

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DENE COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY**

Peterlee, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114313

Headteacher: Allan Fuller

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 258611

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:	773
School address:	Manor Way Peterlee County Durham
Postcode:	SR8 5RL
Telephone number:	0191 5862140
Fax number:	0191 5861295
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Gary Long
Date of previous inspection:	16/1/1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Dene Community School of Technology is situated in the town of Peterlee in County Durham. It is a community comprehensive secondary school, with specialist technology status, for pupils and students aged 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11). It is smaller in size than most other secondary schools. There are 773 pupils on roll, 373 girls and 400 boys. The school is larger than at the time of the previous inspection and is currently over-subscribed. Most pupils live locally and walk to school. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups, or whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English is very low. There are currently no pupils at an early stage of English language development. Employment rates in the area are below the national average. At over 35 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is high. Some 24 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is above average. At 5 per cent, the proportion of pupils having full Statements of Special Educational Need is well above average. The school has a 20-place provision for students with moderate learning difficulties. The school also runs Reach Out, a learning support centre for students with social, emotional or behavioural needs.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17556	Michael Miller	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
30046	Ross Parker	Team inspector	English
4689	Monica Christian	Team inspector	
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science
17156	Edward Graham	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
21855	Dennis Carty	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8070	Joe Haves	Team inspector	Geography History
27416	Tom Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics
19532	Elizabeth Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
22695	Ray Cardinal	Team inspector	Religious education Business education
32686	Niki Elliot	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Dene community school of technology is well poised for improvement and its effectiveness is **satisfactory**. It provides a satisfactory quality of education and gives satisfactory value for money. Under the good leadership of a relatively new headteacher, and with the support of its governors, it is working hard and purposefully to improve students' achievements and to raise standards. However, it is still in the process of resolving fully some significant weaknesses. These relate to the independent capacity of some key staff to lead initiatives, without local authority advisory support.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good, clear vision and purpose of the headteacher is leading to steady improvement.
- The school is well focused on self-evaluation and self-review; consequently, it understands well what it must do to improve and actively seeks the necessary help and advice.
- The leadership and innovation provided in subjects such as science, mathematics, art, modern languages and physical education are raising standards and students' achievement.
- Strategies to support students with weak literacy skills are inconsistent across the school.
- The use of assessment to set targets for improvement is inconsistent across the school.
- Standards in national tests and examinations are low compared with national averages.
- Attendance rates are unsatisfactory and absences adversely affect the students' learning.
- There are good working relationships between teachers and students.
- The school's curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements.

Nevertheless, improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory overall. This is because, until relatively recently, the school has been slow to implement change and development. There have been recent good improvements in information and communication technology resources, but its use as a tool for learning is under-developed. Assessment strategies are now satisfactory, but the use of assessment remains a weakness. The accommodation for science has improved, but the new sports hall has yet to be built. Lessons are now more clearly planned by teachers, but there is inconsistency across the school in the development of additional work for the more able or talented students. Homework is used satisfactorily and display to support learning has improved. An effective inclusion department has been established to support students with special educational needs, but its links with other departments are as yet under-developed.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E*</b>	<b>E</b>

*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.*

Although standards are **below average**, pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** by Years 9 and 11. Standards of literacy and numeracy are below average throughout all year groups. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted or talented is satisfactory overall. The few students for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress, but provision for them is uncoordinated. Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are **satisfactory** overall. However, attendance is unsatisfactory.

By Year 9, students' achievement is good in science, art, modern languages and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology and in music. It is satisfactory in other subjects. Standards of attainment are above average in art and average in science, modern languages, physical education and citizenship. They are below average in other subjects, but well below average in music. By Year 11, achievement is good in mathematics, art and in examination course physical

education. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology, music and core course physical education. It is satisfactory in other subjects. Standards of attainment are above average in art and examination course physical education. They are average in citizenship. They are below average in other subjects, but well below average in English and music.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. The use of assessment is unsatisfactory but improving. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because design and technology does not meet fully National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9 and vocational education is too narrow in Years 10 and 11. The support, advice and guidance for students is satisfactory. Partnership with parents is satisfactory, but broader links with the community are good, as are links with other schools and colleges.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership, day-to-day management and governance of the school are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Other key staff provide satisfactory leadership overall. School and subject planning is satisfactory overall. However, key management staff are still in the process of creating and building fully effective teams in all areas. Financial management is good.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Students are mostly positive about the school and what it has to offer them. They generally feel that this is a good school to be at. Most students feel they are expected to work hard. They appreciate the good working relationships which they have with staff. However, the apparent low self-esteem and low educational aspirations of many students are a considerable barrier to their achievement. Furthermore, not all parents are wholly active in supporting their children's learning. Nevertheless, most parents are pleased with the education the school provides. They feel the school has good expectations of their children, who make good progress because they are taught well. Some parents do not feel that the computerised reports give them good enough information about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with the parents' views on these matters.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- raise students' standards in national tests and examinations;
- continue to develop the independent leadership and strategic management skills of key leadership staff and the process of creating and building fully effective teams;
- ensure the consistent implementation of its programme of support for speaking and literacy across every curriculum subject;
- further develop the school's work on assessment to share good practice and ensure the more effective use of assessment to set targets for raising standards and students' achievement;
- continue its work to raise levels of students' attendance and punctuality to school, and encourage parents to become more involved in support of their children's learning;
- provide a curriculum more suited to the needs of all groups of students in Years 9 to 11, in line with national initiatives;

#### **and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students;
- ensure the full implementation of the school's newly adopted race relations policy and the more effective monitoring and support of students for whom English is an additional language;
- ensure the more consistent monitoring of the health and safety policy and procedures;
- meet fully the national curriculum requirements for Years 7 to 9 in design and technology.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of attainment<sup>1</sup> by Years 9 and 11 are **below average**. Nevertheless, students' achievement<sup>2</sup> is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in national tests and examinations are not yet high enough, compared with national averages by Years 9 and 11.
- Weak oral and written literacy skills hinder students' progress and achievement.
- The school is strongly committed to raising standards and achievement and is taking the necessary action to secure improvements.
- Poor attendance by a significant minority of students in Years 10 and 11 hinders their progress and achievement.
- Achievement by Years 9 and 11 is not good enough in a minority of subjects.
- The majority of students who start at the beginning of Year 7 and continue to GCSE in Year 11 make satisfactory progress and often achieve well.

#### Commentary

1. Dene community school of technology is at an important stage in its development and is well poised for improvement. This is because over the past two years, under the guidance of its new headteacher, it has undertaken a significant programme of self-evaluation and review, which is well aimed at raising standards and students' achievement. As a school, it now has a sound understanding of its own strengths and areas for development. On its own initiative, the school has been active and successful in seeking help and support from the local authority and other agencies in order to put in place programmes and strategies to raise students' achievement. Nevertheless, the impact of the various initiatives and improvements being put into place has yet to be felt fully. Consequently, although the school offers a satisfactory standard of education it has yet to resolve completely some significant weaknesses. This is because not all of the key management staff have yet to demonstrate sufficiently the independent capacity to lead the initiatives without the help and support of the local authority's advisory services. Principally, this relates to the consistent use of assessment by all teachers to help students know better how to improve and to raise standards and to the further support of the majority of students who have weak literacy skills. The school is also receiving good help and advice as a result of its concern to develop further its strategies to improve the students' standards and achievement in literacy.
2. The school faces a number of barriers to raising students' achievement, not all of which are entirely in its own control. For example, it takes its students from an area of high social deprivation. The self-esteem and ambitions of many students, and their standards of literacy, are low. Students' overall competency in mathematics and in information and communication technology (ICT) is below average. Consequently, this has a negative impact on their potential achievements. Furthermore, the low aspirations of a significant minority of students leads to unsatisfactory levels of attendance in Years 10 and 11, which affects their overall standards and achievement. The school continues to work hard to create an ethos<sup>3</sup> and environment that encourages students to attend and where they can succeed.
3. The school now sets itself suitably challenging targets for success in national tests and public examinations. However, by Year 9, its results fell below target in 2003 in English, mathematics

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<sup>1</sup> Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

<sup>2</sup> Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

<sup>3</sup> In this context 'ethos' refers to the characteristic spirit or attitudes of the school as a community.



and ICT. It only exceeded its target, and met the national average, in science. At GCSE in 2003 the school significantly failed to meet its target for the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C passes, but met its target for one or more A\* to G passes. The sharper use of assessment information to set more accurate targets for individual students and subjects is recognised by the school as an important area for improvement. Further, from its own evaluation the school has appreciated that examination leave for its Year 11 students is counterproductive. Inspectors accept the school's analysis that such leave breaks the continuity of learning and revision support available for students in the crucial period before the GCSE examinations. In keeping with the latest national advice there is no examination leave for current Year 11 students. The school has sound expectations of those students it has identified as being able to attain A\* to C passes in 2004.

### Key Stage 3 (Students in Years 7 to 9)

4. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average in English, mathematics and in science. A quarter of the students are on the school's register of special educational needs and most students have weak literacy skills, with a third or more requiring additional support when they enter the school in Year 7. Such factors significantly restrict the students' ability to learn successfully in their early years at the school.
5. Standards of attainment in the 2003 national tests were well below average overall in Year 9 when compared with all schools nationally. The overall trend for improvement has been below that seen nationally by Year 9. However, there has been good improvement in mathematics and science in the past three years. Attainment was well below average in English and mathematics for students gaining the expected Level 5<sup>4</sup> or higher Level 6 and above. However, results were average for science. Girls achieve better overall than boys in the core subjects<sup>5</sup>. Compared with all students nationally, the progress students make between Years 7 and 9 is well below average. However, when compared with similar schools<sup>6</sup>, the students' attainment was well above average overall on the basis of their points score<sup>7</sup>. Attainment was average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. Attainment at Level 5 and Level 6 and above in science was in the highest 5 per cent nationally compared with similar schools. Consequently, students make good progress overall compared with all other pupils who attained similar standards at the end of Year 6.

### Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (31.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.1 (30.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.5 (30.3)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 139 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

6. In students' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement was good in science, art, modern languages and physical education. It was satisfactory in English, mathematics, ICT,

<sup>4</sup> The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

<sup>5</sup> The National Curriculum core subjects are English, mathematics and science. The foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

<sup>6</sup> Results are also compared with those obtained by pupils in similar schools; that is those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

<sup>7</sup> The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school or the national average. By the end of Year 9, the Level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. Therefore, the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Consequently, a school whose average points score for mathematics at the end of the Year 9 national tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. GCSE grades are also awarded points as are A-level grades and these are calculated in the same way although the number of points awarded for each grade is different.

geography, history, religious education, and in citizenship. Achievement was unsatisfactory in design and technology, and in music. Standards of attainment are well below average in music. They are below average in English, mathematics, ICT, design and technology, geography and history. They are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Standards are average in science, modern languages, physical education and citizenship. They are above average in art.

