

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LONGHILL HIGH SCHOOL**

Rottingdean, Brighton

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114581

Headteacher: Mr G Ellis

Lead inspector: John Godwood

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 September 2003

Inspection number: 258695

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of students: 11-16  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1203

School address: Falmer Road  
Rottingdean  
Brighton  
Postcode: BN2 7FR

Telephone number: 01273 304086  
Fax number: 01273 303547

Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Watts

Date of previous inspection: May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Longhill High School became a specialist technology college in September 2003. It received a DfES award as a most improved school in 1998 and won the schools achievement award in 2000. The school serves a wide geographical area including Rottingdean and the surrounding villages and a minority of students travel from East Brighton. It is over-subscribed. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds and the socio-economic context is average overall. The number of students joining or leaving other than at the start of the school year is average. Most students are White British; one in twenty are from minority ethnic groups, including very small numbers from Black or Asian backgrounds. There are no students who speak English as an additional language. Students' attainment on entry is broadly average, but is below average in some year groups. One in five students have special educational needs, which is more than in most schools, and of these thirty-nine have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The most common needs are learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties, but smaller numbers of students have communication difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities or autism. In addition, the school has a special facility for students with dyslexia, which serves the eastern half of Brighton and Hove Local Education Authority. The school provides services for the local community, including evening classes and technical support for primary school computers. It runs an on-site nursery.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Lead inspector	
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector	
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Special educational needs, history
32229	Mary Comer	Team inspector	Citizenship, business studies
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	Geography, religious education
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology, information and communication technology
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	English
24891	Jackie Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Science
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	English as an additional language, art and design

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA  
 Herringston Barn  
 Herringston  
 Dorchester  
 Dorset  
 DT2 9PU

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>COMMUNITY PROVISION</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>THE WORK OF THE SEN UNIT</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>WORKPLACE LEARNING</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>39</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**The school provides a satisfactory education.** Students' achievement is satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9. Most of the teaching is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a good ethos and students are well supported. However, planning and monitoring are not sufficiently well structured and, as a result, there is inconsistency in the quality of provision in different subjects. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students are well cared for and there is mutual respect between most students and most staff.
- Management systems are too informal to ensure that policies are implemented consistently and standards raised throughout the school.
- Some students underachieve in Years 10 and 11 because their curriculum is unsuitable.
- The school provides very well for students with special educational needs and is successful in including students with a wide range of learning and other needs.
- Assessment data is not used well enough to track students' progress or to guide planning.
- Good community links benefit the school and the local community.

The school's improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have risen in line with the national trend, though the improvement has not been steady each year. The quality of teaching is the same as it was in the last inspection. There has been a satisfactory response to the issues in the last report. Provision for higher-attaining students has improved and attendance is better. Religious education is now provided for all students in Years 10 and 11, though in Years 7 to 9 the time allocation has been reduced, and the school does not cover the locally agreed syllabus in full. The school has successfully bid to become a specialist technology college.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

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

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

**Students' achievement is satisfactory.** It is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, students reach above average standards and achieve well. Standards are above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Achievement is very good in mathematics and geography, but unsatisfactory in modern languages, ICT and citizenship.

In Years 10 and 11, standards are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, music and art. The proportion who gain 5 or more A\* to C GCSE grades is above average and some achieve well, but some average and lower-attaining students underachieve significantly because their courses do not meet their needs. Students with special educational needs achieve well.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** Students' attitudes to school are good and they participate well in activities. Behaviour is satisfactory: most behave well, but a minority of lessons are disrupted. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is good.** It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where it is satisfactory. This is partly because Year 7 students are taught in mixed ability classes and the work does not always challenge students of all abilities. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and establish good relationships. The best lessons set high expectations and use interesting methods, but in a few subjects teaching is rather dull and unchallenging. ICT is often used well. Homework is regular but is light in some subjects. Attainment is assessed regularly, but the data is not used enough to set students targets and inform them how to improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 there are some successful alternatives to GCSE for a few students, but there are not enough vocational courses that are suitable for all students. There is inadequate coverage of citizenship and too little time is allocated to religious education in Years 7 to 9. Care is good and students who are at risk of being excluded are very well supported. Extra-curricular activities are good, and very good in sport and music.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory.**

The headteacher and senior management team have succeeded in creating a good ethos in which individuals are valued and in raising standards. There is a good plan for technology college status. In general, however, the systems for planning improvements and monitoring quality are not robust enough to ensure consistency in the standards achieved in all subjects or in the approach taken by all teachers. The governors make a satisfactory contribution. They are supportive of the school's aims and general direction and regularly review policies. They know the school well. They helped with the technology college bid but are not sufficiently actively involved in annual strategic planning or in monitoring the quality of provision.

