedback when work is returned, most students have a good awareness of how well they are doing and what they need to do in order improve. In the best lessons, all students achieve very well because of teaching that strikes a very sensitive balance between helping and guiding students and challenging them. In a few lessons, plans do not provide enough challenge for the highest attainers. In lessons where good opportunities for paired discussion are provided, small numbers of students do not benefit fully, as teachers sometimes do not ensure they have a partner to work with. Teachers occasionally fail to take full advantage of opportunities for reflection when thoughtful questions from students are only peremptorily answered.

Leadership and management

77. Generally efficient leadership and management have ensured that students have achieved well in geography, over several years. This has been most marked in Years 10 and 11 and more systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning would be beneficial in ensuring that the very good achievement that takes place in the best lessons happens more regularly, especially in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum has been thoughtfully improved to include a course that provides a good opportunity for the lowest attainers in Years 10 and 11 to gain a worthwhile qualification. Although the department is beginning to improve planning for students to have opportunities to use computers and undertake fieldwork, these are still insufficient.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in all years.
- Good teaching succeeds well in involving students in their own learning.
- There is effective leadership and management, based upon a good awareness of how the subject can improve.
- There is insufficient systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Students have too few opportunities to use computers.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

78. GCSE results were average in 2002. Those for 2003 show an increase in the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C and reflect the standards currently seen in Year 11.

Standards and achievement

79. Students enter the school with average standards. They achieve well as most begin to reach above average standards by Year 9 and those who go on to study GCSE history generally consolidate this. The 2002 teacher assessments reflected current Year 9 standards more closely than those made in 2003 and the department is aware of the need to review the basis of these to ensure that standards fully reflect students' capabilities. Most Year 9 students can investigate sources to reach conclusions about the events and changes that they study. Although the written accounts of a minority lack important details, those of the majority are lucid, relevant and detailed. In Year 11, many students have a good understanding of the different perspectives that exist on the events that they study. For example, they can explain not only the response of different countries to the events at the end of the First World War, but also the impact upon different groups in the German population.

Teaching and learning

80. Lessons usually start briskly and succeed well in involving all students. This is due to teachers' good techniques in, for example, directing questions in order to help students improve their understanding and also to students' willingness to be involved. The good pace of class work sometimes limits opportunities for reflection, however. Occasionally small numbers of students are allowed to opt out of contributing answers and ideas during discussions, or do not benefit from good paired work because teachers do not ensure that they have a partner to work with. Generally, achievement is enhanced by an emphasis on learning by finding out, rather than being told. Good marking contributes to this by clearly identifying what students do well and what they need to do in order to improve. Teachers are beginning to improve the way in which they encourage students to evaluate their own work, although there are a few occasions when they do not check students' written responses to ensure that such opportunities are used. There is a good focus on improving

literacy skills, with many effective opportunities to practise writing and using historical vocabulary. Homework usually provides good opportunities for students to practise and improve what they have learned in class, although it is occasionally less effective, when it merely involves finishing lesson tasks.

Leadership and management

81. Although, following recent managerial changes, key staff have only recently taken up their posts, there is a good vision for the subject and an awareness of the improvements that are necessary. In spite of a heavy teaching load that leaves little time for departmental work during the school week, much has been accomplished in for example, improving assessment procedures. However, there is insufficient systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to ensure that the best practice is shared. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with achievement remaining good for most students and becoming better for the lowest and higher attainers, because of improvements in specialised resources for these students. The subject has improved well the opportunities that it provides for citizenship, but there are insufficient opportunities to use computers because, although these are planned, they often do not take place due to difficulty in gaining access to resources.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory** and does not meet statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and well below average by Year 11.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, although both satisfactory and good teaching were observed.
- Leadership is inadequate because there is no head of department, specialist teachers or monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Improvement since the last inspection is poor.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Not applicable
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Teaching and Learning	Unsatisfactory	Poor

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Poor

Commentary

Examination results

82. There were no Key Stage 3 teacher assessments and no GCSE examinations in 2002.

Standards and achievement

83. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average overall. Students enter school with a range of experiences of religious education. Progress is unsatisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. No judgement can be made about standards in Years 10 and 11 because the subject is not taught. The lack of curriculum time allocated to religious education has a detrimental effect on students' learning and does not meet the statutory requirements to teach religious education to all students.

Teaching and learning

84. Despite a greatly improved and well-structured scheme of work at Key Stage 3, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Currently thirteen teachers, none of whom has specialist training, teach religious education, mostly for one period per week. Some teaching was good and these lessons have clear learning objectives and previous learning is revisited to check what students have learned and to focus them on the lesson. Teachers encourage and support students effectively. They manage the class well and maintain good standards of discipline even in unsatisfactory lessons. However, teachers' often limited subject knowledge means they can not extend students' learning effectively. Some lessons are slow and lack energy, as teachers lack confidence. Students are not generally enthusiastic about lessons, in a subject which has limited status in the school. This can lead to poor behaviour in some classes.