**Key Stage 4 (Students in Years 10 and 11)**

7. GCSE results overall in 2003 were well below average for students gaining five or more A\* to C passes, when compared with all schools nationally and with similar schools. They were in the lowest 5 per cent nationally on the basis of the students average points score. This is because, except in GCSE art and design, few students gain higher A\* or A passes in any subject. Nevertheless, the school's trend for improvement by Year 11 is broadly in line with the national trend. However, this does not tell the whole story. The school has high levels of students who join the school after the normal year of entry. By Year 11, this is some 16 per cent, six times the national average, many of whom have been excluded from other schools because of behaviour or attitude problems. In addition, many of the students in the school's unit for those with learning difficulties come from out of the local catchment area and would otherwise have attended other schools. When the underlying performance of the core of students who started in Year 7 and continued through to GCSE in Year 11 is analysed, it shows they achieved average results at A\* to C levels compared with similar schools. Consequently, these students are making satisfactory progress and achieving well from well below average standards on entry in Year 7. In addition, nearly a quarter of the Year 11 students on the school's register of special educational needs gained D and E grades in one or more GCSE examinations. Again, this represents good achievement for these particular students.
  
8. The key difficulty for many students lies in their lack of ability to retain learning for examination purposes. Students often perform better in coursework than under examination conditions. An analysis of the coursework modules already completed and marked for the current Year 11 shows a favourable picture. These marks contribute to the students' final GCSE grade and give students good guidance as to their potential grades. When teachers compare these results with those of students from similar schools in 2003, standards so far attained in coursework indicate they are average for English and well above average in mathematics and science.

**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	23 (27)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	66 (77)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	21.9 (25.4)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 144 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

9. In students' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement was good in mathematics, art and in examination course physical education. It was satisfactory in English, science, ICT, geography, history, modern languages, religious education, citizenship and business education. Achievement was unsatisfactory in design and technology, music and core course physical education. Standards are well below average in English and in music. They are below average in mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, core course physical education and business education. Attainment is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Standards are average in citizenship. They are above average in art and examination course physical education.

### **The standards achieved by students with a special educational need**

10. Standards seen for students with learning difficulties, who are on the school's Register of Special Educational Need<sup>8</sup>, were well below average, as would be expected. Standards for students with other special educational needs are below average. However, the achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Their achievement in modern foreign languages, art and physical education is good. Their achievement in music is unsatisfactory.
11. The achievement of gifted or talented<sup>9</sup> students by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory. This is because not all teachers consistently plan for suitable extension work to challenge the students. However, achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, there has been satisfactory improvement overall in the achievement of gifted or talented students across all year groups.
12. Standards, as seen, for students from minority ethnic groups and those whose home language is not English were average. The achievement of those students who are fluent in English is satisfactory. However, students who have been identified as having learning difficulties relating to language have not had their English as an additional language needs considered or assessed.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**. Their personal development through spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **satisfactory**. Attendance, overall, is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' attitudes towards school are positive, although some older students lack interest in their education.
- The school sets high expectations for students' behaviour.
- Many students' lack self-esteem and confidence.
- Students' spiritual awareness is underdeveloped and cultural diversity is not systematically promoted across the curriculum.
- Students in Year 7 attend well, but the attendance of students in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- The work of staff in Reach Out<sup>10</sup> is having a positive effect on students' attendance and attitudes to learning.

### **Commentary**

13. Students are mostly positive about the school and what it has to offer them. However, few show real excitement about learning and many have low educational aspirations. The apparent low self-esteem of many students is a considerable barrier to their achievement. Students in Years 7 to 9 generally feel that this is a good school to be at. In particular they like the good provision of computers and the teaching in physical education and art. Most feel they are expected to work hard. Some students in Years 10 and 11 have little regard for their education and this is reflected in their poor attendance and the standards they achieve. However, most speak positively about the good provision for sports and the high number of computers. Students appreciate the good working relationships which they have with staff and the ease with which they can seek their help.
14. Students behave satisfactorily because most know the school rules and are clear about the sanctions which are used if they misbehave. Whilst they are irritated by the disruptive behaviour of some students in lessons, they generally feel that behaviour in the school is good. They

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<sup>8</sup> The Special Educational Needs Department is normally referred to by the school as its 'Inclusion Department'. Similarly, the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator is referred to as the 'Inclusion Manager'.

<sup>9</sup> Gifted, talented or gifted and talented students are usually referred to by the school as 'More Able and Talented' students.

<sup>10</sup> Reach Out, is the name given to the learning support centre at the school for students with social, emotional or behavioural needs.

acknowledge that some bullying does take place, but feel members of staff take their concerns seriously and deal quickly and effectively with any serious incidents. Students behave well around the school. They move sensibly in the corridors and on the staircases. Whilst there is some boisterous behaviour in the social areas at break and lunchtimes, the school is usually a calm and orderly place.

15. The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of students with special educational needs is good. The work of staff in Reach Out to develop the social skills and self-esteem of students with social, emotional or behavioural needs is good. This provision is in the early stages of development but is already having a positive effect on students' attendance and attitudes to learning.
16. Students' personal development is satisfactory overall, although their spiritual and cultural awareness and understanding are underdeveloped. Their moral and social development is satisfactorily promoted through the teaching of personal, social and health education. They understand the need for rules in school and in the community. They get on with each other and most are able to work co-operatively with others when given the opportunity. Many students, however, lack self-confidence, find it difficult to express their views and opinions and are unable to reflect meaningfully on the values and beliefs of others. Subjects such as art, geography and religious education contribute satisfactorily to students' cultural awareness. However, students have only limited understanding of the cultures and values of others outside their immediate locality. Although tutorials are used satisfactorily to build good working relationships with students, they do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
17. Although attendance is below average overall, it is improving slowly. This is because the school is developing good systems to monitor absences more rigorously and to work with individual students whose absence is giving cause for concern. This has resulted in satisfactory attendance in Years 7 to 9, with Year 7 students attending well. However, many students in Years 10 and 11 have unsatisfactory, and frequently poor, attendance records. This adversely affects their learning and the standards they achieve.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2002-03**

Authorised absence	
School data:	9.2
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	1.5
National data:	1.1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

18. As a direct result of the school's strategies for supporting and including students with behaviour problems within school, the number of exclusions is at a much lower level than that reported at the previous inspection. Exclusions now involve fewer students. There was only a single permanent exclusion in the last academic year, which is lower than average and an indication of the success of the school's strategies for supporting and managing behaviour.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean

No of pupils on roll
750
1
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
56	1
0	0
0	0

Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
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The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The use of assessment is unsatisfactory but improving. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because some aspects of design and technology do not meet National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9 and vocational education provision is too narrow in Years 10 and 11. The quality of support, advice and guidance for students is satisfactory overall. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory, but broader links with the community are good, as are links with other schools and colleges.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are both **satisfactory** overall throughout Years 7 to 11. However, the use of assessment is **unsatisfactory** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 11 in mathematics and science and in Years 10 and 11 in English.
- There has been an inconsistent approach by teachers to the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy across all subjects.
- Whilst teachers' marking is satisfactory, the use of assessment systems and information to help students know better how to improve is not consistent or sharp enough.
- Not all teachers have yet fully developed approaches which involve students fully enough in lessons, or strategies to help the students to understand better how they can learn.
- The majority of teachers have good specialist knowledge and understanding of their subject.
- There is a small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching and learning in some lessons and this is seen particularly in music.
- The teaching, learning and academic progress of students with a special educational need is not monitored or tracked effectively enough.

### Commentary

19. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are good in mathematics, science, art, modern languages and physical education. They are satisfactory in English, ICT, design and technology, geography, history, religious education and citizenship. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in music.
20. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics, science, art, geography and physical education. They are satisfactory in ICT, design and technology, history, modern languages, religious education, citizenship and business education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in music.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 109 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	11 (10%)	54 (50%)	36 (33%)	5 (4%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)

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.

21. In the best lessons, there are important strengths which reflect good practice within the school across a range of subjects. Overall, the majority of teachers have a good, professional knowledge of their subjects and use the school's resources well to enhance their teaching and support students' learning. There is a good insistence on high standards of behaviour in lessons and teaching assistants are used well to encourage and support the students in their charge.

Learning and achievement are supported well in the best lessons where the teacher clearly explains the objectives of the lesson to the students. This is often followed by good questioning or discussion sessions where the teacher can assess the extent of the students' understanding. There is a good awareness of limitations to learning resulting from the students' weak literacy skills. Consequently, students are well challenged and fully involved in the work. This mostly results from lessons which are clearly and carefully planned to meet the needs of all groups of students in a class.

22. Although relatively few in number, examples of unsatisfactory or poor teaching and learning were seen in English, citizenship, design and technology and in music. In these cases there was either a lack of challenge or the teacher's expectations of the students were too low, usually as a result of the students' literacy problems. Consequently, the students, although willing to learn, were not encouraged or enabled to become sufficiently well involved in the lessons or the evaluation of their own learning. This was particularly the case in music. Nevertheless, some excellent teaching was seen in a Year 10 GCSE physical education lesson. Here, students were inspired to succeed in the development of a complex skill, taught in a deceptively simple way. Further, the students were very well challenged as 'teachers' themselves in the evaluation of each other's work.
23. The majority of teachers understand the students well and challenge them in many ways. However, in the lessons which were satisfactory, teachers were often more conservative in their approach and expectations not as high because of the students' under-developed literacy skills. Here teachers played safe and avoided taking the risk of involving the students more. Risk taking was often a feature of the more inspirational lessons. Discussions with senior management show the school is aware of these factors and is currently reviewing and revising its approaches and policy towards the monitoring of teaching and learning. This is in order to place a greater focus on students' learning styles and needs. A good start has been made in this with the current Year 11. Here, the school has made good use of a local authority course for students that helps them to understand better exactly how they learn as individuals. The school is also making full use of local authority advisors in developing the effectiveness of its senior and middle managers in the regular monitoring of learning and teaching.

