

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LINTON VILLAGE COLLEGE**

Linton, Cambridgeshire

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 101862

Headteacher: Mr Clive Bush

Lead inspector: Ms Margaret Julia Goodchild

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 November 2003

Inspection number: 258691

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:             | Foundation                            |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 – 16                               |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                 |
| Number on roll:              | 807                                   |
| School address:              | Cambridge Road<br>Linton<br>Cambridge |
| Postcode:                    | CB1 6JB                               |
| Telephone number:            | 01223 891233                          |
| Fax number:                  | 01223 894476                          |
| Appropriate authority:       | Governing body                        |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mrs G Carter                          |
| Date of previous inspection: | February 1998                         |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Linton Village College draws pupils aged 11 to 16 from a wide rural area and currently has 807 pupils on roll; it is smaller than secondary schools nationally. The vast majority of pupils are white British; a minority come from other white backgrounds, with a very small number of pupils of ethnic minority heritage. No pupils are learning English as an additional language. There are currently four traveller pupils. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (2.9 per cent) is well below average. Fourteen per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and eleven pupils have a statement of special educational need; this is below the national average. From year to year, there is some variation in pupils' prior attainment when they enter the school. Overall, attainment on entry is above average.

As part of its work as a Beacon school, the college works in partnership with a number of other educational establishments. It is a Business and Enterprise College, working with St Bede's School in Cambridge and all its feeder primary schools. It has gained an International School Award, the Artsmark Award (2001), Investor in People status (2001), and a School Achievement Award (2003). Being a village college, it provides extensively for the local community through adult education (lifelong learning, sports and leisure), family learning programmes, youth work, family support services and community outreach. It provides drop-in facilities for local people and makes its resources available to the community.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                          |                | Subject responsibilities                                       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--|
| 15918                          | Margaret Julia Goodchild | Lead inspector | Special educational needs<br>English as an additional language |
| 19727                          | Eric Langford            | Lay inspector  |  |
| 18950                          | Carmen Rodney            | Team inspector | English  |
| 20055                          | Sheila Entwistle         | Team inspector | Mathematics  |
| 6432                           | Mick Sewter              | Team inspector | Science  |
| 10060                          | David Gutmann            | Team inspector | Information and communication technology<br>Business studies   |
| 13805                          | Lynn Lowery              | Team inspector | Design and technology  |
| 24127                          | James Kidd               | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages                                       |
| 15372                          | Patricia Walker          | Team inspector | History  |
| 10392                          | Donnaleen Ratcliff       | Team inspector | Geography<br>Religious education                               |
| 14446                          | Barry Simmons            | Team inspector | Physical education<br>Personal, social and health education    |
| 18846                          | Philip Priest            | Team inspector | Music<br>Citizenship   |
| 30695                          | Geraldine Dinan          | Team inspector | Art  |

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This very successful school** enables pupils to reach standards that are consistently well above the national average. Very good teaching and learning give rise to very good achievement, especially in Years 7 to 9. The school's effectiveness has been recognised by a number of awards: it is a Beacon school, it recently gained specialist status as a Business and Enterprise college, it has an International School Award, an Artsmark Award and gained a School Achievement Award in 2003. As a village college, the school also fulfils a central role within the local community. The principal provides excellent leadership and the school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are consistently well above the national average.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, who in turn demonstrate a desire to succeed; both factors have a very positive effect on achievement.
- The principal's clear vision and quest for excellence provide strong direction to the school's work; senior managers and governors support him very well.
- A range of excellent community, international, business and educational links enliven and enrich many areas of the school's work.
- Pupils are very well cared for and the school ensures that they make very good progress in their personal development.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are not as high as those in other subjects and provision for ICT across the curriculum needs to be developed further.

The school has made very good improvement since it was last inspected in February 1998. It has been effective in tackling the issues from the previous inspection, which concerned its planning for whole school and departmental development. These factors are now strong. Well above average standards have been sustained and the school has developed further, gaining recognition for its work through a number of awards. It has extended its many links and recently gained specialist status.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with: | all schools |      |      | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
|   | 2001        | 2002 | 2003 | 2003            |
|   | A           | A    | A    | C               |

*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.*

**Pupils' achievement is very good overall.** Pupils achieve particularly well in Years 7 to 9 and reach levels in Year 9 National Curriculum tests that are well above average and well above those of similar schools. In Years 10 and 11, pupils sustain these high standards and consistently perform well above average in GCSE / GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11. Based on pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, results in 2002 were above the national average and they were well above those for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In 2003, results were average when compared with schools whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9. This was partly because results in ICT pulled down pupils' overall scores and because, in keeping with their predicted grades, boys did less well than girls. Results in 2003 were above those of similar schools based on free school meals. Pupils' work and their performance in lessons show that throughout the school they are reaching levels well above the national average in most subjects, with the exception of ICT – where standards are currently below average.

**Pupils' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.** They have very positive attitudes and behave very well. The attendance rate is well above average and punctuality is excellent.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very good education. Teaching and learning are very good overall.** Teachers and pupils share a strong work ethic and a commitment to learning. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and provide varied experiences to stimulate their interest. Pupils are enthusiastic and readily take responsibility for their own learning. Assessment is good overall and very good in a number of subjects. The school makes very good use of assessment information to measure its effectiveness and track pupils' progress.

An excellent range of clubs, educational visits and other activities enriches the curriculum and supports pupils' learning. The school cares very well for its pupils and works well with parents, who are very satisfied with its work. International links, those with the community and with other educational establishments are excellent.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good overall.** The principal provides excellent leadership which ensures that well above average standards are sustained, and exciting, new initiatives keep the school in a state of dynamic development. Monitoring and self-evaluation are rigorous, so that senior managers know the school's strengths and quickly identify areas for development. Almost without exception, the governing body provides very good support and challenge. Governors do not, however, ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Governance is, therefore, satisfactory overall.

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

The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with the school's work. Pupils are highly positive about what the school has to offer and participate enthusiastically in all activities.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- To raise standards in ICT and strengthen the use of ICT as a tool for learning across the curriculum<sup>1</sup>.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
- Ensure that all requirements are fully met in ICT.
- Monitor the implementation of its race policy and report findings to parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

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<sup>1</sup> ICT is a current priority in the school improvement plan.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils' achievement is very good. Pupils achieve particularly well in Years 7 to 9 and reach levels in Year 9 National Curriculum tests that are well above average and well above those of similar schools. In Years 10 and 11, pupils sustain these high standards and consistently perform well above average in GCSE / GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11. Based on pupils' prior attainment, results in 2002 were above the national average and well above those for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In 2003, the school performed in line with schools whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9. This was partly because results in ICT pulled down pupils' overall score and because, in keeping with their predicted grades, boys did less well than girls. Results in 2003 were above those of similar schools based on free school meals. Pupils' work and their performance in lessons show that throughout the school they are reaching levels that are well above the national average in most subjects, with the exception of ICT – where standards are currently below average by the end of Year 9.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently well above the national average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- A number of factors contribute to pupils' very good overall achievement.
- Standards in ICT – although improving – are below average.

### Commentary

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 36.9 (34.4)    | 33.3 (33.3)      |
| Mathematics   | 39.8 (38.4)    | 35.3 (34.7)      |
| Science       | 38.1 (36.9)    | 33.7 (33.3)      |

*There were 165 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

1. By the end of Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science are consistently well above the national average. Year 9 test results in 2003 were a further improvement on those in 2002 in all three subjects, but particularly so in English. Comparisons with schools whose pupils gained similar results at the end of Year 6 show that pupils achieve very well from Years 7 to 9. The school does particularly well at Levels 6 and 7 and even Level 8. These results show that all pupils are fulfilling their potential and that higher-attaining pupils are challenged effectively. Boys and girls achieve equally well in Years 7 to 9.

#### **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  | 70 (75)        | 50 (50)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 95 (98)        | 90 (91)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 99 (99)        | 97 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 41.5 (49.6)    | 34.3 (39.8)      |

*There were 145 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Results in examinations at the end of Year 11 are consistently well above the national average for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades, five or more A\* to G and one or



more A\* to G. Compared with schools nationally, overall results in 2003 were well above average and showed good achievement in Years 10 and 11. The school does very well by its higher-attaining pupils, as revealed by the number of pupils who gained between eight or more A\*/A grades in 2003. Results in 2003 showed a slight dip on previous years, which reflected the lower cognitive ability of that year group compared with other years, especially that of boys. The dip in overall results in 2003 is also partly the result of a small number of pupils doing less well in the GNVQ Intermediate course in ICT.