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

Most parents are pleased with the school. They are generally happy with their children's progress and believe that most of the teaching is good. They feel their children are cared for well and any bullying is dealt with effectively. Many parents do not like the recent changes to parents' evenings. Most students are content with the school and there is little they wish to change. They value the school's inclusiveness and the way that personal problems are sorted out. They believe they are well taught in most lessons and that most, but not all, teachers treat them fairly and with respect. Younger students are concerned about the behaviour of a minority who disrupt some lessons.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- improve planning and monitoring in order to ensure that policies are implemented consistently;
- raise standards and improve provision in modern foreign languages;
- ensure that all students in Years 10 and 11 can follow courses that meet their needs;
- make better use of assessment data to track students' progress and monitor curricular provision.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship;
- ensure that the National Curriculum for citizenship and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are covered in full.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall, and good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, a minority of students underachieve significantly. Standards are above average in mathematics and science and average in English. There is little difference between boys' and girls' performance.

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

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have risen in line with the national trend.
- Achievement is good overall in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and citizenship.
- In most subjects, students' achievement is directly related to the quality of teaching.
- In Years 10 and 11, some average and lower-attaining students do not achieve their potential because their courses are unsuitable.
- Students with special educational needs have very good provision and achieve well.

#### **Commentary**

1. Year 9 results were average in 2002 and above average in 2003. There is an improving trend and the most recent results were the best yet achieved. Results in mathematics and science are consistently better than those in English. Girls do better than boys in English but, overall, there is little difference between girls' and boys' results.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.1 (32.0)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	34.7 (35.4)	34.7 (34.4)
science	33.0 (34.1)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 243 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. GCSE results were average in 2002. Results have risen over the last five years, but not consistently – they were above average in 2000 and 2001, and the 2002 results were a disappointment. Results rose again in 2003. Higher-attaining students generally make better progress in GCSE than average attainers. Boys' results are often on a par with those of girls.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	48.2 (55.9)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88.3 (85.1)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	97 (97)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.3 (n/a)	36.8 (n/a)

*There were 222 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*



3. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, but is below average in some years. The standards seen at the end of Year 9 are similar to the test results in 2003 and are above average in the core subjects. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore good. There is, however, considerable variation in the standards reached in different subjects, because the quality of teaching varies. Achievement is better in mathematics and science than in English, for example, because the teaching is more interesting. Other subjects where good teaching leads to good achievement are design and technology, history, geography and physical education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in modern languages because of dull teaching, in ICT because teaching was until recently inadequate, though it is now improved, and in citizenship because the school does not yet teach the full programme of study. These inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are partly due to weaknesses in management as there is not enough systematic monitoring of classroom work. Further explanation can be found in the sections on quality of education and leadership and management. In some subjects, achievement is less good in Year 7 than in Years 8 and 9. This is because Year 7 classes are mixed ability and the work set is not planned well enough to meet the needs of the full range of ability in the class. In general, students with special educational needs achieve well because their needs are well known and their provision is very good.
4. Standards seen at the end of Year 11 are average and students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Value-added calculations on examination results from the last two years show that on average students make less progress in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is because there has been a group of about 30 students in each year, mainly of average or below average ability, who underachieved significantly and in some cases did not complete all their courses. The school goes to great lengths to provide well for students who are at risk of being excluded and these often achieve well in relation to their needs. However, there are other students for whom the curriculum is not well suited and who need improved guidance in choosing appropriate courses. Students of above average ability achieve better and the proportion of students who gained five or more A\* to C GCSE grades in 2003 was above that in similar schools. The quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 but, as in Years 7 to 9, variations in teaching lead to standards that vary across subjects. They are above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, music and art. In all year groups, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is much less marked than is the case nationally. There are several reasons for this: the school's good ethos, which emphasises respect and effort; the use of boy-friendly texts in English; good access to ICT in Years 10 and 11. Students from minority ethnic groups are few in number but achieve at least as well as the school's average.
5. Most students with special educational needs make good progress in achieving their individual targets and grow in confidence as their reading and spelling improves. Their progress is carefully monitored and many achieve well in GCSE examinations and go on to further education. They achieve well in most subjects, particularly science, design and technology, music in Years 10 and 11, and horticulture. Their achievement is unsatisfactory in modern languages because they do not get enough support in the large teaching groups and in art because the curriculum is too narrow.