### **The teaching and learning of students with a special educational need**

24. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs are satisfactory in all subjects except music. However, they are good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, art and physical education. Where teaching is good, teachers have planned carefully to meet the full range of needs. They focus their questioning and attention well to include all students. Students with special educational needs are well motivated and work at a good pace. Teaching assistants contribute well to planning and provide good support for students with Statements of Special Educational Need, enabling them to participate fully in lessons. In the inclusion unit, programmes to meet students' literacy needs are taught well. Students make satisfactory progress and are pleased with their learning. However, the links between these programmes and the main curriculum have not been established. This reduces their effectiveness.
25. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is good in art and science, where both teachers' and students' aspirations are high. Teaching presents challenges and encourages independent learning. However, teaching in other subjects does not challenge as consistently the most able students. Teaching in music is unsatisfactory.
26. Teaching and learning for those bilingual students who are fluent in English are satisfactory. However, as with the more able and talented students, teachers are generally unaware of the needs of more advanced bilingual learners.

### **Assessment**

27. Improvement since the previous inspection in the use of assessment has been unsatisfactory. There is still not a common approach to the collation and use of assessment data across the

school to guide curriculum development, inform lesson planning and to enable target setting. However, there is good practice developing in a number of departments, including mathematics, science, art, design and technology and physical education. These areas of good practice have developed independently and consequently led to a variety of different systems. Although there has been in-service training for all staff on assessment, including a presentation by the head of science, there is no uniformity in the systems currently being developed and used by teachers in the different departments.

28. A manager with responsibility for assessment has been appointed in this academic year in order to develop a whole school assessment system. Planning is in place based on short, medium and long-term goals, but these are not yet linked to time deadlines. A computer-based system has been acquired for the whole school collation, analysis and use of assessment information, but this is still being established. At this stage, there is not a co-ordinated approach to assessment leading to a common and efficient system with a focus on raising achievement.
29. Nevertheless, the use of assessment is particularly good in science and mathematics. In Year 7, data is collated from the primary schools and from tests taken by students when they enter the school. The information from the data is used well to develop lesson planning. It is also used effectively to identify weaknesses and to match students to levels of work. The performance of students is tracked and monitored as they progress through the school. Teachers ensure students know how they can improve and this has had a very positive impact on raising achievement.
30. During the year the school has undertaken a critical self-evaluation at departmental level. This has included aspects relating to assessment based on classroom observations. The results from the evaluation exercise are providing departments with sound feedback on the quality of their assessment strategy, including marking and the feedback given to students. Line managers are starting to become more effectively involved in monitoring assessment, but this practice has yet to become well embedded.

### **The assessment of students with a special educational need**

31. Assessment for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school makes effective use of screening tests and information from primary schools to identify students' needs. Standardised tests are used well to monitor students' progress in reading. Teaching assistants and learning support teachers keep satisfactory ongoing records of students' progress. These are shared effectively through meetings and lesson feedback sheets. Individual education plans are satisfactory. They contain a good range of information, including students' and parents' views and strategies which have been effective. However, the descriptions of students' needs are not precise enough and targets are not always helpful in enabling departments to identify suitable curriculum targets for students. Systems to track the learning of students with Statements of Special Educational Need for learning difficulty are not detailed enough. Consequently, the quality of information from other departments on students' academic progress is unsatisfactory.
32. Gifted or talented students are identified but there is not a clear strategy to ensure their progress based on an assessment of their learning needs. Neither has the school identified students whose home language is not English. Consequently, there are no tracking procedures in place to ensure they are making equivalent progress in non-verbal, verbal and written attainment. Assessment for bilingual students is poor. Students are identified as having special educational needs without having their level of English language acquisition assessed.

### **The curriculum**

Curricular provision is **unsatisfactory** overall. Enrichment of the curriculum is **satisfactory** overall but support for learning outside the school day and participation in sport are good. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory** overall. Learning resources are good but there is unsatisfactory staffing.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- National curriculum requirements are not fully met for design and technology in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a lack of a coherent planning in response to national Years 9 to 13 curriculum initiatives, with many curricular developments only in the planning stage.
- There is a good, innovative, developing curriculum in art, physical education and in Years 7 to 9 in modern foreign languages.
- There is unsatisfactory preparation for the later stages of education and employment in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality and qualifications of staffing in English are unsatisfactory overall.
- Extra-curricular opportunities in music are unsatisfactory, but science and art provide very good opportunities for curriculum enrichment activities.
- Extra-curricular provision is effective in raising the aspirations of students with special educational needs, whilst extending their experience.
- Provision within the curriculum for students who are gifted or talented, or whose first language is not English, is neither consistently planned nor monitored.

## Commentary

33. The curriculum is well planned in Years 7 to 9 with the exception of design and technology, which does not fully comply with National Curriculum requirements. A good curriculum is provided in art and its work is well extended in Years 10 and 11 through ceramics and photography. In physical education the curriculum is good, with very good community and parental links ensuring very good provision for gifted or talented students. In modern foreign languages students are given good opportunity to study both French and German in Years 7 to 9 before choosing which language to follow in Years 10 and 11.
34. In Years 10 and 11 there is a small number of alternative curriculum courses aimed at disaffected young people, such as ASDAN<sup>11</sup> and a work-related pilot scheme with a local college. However, vocational education is too narrow and there is a resistance on the part of some teachers to embrace change. This is slowing the pace of innovation. Curriculum planning is satisfactory in response to perceived student need. However, there is no overview of how the school intends to develop its 14 to 19 curriculum in partnership with a wide range of other organisations and establishments. This includes some unsatisfactory elements in the current careers education programme as a result of insufficient monitoring and review. There are a number of projects planned for a September 2004 start, aimed at raising the self-esteem and aspirations of particularly disaffected students. The Reach Out Project and Inclusion Team are developing effective whole-school systems for disaffected students. However, the school has not yet decided how best to approach timetabling for these innovations. As a consequence, students are faced with catching up on work missed in lesson time in order to take advantage of programmes in college or off-site with private providers. The introduction of key skills has been identified as a priority for the school.
35. The school is in the local Education Action Zone, but has only begun to take full advantage of its membership in the past two years. Of particular note have been the positive contributions of the art department to a teacher research project, that of the physical education department to the Sports Co-ordinator programme and the contribution of the science department to an assessment initiative. However, the school has not found change comfortable and has been slow to respond to some Zone initiatives such as the work on inclusion. Nevertheless, as a result of the good work of the school's inclusion team, teachers are aware of the needs of students with special educational needs. Several departments have learning support assistants specifically assigned to them and make good use of this additional expertise. There is flexibility in the programmes planned for school refusers, with an effective work-related programme in place.

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<sup>11</sup> ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) is an approved awarding body offering a number of programmes and qualifications to develop life skills, from Key Stage 3 through to adult life, from preparatory to Entry Level through to Key Skills at Level 4.



36. The school is at an early stage of broadening its curriculum to enhance vocational opportunities. Provision is currently fragmented and lacks overall coherence. One Year 11 group gains vocational experience at college for one afternoon each week. A Year 10 group's programme includes both weekly work and college experience. A GNVQ manufacturing course is currently running only in Year 11. There are good links between the Key Steps course offered to some students in Years 8 and 9 and the ASDAN course in Years 10 and 11. Applied GCSEs have been introduced in ICT and business studies with plans to modify the provision next year. However, college links are currently very limited, but improving. A college partnership has been established for next year to offer GCSE courses in engineering and in health and social care. The school is also planning to offer a course in applied science and to introduce work-related learning for all students in Years 10 and 11. Whole-school planning shows greater coherence for future provision than is currently the case.

### **The curriculum for students with a special educational need**

37. The curriculum for students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. There is a good range of courses leading to suitable qualifications available to students with learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11. The variety of courses available in partnership with colleges and other providers has increased, but the co-ordination of work in and out of school is not always effective. However, there are several good examples of flexible planning for individuals which have improved their attendance and motivation.
38. The Excellence Challenge initiative has provided good curricular enrichment for gifted and talented students, offering access to master classes in ICT, a health care conference and visits to regional universities. Outside of the Excellence Challenge initiative, curriculum provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is satisfactory. This is because the school's focus on developing the aspirations and experiences of its gifted or talented students, and most development, has taken place in extra-curricular activities. However, in art and science such opportunities have been balanced well with curriculum development, resulting in good provision.
39. There is no provision for the few students whose home language is not English because the school has not been pro-active in identifying the needs of students belonging to minority ethnic groups. Cultural diversity is promoted in religious education, citizenship, history and in English, but many opportunities to raise students' awareness of their own and others' cultures in other subjects are missed.

### **Extra – curricular activities and enrichment**

40. Support for learning outside school hours is good. There are booster classes in English, mathematics and science and catch-up clubs in ICT. All these activities raise the achievement and confidence of the students. Participation in sport is good and lunchtime clubs are well supported by students of all abilities, who particularly enjoy basket-ball and trampolining.
41. However, provision in the arts is unsatisfactory. Year 9 students watch visiting drama companies perform scenes from Shakespearean plays, which enhances their knowledge for the end of year National Curriculum tests. Nevertheless, there are no opportunities to act out roles themselves. There are no regular activities which support personal development or a commitment to music. There are too few extra-curricular activities in music to give the students any extra motivation. However, in art and science there is a joint trip to the Oceanography centre in Boulogne, which provides students with a good experience of European culture.
42. Science has strong links with three local universities and students have benefited from involvement in DNA profiling on a genetics day. In art there is a thriving photography section and students receive a twilight lesson to prepare them for GCSE. Students who are talented in art and wish to study it at a higher level visit Chelsea College of Art to attend a summer school. Therefore, science and art provide very good opportunities for students to experience a wide range of cultural activities.

### **Resources for learning**

43. In English staffing is unsatisfactory because there is not a full complement of teaching staff and only three out of the six are English specialists. Until last year, standards in English were rising at a faster rate than nationally but this has now been reversed. Whilst the accommodation for mathematics in the new teaching block is very good, the corridors are very narrow and this imposes constraints on the extent to which materials can be displayed to enhance the quality of the learning environment . Accommodation and resources in science are good, rooms are suited and there is an electronic whiteboard in every teaching room. The good quality and levels of staffing in art mean the curriculum has been extended to include photography and ceramics. However, in design and technology, long-term staff absence has had a negative effect on teaching and learning. In modern languages the quality of staffing and their experience is very good and consequently learning has shown very good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the GCSE groups.
44. Teaching and support staff are experienced and have a good range of skills and specialisms for working with students with special educational needs. The induction of new special needs support staff is planned well. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory. ICT is used well to support learning in the inclusion department itself and to provide access for students with specific needs such as dyslexia.