3. Compared with schools whose pupils gained similar Year 9 results, the school's performance at GCSE and GNVQ was above average in 2002 and slightly below average in 2003. This comparison is clearly less favourable than that with all schools nationally but inspection findings and the school's own detailed monitoring are not able to resolve this apparent anomaly. The school is of the belief that pupils reach their potential early, as a result of rapid progress in Years 7 to 9, then sustain a well above average standard throughout Years 10 and 11. The inspection reached similar conclusions: across the curriculum, pupils achieve very well against the GCSE syllabus expectations and reach standards that are well above average at this higher level. Inspectors did not find evidence from lessons or from pupils' work that achievement is less good in Years 10 and 11. In the last few years, there has been little difference between the performance of girls and boys at GCSE but, in 2003, girls performed better than boys. This reflected these boys' lower prior attainment but alerted the school to the need to ensure boys' achievement. It is now tackling the issue of boys' learning and there was no significant evidence in the inspection of boys performing less well than girls, relative to the national picture.
4. There are a number of reasons for pupils' very good achievement:
  - Teaching is very good overall: teachers have high expectations and know their subjects very well.
  - Pupils readily take responsibility for their own learning and there is a culture of academic achievement amongst the vast majority of the school population.
  - Pupils with special educational needs, are supported very well in class by teachers and learning support assistants, and have some good opportunities to attend additional support sessions.
  - Senior managers and heads of department have high aspirations and convey these effectively to staff, pupils and parents.
  - Thorough data analysis means that any dips in performance are quickly identified and acted upon.
  - The school has an excellent ethos, which is at once purposeful and supportive; pupils flourish academically as well as personally in this environment.
  - Excellent enrichment opportunities provide pupils with opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding and develop their learning skills.
  - Many parents are supportive and interested in their children's progress; they challenge the school and work as active partners in their children's education.
  - The school continuously embraces new initiatives and is very outward looking in developing its provision to improve opportunities for pupils.
5. The one subject where pupils are not currently performing at this well above average standard is ICT, where standards in 2003 were below average by the end of Year 9. An average proportion of pupils reached Level 5 but results at Level 6 were below average. Compared with similar schools, based on free school meals and prior attainment, these results were well below average. Pupils are currently achieving satisfactorily in ICT lessons but opportunities for them to extend and consolidate their skills in other subjects of the curriculum are limited. The school has begun to increase computer provision significantly, in order to reach national expectations, through a successful recent Business and Enterprise college bid but it is too early for this development to have a clear effect on standards.

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning and to school life are very positive. Relationships within the school are excellent and behaviour is very good. Pupils are provided with very good opportunities for their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These very good aspects of the college provision have been maintained since the last inspection and make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils' attendance is very good and punctuality to lessons is excellent.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff underpin the positive ethos of care and purpose that pervades the school.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute greatly to the well above average standards being achieved across the school.
- The wide range of experiences provided, particularly through enrichment opportunities, has a significant impact on the pupil's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- The very good rate of attendance enables the school to maximise pupils' learning.

**Commentary**

6. Pupils enjoy coming to school and most display a very good level of commitment to their continued learning. They work hard, collaborate very well with each other and respond with enthusiasm to the very good levels of teaching they receive. They think teachers are fair, willing to listen to their ideas and are very approachable. Pupils are proud of their school.
7. Behaviour is very good in and around the school. Some parents raised concerns about bullying. However, following checks of records and many observations and discussions with pupils, staff and parents, it was concluded that bullying was not an issue in the school. Staff deal swiftly with incidents of inappropriate behaviour, normally to the satisfaction of all concerned. Pupils are courteous and polite, and the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and staff contribute in a significant way to the ethos of care and purpose that pervades the school.

| <b><i>Ethnic background of pupils</i></b>   | <b><i>Exclusions in the last school year</i></b> |                                   |                                |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll                             | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
| White – British                             | 705  | 13                                | 0                              |
| White – any other White background          | 26   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean           | 3  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                     | 3  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background          | 5  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian             | 3  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or black British - African            | 2  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Chinese                                     | 1  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Other ethnic group                          | 1  | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Information not obtained                    | 58   | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

8. Staff are proactive in creating a very good range of personal development opportunities for the pupils. The year group councils and school council provide pupils with invaluable experience of the benefits of living in a democracy and enable them to show enterprise, influence school life and enhance their learning environment, in addition to developing key skills of citizenship. Of

significance is the 'Hear4U' initiative, which provides Year 10 pupils with very good opportunities to develop mentoring and counselling skills. Pupils are involved in extensive charitable work, and often become engaged in this independently. Worthy of note are the 240 pupils actively involved in voluntary activities during out-of-school hours and the positive impact this has on their personal development.

9. Provision for spiritual development is good. Pupils are used to sharing feelings and reflecting on the experiences of others less fortunate. Pupils are given many opportunities to reflect on the beauty of nature during their curricular studies and the wide range of out-of-school visits and pupils' exposure to the inspirational works of musicians and artists has a significant impact on their spiritual awareness. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, as noted in the previous report.
10. The moral and social development of pupils is very good with many opportunities provided for pupils to reflect upon and think about the impact of their actions on others. Pupils know right from wrong and collaborate effectively with each other in their academic learning and sporting activities. Teachers and support staff provide good role models, display a high level of respect for pupils and encourage them to think about, and give consideration to, the needs of others. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to have work collaboratively in lessons and through extra-curricular activities, all of which make a positive contribution to their moral and social development.
11. Cultural and multi-cultural development opportunities are very good. These are fostered by the school's excellent international links, pupil exchanges, visits and the well-planned curriculum.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data:       | 5.9 | School data:         | 0.8 |
| National data:     | 7.8 | National data:       | 1.0 |

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a very good education. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and assessment is good. An excellent range of clubs, educational visits and other activities enriches the curriculum and supports pupils' learning. The school cares very well for its pupils and works well with parents, who are very satisfied with its work. International links, those with the community and with other educational establishments are excellent.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are very good, effectively supporting pupils in gaining well above average standards. Pupils' work is assessed effectively and the school makes very good use of assessment information to measure its effectiveness and track pupils' progress.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subjects very well and go to great lengths to engage pupils' interest.
- Pupils are keen to learn and take advantage of the many opportunities the school has to offer.
- Assessment arrangements are good overall and there is some very good practice.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 107 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3 (3%)    | 44 (41%)  | 48 (45%) | 12 (11%)     | -              | -    | -         |

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

12. Teachers have high expectations for their pupils, very good subject knowledge and usually ensure that work is appropriately matched to pupils' prior attainment. There is no significant difference between the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school, teachers and pupils share a strong work ethic and a commitment to learning. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and provide varied experiences to stimulate their interest. Pupils are enthusiastic and readily take responsibility for their own learning. Work is particularly challenging in science, and also in English and mathematics. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is used well in a number of subjects. Opportunities for independent research are very good. High quality oral work and discussion promote learning in many subjects and teachers use a variety of teaching methods. Probing questioning develops pupils' good thinking skills. Opportunities for investigative work are strong in mathematics and science. Support for learning is very good in many subjects, as a result of the work of learning support assistants and technicians and teachers' concern to involve all pupils and to group them strategically. As a result, pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers in many lessons. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is assisted by the very good opportunities for learning support assistants to gain accredited qualifications. Gifted and talented pupils receive very good encouragement to reach high levels, especially through opportunities for enrichment and teachers' use of the skills of outside specialists.
13. Where teaching is at its best, pupils show energy and excitement, and the fact that members of the public attend classes in the school increases pupils' awareness that learning is something for everyone. This encourages them to embrace learning more fully than pupils of this age often do. Pupils respond very well to the many opportunities for group work: they collaborate well, willingly learn from and support one another. They speak and listen well. The small number of pupils of ethnic minority heritage work well alongside other pupils.
14. Pupils are very co-operative and generally rise to a challenge. They readily take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils organise their ideas well, use mind-maps and plan their essays effectively. Pupils show a good level of independence and take part in a good deal of research. Very good learning takes place in various enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
15. The school has recently introduced a new assessment policy in order to improve the quality of day-to-day assessment in planning and teaching. There is good practice in many subjects and very good assessment arrangements in some areas, especially in science. Teachers generally use assessment information well in their planning and the school is working to improve its systems for setting individual targets and for tracking pupils' progress. It has good overall systems for identifying pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, and for taking action on assessment information. There is scope, however, for sharper identification of pupils' difficulties, for instance in literacy, and a closer tailoring of additional support sessions to pupils' particular needs. Many individual education plan targets

are precise but not all targets are sufficiently specific or measurable. The tracking of progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good overall. It could be assisted by more formal record-keeping by learning support assistants.

16. Most, but not all, subjects ensure that pupils are clear about the assessment criteria against which their work will be marked and know what they need to do to move up to the next National Curriculum level. In English, self-assessment is used very well to raise pupils' awareness. At a whole-school level, pupils' performance is analysed extensively to measure effectiveness and identify areas in which improvements need to be made. Detailed analyses are passed to subject departments, who are expected to make use of data to measure their own performance and that of their pupils and to plan for development.