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

Students have good attitudes to school. Most behave well, though a minority misbehave in some lessons. Attendance is good and punctuality satisfactory. Students' personal development is good – moral and social development are good; spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attendance is encouraged strongly and supported well.
- There is good provision for students' moral and social development.
- The majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school.
- A minority of students disrupt some lessons because teachers do not all have a consistent approach to managing behaviour.
- There have been no recent permanent exclusions but a high level of fixed-term exclusions.

## Commentary

6. The school has a good ethos. It values students' views and their involvement, and attempts to provide well for all students, whatever their difficulties. Students appreciate these values and are confident that any problems will be resolved effectively. Students recognise, however, that this approach is not consistently supported by all teachers in the school.
7. Attendance at school and in each lesson is monitored effectively using a computerised system and the data is used well by heads of year and the education welfare officer to identify and help students with attendance problems. As a result, attendance is above average and there is little truancy. Holidays during term time are discouraged by the school but are a factor in the attendance figures. Punctuality is satisfactory.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.3	School data	0.4
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

8. Most students like school and are happy within it. Nearly all, including those with special educational needs, want to learn and to succeed. They are often enthusiastic about their work and cooperate well with one another. They respond well to good teaching and participate enthusiastically in after-school clubs. When they are given responsibilities, for example as prefects, they take them seriously. Behaviour at breaks and lunchtime is generally good and students are usually considerate to others. Students generally look after school property and, while there is some litter, there is no graffiti.
9. Both parents and students, however, are concerned about behaviour in some lessons and believe that there is a disruptive minority. Where teaching is good, students usually behave well, but the school's behaviour policies do not always provide enough support for less experienced teachers. The number of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties has increased in recent years and the school has responded to this by providing additional training for staff. However, behaviour is not managed consistently by all teachers and there is a need for clearer expectations coupled with equally clear consequences for ignoring them. This would help and support all teachers.
10. The school takes bullying very seriously. It is regularly discussed with students, some of whom are involved in its management on the anti-bullying council. Students are encouraged to report any incidents and both parents and students are confident that when it does occur it is dealt with effectively. The number of recorded incidents is quite high, partly because its high profile means that some very minor incidents are included. However, most reported incidents take place at break or lunchtime, when adult supervision is limited.
11. Parents commented on poor behaviour on the school buses. At this point behaviour is actually the parents' responsibility, but the bus company and the school do what they can to address

the issue. The problem is aggravated by overcrowded conditions on the buses and while the school appoints students as bus monitors, these appear to have limited effect.

12. The school employs a full-time inclusion co-ordinator to support students who are at risk of being excluded through behaviour management and alternative education programmes. These students are very well supported, and as a result, there have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years. There were, however, a high number of fixed-term exclusions. The reasons for these were all justified and were mainly verbal or physical aggression. Virtually all the students who were excluded were white British and most were boys.

**Ethnic background of students**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1141	118	0
White – any other White background	15	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	25	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