### Care, guidance and support

Provision to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety is **satisfactory**. The advice, support and guidance provided for students are **satisfactory** overall. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good working relationships with staff and know who to go to if they need help.
- The school works well with outside agencies to ensure students' care and welfare.
- The management of health and safety procedures is inconsistent across departments.
- Students are not provided with enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- Learning mentors support very well students at risk of underachievement.

### Commentary

45. The school cares about the welfare of all its students and is well aware of the difficulties which many of them face. Students appreciate the good working relationships they have with staff and know they will be listened to and their concerns taken seriously. For example, whilst many have some concerns about bullying they also speak positively about the effective way it is dealt with by staff. Students say their views are heard satisfactorily, as individuals or through the school council, although some are not sure how effective the council is in bringing about improvements in the school. Care and guidance for students with special educational needs are good. Such students' needs are very well known. Staff in the inclusion department have developed trusting, supportive working relationships with the students, who are confident in approaching them.
46. The school's relationship with outside support agencies is good and is used effectively to ensure students have access to any help available. Procedures for child protection and for monitoring the progress of any students who are in public care are secure. Regular multi-agency review meetings are an effective tool for monitoring the well-being and progress of vulnerable students and for identifying appropriate support.
47. Whilst the school generally provides a safe place for students and staff to work, the management and awareness of statutory health and safety procedures is not consistent across all areas of the school. Concerns relating to the use of equipment in the art and the design and technology departments were brought to the attention of the school during the inspection.
48. The pastoral care available to students is led and managed well by heads of year. On the whole, tutorial times are used satisfactorily to promote attendance, behaviour and the completion of homework. Students' planners, recently introduced, are not yet used consistently by all students

and tutors to monitor personal and academic progress and achievement. Students have mixed views about the way in which teachers and tutors help them to understand how to improve their work. In subjects such as mathematics students are given clear guidance on what they need to do to achieve the next level or a higher grade. However, there is inconsistency across subjects in this provision, as evidenced in the inconsistent quality of targets given to students in their end of year reports.

49. A significant strength in the support and guidance offered to students is that provided by the learning mentors working with vulnerable students who are at risk of underachievement at school. The quality of study support, encouragement to complete coursework and care shown towards students' personal difficulties has a good impact on the standards these students achieve.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's partnership with parents is **satisfactory**. There are **good** links with the community. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most parents like the school, although not many are actively involved in their children's education.
- Students' end-of-year reports are unsatisfactory.
- There is an effective partnership between the school and the community.
- There are good links with primary schools and local colleges.
- The good work of the inclusion department in developing partnerships with other agencies.

### **Commentary**

50. Most parents are pleased with the education that the school provides. The support given by them when the school was threatened by closure demonstrated well that parents want the school to be at the heart of the local community. Most feel the school has good expectations of their children and they make good progress because they are taught well. Most parents feel it is easy to approach the school with any concerns. However, the small number of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting is partly indicative of a parent body which is not wholly active in supporting its children's learning. Another example is the absence of parental communication with tutors in students' planners. This lack of engagement by some parents is a barrier to achieving higher standards by a number of students.
51. Some parents feel they are not as well informed as they might be about their children's progress and, specifically, do not like the computerised end-of-year reports. Inspectors agree with parents that reports are unsatisfactory. This is because they do not provide sufficient information on student's progress and the standards they have achieved. In addition, targets for improvement are too vague and do not give clear enough guidance either to parents or their children on what students need to do to improve.
52. The school has developed a satisfactory, but increasingly effective partnership with the community in order to enrich the curriculum for students. Good work is being done to renew business partnerships, such as those with a local snack food company. This co-operation provides students with practical and meaningful opportunities to support their learning. The school is actively working to develop its community links further as its facilities, such as the proposed new sports hall, improve. It recognises that more work needs to be done to provide a wider range of learning opportunities, such as adult learning classes, so that it genuinely functions as a community school.
53. Links with the local primary schools are good. Transition arrangements are well established and the way in which students from Year 6 settle easily into the school as a result is much appreciated by parents. The school makes good and developing use of its links with the local colleges to provide students with alternative curriculum options suited to their individual needs. Good use is made of links with colleges of further education and universities to develop students' knowledge of, and aspirations to, future studies and career paths.

54. The inclusion department has developed a good range of partnerships with education providers and agencies. They have taken care to ensure that partners are accommodated well and enabled to play a full role in meeting students' needs. This good practice is exemplified in annual reviews, which are thorough and contribute well to planning provision. Induction into Year 7, and transition into Years 10 and 11 courses and post-16 education, are planned carefully and involve fully both students and their parents. The department works very effectively with parents, particularly those who find it difficult to communicate with school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the headteacher is **good**. He has a very clear vision and sense of purpose for the future development of the school. Other key staff provide **satisfactory** leadership. The governance and management of the school are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is the driving force behind change and provides good overall leadership.
- The leadership of some key staff is not yet sufficiently influential in bringing about change.
- The school makes good use of self-evaluation to identify priorities.
- Insufficient use is made of performance data to help raise standards.
- The governing body is active, supportive and well involved in securing the development of the school, but has not yet ensured all its statutory responsibilities are fully met.
- Recent leadership initiatives have created a highly motivated and effective special educational needs team.
- Students with Statements of Special Educational Need are successfully included in mainstream lessons, but links with other departments are under-developed.
- Responsibility for co-ordinating provision for students whose first language is not English has not been identified.

### **Commentary**

55. The headteacher provides good overall leadership. He is very clear in his vision for the school, has high aspirations for its improvement and a realistic view of the means to achieve it. He energetically promotes a wide range of innovative ideas and keeps the governing body very well informed on progress. Since his appointment he has re-structured managerial responsibilities to the benefit of the school and made a number of key appointments. Where necessary, training and support for these post-holders have been put in place. However, there is still considerable scope for developing the roles of key senior and middle management staff as part of the strategic planning necessary to meet the stated aims of the school.
56. The senior leadership team makes good use of self-evaluation and reflects carefully upon its performance and progress towards meeting external and internal targets. It monitors carefully performance data, but is not yet effective enough in taking action in response to its findings. Nevertheless, there is good evidence that senior staff meet on a regular basis to reflect upon progress and this helps develop their own aspirations for the school. However, not all key staff yet influence sufficiently well the thinking of other staff, and students, when seeking to motivate them. Not all key staff have yet been able to create effective teams to carry out specific tasks within the school and the school is still in the process of securing this important aspect of its work.
57. The headteacher carefully monitors the work of the senior management team, who in turn monitor and support middle management satisfactorily. There are established procedures for the induction of all new staff, who are given satisfactory support within departments. Good care is taken to identify staffing needs to recruit and retain staff where vacancies arise. The school is not fully staffed and there are still important vacancies to fill, for example a head of geography is required. However, there is a strong commitment to deploy staff effectively and manage workloads fairly.

58. Overall, there is satisfactory leadership of teaching and the curriculum by the headteacher and key staff. Steady progress is being made in curriculum development by the senior leadership team, for example in widening the use of ICT, promoting science effectively and developing the sports curriculum. However, some statutory requirements are not yet fully met and there are weaknesses in promoting students' participation in the arts, especially drama and music. The school's arrangements for performance management are satisfactory and through these teachers are observed teaching and receive good feedback on a regular basis. This programme is used increasingly well to support and monitor staff development. The commitment of leaders to inclusion and equality is satisfactory. However, the needs of all groups of students are not sufficiently met, for example gifted or talented students and those for whom English is not their first language.
59. The school has not yet fully complied with the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act. The local authority's policy has been adopted but no development work has been undertaken to implement this. The leadership team has not identified responsibility for co-ordinating provision or pastoral care for students from minority ethnic groups. As a consequence, students' learning needs are not identified and the students do not always report racist behaviour. Systems to meet the needs of students from minority ethnic groups are unsatisfactory. However, staff have now been trained regarding the needs of Traveller students and the school is beginning to plan provision. Racist incidents which are reported are recorded, but there is no monitoring of the achievement or pastoral needs of students from minority ethnic groups.
60. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall, with a good blend of experienced and new governors on the governing body. However, it still requires two parent governors to reach its full complement. All governors' committees are in place so issues can be considered and decisions reached in an effective manner. The governing body has been instrumental in securing the future of the school and is continuing well to help shape its future direction. However, the governing body does not meet fully all its statutory responsibilities, for example in meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship, or in ensuring the full implementation of the Race Relations Amendment Act. Nevertheless, governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body is well informed, not least through the regular, high-quality and informative reports presented to them by the headteacher. The governors are very supportive of the senior leadership team, but do not always challenge sufficiently its views. Governors are committed to ensuring that the school continues to grow and develop in the interests of all its students.

### **The leadership and management of the school's inclusion unit**

61. Leadership of the inclusion unit is satisfactory overall. The recently appointed inclusion and Reach Out managers are very effective. Both have a clear vision for the development of provision in which all students can be fully included in the life of the school. Practice in Reach Out is innovative and highly effective staff teams have been built very rapidly. The draft special educational needs policy is clear and comprehensive and the initial development plans are well focused. However, links between the inclusion department and other departments, particularly ICT, are weak and monitoring of practice across the school is not in place. Management of the unit is satisfactory. Documentation and guidance on special educational needs are good and students' records are well maintained. The management of the teaching assistants is good. Their role has been clearly described and they meet regularly to share information about students. Procedures to implement the Code of Practice are in place, but many systems are new and criteria for measuring their effectiveness have not yet been established.
62. The managers with responsibility for Excellence Challenge and gifted or talented students have a clear understanding of how the school should progress in developing provision through the Excellence Cluster. The policy and development planning for gifted or talented students is satisfactory. However, the monitoring of the curriculum described in the policy has not been implemented. Good use has been made of additional funding to develop partnerships with universities and to extend extra-curricular provision. Each subject identifies effectively gifted or

talented students. Care is taken to include students who have underachieved in the past but have shown ability or talent. Guidance on identifying students who are gifted and talented is good. However, there is insufficient guidance on curriculum development and teaching approaches for gifted or talented students.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,165,477	Balance from previous year	-38,260
Total expenditure	3,153,188	Balance carried forward to the next	-25,971
Expenditure per pupil	4,188		

63. The financial affairs of the school are managed and controlled well. Governors are kept fully informed of the financial situation of the school on a regular basis. The school takes any necessary action relating to recommendations from its auditors' reports. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily and resources are correctly used to support the students' learning. The school currently has a theoretical financial deficit. This is because an amount of £134,268 was due to be paid to the school, by the end of March 2004, through the European Social Fund. This payment involves funding for the school's Reach Out project. However, payment has been delayed until July 2004.