Leadership and management

85. Leadership is unsatisfactory because there is no head of department and this means staff lack a role model and specialist support. No monitoring and evaluation are carried out, either of the impact of the scheme of work or of the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently non-specialist staff, often inexperienced in this subject, do not know how to improve their teaching. Training is not planned to help them to improve their skills in this subject.

Other features

86. No time is allocated for religious education in Years 10 and 11. This is contrary to legal requirements. The scheme of work, for Years 7 to 9 recently written, represents tremendously hard work by non-specialist staff. It has very good links to citizenship. However, non-specialist teachers find the scheme difficult to follow and they need much more specific guidance about what to teach and when to teach it. The status of the subject overall is weak and students regard it as less important than other subjects. Non written resources are poor. The scheme provides a range of written resources and there are newly published textbooks for Years 7 to 9. There are no planned visits and visitors, for example, to places of worship, and no artefacts. This results in few opportunities to bring the curriculum alive for students and enhance learning through inspirational and practical experiences, led by adults with specialist knowledge and experience.

87. Despite the new scheme of work for Key Stage 3, improvement since the last inspection is poor partly because religious education is still not taught in Years 10 and 11. This remains a key issue as it has been in the two previous inspections. There is still no scheme of work for Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

Design technology

Provision in technology is **good** with many strengths.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Very Good
Teaching and learning	Very Good	Good

Leadership	Outstanding
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very good.
- There is outstanding leadership that has gained significant support from industry.
- The teaching of systems & control and electronics is outstanding.
- The accommodation for food technology is undersized and poor.
- There is insufficient use of students' prior achievements in the planning of lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

88. End of Year 9 results are below average overall. In control technology they are much higher. GCSE results are very good with no differences between various technology subjects.

Standards and achievement

89. Students have varied previous experiences in technology. By the end of Year 9, their achievements are slightly below the average. Exceptional standards were seen in control technology. In all practical lessons students achieve very good standards. This is due to competent teaching. Learning support assistants and teachers provide for students with special education needs very well. This ensures very good progress in the different areas of the subject.

90. By the end of Year 11 students' achievement is very good. The new technology building and specialist accommodation are enabling teachers to provide high quality technological education. These new facilities are accelerating the raising of achievement. In the folder-work seen, designing is nearly all done by using software. This is limiting the development of spontaneous creative drawing. Very good innovative GCSE practical work was seen on display. This work showed that the students had acquired very good practical skills, and they could combine different processes and materials.

91. Throughout the inspection the students displayed very good standards of behaviour. Teachers had established good routines and relationships. This encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers commented that students could be trusted.

Teaching and learning

92. In Years 7 to 9, the very good teaching led to lessons that were brisk, full of activity, interesting and fun. The teachers have very good and some outstanding subject knowledge of technological processes. This enabled them to demonstrate confidently techniques, and concentrate on developing students' problem-solving capabilities. These approaches make students eager to learn.

93. Significant improvements to GCSE teaching have been made since the new buildings have been opened. Weaknesses can still be seen in the students' folder-work, with the poor linking of the development of ideas to evaluative thinking. The work seen in resistant materials is limited by predominately using wood.

94. Teachers do not consistently use information on the students' prior achievements, which limits the effectiveness of their lesson planning. The long-term educational plans are not all matched to the statutory requirements, or to the needs of all students. In the marking of work, teachers do not indicate how students could improve. The current inadequate accommodation for food technology, textiles and resistant materials is working against teachers. These areas need updating to allow effective curriculum coverage in these subjects.

Leadership and management

95. The head of department has pioneered the subject in the school. It is now recognised as a centre of excellence for the teaching of electronics and control systems. He has been successful, with the support of the former head of department, in obtaining significant sponsorship from industry to enable the school to build a new technology block and gain Specialist School Status. The department is now in transition; the older rooms are still awaiting development. The good progress made since the last inspection is now being accelerated as a result of the award of Technology Specialist Status.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in art are improving.
- All lessons have a workmanlike ethos.
- There is effective use of homework in Years 7 to 9.
- Students receive good one to one support.
- The Years 7 to 9 timetable for art is unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough emphasis on developing an understanding of other artists and cultures.
- Not enough use is made of computers.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 do not fully understand the requirements of the GCSE examination.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

96. Results in the GCSE examination were in line with the national average in 2002. Over the last three years the number of students gaining A*-C grades has risen, with a 14% increase in 2003.