## **The curriculum**

Overall, the curriculum meets pupils' needs very well and has a number of excellent features, including opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory but there are weaknesses in some of the specialist facilities for science and design and technology.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is enriched by excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activity.
- There are outstanding links between the college and local, national and international organisations.
- The enterprise initiative in Year 9 is very effective in offering pupils opportunities to meet representatives from local businesses and industry.
- Pupils are also prepared very well for later stages of education and employment.
- Provision for ICT as a learning tool across subjects is limited.
- The curriculum meets most but not quite all statutory requirements.
- Although changes are soon to be made, accommodation in science is currently unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

17. The school evaluates its curriculum provision regularly and rigorously and is currently planning further vocational courses in Year 10 and 11 to meet the needs of lower-ability pupils more closely. The school was awarded Business and Enterprise College status in September 2003 and is using the additional funding this brings to improve its provision for ICT.
18. Pupils benefit from excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities and the rate of take-up is high. In addition to a wide range of subject clubs and societies, there are many activities in relation to music, drama and sport. Furthermore, the community education department at the school works in partnership with several agencies to provide a variety of activities for children and young people out of formal school time. The school is alive at lunchtime and after school, when pupils pursue their own individual interests. They speak highly of the talents and efforts of their teachers, who, they say, work tirelessly to provide them with interesting and valuable events. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is well embedded into school life and aims to recognise the effort and success of young people in voluntary work.

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **The school's excellent international links contribute significantly to pupils' learning and personal development.**

The school has gained International School status as a result of its excellent links and exchanges with many schools and organisations across the world. The highlight of the support the school offers to other institutions is the work done with Boeathutse Junior Secondary School in South Africa. The design and technology department helped teachers in this link school to design, develop and resource a design and technology curriculum. Linton Village College has created a science laboratory there and equipped it, and is helping the school to build a technology centre. Furthermore, the British Council is looking to produce an article on one of the school's pupils who raised funds for Boeathutse. The future development of such links is fostered by the half-termly meeting of the International Working Party, which comprises pupils from Years 10 and 11 and staff.

19. Preparation for life after compulsory school age is complemented by a wide range of industrial and business links, which contribute to business studies courses, Insight into Industry days and master classes arranged with the University of Cambridge. The Year 9 Enterprise scheme is an outstanding example of collaboration between education and business and pupils demonstrate real perception in the manufacture of a variety of products.
20. The curriculum meets nearly all statutory requirements but with the following omissions:
  - A substantial number of pupils in Years 10 and 11, who have not opted for the GNVQ course, do not receive their entitlement to ICT. Most subjects meet the minimum statutory requirement for ICT but this is not the case in mathematics and music.
  - As at the time of the last inspection, the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. It provides some assemblies that are of a religious nature - including those where a minister of religion addresses the pupils – and a number of world festivals, such as Diwali, Eid and Ramadan, are celebrated in assemblies. All assemblies have a strong ethical and moral content.
21. There are detailed plans for new laboratories in science, but accommodation is currently unsatisfactory, as is the provision for ICT as a learning tool across many subjects. Access to ICT facilities is difficult for the majority of subject departments. The school is working to remedy the situation and is channelling some of its Business and Enterprise funding into ICT resources.

### Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupils' care, welfare and health and safety very well. It provides them with very good pastoral support and guidance and involves them well in aspects of the school's work and development. This represents an area of improvement since the last inspection.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality care and welfare related procedures ensure that the best interests of pupils are maintained at all times.
- Pupils feel valued and are fully involved in the running of the school.
- High quality advice and guidance ensure that pupils' pastoral needs are met and prepare them well for life after school.
- Very good health and safety practices ensure a safe learning environment.

### Commentary

22. Very good child protection and care related procedures are in place, with staff aware of, and familiar with, the need for vigilance in monitoring the well-being and welfare of the pupils in their

care. Risk assessment techniques are well embedded into school routines. Health and safety procedures are very good.

23. Teachers know their pupils well and provide them with a high level of pastoral support. They are kindly and sensitive to their needs. Effective induction procedures ensure new pupils and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life. There are very good systems for identifying and monitoring pupils' personal development and progress against targets through the pastoral development programme. Pupils are well informed of their personal targets, which are discussed with teachers and form tutors and communicated to parents.
24. As part of the personal, social and health education programme, there is a well-planned programme of careers education which includes events at significant points during the school year to assist subject and career choices. The Connexions Service is closely involved with the school in helping pupils to make informed choices about their options and to prepare them for transfer to work or to further education. There is a well-planned work experience programme when pupils spend two weeks with local employers.
25. Consultation with pupils across all year groups is very good. Pupils are fully involved in influencing the running of the college through the well-developed year group councils and school council structures and their suggestions have impacted in a positive way on improving their learning environment.

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

Partnership with parents is good. The school continues to enjoy excellent partnership arrangements with the community and with other educational establishments. Business and enterprise links are excellent and have improved significantly since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent global links with other schools and colleges significantly enhance pupils' personal development and expose them to the ways of the wider world.
- Excellent business and enterprise links enrich pupils' access to high quality learning experiences.
- Excellent community partnership arrangements support the quality development of citizenship skills and provide added value to pupils' lifelong learning environment.
- Parents are very satisfied with the school, are involved in their children's learning and have confidence in the principal and staff.
- There is no formal process for canvassing parents' views and a number of parents are dissatisfied with the parents' evening arrangements.

### **Commentary**

26. The school's close relationship with parents is demonstrated by the many positive views expressed in the parents' questionnaire, at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection and in conversations during the inspection. Parents consider staff approachable and responsive and are pleased with the school's high expectations and their children's progress. Scrutiny of pupil records shows that there are very good arrangements for regular contact with parents.
27. Parents' contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home is very good. Parents are provided with a good level of information about the school and their child's progress and the close partnership between most parents and teachers ensures concerns and queries can be quickly addressed. Reports to parents provide a good insight to the progress made by pupils; however, there are inconsistencies in identifying pupil targets and areas for improvement. A significant number of parents expressed dissatisfaction and concern over the organisation of parents' evenings, which they feel do not satisfy their parental needs for information on how

well their children are progressing. The arrangement whereby pupils make bookings on behalf of their parents is clearly an area for improvement. The school is already trialling a new system in Year 7.

28. The school relies on parent governors and informal feedback from parents to gain parents' views on the running of the school and has yet to implement any regular, formal process for surveying parents' views.
29. The school benefits greatly from the active Friends of Linton Village College association, which organises regular fundraising social events that are well attended by parents and the local community. Learning opportunities have been greatly enhanced by many resources funded by the 'Friends'.
30. The school's clear commitment to inclusion and the total care of young people within its wider community is well demonstrated through its excellent community links. These include 'Linton Action for Youth', a youth support charity which is overseen by a senior manager at the school. This charity has its own management committee of young people, including some pupils from the school.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

##### **The school's excellent business links contribute significantly to pupils' learning.**

Excellent business and enterprise links do much to support pupils' very good achievement. Some 60 local businesses, many involved in the biotec/scientific and research field, provide the school with outstanding curriculum enrichment opportunities. These include providing skilled staff to talk with pupils on specialist subjects such as fibre optics and laser technology and organising site visits for pupils to see and experience modern production methods and manufacturing processes. The Year 8 'Insight into Industry' programme exposes pupils to various types of industry and provides a valuable insight into the place of each in society. From Year 9 onwards, the use of business resources and specialist speakers provides added value to pupils' knowledge of up-to-date technology and scientific thinking. The use of specialist staff in areas such as laser technology, delivering lectures to older pupils on the subject of fibre optics, provides high quality learning opportunities for pupils pursuing a wide range of GCSE options. The access to work place experiences, from engineering workshops to research laboratories, and to company marketing departments, provides pupils with excellent insight into possible career paths.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

##### **The school has established highly productive partnerships with other educational establishments.**

Partly as a consequence of its Beacon school status, partnership with other schools and educational establishments is excellent. This ranges from seamless induction links for pupils joining the school from primary education, through developing high quality pupil and teacher exchange opportunities with schools in Europe and America, to 'leading edge' partnership relationships with an adopted peer school in South Africa. Pupils of all ages benefit greatly from links with pupils from other schools, and from many sporting activities and joint learning events. The very close partnership with the Cambridge Further Education College has provided Year 9 pupils with quality taster days and Year 11 pupils with flexible learning programmes for applied GCSE in engineering. Similar partnerships with the University of Cambridge have facilitated master classes in engineering for both pupils and teachers, all of which significantly enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Of note is the school's regular use of high quality speakers, often leading exponents in their subject area and the tremendous development opportunities pupils gain from debating with such eminent experts. Of immense value to both pupils and teachers are the links with schools in Germany, France, Sweden, America and South Africa.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The principal provides excellent leadership and, almost without exception, the governing body provides very good support and challenge to senior managers. The school does not, however, ensure that all statutory requirements are met and so governance is satisfactory overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The principal ensures that the school is kept in a state of dynamic development.
- He is very well supported by senior managers and by heads of department, who share his vision.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation are rigorous, so that senior managers know the school's strengths and quickly identify areas for development.
- The governing body works strategically to assist in the school's development and to improve its own effectiveness.