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in national tests and examinations are adversely affected by the students' weak literacy skills.
- Staffing is unsatisfactory because there is not a full complement of specialist teaching staff.
- Teachers manage students' behaviour well and support good working relationships and personal development.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully, making use of good quality resources to support learning.
- There is insufficient day-to-day assessment of students' achievement.
- Lessons do not provide consistently high challenge for all of the students.
- The management and implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is inconsistent across other subjects and therefore unsatisfactory overall.

#### **Commentary**

64. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well below average. They were also well below the standards reached in schools whose students had been at a similar level by the end of Year 6. This was unsatisfactory achievement and a significant downturn after four years of continuous improvement, which was faster than the national trend. It was primarily due to extended staff absence, where temporary teachers covered half of all the classes, and the enforced use of non-specialist staff. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards are currently below average, but achievement is satisfactory.
65. Basic literacy skills are weak. One-third of the current Year 7 receives extra support because they did not reach expected levels in their primary schools. This is in addition to the above average number whose delayed reading skills are classed as a special educational need. Many of those who did reach expected levels in English before they came to the school read competently for surface meaning. In familiar situations they can often identify implied meanings within a text. However, this skill is not secure when they read unfamiliar material and the heavy emphasis on preparing for the Year 9 tests has meant that the skills of deduction and interpretation are not effectively developed. Most students know they need to vary their vocabulary and the structure of their sentences when they write. However, they do not read enough by themselves to absorb the stock of vocabulary and sentence styles which would enable them to do this. Teachers have recognised this shortcoming and have begun to develop new teaching materials to put right the problem.
66. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below average, though they were average when compared with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances. Students did less well in English than in many other subjects, though the small number of students entered for English literature achieved better results. Work seen confirmed these standards and that achievement is satisfactory.
67. An average proportion of students can readily recognise quotations from a text they have studied, such as 'Lord of the Flies', because they have been taught well. They know who said the words and at what point in the story. However, fewer than expected can interpret what the words tell the reader about the character or deduce why the writer chose to make that character say those particular words. Because of the record of poor attendance in Years 10 and 11 of many previous students, teachers start work on the course work for GCSE as soon as the Year

9 tests are finished. However, students' limitations in both reading and writing, which were seen in Years 7 to 9, continue to make the work difficult for them.

68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 where teachers know their subject well and are aware of their students' limited range of skills. They saturate them with support to help them cope with both the course work and the examinations. Learning is good. The level of care is obvious to students, who respond by trying hard to make use of the notes and guidelines which teachers provide. The result is that both high and low attaining students present their skills to examiners effectively. However, they are heavily reliant on their teachers and they do not have enough time to develop their basic literacy skills further.
69. In Years 7 to 9 planning, support and class management are similarly careful and teaching is satisfactory. Students learn effectively how to succeed in the national tests but the best teaching practice identified in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>12</sup> is not being used effectively enough. Teachers have recognised the recent under-achievement and introduced rigorous periodic tests to check whether it is reoccurring. They have also developed new lesson materials to help students to read below the surface meaning of a text and write more flexibly, but these are not yet having enough impact across all of the classes.
70. Generally, those with learning needs and those with behavioural difficulties achieve well because of the care and additional help which teachers and support staff provide. The aspect of teaching which inhibits better achievement is weak day-to-day assessment. Teachers are not consistently evaluating how effective their lessons have been for different groups and individuals within their classes. They are not, therefore, adjusting their planning to keep every student working to their limit throughout every lesson.
71. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory, as is management and the improvement since the previous inspection. The subject leader has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve achievement. She has introduced new materials and a consistent teaching programme for all classes and improved assessment systems. However, the teaching team is incomplete and the current staff do not fully appreciate how rapidly English teaching has moved on over the last few years. Consequently, they are not putting these developments into practice consistently enough to raise achievement quickly.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

72. The use of literacy in other subjects is under-developed. Overall, standards of literacy in the school are weak and the provision to improve them is unsatisfactory. A significant number of students lack confidence when speaking and do not use discussion effectively in lessons. An exception, which showed how it should be done, occurred in a Year 11 mathematics lesson. Here students shared possible ways of solving a problem with real enthusiasm because they were confident in the lesson and willing to risk being wrong. Too many students are not good enough listeners for this to happen regularly. In addition, the focus on coping with national tests in English has reduced the time available for extending students' reading and writing experiences. These factors are restricting learning in subjects such as religious education, geography and history, where one-word answers simply do not allow students to explore ideas. Limited reading skills restrict access to crucial information in science and inadequate writing skills restrict important evaluations in design and technology and course work in business education.
73. As part of a national initiative, two years ago teachers were asked to plan how they could help to develop these basic building blocks for learning within their own subjects. The initiative has not been effectively managed across the school so that subjects such as science, modern languages and art have made good progress, whereas others such as music, design and technology, business education and religious education have done too little. This is the single

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<sup>12</sup> The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects.



biggest barrier to improved achievement in this school. Moreover, many subjects are failing to match the best examples, where students are taught how to discuss the ideas they are studying and how to use properly specialist vocabulary. Consequently, they are neither teaching students to cope with the particular types of reading or writing they require, nor are they supporting them if they do not find it easy. Momentum was quickly lost when the initiative was first launched, because the then literacy co-ordinator left and no new appointment could be made for a year. Managers do not now have a clear understanding of what has been done, or which skills the teachers themselves need to develop.

## **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head of department is very knowledgeable and provides a very good role model for staff and students.
- Teachers have good levels of subject knowledge and plan thoroughly with clear learning objectives, which aid students' achievement.
- Teachers ensure good productive working relationships, which promote good students' attitudes.
- The learning support assistant contributes well to students' learning.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- The quality of homework is inconsistent and its use unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

74. In 2003, GCSE results in French and German were below average, although students generally reached their target grades and performed at a higher level than in most of their other subjects. Girls performed better than boys. Students with special educational needs attained lower GCSE grades, but this represented good or very good achievement. Students' attainment is improving overall. Although work seen during the inspection was below average for many, it was average for a significant minority. Overall, achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. Recent trends show these standards are improving.
75. Standards of work seen were average in Years 8 and 9 but above average in Year 7 French. Here, students were confident in the use of the present tense, using a wide range of connectives to produce longer varied sentences to talk about their family and friends. In Year 9 German, very good understanding was demonstrated of comparatives where students were writing accurately to compare towns by size and other features. By the end of Year 9, achievement is good, given students' levels of literacy upon entry to the school in Year 7.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall. All teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory or better. The significant majority of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good or better. Very good teaching was seen in a Year 7 French lesson. Here, students understood well the level at which they were performing and the next steps required for improvement. Teachers' command of subject knowledge is good. They use good levels of proficient and authentic language with students and are encouraging of students with learning difficulties. Planning is very effective. Good, clear learning objectives are shared with students and invariably reviewed well at the end of lessons so that students of all levels of ability recognise their learning gains. Teachers promote high standards of behaviour through good support and challenge. Opportunities for students to become more independent learners are developing fast. Teachers are rapidly increasing their confidence and expertise in their use of the interactive whiteboard. However, there are missed opportunities for increasing the degree of collaborative working to promote further students' independence in learning. Homework is set, but its quality is inconsistent and because of this its use to reinforce and extend work in lessons is unsatisfactory. Assessment for learning is developing fast, with students understanding clearly at what level they are and how to improve.

77. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department demonstrates a clear sense of purpose and has high aspirations and expectations, presenting a very good role model for staff and students. The learning support assistant supports students' learning well, is well respected by students and much appreciated by teachers. Review and evaluation by the department is developing fast and the head of department has a very perceptive view of the strengths of the department and its areas for priority development. All the issues raised at the previous inspection have been resolved and improvement is good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In 2003, standards in national tests and examinations were well below average overall.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge is leading to improved planning and raising standards.
- Poor attendance by a significant minority of students in Years 10 and 11 is adversely affecting their attainment.

### **Commentary**

78. In 2003, results in Year 9 national tests were well below average for all schools. Boys' results were similar to those of girls. Results were similar to those in English but below those in science. However, they were above average compared with similar schools and continued a rising trend. GCSE results were very low compared with the national average, representing poor achievement. There were no A\*, A or B grades attained by the most able students. This was a significant fall from previous levels due, in part, to staffing problems and significant absences of students during their course and examinations.
79. Current achievement, seen in all lessons, has improved significantly. However, standards remain below average overall. By the end of Year 9, this represents satisfactory progress for students, from their very low levels of attainment on entry in Year 7. By the end of Year 11, students are achieving well. Results already gained in GCSE modular mathematics examinations indicate a significant improvement in students' attainment when compared with the 2003 GCSE examinations. The most able students have already attained A and B grades through success in module examinations. However, a quarter of all Year 11 students have missed one or more of the module examinations because of absence, which reduces their chances of attaining higher grades. The quality of work seen reflects the students' good attitudes to learning. However, students' books indicate a lack of suitable mathematical rigour, which reduces the development of their understanding and ability to tackle questions which are more advanced. Overall, there is no difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress. However, in a minority of lessons, which lack appropriate challenge, higher attaining students and those gifted in mathematics do not make sufficient progress.
80. Teaching and learning are good in all years and frequently very good. Teachers use ICT very well to engage the interest and participation of students in their learning. Lessons are well planned and students are encouraged to work at a challenging pace, resulting in good learning. Teachers plan well to develop and check students' understanding. Learning support assistants are used well during lessons to enhance the learning opportunities for all students. However, there is insufficient difference in learning objectives for students of differing abilities. Year 7 mixed ability groups are large and include too wide a range of ability for students to progress well, even when appropriate levels of work are supplied. This is especially true where groups contain students with challenging behaviour.
81. In the short time since the appointment of the new head of department there have been significant developments in the subject. Together with a supportive team of teachers, and acting on advice from the local education advisers, he has secured the improvements seen. There is a

good assessment system, which enables students to understand their progress and targets. Developments in students' self-assessment are planned to improve this provision further. Currently, assessment data is not used to identify the progress of groups of students with different backgrounds or learning ability. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

82. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Students' mathematical skills are below that expected nationally, but are sufficient to support satisfactorily their learning in other subjects. In science, students use graphs and a wide variety of measures and compound units in their calculations. Design and technology lessons satisfactorily promote accuracy in measuring and in students' graphic skills. In French and German lessons, students carry out surveys and analyse results, presenting high quality charts and graphs. During ICT lessons, students successfully enter formulae into spreadsheets and produce a useful variety of graphs using computers. These skills are further utilised satisfactorily when analysing data in geography and history lessons. There has been satisfactory whole school training in the development of students' numeracy across the curriculum and departments have a copy of the school's numeracy policy, which is raising the awareness of all teachers. The numeracy co-ordinator is working well with other departments to develop common methods and techniques to support students' numeracy skills.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement has led to much improved results in national tests at the end of Year 9.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision.
- GCSE results are not high enough and the evaluation strand of the coursework is underdeveloped.
- There is effective, regular, diagnostic assessment of the standards achieved by students.
- ICT is now very well used to support learning.