Standards and achievement

97. Overall, when students enter the school they have average standards. They make satisfactory progress with drawing and painting in Years 7 to 9. However, their knowledge and understanding of other artists and cultures is below average, as is their ability to explore and develop ideas. This limits their achievement and means that it is unsatisfactory overall. However, by Year 11 their achievement is satisfactory and students have developed above average painting and drawing skills. Their work shows good technical expertise using different styles. Their knowledge and understanding of other artists and cultures is below average.

Teaching and learning

98. Both art teachers have created a workmanlike ethos, where relationships are positive, and students concentrate for long periods of time. Homework provides students in Years 7 to 9 with valuable opportunities for extending their skills. Teachers provide good individual support in all lessons, including feedback on homework. This helps students extend their drawing and painting skills. Teaching is well structured to develop students' technical skills. However, there are some weaknesses, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Little time is spent developing students' knowledge and understanding of other artists and cultures. Students have few opportunities to explore and develop their ideas, or to evaluate their work as they proceed. Students do not make enough use of computers in their work.

Leadership and management

99. The head of department has a focus on raising achievement in art. There is close informal liaison with the other teacher of art, but no opportunities for observing lessons. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 do not include sufficient emphasis on the work of other artists or art from other cultures. Neither are there opportunities to use computers. The timetable arrangement for art in Years 7 to 9 has a detrimental affect on students' achievement. There are long periods of time during the year when students do not have art lessons, and the number of lessons over the year is below the national average. There is no technician for art. The funding for art is below the national average and limits the range of materials available.

Music

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Performance work is very good.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are exceptionally strong.
- The allocation of time in Years 7 to 9 is low.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good	Very Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

100. GCSE music results have varied in recent years. In 2002 results were above average. Music is becoming an increasingly popular option and numbers are growing in Years 10 and 11. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

101. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is average. The standards achieved are just satisfactory when compared with their attainment on entry, which is also near average. Lack of curriculum time has a significant impact on the standards achieved, particularly in composing and music appraisal. Students experience less than half of a normal time allocation for music. Achievement by students with special educational needs, and gifted and talented students is satisfactory. Students in Years 7 to 9 have some opportunities to use computers. At the end of Year 9 all students are able to use computers and keyboards for performance and for composition. Listening and appraising skills are below average; students develop a diversity of musical vocabulary with which to describe the music they hear but lack of curriculum time limits the range of their experience. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls in Years 7 to 9.

102. By the end of Year 11 students are fluent in the use of music technology and often reach average standards in composition and above average levels in performance. Compositions display interesting use of computer-generated sounds. Students' musical and general literacy skills are promoted and this has a positive effect on attainment. However, analysis of GCSE results for 2003 clearly shows that the limited range and depth of students' experience in Years 7 to 9 have an impact later on attainment in listening and composition. Performance is the stronger component.

Teaching and learning

103. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9. Learning is carefully related to previous work and lessons often have a range of tasks and an energetic pace. This helps to consolidate student learning and maintain interest. Teaching embodies strong preparation, a wide range of teaching styles, interesting work, and good organisation.

104. In Years 10 and 11 teaching successfully builds on previous attainment. No GCSE music lessons were observed during the inspection but students' work shows teaching of a high standard. Teaching supports special needs students and they are involved in all activities. There is some work especially designed for students with special needs, but gifted-and-talented students are not formally identified. Very good teaching and planning ensure that most students make good progress across years 10 to 11. Teachers ensure that at all stages students have some opportunities to develop necessary musical skills.

105. The provision for instrumental teaching is very good. The number of students taking lessons in school is above average in relation to the size of the school. About 100 students have instrumental lessons each week. The visiting instrumental teachers make a strong contribution to the curriculum and their work is carefully managed and integrated into the work of the department. In the best instrumental lessons teachers keep careful records of student progress and give students opportunities to take instrumental grade examinations. This has a good effect on student progress. The department does not as yet record successes in grade examinations as part of its statistics.

Leadership and management

106. Leadership in the department is very good and management is sound. The strong leadership in the department has a direct impact on students' enthusiasm for the subject and a large number of students are involved in music outside the classroom. Overall, administration within music has strong organisation. Some aspects, for example target setting, the use of assessment for fine tuning the work offered to students, GCSE component analysis and a gifted and talented policy, are currently under development. The department promotes literacy by giving students key terms in each lesson and this has a significant impact on student attainment in appraisal and listening. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of students' work are good.

107. Extra-curricular activity is very strong. The performing and composing work of students are appropriately celebrated in musical events. Standards of performance are often high. Expressive arts teachers work very hard to extend a wide range of performance opportunities to students. There are large-scale musical productions involving large numbers. Such opportunities have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of students; they also contribute strongly to the prevailing ethos of the school.