### Commentary

31. The principal provides excellent leadership and direction to the school's work. He combines a clear vision and high aspirations with being very outward looking. As a result, the school not only sustains its well above average standards, but embraces change and readily takes on new initiatives. The school's leadership actively seeks national and international involvement as a means of keeping it in a state of dynamic development, and effectively interweaves a range of initiatives into a coherent whole. Staff find senior managers open and approachable, and heads of department feel inspired to mirror this style of leadership in their subjects.
32. As a result, most subjects are led and managed very effectively. Heads of department are typically innovative and have high aspirations for pupils' academic achievement and personal development. For example, the head of science demonstrates exceptional clarity of vision and commitment; the head of English is energetic, displays a similar clarity of vision, and ensures that staff and pupils understand that a hundred per cent is expected at all times. Subject leadership is excellent in design and technology, where the head of department was a key figure behind the recent successful bid to achieve Business and Enterprise College status. The newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has made a good beginning in fine-tuning the school's provision for pupils with learning difficulties.
33. Systems for self-evaluation are excellent and senior managers have a detailed knowledge of the school's work. The process of departmental reviews leads to a rigorous identification of strengths and weaknesses within subjects and gives rise to very clear action points. There is a clear system of line management and the delegation of roles and responsibilities enables the school to run very smoothly. The school improvement plan is a powerful vehicle for change and is complemented by effective planning at departmental level. This marks a substantial improvement since the last inspection, when development planning was a key issue.
34. The governing body is very active in supporting and challenging the school's work. Governors meet regularly and frequently, in full governing body meetings and through a range of sub-committees. Governors provide a range of expertise and the school is able to tap into this for advice. For example, a governor with direct knowledge of business and property is advising the school over the details of plans to build a special school on the campus. Findings from the school's own monitoring are shared with governors, and staff make direct presentations to the governing body. Currently, governors are looking at ways in which they can fine-tune their own direct monitoring with the intention of introducing innovations in the way that they operate. This is an example of their desire constantly to improve and the strategic way in which they work. Governors are active in decision-making and the school improvement plan is discussed regularly. Whilst pleased with the overall results, governors challenge senior managers and

are quick to identify possible dips in performance. In this way, the governing body collaborates closely with the senior management team. Governors have not, however, taken sufficient lead in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met fully. As a result, governance is less effective than it would otherwise be and is satisfactory.

35. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met, apart from the following:
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
  - Requirements are not fully met in ICT.
  - The effectiveness of its race equality policy is not monitored and findings are not reported to parents.
36. Discussions between the governing body and senior managers about the school's failure to meet legal requirements for collective worship have not led to a resolution that has been acceptable to all concerned. Spiritual development is good, in spite of the limited opportunities for collective worship but the school is currently missing opportunities to extend pupils' spiritual awareness further through a daily act of collective worship and governors need to ensure that requirements are met. Low resourcing levels have made it very difficult for the school to meet ICT requirements fully in all subjects. Additional funding, generated by the recent award of specialist college status, is enabling the school now to improve its ICT resources. Computers are being targeted towards mathematics and music, where requirements have not previously been met. In Years 10 and 11, the school is just meeting requirements through the work that pupils do across the curriculum. Although the school has not yet monitored the effectiveness of its race equality policy or reported findings to parents, it does have a good understanding of the progress made by the small number of pupils of ethnic minority heritage and the inspection did not find that these pupils were disadvantaged in any way by the school's practices.
37. Financial planning ensures that funding is closely aligned to key educational priorities. The school has stringent systems for financial control, which are closely and regularly monitored by governors. Managers are meticulous in applying best value principles and ensure that the school gives very good value for money. Thorough comparison is made between the outcomes of this school and others in the locality, alongside analysis of performance compared with schools nationally. The local education authority uses the school as an exemplar for its systems for ensuring best value. The school generates substantial amounts of income and sponsorship to supplement its budget, enabling it to increase its spending by almost £500 per pupil. This clearly makes a significant impact on what it is able to provide and increases the quality of education. Without this self-generated funding, its income and expenditure per pupil would be low compared with schools nationally.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

| Income and expenditure (£) |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Total income               | 2,419,373 |
| Total expenditure          | 2,356,243 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 2,945     |

| Balances (£)                        |        |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Balance from previous year          | 20,000 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 63,130 |

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

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

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

#### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above the national average.
- Pupils achieve very well in English with many in Years 9 and 11 exceeding the predicted National Curriculum levels and GCSE examination grades.
- Teaching is very good overall; teachers are very focused on maintaining standards and committed to helping pupils to do well.
- Marking and assessment data are used consistently very well to track pupils' progress, set targets and take action to support pupils in achieving their best.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good and this has sustained the consistently well above average tests and examination results.

#### **Commentary**

38. Results in English are well above the national average and the average for similar schools. The 2003 National Curriculum tests were a significant increase on the 2002 results, which were also high. GCSE results were well above average in 2002 with almost half of the entire cohort gaining A\*/A in English literature. Although the 2003 GCSE results in English and English literature were slightly lower, seven out of every ten pupils gained a higher grade in both subjects. These results represent a fair reflection of pupils' achievement. Girls' results are better than boys but the gap is narrower than the national average and the local authority's average. Inspection evidence indicates that, by the end of Years 9 and 11, pupils are working well above the standard expected nationally. Achievement in lessons is often well above average, with work in pupils' folders indicating very good progress over time in all areas of the English curriculum. The small number of ethnic minority pupils do as well as their peers.
39. Achievement from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 11 is very good because of pupils' willingness to work productively and the high level of independent learning. Pupils' attitudes, the very good teaching and the department's use of data and research papers to raise standards ensure that pupils achieve their best.
40. Pupils reach very good standards in speaking and listening. They are articulate and listen attentively with concentration and understanding. Standards in reading are above average with higher-attaining pupils reaching exceptionally good standards in their interpretation and analysis of a range of complex literary texts. These higher-attaining pupils have a wide vocabulary. They understand how writers use language, structure and form because of the strong emphasis teachers place on developing literary criticism, which leads to many pupils becoming autonomous readers. Average attaining pupils grapple with difficult ideas and use extensive annotation and preparatory notes well to achieve much higher standards than expected. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, also adopt a similar approach. These pupils command a reasonably wide vocabulary, but although they begin to comment on the use of language, their analysis is not sustained. Writing skills are good and well above average for the higher-attaining pupils, who write with precision and flair. Written work is well

structured, based on detailed planning, drafting and editing. Further development of editing and proof-reading skills could reduce the number of careless mistakes in spelling and punctuation.

41. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and have high expectations. They draw on well-planned units of work to challenge pupils and increase their thinking and level of independent learning. Teachers maintain a sharp focus on developing pupils' analytical skills, which leads to them understanding the implicit meaning of texts. Teachers use good questioning techniques to develop oracy skills, thus helping pupils to express their thoughts as a way into understanding the work. They promote very good learning over time through using a wide range of strategies such as 'mind mapping' to tease out ideas, group work, modelling and presentations. There are, however, occasional missed opportunities when pupils are not fully challenged and the pace is too slow.
42. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The head of department is energetic and his clarity of vision ensures that staff and pupils understand that one hundred per cent is expected at all times. The department involves parents in their children's learning. It provides an array of enrichment activities and increases pupils' involvement in literary events such as the 'Big Read' as well as broadening their perspective of other cultural traditions. The department organises and uses assessment very sensibly, and rigorous self-examination and monitoring take place to plan and raise standards.
43. Since the last inspection, progress within the department has been very good. Whereas standards were above average in Year 11, they are now well above. There is extensive use of data to track progress and to challenge pupils and staff in order to maintain high standards. The curriculum has been revised. There is still a need, however, to ensure that the department has full access to ICT and for citizenship and aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be more explicit in the curriculum.

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

44. There is very good provision within every subject for the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are given opportunities to use oracy, reading and writing skills in a systematic way across the curriculum. The school has embraced the literacy strategy and teachers have access to quality guidance. The school recently introduced the Literacy Mark Code, a booklet on basic literacy across the curriculum. There are extensive links with feeder primary schools and the local authority to support pupils' literacy. Similarly, the library – which is well organised – promotes reading and research skills through a range of activities.
45. Pupils confidently articulate and present their ideas in subjects such as history during discussions or when making presentations. Subject-specific vocabulary, research and good reading skills are embedded in the curriculum. There is a sharp focus on writing across the curriculum with emphasis on accuracy in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Marking is, however, not always consistent in correcting errors.

### **Drama**

46. The subject is taught as a GCSE option and as part of the English curriculum in Years 7 to 9. In 2003, GCSE results were well above the national average, with a very high proportion of A\* and A grades. This was a significant improvement on standards in 2002. Given that pupils begin the GCSE course with very little experience of drama, they achieve highly and make rapid progress throughout the two-year course. Standards of work seen were well above average, showing very good achievement. Pupils work well collaboratively and understand how to use and explore drama conventions of interrogation and interview to devise role-play. They work with enjoyment and vigour when exchanging and developing ideas. Overall, pupils use evaluative skills confidently to assess their work.

47. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The three lessons seen used imaginative prompts to stimulate pupils' creativity and extend their oral skills. The teacher skilfully uses his expertise in drama to develop pupils' approach to expressing their ideas, often by demonstrating and questioning them closely about their techniques. Relations between pupils and their teacher are very good. Opportunities for enrichment are provided through the annual school production, which involves a significant number of the school population.