### **Commentary**

83. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003. They are, however, well above average compared with students in similar schools. They have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Boys gained higher results than girls.

84. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations in double award science were well below average. They have improved slightly since the previous inspection. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs achieved well. Sound strategies are in place to raise achievement in GCSE. Regular assessment of students' progression in modular tests predicts a large rise in the proportion of students achieving an A\* to C grade in 2004. This is as a result of testing regularly how well the students are doing and subsequently concentrating revision on those areas requiring most improvement.

85. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for many students, considering they entered the school with well below average standards. This includes students with special educational needs and the small proportion of students learning English as an additional language. Good strategies are employed so that students of all abilities show increasingly good literacy skills, which support their understanding of science. This was demonstrated well in a Year 7 class of students of varying abilities, who discussed filtration and the formation of solutions using the appropriate scientific language.

86. Standards in the current Year 11 are below average. However, this represents satisfactory achievement by most students considering they entered the school with standards which were well below average. Nevertheless, practical coursework for the GCSE examination is adversely

affected by their poor evaluation of results, which reduces their marks. However, students generally cope well with the skills of planning and observation. This allows them to collect accurate results and display them clearly. Where students' writing skills are underdeveloped, teacher support and other resources, including facilities for word-processing their coursework, enhance their learning.

87. Learning and teaching are good, with some very good features. This is because teachers have very high expectations of the students. The challenge presented by their incisive questioning stimulates students to think about science more deeply and, as a result, the students learn more effectively. Teachers share innovative ideas, thus increasing their range of strategies, and this helps to raise students' standards. Assessment procedures are well developed and are used well to identify areas of potential underachievement. ICT is now used well on a daily basis to support learning. The five interactive whiteboards add a strong visual impact to learning, as does the science computer suite, where students word-process coursework and tackle revision questions. This allows them to consolidate satisfactorily their earlier learning.
88. The raising of standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is the focus of a very well led and managed department. The new head of department has united mainly very young and inexperienced teachers into an effective team. Consequently, there is a shared understanding of factors which contribute to high standards. The leadership places a very high priority on helping teachers to develop their skills and share their good practice. All teachers have received training which supports the National Science Strategy. This is helping to raise achievement in both practical and thinking skills. The head of department has monitored well the effectiveness of teachers by observing them teaching. As a result, teaching improves and so does students' learning. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The refurbished laboratories now provide good areas in which to teach and learn. The use of ICT has improved considerably and students regularly use the science computer suite to research the Internet to provide material for their homework. They also use computers to see how science affects their daily lives and this increases their level of interest. There has been a very large investment in textbooks, particularly in revision guides. These allow students to support their school work effectively with home study.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment by Years 9 and 11 in ICT is too low, but students' achievement is improving.
- Good improvements in ICT resources are raising standards of teaching and students' interest.
- Matters relating to the leadership of ICT, to secure clear direction for the subject, are unresolved.
- The use of assessment to support students' learning is improving, but is under-developed.
- There is a lack of alternative ICT courses and extension work to fully challenge all students.
- The management and monitoring of the use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

89. Standards of attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average, but students' achievement is satisfactory. This represents a satisfactory improvement in achievement since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were well below average. However, there has been an improving trend over the past three years with increasing numbers of students gaining the expected Level 5 or better. The achievement of higher attaining students is satisfactory when compared with their standards on entry to the school in Year 7. A new applied GCSE course was introduced for students in September 2002 but staffing problems and teaching difficulties in coming to terms with the new examination syllabus have adversely affected the standard of coursework and students' achievement. However, although standards seen for this course during the inspection were below average, the students' achievement was satisfactory. Year 11 GCSE results in 2003 were well below average, with only one student gaining a higher grade A.

90. There has been a significant improvement fairly recently in the quality of computer resources and in the accommodation for the teaching of the subject. This is raising the quality of teaching and contributing to the students' very good attitudes towards ICT. Working relationships between teachers and students are good. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning across Years 7 to 11 is now satisfactory overall and improving. However, whilst day-to-day marking is satisfactory, the use of assessment information is not sharp enough in helping students develop targets for improvement. Where teaching and learning are good, planning is clear and students understand well what it is they are aiming to learn. The work involved is successful in helping students to develop a basic range of ICT and communications skills. However, the use of databases to collect and explore information is under-developed, as is control work where students write simple programs for themselves. Although higher attaining students are successfully able to evaluate and explain their work, the achievement of others is affected by lower literacy skills. Overall, the department's contribution to the development of students' use of literacy is satisfactory and their use of numeracy good. However, planning of work by teachers to meet the needs of students at different levels of ability is inconsistent. For example, whilst sound attention is paid to students with special educational needs, the provision of extension work to enhance challenge for students who are more able is under-developed.
91. There has been an acting head of department since January 2004, on a temporary basis, who is now leading the department well and managing the subject satisfactorily. However, the overall leadership and management of the subject and the subject's improvement since the previous inspection have been unsatisfactory. This is because important issues from the previous inspection have not been effectively implemented. These involve, for example, the embedding of ICT as a tool for learning in subjects across the curriculum and the practical use of assessment to help students learn and improve. The curriculum satisfactorily meets statutory requirements. However, the provision of alternative and vocational ICT courses to meet better the needs of groups of students in Years 10 and 11 and support national initiatives to develop the curriculum between Years 9 and 13 has not been developed.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

92. The use of ICT across the other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This is because it was a key issue at the previous inspection upon which there has been insufficient improvement. Until very recently the monitoring, evaluation and management of this important aspect of the school's work in support of students' learning has been unsatisfactory. A recent survey has been undertaken by the acting head of department to check on each subject's contribution, but not all have yet responded. Not all departments have sufficiently well planned or considered how they may make their required contribution to ICT. Nevertheless, the improvements in ICT resources and networked computer suites are starting to have a positive impact as teachers learn how to make the best use of these new facilities. Contributions made through mathematics, science, modern languages and the inclusion unit, for example, are developing well. Across the school, teachers are making sound use of their laptops, in support of their teaching, when projecting information onto screens or interactive whiteboards. However, the practical use of ICT by the students themselves to support their learning is thin in most subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Weak literacy skills adversely affect students' achievement in tests and examinations.
- The new head of department provides a very good role model for staff and students.
- Where teaching is very good, standards and students' achievement are being raised effectively.
- At present, students do not receive sufficient guidance as to how to improve their work.
- In a minority of lessons the needs of higher attaining students are not fully met.
- The subject promotes effectively aspects of students' personal development.

### Commentary

93. In 2003, students in Year 9 achieved standards which were well below average. In the same year, GCSE results for students in Year 11 were well below average and lower in relation to the same students' overall performance across other subjects.
94. Standards of work seen are below average in both Years 9 and 11. This is because of poor literacy skills which have a negative impact, particularly upon written work. However, achievement is satisfactory, with students making the expected gains as they move through the school. Most students know and understand more than they can express easily in their writing. They lack confidence in speaking to a wider audience but many are capable of making accurate statements in smaller groups to explain historical events. They do not draw sufficiently upon standard English or subject vocabulary when speaking or writing. This has implications for developing particular approaches to teaching and learning. The head of department is taking a clear lead in encouraging diversity in the tasks teachers set and promoting dialogue in lessons. Teachers in the department are now introducing imaginative methods and this helps students achieve higher standards.
95. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but better in a minority of lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and introduce topics accurately. Where teaching is very good all students are actively engaged and learn effectively. Their work is effectively consolidated and extended through written tasks, including homework. As a result, achievement is good and standards are raised. In contrast, where there is insufficient challenge in lessons, teachers are missing opportunities to establish learning objectives which stretch higher attaining students. At present, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. They do not diagnose individual needs sufficiently so students too rarely have a clear understanding of how to improve their work.
96. The new head of department, only recently in post, provides good leadership. Through the quality of her teaching she provides a very good role model for students and staff. Students are challenged to think clearly and there is a clear commitment to improving standards by identifying priorities and taking action. As a result, teaching styles are becoming more varied and learning is becoming more active. The ethos of the department is now positive and day-to-day management procedures are satisfactory. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but lacks variety and enrichment. At present, there are no educational visits and few community links. The subject supports students' social and moral development well by presenting issues such as medical ethics and comparing the practices of ancient Rome with today's health service. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, with positive developments in teaching styles and the appointment of a full-time head of department, replacing a part-time post holder.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in tests and examinations are affected by poor literacy skills.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject.
- The varied use of resources is promoting greater independence in learning .
- Students do not have sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- ICT is being used effectively to support learning.
- At present, there is no head of department in post.