108. Improvement since last inspection is just satisfactory. Accommodation is now adequate. The main issue from the previous report, concerning the low amount of time allocated to music in Years 7 to 9 remains unresolved.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good provision of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum for students.
- Facilities and timetabling limit the development of activities although the enthusiasm of the staff makes the best use of what is available.
- There is no analysis of data to identify areas for improvement.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

Commentary

Examination results

109. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were well below the national average and students did worse in physical education than in their other subjects. In 2003 the levels of attainment were lower.

Standards and achievement

110. Standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with the national average, this is better than the teacher assessments. Students have secure hand-eye and foot-eye co-ordination skills and can play effective small games. Students enter the school with standards below expectations and so this represents good achievement. Standards in the core course at the end of Year 11 are average compared to the standards expected at this level although there is no national data to compare standards. The timetabling of some small groups is limiting achievement as it prevents the playing of full games and thus the development of higher tactical skills. Although GCSE results fell in 2003 students achieved grades predicted by their previous results and so achievement is satisfactory and the work of the current students, although still below average, shows signs of improvement.

Teaching and learning

111. The work in Years 7 to 9 was limited by the timetable arrangements during the inspection. In all lessons students work well in pairs and in groups although when not directly supervised, the students' weaker organisational skills are apparent and concentration varies. The good relationships between staff and students and between students themselves encourage a positive environment in which learning can take place and in which the students feel confident in trying out new ideas. The wide range of extra curricular activities enhances the high attainment of a significant number of individuals and allows all abilities to develop skills further. All groups of students are catered for in lessons. The use of peer evaluation needs further development. Students taking the GCSE lack sufficient direction to organise their work in a way that assists revision. Marking is inconsistent which, although encouraging with praise, does not give clear guidance of what needs to be improved and how to improve it.

Leadership and management

112. The department is well led with a clear vision for improvement. The enthusiastic staff provide good role models and new staff are supported well. Data is not yet analysed fully to focus on areas of improvement. Since the last inspection good progress has been made and the Sportsmark accreditation has been obtained. The curriculum still has a heavy games bias but it is dictated by the unsatisfactory indoor facilities available: and the timetable structure of having one double lesson of physical education means that the principles of fitness taught are not being applied in practice, although the staff make the best use of all situations.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Overall provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The citizenship days in Years 7 to 9 are effective.
- Students' participation in enrichment opportunities is high.
- Provision for low attaining students is effective.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 do not have so many opportunities for citizenship.
- Assessment, recording and reporting are not fully in place.
- Co-ordination of citizenship across the curriculum is not developed enough.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good	Very Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Standards and achievement

113. In Year 9 students have average knowledge and understanding of aspects of the criminal justice system, the election process and environmental issues. Students have gained average skills in participating in school activities. In Year 11, students have average knowledge and understanding on a wider range of issues including: human rights, different political systems and personal budgeting. Those students involved in additional activities such as the school council, the Amnesty group and Eco Schools achieve well.

Teaching and learning

114. The citizenship days are well organised and result in good learning. Students also learn about citizenship in English, geography, history, and in personal, social and health education (PSHE). For example in a Year 7 history lesson, students learnt about the concept of kingship and what makes a good leader. In Years 10 and 11, there are not so many opportunities for students to learn about citizenship apart from personal, social and health education, and in some English lessons. Only those students studying history or geography benefit from the opportunities these subjects include. Students do not yet have a well-developed sense of what citizenship means, because teachers do not always make this explicit. The school council gives students an effective voice, but is not totally successful in giving students opportunities to feel that this results in action. The Eco schools project results in low-attaining students developing good skills in active participation and gaining understanding about environmental issues.

Leadership and management

115. The school prepared well for implementing citizenship, carrying out an audit to evaluate which subjects contributed to learning about citizenship. There is an action plan setting out the future development of the subject, with appropriate priorities. A group of teachers meet regularly to implement the plan. A detailed evaluation of the citizenship days in Years 7 to 9 revealed many strengths and some areas for improvement. There is no formal system across the school for assessing students' learning. The teacher in charge of citizenship is not given time to monitor the quality of teaching across the school, or to co-ordinate each subjects' contribution to citizenship, so that a coherent programme can be put in place.

116. The school has a good programme for PSHE, which meets legal requirements for sex education and drugs education, and enjoys close links with a number of external agencies. The programme, which is well led and effectively managed, comprises a wide range of active learning experiences, and makes a strong contribution to the students' good social, moral and personal development. No personal, social and health education lessons (PSHE) were timetabled to take place during the inspection but samples of students' written work, representative of the full range of ability in each year group were scrutinised. The results of the sampling of written work and the discussions with the students strongly indicate that standards are above average by Year 9 and well above average by Year 11, suggesting good overall achievement.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).