## **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and offers challenge and support for pupils of all levels of competence in both French and German.
- Standards in both languages are above average at the end of Year 9 and are well above average in the GCSE examinations.
- Although still reaching well above average standards, boys do not perform as well as girls, particularly in French.
- Leadership and management are very good and ensure high levels of teamwork and an accurate evaluation of departmental performance.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to visit France and Germany and to communicate with pupils from other countries.
- ICT is under-developed as a learning tool because there is insufficient access to computers.

### **Commentary**

48. Although GCSE results in both languages regressed in 2003, pupils' performance has been well above average for the past four years. Girls reach higher standards than boys in French, but in lessons observed both boys and girls performed at a similar level, again at well above average standards. At the end of Year 9, standards are above the national average in both French and German and oral proficiency is a strong feature, particularly among higher-attaining pupils.
49. Achievement is very good in all years and pupils of different prior attainment make similar progress. For example, they assimilate new words and phrases rapidly and are beginning to use quite complex grammatical constructions, particularly in German. Pupils in the GCSE years are developing their writing skills in a most impressive fashion: they can use a variety of tenses with real confidence and accuracy in both languages.
50. Because teachers are concerned to challenge realistically and thus meet the needs of all their pupils, behaviour and engagement in lessons are very good and pupils respond maturely to a range of methods designed to motivate, enthuse and also reinforce new learning. Moreover, teachers have a secure command of their subject and use the foreign languages extensively. The display of work in classrooms is of high quality and pupils benefit from the many examples of levelled assignments on the walls. Teaching is, therefore, a major strength of the department and is very good overall.
51. Pupils made outstanding progress in an excellent Year 10 French lesson because they were immersed in the foreign language for most of the session. The teacher's extensive use of French and her skilful explanations of new words and phrases, without a word of English, challenged her pupils to such an extent that they were often surprised at how much they could achieve. Moreover, pupils worked in pairs and groups in a very mature fashion, used their classmates as a resource, and were not afraid to learn from and with each other.

52. Leadership and management are very good and ensure that the department evaluates its performance regularly and with rigour. There are high levels of industry, commitment and teamwork amongst staff, all of whom assess the work of their charges with utter accuracy. Teachers recognise that the use of ICT is under-developed. There are, however, good opportunities for pupils to go on a wide range of exchange visits and study tours to France and Germany.
53. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, has maintained high standards and continues to have very high expectations of what its pupils can achieve. It is, therefore, very well placed for future development and further success.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Pupils achieve very well at both key stages.
- Lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work give evidence of very good teaching and learning.
- Very good leadership has resulted in a positive ethos and a shared commitment to raising standards.
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' achievements are thorough but pupils are not yet given targets to help them improve their future performance.

### **Commentary**

54. In 2002, pupils' National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. In 2003, 89 per cent of pupils achieved Level 5 and above, 40 per cent gained Level 7 and above and twelve pupils achieved Level 8. At GCSE, results in 2002 were the best in the county; they were again well above the national average in 2003. Major factors in these impressive results were strong leadership, very good teaching and well-motivated pupils encouraged by staff to reach their full potential.
55. Achievement by pupils of all levels of ability and in both key stages is very good. Analysis of pupils' work shows very good progression from year to year and continuity in each of the aspects of mathematics is clearly identifiable. Lesson planning includes provision for pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils of average attainment are encouraged to give of their best and are fully supported by staff to this goal. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress with the dedicated help of teaching staff and learning support assistants. The small number of ethnic minority pupils do as well as their peers. Overall, there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
56. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clearly identified and communicated to pupils. All pupils are fully included in lessons when teachers use targeted questions, matched to pupils' level of ability, to enable them to participate. The school literacy policy is fully supported, textbooks and learning resources are very effectively used and lessons are conducted in a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils concentrate very well and have effective learning skills.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is a very good teacher and role model. He is totally focused on improving achievement and he has created a highly effective team who are committed to raising standards. This has not been an easy task during a period of considerable changes in staffing. Documentation in the subject handbook is of the highest quality and prepares less experienced staff for the standards to

which they should aspire. Performance data is well analysed to identify pupils' achievements, but the school's new assessment policy is not yet fully in place. Whilst provision for ICT is contained in the department's schemes of work, in practice computers are rarely used. When the subject receives new computers as a result of the school gaining Business and Enterprise College status, this deficiency should be rectified.

58. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Pupils are now given more time to complete mathematical investigations. Behaviour problems, identified in the last inspection in large lower sets, were not observed during this inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

59. Other subject areas make a sound contribution to the practice and consolidation of mathematical skills. These skills are extensively used in science for the construction of different types of graph and the use of transposition of formulae. In history, pupils in Years 9 and 11 analysed statistical data about armaments in World War I and World War II. In English lessons, pupils used percentages when showing preferences of text in book and film reviews, and in Year 11 pupils used a graph to plot the mounting tension in the plot of *Othello*. The geography department has a comprehensive policy for numeracy across the curriculum and in a Year 10 geography lesson, pupils undertook a graphical analysis of the correlation of various features in the course of a river.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are consistently well above the national average.
  - Teaching is very good overall and some is outstanding.
  - Leadership and management are very good.
  - Assessment strategies and the analysis of data are very well established,
  - ICT is not used enough by pupils, and accommodation is dated and insufficient.
  - Attitudes to science are positive and pupils are very enthusiastic.
60. Standards are consistently well above the national average, and there is no significant pattern or sustained difference in the attainment of different groups of pupils. In 2003, results of tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average at Levels 6 and 7 and above, and this has been so for the past four years. The proportion of pupils gaining Level 7 and above has steadily increased over the same period and represents very good achievement for many pupils. In comparison with schools with similar prior attainment, standards are well above average, especially at these higher levels. Pupils in Year 9 were able to predict and determine the order of reactivity of metals with water and successfully applied their new knowledge to the common uses metals are put to. In another lesson, they showed very good understanding of the classification of living organisms and then constructed and used a simple key successfully.
61. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also well above average. In comparison with the national average, achievement is very good for all pupils. In 2003, the proportion of double award pupils gaining passes in the A\* to C range was about twice the national average. In single science also, standards were well above the national average. Of those taking all three separate science subjects (physics, chemistry and biology), typically all pupils gain passes in the A\* to C range. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils in Year 10 show well-developed skills of analysis, evaluation and interpretation of data and as a result speak confidently about their work.

62. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and there is some outstanding practice. The recent use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, and the introduction of a wider range of teaching and learning methods are strong features in many lessons. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects, and standards of marking have recently improved. Assessment is rigorous and provides an exemplar for other subjects. Thorough and detailed planning, together with the effective use of resources and focused questioning, helps pupils to do very well and they respond with energy and enthusiasm. This gives rise to very good learning, especially in Years 7 to 9. In almost all lessons, pupils show high levels of initiative, responsibility and maturity in the way they work independently and in small groups. Science has a popular and positive image and is enjoyed by all pupils.
63. The leadership and management of science are very good; documentation is supportive and of high quality. The head of department demonstrates exceptional clarity of vision, commitment and high aspirations. The team of teachers and technicians is very well supported by her and all have high expectations of their pupils. Two part-time technicians make an outstanding contribution to the quality of learning for all pupils; there is a keen sense of purpose to their work and knowledge and understanding of science is high. In supporting the range of courses, technicians work beyond the hours for which they are paid because of prolonged goodwill.
64. There has been a complete change in teaching staff since the last inspection. In this time, there has been considerable improvement in the way the curriculum is organised. Marking is better, and continuing professional development has led to improved styles of teaching, learning and assessment. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the number of pupils studying double award science is increasing, as is the number of girls doing all three sciences. Pupils' experience is enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular activities and through frequent contact with scientists in the community. However, accommodation is dated and insufficient and there is not enough use of ICT in lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Overall standards are below average but improving.
- Pupils on the GNVQ course achieve well.
- Some teaching is good, particularly on the GNVQ course.
- The full content of the National Curriculum is not covered.
- Some tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities in Years 7 and 8.
- Recent funding increases are leading to significant improvements in equipment.

### **Commentary**

65. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average though improving significantly. Staffing difficulties, shortage of equipment and restricted time allocation for the subject have all contributed to below average attainment. Recent funding increases and (fortnightly) Year 9 lessons are beginning to help pupils make better progress. By the end of Year 11, most pupils on the GNVQ intermediate option course reached the required national standards in 2003 and achieved well from below-average starting points at the beginning of Year 10. The results of a small number of pupils in GNVQ, however, contributed to the school's lower overall score in end of Year 11 examinations. Three-quarters of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have discrete ICT lessons, although there have been recent improvements in the use of ICT by other subjects and statutory requirements are just about met. Some subjects, such as mathematics and music (in Years 7 to 9), are not fully meeting National Curriculum Programmes of Study.