### **Commentary**

97. In 2003 students in Year 9 achieved standards which were well below average. In the same year, GCSE results for students in Year 11 were well below average and lower in relation to the same students' overall performance in other subjects. This is because many students lack examination technique and have poor literacy skills.
98. Standards of work seen are below average in Years 9 and 11. However, achievement is satisfactory, with students making expected gains year-on-year. Students know and understand more than they demonstrate in written work. For example, most students in Year 11 can satisfactorily read an Ordnance Survey map, locate features using grid references and talk and write about them briefly. This work promotes numeracy well. However, they make insufficient use of subject vocabulary and standard English when doing so. Because their speaking skills are weak, students do not use specialist subject vocabulary and terminology sufficiently often in discussion so their writing lacks specific language and detail.
99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Working relationships are good. As a result, most students are motivated well to learn. Where teaching is good, there are higher levels of discussion, more variety of activity and greater independence in learning. For example, students study tourism and work collaboratively to investigate the attractions of differing locations. GCSE project work provides good tasks requiring students to carry out independent research and gather information from members of the community.
100. Where teaching is satisfactory, the promotion of speaking by focusing on vocabulary and its use in written work is under-developed. Lesson planning does not consistently place sufficient emphasis upon developing literacy skills. There is an increasing use of ICT for both information retrieval and presentation of work. This encourages independence in learning quite effectively and provides good opportunities for students to access a range of source material. However, one barrier to its full and effective use is the students' limitations in reading and understanding complex text on screen, often when searching for information on the Internet. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but insufficiently developed. For example, data helps teachers to inform students of their general progress over time. However, it is not used sufficiently to provide specific guidance as to how individual students might improve their work.
101. At present, there is no head of department in post. This does restrict the development of the subject within the curriculum and the monitoring of standards and teaching. However, leadership and management is judged satisfactory because existing departmental staff have taken responsibility for ensuring that students are supported well. Day-to-day administrative tasks have been maintained and senior management members have ensured that experienced and knowledgeable external support, through the local education authority, has been provided. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most of the teaching is by specialist staff but the use of non-specialist staff has limited the achievement of some students.
- There are limited opportunities for teachers to share good practice.
- There is no effective literacy strategy for the subject.
- The department has been supported well by both senior management and the local education authority in reviewing its effectiveness.
- There has been good progress in the development of the curriculum, some aspects of assessment and in resources.

### **Commentary**

102. In work seen, standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory by the end of Years 9 and 11. In 2003, GCSE short course results were below average with higher grades well below average. Students develop their knowledge and understanding of different religions more effectively than their skills in reflection and response. They lack confidence in giving their opinions in discussion and do not fully develop their ideas in written work. By the end of Year 9 the range and variety of written work varies. It is better where subject specialist staff teach the classes. With the exception of higher attainers, students are slow to transfer new learning into individual writing. For example, they quickly complete a problem-solving activity in pairs to identify the sequence of events in different birth ceremonies, but find it difficult to then recall and summarise key features of each ceremony. By the end of Year 11, students express clearly their opinions on moral issues such as abortion, but find more difficulty in giving reasons for their opinions and showing they have considered more than one point of view, as required by the examination syllabus. Students' skills are weak where they have to agree or disagree with a point of view. Although, for example, most can argue about God's existence, the majority, excluding higher attainers, find it difficult to interpret arguments such as "if God did not exist there would be no need for moral behaviour".

103. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In specialist teaching, subject knowledge is good and this sustains a satisfactory and sometimes good level of challenge in discussion work. In some of the non-specialist teaching classes, discussion lacks challenge. For example, in oversimplifying contrasting beliefs about creation in questions posed to students. This, in turn, results in students' learning being at too basic a level. Engaging students in discussion and developing their skills in giving reasoned opinions are under-developed. This is because too often discussion is sustained by the teachers' excessive use of a running commentary, which does not make sufficient use of students' responses. However, in the most effective teaching a sequence of activities effectively challenges students to develop oral and writing skills. Resources are used well and assessment gives students clear feedback on their learning after each activity. This approach is more effective than in lessons where there is a period of open, unstructured class discussion. Assessment procedures are developing well, with an increasing emphasis on students learning how they can improve their performance. This is beginning to have an impact on improving the quality of written work, but teaching methods are not always sufficiently focused on developing writing skills. The use of assessment to respond to students' individual needs is a gap in the otherwise good progress made.

104. Leadership is satisfactory. The department has worked purposefully and productively with senior staff and with the local education authority to improve its effectiveness. There is a commitment within the department to further improvement. The teaching team are well motivated. Management is satisfactory. Staff are effectively implementing improvements in curriculum planning, assessment and resources. However, there is a lack of a clear literacy strategy within departmental planning. The newly introduced assessment procedures do not yet inform planning. It is recognised at a whole school level that procedures for the identification and deployment of non-specialist staff require improvement. In addition, at a whole school level, opportunities for the single specialist to share good practice are absent. Improvement since the



previous inspection is satisfactory with more variety in teaching methods and improvement in assessment procedures.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject is not fully meeting National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a restricted choice of design-based subjects in Years 10 and 11.
- There is good development of a common assessment system.
- The continual absence of staff is lowering students' achievement.
- The unsatisfactory development of graphical skills is limiting achievement.
- The use of computer-aided design and manufacture is insufficiently embedded across the design and technology curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

105. The standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average. By Years 9 and 11, standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory overall. This is because, although students' standards are average and achievement satisfactory in manufacturing and the use of materials, there is limited technological challenge in using mechanisms or systems and control. There is unsatisfactory development of graphical capability. A good start has been made with work in computer-aided design and manufacture, but this has yet to become well embedded into course planning.

106. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average for all the GCSE courses. In lessons the overall standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory overall. The content of coursework folios is satisfactory in food and textiles, but graphical presentation is unsatisfactory and there is too little use of ICT to improve the quality of the work.

107. In the lessons seen, the overall quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. Where lessons are good they are planned well, expectations are high, students are interested and lesson objectives are discussed clearly. In lessons which are unsatisfactory, planning is adequate but progress is slow and the work does not challenge students sufficiently well. Long-term staff absence has been a problem leading to a lack of continuity in teaching and learning. This situation is having a negative impact and is lowering the standards and achievement of students. There is satisfactory support for all students with learning difficulties.

108. The leadership of the department is satisfactory overall. There is now good ongoing self-evaluation by the department, with a focus on improvement, to guide development planning. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. This is because, although schemes of work and essential policies are in place, the subject is not meeting National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9. Although a vocational course in GNVQ manufacturing has been established, there is only a restricted choice of design-based subjects in Years 10 to 11. A good but recently developed common assessment system is in use across the department. However, this is not yet well enough established to monitor performance, neither is it used to lead target setting nor inform students of their progress. The accommodation for design and technology is good. The teaching rooms are well maintained and well organised. The resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory, but there are insufficient facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture in food and textiles. Display is not effective either as a resource for teaching and learning or for raising achievement. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good quality of teaching is supporting students' learning well.
- There is a stimulating environment and use of ICT resources for teaching and learning.
- Students achieve and progress well in lessons.
- The introduction of new courses has extended well the experience of students.
- Standards in national tests and examinations are well below average, but higher attaining students achieve well.

#### **Commentary**

109. The standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average. However, in the lessons and work seen, standards were above average and achievement was good because of new staff appointments. The students are gaining a good breadth of experience and covering a wide range of activities and skills. The work is challenging and good outcomes are produced by students at all levels because of the enthusiasm and support of their teachers. Very good use is made of sketchbooks. This is enabling students to build up their own resources for their artwork activities, linked to different themes, including the work of other artists.
110. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average overall. Nevertheless, students taking art attained nearly a grade higher in the subject than other subjects taken at the same time. The proportion of students gaining higher A\* and A passes was in line with the national average. This represents very good achievement by the students concerned. In the lessons and work seen, the overall standards were above average and achievement was good. Coursework folios are good and in many instances there is real creativity and originality in the work being produced. Students have developed excellent sketchbooks as a resource for ideas and have the freedom to experiment with different graphical techniques. This is leading to the development of some very good examples of coursework, demonstrating the interest students have in the subject. Due to the good support of teachers students at all levels, including those with learning difficulties, are achieving well and making good progress.
111. In lessons, the quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have high expectations and they are keen and enthusiastic, which contributes much to the good and sometimes very good progress made by students. Good use is made of the wide range of resource material in the department, including the work of other artists. Lesson planning is very good and practical sessions are well organised. Very good use is made of ICT for teaching and learning. The teachers provide extra-curricular time for students to complete their work. The introduction of courses in photography and ceramics has extended the skills and artistic experience of students. Good use is made of homework to extend and reinforce their learning.
112. The leadership of art is very good and this has had a positive impact on raising standards over the past year. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. The management of the department is very good. Schemes of work clearly chart the progressive development of artistic ability and reflect the expectation of creativity. Assessment is well established and is used effectively to track attainment and provide good feedback to students on how to improve. The two teaching rooms provide good accommodation for art and there is a good stock of resources. Display is used very effectively throughout the department and in some areas of the main school, showing the work of students to good effect, whilst identifying expectations of quality and creativity. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection as a result of radical changes following the appointment of new staff and head of department.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is unsatisfactory because too little is expected of students.
- Too little emphasis is placed on developing students' speaking and writing skills.
- Teaching is not linked closely enough to National Curriculum levels to allow students to attain higher standards.
- Students behave well, have good working relationships with each other and their teacher, but take very little initiative in their learning.
- There is no regular programme of extra-curricular activities.

### **Commentary**

113. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 the proportion of students reaching the expected Level 5 was well below average, with twice as many boys as girls failing to reach this level. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 were also well below average. Achievement is unsatisfactory for all students because their poor control of instruments severely hampers them when attempting to play even the most basic melody. Although they know the names of the notes, they have little understanding of notation as it links with musical sound. They are given insufficient opportunities to explore ideas and develop their thoughts through discussion and debate. Although they know some musical terms they do not use them to describe music to which they are listening.
114. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average, with boys performing better than girls. The students who entered for music did considerably less well than they did in their other subjects. In work seen, standards in Year 11 were also well below average. Weaknesses in literacy, which have not been tackled in Years 7 to 9, continue to hold back achievement which, consequently, is unsatisfactory. Although students have a broad knowledge of musical terms, genres and historical periods, their thoughts are not expressed well in spoken or written work.
115. Learning is unsatisfactory because of unsatisfactory teaching which is not challenging and does not relate closely to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Students, however, are willing to follow instructions and they behave well. Deficiencies in speaking and writing are not tackled. Their work contains very little evidence of the development of their ideas through extended writing. This particularly disadvantages students preparing for GCSE who are not equipped with the writing skills needed to gain good marks. Teachers' marking of work is superficial and does not inform students of how to improve, especially in their writing. Since all students are given the same work, the learning needs of all students, especially those with special educational needs or who are gifted musicians, are not met.
116. The department is subject to unsatisfactory leadership and management. The head of department has a weak understanding of the importance of assessment information and does not use it to plan work designed to help all students to succeed. The department lacks a scheme of work showing progression in the development of basic musical skills, knowledge and literacy. It does not provide coverage of a broad range of musical styles, which is a further impediment to improving teaching and learning and raising standards. Very few students learn an instrument. There is very little in the way of extra-curricular activities, which normally give students the added motivation and opportunity to make music and add to their personal development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning, and consequently of standards, has deteriorated.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good across all year groups.
- The progress made by the Year 11 GCSE group is good and reflects very good support for learning.
- The time allocation for core course physical education in Years 9 to 11 is very low compared with that recommended nationally and timetabling constraints restrict the range and extent of students' learning experiences in Years 10 and 11.
- Good opportunities are provided for students to take part in sports outside of lessons.

### Commentary

117. Students join the school with standards which are below average. By the end of Year 9, standards are average. Students achieve well and make good progress despite having only one 50-minute lesson each week in Year 9. Standards by the end of Year 11, in core physical education, are below average. Students' achievement and progress is unsatisfactory, because of the very low time allocation. Standards in the Year 11 GCSE group are above average. These students achieve well and make good progress, but GCSE results in 2003 were well below average.
118. Teaching and learning are good because planning for lessons is effective. Tasks are well structured and this enables students of all abilities to improve and develop their performance. In core lessons for Years 10 and 11 the range and extent of activities offered is restricted both by the shortfall in time allocation and timetabling limitations which affect the staffing of the subject. Despite these constraints, students work productively in lessons and because teaching is good their levels of participation are high. This was evident in a Year 10 volleyball lesson, where the teacher's demonstration of the spike shot was of such high quality that students of all abilities quickly mastered this complex skill and made good progress in the lesson. Students in the Year 11 examination group make good progress and their standards in their practical work are above average. In an excellent revision lesson the teaching inspired the students as a result of highly effective pair work which closely matched the revision needs of all students.
119. The extra-curricular provision is good. Staff, students and parents willingly help to organise a good range of clubs. Students support teams in all years and some have been successful at district and county levels. Students benefit well from further opportunities for leadership through participation in the Junior Sport Leadership Award and sports coaching awards. Links with the community are good and representatives from local clubs sit on the sports hall partnership board.
120. Very good leadership ensures there is a clear vision for the future. Management is good and this is evident in the development plan, the strategy for raising achievement in Years 10 and 11 and the role played in negotiations for securing funding for the new community sports hall facilities. Leadership and teaching of the curriculum is innovative, self-evaluation is rigorous and there is regular monitoring through the self-review system and use of outside agencies. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Because of all these positive factors, in spite of the timetabling constraints, provision is good.

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

In these areas, business studies was inspected in depth and two other courses, social studies and manufacturing, were sampled.

### Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new course has been well matched to the students' needs and is taught by subject specialists, but there is insufficient subject focus in planning.
- The accommodation allows very good access to ICT resources.
- Links with business are currently too limited.
- Insufficient support is provided for students in order to develop their literacy skills, particularly in relation to coursework.

#### Commentary

121. In work seen, standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. The majority of students did not perform as well as they did in other subjects. The college has now introduced a GCSE applied business studies course and current Year 11 students will be the first group to complete this course. One part of the course has already been assessed and results show a significant increase in higher grades attained, compared with last year. Lower attainers initially lack confidence in applying numeracy skills, for example when interpreting graphs about a company's 'break-even' position, although their understanding is often better than this suggests. Recall of key terms is weak for those whose literacy skills are weak, for example in describing variable costs as "*costs that vary*". Students use terminology well in coursework, as when giving an account of different methods of training and recruitment in a company. However, only higher attaining students have the skills to evaluate effectively such features of a business. Students display good skills in selecting information from sources, including websites, to include in their coursework. A weaker area is in combining textbook information with information about a particular company. Students use ICT well in investigation and in the presentation of their coursework. Coursework is well organised, in contrast with students' class work files.

122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Individual learning needs are identified well because teachers' subject knowledge is good. Lower attainers respond well in small group work, due to confidence-building methods, which encourage them to identify aspects of business finance which they find difficult. Teachers explain theory clearly, using worked examples well to consolidate learning. Students work well independently on their coursework but methods are not effective in assessing and building literacy skills to improve quality. Students do not display a good understanding of literacy weaknesses in their own coursework. Assessment methods, including self-assessment, are used well to test students' understanding of new terminology. In work seen, methods to reinforce learning through the use of resources lack consistency. In work on financial documents, students' records of their own learning are too fragmented, with insufficient links between printed resources in files and students' own notes.

123. Leadership is satisfactory. The aim of ensuring that provision matches needs has been pursued well, with a new course being introduced. Business links are too limited. However, the need to extend links with the business community has been identified and pursued at both departmental and whole-school levels. The advantage of good departmental ICT facilities has been further enhanced by the introduction of interactive software. Management is satisfactory. The new course is well planned in terms of maximising students' opportunities to achieve well in the examined part of the course, including re-sit opportunities. Planning is weaker in terms of developing students' literacy skills to improve the quality of coursework. There is a lack of

subject specific focus in planning due partly to the temporary combination of the co-ordination of ICT and business studies, which is limiting development in both subjects. The subject was not inspected at the previous inspection and therefore no judgement can be made on improvement.

### **Social Studies**

124. Some students follow a 'Key Steps' course in Years 8 and 9 in preparation for the ASDAN course offered in Years 10 and 11. Two lessons were sampled, one in Year 8 and one in Year 10. Teaching and learning were good in both. Standards in Year 8, where students studied sex discrimination in the media, were well below average. However, they worked well in groups and examined a series of advertisements to identify features that could be considered as sexist. All students, including lower attainers, completed the task satisfactorily and achieved well. The management of students by staff was good. Students were well motivated because their work was valued and success celebrated. Each group's findings were presented and displayed well to the whole class. Standards in Year 10, where students were studying healthy eating, were well below average. They had produced their own diaries recording food eaten over two days, satisfactorily analysing their own eating patterns in relation to healthy eating and devised healthy diet plans. Achievement was satisfactory, but independent learning skills were weak and students frequently sought help. Working relationships were good and behaviour managed well.

### **Manufacturing**

125. Four groups of students in Year 11 follow the GNVQ foundation course. One Year 11 lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Standards were well below average and achievement satisfactory overall. This revision lesson satisfactorily examined automated processes and class discussion followed the viewing of a video about biscuit manufacture. However, not all students were engaged with some displaying a lack of interest. Independent learning skills, including observation and recall of detail from the video, were weak. Students' responses did contribute satisfactorily to the creation of a flow diagram of the process, but much of the input was from the teacher.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

In these areas, the school's course in personal, social health and citizenship education was inspected in depth and careers education was sampled.

### **Citizenship and Personal, social and health education**

Provision in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of management is good.
- Explicit links with other curriculum areas are not consistently identified in schemes of work.
- Enrichment provides good opportunities for students to develop their skills of participation.
- Teachers miss opportunities in lessons to develop students' communication skills.

### **Commentary**

126. Citizenship and personal, social and health education are taught through discrete tutorial sessions and off-timetable enrichment activities organised for all age groups. By the end of Years 9 and 11 standards are average, achievement is satisfactory and students are making satisfactory progress. In Year 9, students study aspects of citizenship which include local government, the judicial system, tax and finance and voluntary organisations. Skills of enquiry are developed satisfactorily through students expressing their own opinions about social and moral issues through written scenarios and considering other people's points of view. In Year 11, students develop satisfactorily their skills of evaluation through self-assessment and further study of their own rights and choices as individuals.

127. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers set effectively the context for citizenship. This encourages students to develop satisfactorily their skills of participation and communication through group work in response to a variety of teaching methods. In a Year 8 citizenship lesson, students were considering satisfactorily the effects of job losses through a series of interesting tasks, which were set within the context of personal and moral issues. They worked well in small groups and contributed good suggestions to discussions. A description of the data protection act helped students understand well their individual rights and the fuller implications of losing a job.
128. However, in the majority of lessons seen, teachers did not develop students' communication skills effectively enough through whole-group discussion, or use debate to reinforce their skills of enquiry. Students work well in pairs and small groups but they do not readily contribute their ideas to the whole class. In a Year 10 lesson, students talked confidently among themselves about issues related to recent drugs legislation when drawing on what they already knew. However, they found it difficult to articulate their own ideas and consequently could not construct arguments to support their own judgements. Nevertheless, Year 11 files show good evidence of written and oral work, and good connections are being made between the National Curriculum areas of study. Consequently, the students are beginning to evaluate and develop well their critical awareness of the issues studied.
129. The curriculum for citizenship and personal, social and health education is good and the schemes of work follow this closely. Enrichment is good and supplements well the teaching of the curriculum through specially organised activity days and talks from outside speakers. These enable all students to extend their understanding of issues, including sex and drugs education, and develop their participative skills. However, policies for citizenship are not systematically included in departmental documentation and a only few subject areas have detailed links in their planning and schemes of work. Nevertheless, in a good Year 10 history lesson, students shared their ideas well about the validity and value of different sources of information regarding the liberation of concentration camps after the Second World War.
130. There is a clear vision for the development of citizenship and this is well supported through the development plan. Tutors and heads of year co-ordinate the teaching satisfactorily and the curriculum is good. Good management is reflected through detailed planning and regular monitoring, undertaken by heads of year, senior management and the school's link adviser. There is an effective assessment system established and self-evaluation is good because teaching and day-to-day procedures are reviewed regularly.

### **Commentary: Careers education**

131. Careers education was sampled, through interviews with staff and pupils and a study of school documentation. Careers education meets basic statutory requirements. However, in July 2003 over a quarter of leavers did not enter further education, employment or training. This fallout has been consistent over the past four years and the school performs significantly worse than other schools in the locality in this respect. There are basic schemes of work in place for careers education. However, these are unsatisfactory because they are not linked to students' progress from year-to-year. The co-ordinator provides careers materials and regularly briefs year staff, but there is no monitoring of the teaching of the programme. However, there is satisfactory monitoring of students to ensure coverage of the programme. Arrangements for work experience are satisfactory and, in addition, the school is currently piloting a weekly work placement scheme for a small group of Year 10 students on its work related learning course.
132. At the time of the inspection there was no Connexions<sup>13</sup> careers adviser in post, and there have been staffing difficulties over the past two years. However, the Connexions service is satisfactorily involved with the Year 9 options choices and in the Year 10 work experience programme. The service supports the ASDAN group and Year 11 in promoting the modern

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<sup>13</sup> The Connexions service is a national agency, which was established to provide integrated information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for all young people aged 13 to 19.

apprenticeship programmes and by encouraging self-referral by students. However, there has been no analysis by the school as to how well the partnership is serving students. Consequently, liaison with the service is currently unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator for careers education demonstrates commitment by the production of both student and staff learning and information packs and by his contribution to the training of staff team members. In this respect, there is satisfactory co-ordination of the curriculum. However, effective teams are not in place for the teaching of careers and there is an absence of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the consistent assessment of student achievement.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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