66. In lessons and work seen, standards in Years 7 to 9 were below average, but many pupils achieve satisfactorily overall by the time they leave school, aided by work done on their home computers. Most pupils use the computer network competently, carry out a considerable amount of Internet research, and use a range of presentation software reasonably well. In timetabled ICT lessons seen, Year 7 pupils made good progress and attained above average standards but in Year 8, higher-attaining students tackled the same tasks as others, and were not given more complex ones if they finished quickly. Discussion with pupils revealed that, although they have computers at home, they do not have enough lesson time in Year 9 to consolidate previous learning. Most pupils therefore achieve less than pupils in similar schools. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good basic grasp of word processing, measurement and control, but few use spreadsheets and databases with any sophistication.
67. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in Years 10 and 11, where teaching on the GNVQ course is particularly encouraging and supports individuals well. Most pupils, including some with special educational needs, learn new routines well because they receive good individual attention. In Years 7 and 8, teachers are beginning to use the new Key Stage 3 Strategy materials quite effectively but, with only one lesson a fortnight, Year 9 pupils are not able to make as much progress as they should, particularly in achieving the higher levels. Homework is not set for pupils in Years 7 to 9, marking is inconsistent, and valuable practice time in lessons is taken up with written work. All pupils show good attitudes in lessons and treat equipment safely, and nearly all are keen to improve, with teachers' enthusiastic help. In some other subjects, such as science and history, teachers make good use of ICT to help pupils learn, but several subjects using ICT well at the time of the last inspection are unable to plan regular use of ICT for pupils because there are too few computers available in lessons, due largely to more timetabled ICT lessons in earlier years.
68. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory; management is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory but the school has begun to increase significantly its computer provision, in order to reach national expectations, through a successful recent Business and Enterprise College bid. Technical support has been increased, and the new GNVQ course recently introduced as a double option in Year 10 is proving a success. As well as increasing timetabled ICT lessons for all from Year 9, more needs to be done to improve schemes of work, make assessment methods up-to-date, and to generate materials that pupils can use to work on their own.

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

69. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum are limited through restricted resources in a number of areas. During the inspection, good practice in the use of ICT was seen in GNVQ business studies, history, science and careers but not in mathematics or religious education. Pupils in geography use the computerised weather station well, and carry out data logging regularly in science. Increasingly, they use computers at school to do their homework essays and research on the Internet. Many enthusiastically use the computer rooms at lunchtime and during break. Most staff use their laptops well to keep records of pupils' progress and are beginning to use projection equipment well. Although not all subjects fully meet National Curriculum requirements, planned improvements through recent Business and Enterprise funding are already under way. With the provision of new mobile sets of laptops, teachers should be able to plan regular ICT use to improve pupils' achievement.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good planning and assessment contribute to high standards and good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT as an everyday tool to enhance teaching and learning.

#### Commentary

70. Pupils reach well above average standards at GCSE with a significant number gaining A\* and A grades. Both boys and girls do equally well and both do better than their peers nationally. The majority of pupils reach above average standards at the end of Year 9.
71. Very good achievement and well above average standards are the result of very good planning that ensures that a breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding of physical processes and human activities is progressively built up over time. Pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 confirms this. The quality of written work is good with most pupils providing full answers. Discussions indicate both good recall and a fair depth of understanding. Pupils with specific literacy difficulties shine in discussions. Assessment is very good and pupils apply geographical vocabulary and skills as well as literacy, numeracy and ICT knowledge well. The variety of assessment tasks enables pupils to write and present their work in creative and imaginative ways. Older pupils build effectively on prior learning; their oral and written answers reflect broad thinking about geographical questions. They are curious, ask questions and seek answers through fieldwork and other resources including ICT. Although skilled in the use of ICT, too few pupils use it to enhance their work. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, given their low standards on entry, is very good. Higher-attaining pupils consistently produce work of a very high standard. Year 11 pupils produce very good coursework.
72. Teaching and learning are very good: teachers' encouragement and engagement of pupils builds confidence leading to good relationships, very good behaviour and positive attitudes. Assessment provides opportunities for moral, social and cultural development especially in work relating to trade, sustainable development and tourism. Teachers take a strong moral and social stance on mutual respect and consideration for the needs of others and share an appreciation of cultural diversity on a national and global scale, most particularly about what is wonderful and extraordinary in the subject. Teachers make good use of opportunities for citizenship education. Well-planned lessons ensure good pace and time to finish work set. Although adept in the use of ICT, teachers do not use it enough to enhance their teaching or insist that pupils use it enough in assessments and GCSE coursework. All work is carefully marked and comments are helpful. Teachers consistently promote high standards and challenge pupils to achieve.
73. Leadership is very good. The subject benefits from experienced and enthusiastic leadership that has made the subject a popular choice at GCSE and sustained high standards over time. Management is good with new team building in progress given a turnover of staff. Although other resources are good, ICT resources are not. One computer, albeit linked to an electronic weather station, is insufficient for the department. Data analysis is effective and is used for tracking pupils' progress, to identify problems and to inform future planning. Citizenship, although in place in the curriculum and very good, has yet to be identified in schemes of work.

74. The positive picture presented at the last inspection persists and, apart from ICT that has not as yet been sufficiently updated or become part of the daily routine, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## History

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and rising.
- The quality of teaching and learning are very good and promote very good achievement.
- Teachers make very good use of assessment information to track pupils' progress but do not make pupils sufficiently aware of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good overall.

### Commentary

75. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2003, based on assessments carried out by teachers, was well above the national average for both the percentage of pupils who attained in line with expectations and for those attaining at the higher levels. There has been a small rise in attainment over the past two years. A full range of evidence seen during the inspection also indicates that attainment is well above the national average.
76. Pupils enter the school with above average literacy skills and with very varied experience of the study of history. Evidence indicates that pupils' attainment in history at the start of Year 7 is very slightly above national expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils, including those with special needs, achieve very well to reach standards that are well above average by the end of Year 9. Their achievement is particularly good in the use of a wide range of historical information to form and explain their opinions and the linking of causes and consequences in historical events.
77. At GCSE in 2003, the percentage of pupils attaining grades A\* to C was well above the national average. The number of pupils with grades A\* and A was very high. There has been a considerable increase over the past five years in the percentage of higher grades. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average.
78. The overall attainment of pupils at the start of the course in Year 10 is well above average, although pupils with lower previous attainment also take the course. Pupils, including those with special needs, achieve well to successfully maintain and build on their previous attainment. Achievement is particularly good in pupils' confident command and use of a wide range of historical detail and in the evaluation of demanding source material. They also make very good use of independent research in order to justify and illustrate their opinions.
79. Overall the quality of teaching and learning are very good, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan a very good range of activities to meet the needs of all pupils. They make very good use of challenging questioning and discussion to probe and extend pupils' thinking. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to give clear explanations, which build pupils' confidence. They provide good opportunities for pupils to undertake independent research and have very high expectations of the way this should be used to enhance understanding. Some lesson introductions, although obviously interesting to pupils, are rather protracted. Teachers carry out assessments regularly and keep meticulous records of all assessment information, building up and tracking the progress of each pupil. However, they do not use this in order to involve pupils in checking their own progress and pupils are not sufficiently aware of their own attainment levels or what they need to do to improve them.

80. The quality of leadership and management is very good overall. There is a strong commitment to the further raising of standards, with no sense of complacency about the already high attainment. There is a good programme for the assessment of pupils' work, which is monitored consistently. This includes good provision for the identification of pupils who are in danger of underachieving or who show strong potential. Good support, some of it out of school hours, is offered to these pupils on a regular basis. There is a stimulating programme for the enrichment of the curriculum through visits to places of historical interest. There is, however, no scheme of work to guide teachers' work in Years 10 and 11.
81. The progress made since the previous inspection has been good. Standards of attainment have risen, especially amongst older pupils, and the quality of teaching has improved. The difficulty of access to ICT facilities, noted in the previous inspection report, still exists and it is to the credit of the teachers of history that, despite this, they find ways of providing pupils with improved opportunities to develop their ICT skills.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning in the GCSE course leads to high standards and very good achievement.
- Very good opportunities are provided to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Insufficient time limits in-depth study in the general course in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality and quantity of students' work in Years 7 to 9 is constrained through lack of time.

### Commentary

82. Standards at GCSE are very high, with a significant number of pupils at the highest grades. Boys do as well as girls and both do better than their peers nationally. Achievement is very good for pupils taking the GCSE course. Small groups allow for good in-depth discussions, which result in some good thinking and sound evaluation about concepts such as everlasting life. Pupils adopt a balanced view examining the ideas of different religious groups. Pupils' background knowledge and understanding are very good. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from small group work and achieve very well over time. Pupils make good use of ICT for research but do not use it enough for assessments and coursework.
83. Pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 9 and achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils' knowledge of world faiths is good and most pupils can speak thoughtfully about the beliefs and practices of a range of religions. Pupils show a mature respect for differences in belief and culture. High standards are evident in well-written assessments, which show good research using texts, including the bible, and ICT. Very good assessments allow students to be creative and imaginative, for example, entering into a dialogue with God about the creation of the world.
84. Standards in the general course in Years 10 and 11 are average. Time for any meaningful discussions is limited and overall achievement is just satisfactory. Given the small number of pupils who do opt for GCSE, the time allocated to discrete religious studies for the remaining majority in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate.
85. Teaching is good overall. Non-specialist teachers make a valuable contribution. All teachers have good subject knowledge and that of the head of department is very good. Teachers encourage and engage pupils very well and the good relationships established create a positive

ethos for learning. Teachers provide good opportunities for research using ICT but do not make enough use of ICT to enhance their teaching. The subject raises pupils' awareness, particularly of spiritual concepts. The strong emphasis on moral and social issues and their links with religious teaching contributes considerably to pupils' personal development. Marking of pupils' books in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE course is detailed and comments are informative. Insufficient records of pupils' achievement are kept in the general course in Years 10 and 11.

86. Leadership is very good. The commitment and competence of non-specialist teachers is indicative of inspirational leadership. Management is good. The head of department manages other areas of the curriculum besides teaching the bulk of religious studies. Effective practical and theological guidance, detailed schemes of work and a good range of resources – especially artefacts – support teaching and learning in the subject. The department makes a good contribution to citizenship.
87. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, as limited time in the general course in Years 10 and 11 persists and is impacting on a large number of pupils. The use of ICT requires further development.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision for design and technology is **very good**.

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

- Attainment is well above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11; practical work is of a particularly high standard.
  - Very good teaching and learning give rise to very good achievement throughout the school.
  - The leadership of the department is excellent.
  - The curriculum is innovative.
  - Pupils are encouraged to be adventurous in their designs.
88. GCSE results are well above average. These high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils' coursework is very thoroughly completed and the quality of their practical work is very high. Last year, pupils' work of an exceptionally high standard included a motorised scooter, an unusual candle-holder, a folding music stand and an instrument cupboard. In the previous year, a pupil at the school won an award in a national competition for designing and making a fold-away bed. Drawing skills are well developed. Research and evaluation skills are very good.
89. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well above the national average. Their practical skills are well developed in all aspects of their work. Food is particularly well garnished and decorated. As soon as they come into the school, pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work and to ensure a high quality finish. They have opportunities to develop skills in electronics and robotics and to take part in national competitions. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a very good understanding of industrial practices. This is the result of planning and running stalls to make a profit as part of the Business and Enterprise Project.
90. Pupils benefit from well-qualified and extremely hard-working teachers, who are always seeking ways to improve. Teachers plan very thoroughly. Their organisation has to be very efficient in order to cope with exceptionally large groups of pupils. In addition, they have to cope with limited resources and small and dated workshops. Despite this, they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils respond very well to this. Many interviewed said that design and technology is their favourite subject. Teacher and pupil relationships are very good.

Teachers provide very effective advice to individuals and this helps them improve their work. They take into account special educational needs, supporting pupils with learning difficulties well and building their self-esteem. Higher-attaining pupils are encouraged to undertake challenging activities and to strive for really high standards.

91. Older pupils are given a great deal of advice on what to include in their coursework folders and teachers suggest improvements as the work is in progress. Pupils are quick to take the advice offered and consequently they achieve high marks. Teachers give freely of their time at lunchtimes and after school to provide an excellent range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Catch-up and booster clubs help them achieve high standards in their examinations. Robotics and Lego clubs stimulate their interest and enable them to take part and achieve success in national competitions.
92. The head of department provides excellent leadership and very good management. He is dynamic and demonstrates real enthusiasm and vision. He is quick to see opportunities for development and to take advantage of them, supported by his dedicated staff. The recent successful bid to achieve Business and Enterprise College status for the school is having a very positive impact on pupils' learning. It will also lead to much-needed improvements in accommodation and resources. The head of department's understanding of how to promote creativity and risk taking has been nationally recognised and he is to address a national conference on this subject. As a result of the respect he receives at a national level, pupils regularly have the opportunity to trial new initiatives and to take part in unusual activities. He provides opportunities for pupils to meet architects and engineers and to discuss their work with them. Excellent opportunities are identified for pupils to contribute to the national and international community. Wooden cribs have been made for local churches and equipment and other resources have been sent to help a community in South Africa. Pupils have opportunities to work with local businesses and this gives realism to their work.
93. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. High standards have been maintained. The quality of teaching has improved. The curriculum is broader and very well linked to industry. Business and Enterprise College status has been achieved and business and community links have been extended. Pupils do well in national competitions and the department has been asked to develop a national competition for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

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

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

- Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above at the end of Year 11.
  - Achievement is very good.
  - The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good.
  - Positive relationships foster very good attitudes and behaviour.
  - Strong links with the local community extend very good learning opportunities for all.
  - The use of ICT is under-developed in Years 7, 8 and 9.
94. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Pupils achieve very well, since many join Year 7 with a wide disparity of prior experience and lack confidence in areas such as printmaking, ceramics and three-dimensional work. Pupils effectively use a wide range of media but have few opportunities to generate imagery using computers in Years 7 to 9. Pupils use specialist subject vocabulary correctly when evaluating their own work and that of established artists. Most have a satisfactory knowledge of a range of artists, from different times and cultures, such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Da Vinci and Morris. After a visit by the South

African High Commissioner, pupils celebrated the paintings of the Women of Ndebele. They incorporated motifs, geometrical patterns and the customary bright colours into their own abstract designs and this enhanced their own understanding of the richness and diversity of contemporary African culture. Despite large whole classes for practical activities, pupils' attitudes to work are very positive and their behaviour is very good.

95. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. This is reflected in the 2003 GCSE results. The smaller numbers of boys did less well in gaining higher grades but there are good strategies in place to redress the balance in the future. Pupils make appropriate use of sketchbooks to complete homework tasks. They research the lives of artists, practise drawing skills and produce annotated sketches, which they develop in lessons and incorporate into larger finished works. Pupils are articulate when critically evaluating their own work in relation to their chosen artists. They benefit well from the many visits from local professional artists and also from excellent links with the Curwen Press. Adult education classes are a useful opportunity for pupils and adults to compare notes and make good use of the ceramics studio and facilities. A few pupils are beginning to scan, modify and print their own imagery as a basis for larger paintings but there is insufficient access to computers in the department. Careers advice is good: pupils are aware of the opportunities for those with good art and design skills in the world of work.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good, which explains the well above average examination results. Teachers work well as a team and pupils' learning is enhanced by the knowledge that their teachers are practising artists. Teachers constantly challenge pupils to take more responsibility for their learning. They are excellent role models and demonstrate skills well. Teachers closely monitor progress and give very good individual oral feedback as well as written comments, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve, in line with the new whole-school assessment policy.
97. Leadership and management are very good. There are clear organisational practices and harmonious relationships throughout the department. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The level of resourcing in the department is less positive: there is no specialist subject technician and teachers have to spend too much time outside of lessons, preparing clay and printmaking materials. The accommodation is good but some of the furniture is old and in a poor state of repair.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high overall.
- Substantial extra-curricular work of very good quality supports standards very well.
- Very good leadership and management contribute to pupils' learning and achievement.
- ICT is under-developed because of insufficient resources.

## Commentary

98. In recent years, a well above average proportion of pupils at the end of Year 9 have reached or exceeded the expected standard. All candidates gained grades A\* to C at GCSE in the last two years, which was well above the national average, and the number of pupils taking GCSE is increasing. Overall results in music in 2003 were the highest of all subjects in the school. Work seen and heard during the inspection shows no fall in these high standards. Performance is a strength generally among pupils in the first three years, both as individuals and in ensemble, since many have started instrumental playing in primary schools. The majority show a good rhythmic sense in clapping complex patterns as a round and sing a demanding repertoire tunefully and enthusiastically. Performance is strong among the 21 boys and girls in Year 10 and the 14 in Year 11, since all have instrumental or vocal tuition in or out of college. Composition is also strong: recorded work of a sample of Year 11 composers is imaginative, stylish and convincing. Response to listening is not so strong; standards for this might improve through more preparation in earlier years.
99. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils show their enthusiasm in most lessons. There is strong commitment to instrumental learning and to the demands of the voluntary activities provided outside lesson time. The younger pupils work well in lessons, those with special educational needs usually achieving as well as others. Pupils' potential could be more fully realised with more regular written tasks to complement the valuable practical work and with increased resources for computer-aided learning. Opting for music at GCSE was a very positive choice by all current pupils, who clearly want to learn and to succeed.
100. Teaching and learning are good overall and frequently very good. Among the many strengths commonly found are enthusiasm and energy, which engage pupils well. Teachers' own presentation acts as a good role model for musicians. Teachers are courteous and expect high standards of behaviour. Very good questioning probes pupils' previous understanding in music and their general knowledge, as well as boosting their confidence. Teachers usually provide work that is matched to the needs of different pupils so that all may achieve. Very good planning, short and long term, ensures efficient use of time and resources. Changes of learning activities within one-hour lessons help to maximise pupils' concentration. At GCSE, pupils are able to use the two computers for composition because teachers make them available outside lesson time. Staff work very hard to foster and monitor the large number of instrumental lessons and the twice-daily voluntary ensembles. Standards could be raised still further if written work in Years 7 to 9 were to have a higher profile. Used more regularly, written work should provide a record of learning, show progress and encourage more extended writing - including pupils' personal and aesthetic reaction to music they have heard. Some opportunities are missed to reinforce learning, for instance, through varied examples, illustrations and demonstrations. Less experienced teaching sometimes affects learning adversely when some subject skills are lacking.
101. Leadership and management are very good. Very good stewardship of resources provides a stimulating and effective environment for learning. The head of music has good links with agencies beyond the college and makes very good use of these to support provision and to raise standards. He is aware of priorities for development and takes swift action on them. For example, the continuing expansion of the vibrant extra-curricular work, choral and instrumental, has been extended this term. Instrumental tutors take ensembles, such as a saxophone group which challenges and enables young players to improvise. Money raised by primary music festivals have provided instrumental learning in feeder primary schools. Instrumental lessons are managed efficiently. However, despite teachers' efforts, provision for computerised music making is inadequate and National Curriculum requirements are not fully met for ICT.
102. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent. It is shown in improved standards, the increased number of GCSE candidates (though girls still outnumber boys),



leadership and management and the huge increase in musical activity beyond lessons, which benefits learning and is now a strength of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination are well above the national average.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good; all staff share a commitment to raising the status and standards of the subject.
- Very good relationships and good lesson management mean pupils have very positive attitudes.
- ICT is not used enough, especially in the teaching of the examination groups.

### Commentary

103. This is a very successful and well-managed department which promotes high standards and makes a positive contribution towards raising pupils' level of physical fitness and confidence.
104. In recent years, the percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the GCSE examination has been above the national average. In 2003, the department entered an increased number of pupils for the examination and the proportion gaining A\* to C grades improved again, to well above the national average.
105. Pupils arrive at the school with a variety of levels of physical education skills and experiences, with some below the standard expected at the beginning of Year 7. They settle into school quickly, achieve well and, by the end of Year 9, overall standards are at least in line with national expectations, with a significant number performing above average. In games activities, particularly in soccer, rugby, hockey and netball, pupils demonstrate good levels of skill, often showing good ball control and being aware of simple attack and defence strategies. It was not possible to observe Year 11 at the time of the inspection, but pupils in the Year 10 non-examination groups demonstrated levels of skill and understanding that were better than those seen nationally. Pupils in the GCSE groups are developing understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject and are reaching standards that are well above average. The majority of the current examination pupils are achieving very well with several able pupils performing at the highest level.
106. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. They are given much support by teachers and other pupils and are reaching above average standards. Talented pupils are encouraged to extend their skills both in school and with outside clubs.
107. Overall, teaching and learning are very good and this is a major strength of the department. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and teach lessons that are well structured, provide a variety of activities, and are conducted at a brisk demanding pace. However, there is a need for teachers to use ICT more extensively, especially with the examination groups. There is an expectancy that pupils will work hard, behave well and achieve good standards, and generally these expectations are met. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident.
108. Leadership and management are very good. The committed head of department and his staff continue to raise the status and standards of physical education at the school. High quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and helps in the delivery of the subject. Comprehensive records of pupils' achievement are kept but the department does not yet use this information to set targets for individual pupils that are related to the National Curriculum attainment levels.

109. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The number of pupils opting for GCSE in the subject has increased and the percentage gaining higher grades has improved significantly. The situation with only three full-time members of staff – as at the time of the last inspection – continues to create difficulties with the supervision of the changing rooms.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work are well above average.
- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve well.
- Marking is prompt and detailed.
- Links with local business and industry are excellent.
- Pupils do not always use ICT enough in lessons although they use it very well for their coursework.

### **Commentary**

110. Applied business studies is a popular new double-option GCSE course. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. The course has made a promising start although there are currently big changes being made to improve some unsatisfactory accommodation and increase the availability of computers in the classroom. In lessons and work seen, pupils had an above-average grasp of links between the sectors of industry, and could explain why primary industries are in decline. Higher-attaining students introduced economic concepts and analysed them critically. Pupils worked very well in small groups to discuss and evaluate their ideas for a new business, clearly very well motivated by practical tasks.

111. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers keep pupils very engaged and interested, and lesson plans focus on improving literacy through consolidating key terms and helping pupils bring in their own business ideas. Teachers refer to relevant topical business examples. Pupils know exactly what tasks to do, and their individual needs are met. Teachers mark work promptly, and, in the best practice, give pupils effort/attainment grades and targets for improvement. Some lessons take place in rooms without computers – not an ideal situation – and new textbooks are on order. The large classes make it difficult for teachers to move round the rooms freely. The very well qualified team of teachers ensure that lessons are managed effectively.

112. The subject is led and managed very well. There are exciting plans for further development, using recently acquired Business and Enterprise funding. The head of department intends to use the school's excellent links with local businesses to provide better preparation for sixth form work; this should help pupils to link their studies with industry even more.

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

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The scheme of work for personal, social and health education is very good.
- The leadership of personal, social and health education is effective and teaching is good.
- The many opportunities pupils have to take responsibility in the local and wider community contribute significantly to their understanding of citizenship.
- Support for developing skills of enquiry and communication is strong in many subjects.
- Monitoring of teaching, learning and achievement in citizenship is at an early stage.

## Commentary

113. The programme for PSHE has been re-structured since the previous inspection. Schools in the local education authority have set up a working party that has produced a programme of study which the school is now using to complement its own very good scheme of work. A growing involvement of people from the community in the school's provision for personal, social and health education helps to ensure that pupils make good overall progress in learning about an appropriate range of topics. The formal identification of assessed work that contributes to citizenship as a discrete subject is at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, pupils have very good opportunities to experience aspects of citizenship across the school as a whole.
114. Prior to the national introduction of citizenship as a distinct subject, participation in the school's community and beyond was already strong. Pupils elect their school council and its officers. Members have used its budget of £1,000 a year to achieve improvements requested such as new lockers, helped design new planners and instituted a campaign against the dropping of litter. Prefects are nominated and have specific responsibilities around the school. Older pupils can receive training in counselling to provide the valued drop-in service known as 'Hear4U' which is well publicised and valued. A group of budding journalists show initiative in reporting on issues that affect the school for the school journal. Members of the 'UK Parliament for Youth' enthused Year 10 pupils to become involved in an assembly devoted to this. Pupils gain much knowledge and experience of citizenship through the school's excellent community links, its international links and through charity work.
115. Teaching in personal, social and health education is good and, where teaching and learning about citizenship were seen, they were also usually good. Citizenship is found mainly in personal and social education, where specific modules are planned for each year. Pupils' awareness was raised in Year 7 in a lesson about stereotyping, the value of co-operation and imaginative work on differing cultures worldwide and in Year 8 when they considered the situation of old people in our society. In Year 9, matters of local and national government, crime and punishment and the influence of the media were focused on. Pupils assess their own learning satisfactorily but standards and achievement of individuals are not monitored adequately yet.
116. Geography makes a strong and specific contribution to learning about environmental issues, both local and global, including how conflict might be resolved. In drama, pupils role-play applying for work abroad through the United Nations. Many other subjects support citizenship through developing pupils' skills of enquiry and communication, including work that encourages debate and public speaking, concerning moral values, human rights and awareness of global issues. Some tutor periods and assemblies include focus on citizenship issues and practices. The valuable contribution a number of subjects make to citizenship now needs to be identified and each pupil's progress monitored so that it can be reported to parents.
117. Responsibility for personal, social and health education and citizenship is vested in a senior and experienced teacher. He manages personal, social and health education effectively and works with other senior members of staff to integrate citizenship teaching with non-classroom enrichment of the subject. An audit has taken place, there has been a short input to staff training and the co-ordinator is using agencies well to enrich provision and to explore ways to

assess standards and achievement. There is some attractive display and the library includes appropriate stock. However, governors have not been briefed yet and the school prospectus and aims do not adequately reflect citizenship. The profile of citizenship as a discrete subject needs to be raised among staff and pupils, and the urgency of meeting requirements fully recognised and accepted by all teachers.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i>  | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| <b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>                       | <b>2</b>     |
| How inclusive the school is  | 2            |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 2            |
| Value for money provided by the school                               | 2            |
| <b>Overall standards achieved</b>                                    | <b>2</b>     |
| Pupils' achievement  | 2            |
| <b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>        | <b>2</b>     |
| Attendance   | 2            |
| Attitudes  | 2            |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions                        | 2            |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development            | 2            |
| <b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>               | <b>2</b>     |
| The quality of teaching  | 2            |
| How well pupils learn  | 2            |
| The quality of assessment  | 3            |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs                          | 2            |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities     | 1            |
| Accommodation and resources  | 4            |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety                             | 2            |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils                              | 2            |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views                  | 2            |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents                 | 3            |
| The quality of the school's links with the community                 | 1            |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges                   | 1            |
| <b>The leadership and management of the school</b>                   | <b>2</b>     |
| The governance of the school   | 4            |
| The leadership of the headteacher                                    | 1            |
| The leadership of other key staff                                    | 2            |
| The effectiveness of management                                      | 2            |

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