13. Staff provide good role models for students' moral development. The school has a satisfactory range of rewards and sanctions and students have a good understanding of right and wrong. Moral and social issues are explored well in social, personal and citizenship education (SPACE) lessons. In English also, students discuss moral and social issues such as the racism and prejudice in 'To Kill a Mockingbird'.
14. The school provides many opportunities for students to develop socially and take responsibility, for example as representatives on the school council or by helping younger students. Students were consulted through the school council in a recent review of the summer school uniform. Many trips and clubs foster social skills, whilst the well-managed Combined Cadet Force provides a good opportunity for young people to face challenges and to achieve within an environment very different from the classroom.
15. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. There is no daily act of collective worship but students attend assembly two days a week. Morning tutor periods provide an opportunity for discussions on spiritual themes, but the use of this time depends on the individual tutor and is not always productive. Students explore major world faiths and their associated cultures in religious education, and consider issues such as how belief influences action. Students learn to appreciate the art and music from a range of cultures, including African drumming and Balinese gamelan. Modern foreign language lessons make only a limited contribution to students' cultural development because there is a lack of curriculum time in Years 8 and 9 and many students do not enjoy the subject. Displays around the school are very attractive but are not as representative of multi-cultural themes as they could be.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is good overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11, but is too variable across different subjects. Assessment is satisfactory, but in need of further development. The curriculum is satisfactory. Support, advice and guidance are good. Links with the community and other schools are good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers know their subjects well and their enthusiasm often aids students' motivation.
- Most teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve.
- In classes with a wide range of ability, teachers do not plan sufficiently for the full range.
- The better teaching uses interesting methods, but modern languages and some English lessons are dull.
- ICT is often used well in learning, though not in modern languages or physical education.
- In many subjects students are interested and think for themselves, though in history and business studies they need to work more independently.
- Marking is good in English but in many subjects assessment and marking does not give students enough information on how to improve their work.

### **Commentary**

16. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations and ask questions that check on students' understanding. In art, ICT and design and technology, they give effective one-to-one help that develops students' skills. Most students respond well and are interested in learning, though some lower attainers in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11 show less interest.
17. The quality of teaching is less good in Year 7 than in other years because many teachers do not plan enough work to suit the full range of ability in Year 7 mixed ability classes. As a result, higher-attaining students in Year 7 are not sufficiently challenged in English, mathematics or science. Some parents are justifiably concerned about this, though in general most parents believe that teaching is good. Design and technology and physical education teachers generally plan well for the full ability range.
18. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement is much smaller than in most schools. This partly because boys' achievement is raised by the ethos pervading much of the school which stresses mutual respect and values effort. Most teachers have high expectations of work and effort, and this has a positive effect on students' learning. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects aids students' motivation in history, geography, design and technology and science. In addition, English lessons use texts which boys find interesting and in many subjects good use is made of ICT, which many boys find motivating. The use of ICT in teaching and learning is a principal aim of the technology college plan and the school is on track to fulfil this.
19. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been used in many subjects to improve teaching and help students to focus on what they are expected to learn. The recommended methods have increased the pace of many lessons through splitting the lesson into three parts. In many subjects, however, the final review sessions need to be improved and in English and mathematics, the beginning of lessons could be made more effective. In modern languages,

however, lessons remain slow and unimaginative and as a result students' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

20. A barrier to high quality teaching is the increased class sizes in Years 7 and 8, introduced this year because of budget cuts. This particularly impacts on students with special educational needs, who get insufficient attention. Other barriers are the inadequate time available for teaching a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9, insufficient time to teach religious education in Years 7 to 9 and recent high staff turnover in English.
21. Some parents believe that there is too little homework set in Years 8 and 9, but plenty in Year 7 and in GCSE courses. Students' view is that homework is set regularly and is appropriate, though teachers do not always follow the homework timetable. Evidence from the inspection shows that homework is set regularly but the level of challenge is too low in some subjects.
22. Students with special educational needs are very well taught in the learning support department, because lessons meet their individual needs, are interesting and boost their confidence. They are also well taught in most subjects, as in general the work is matched to their needs and they are well supported by teaching assistants. There are some lessons in English and in science in Years 10 and 11, however, where their learning is slower because they are not set appropriate work. Students' progress is closely monitored through regular tests and reviews of their targets. The objectives set in their Statements of Special Educational Needs are fulfilled well and annual reviews are carried out effectively.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 132 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (3%)	19 (14%)	63 (48%)	38 (29%)	4 (3%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)

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

23. Students' progress is assessed regularly in all subjects except citizenship, where a system is yet to be established. Records are computerised and accessible; they are monitored by heads of year and reported to parents regularly. The quality of assessment varies across subjects. It is good in mathematics, science, music and history, but unsatisfactory in art, modern languages and in ICT in Years 7 to 9. Assessment data is used well to track students' progress in mathematics, but tracking and target setting are underdeveloped in English, modern languages and physical education.
24. Heads of department are expected to analyse their examination results, but some lack the necessary skills and the data provided for them is not presented in a format that is easy for them to understand. As a result, the use of assessment in planning to meet students' needs is variable. It is good in mathematics, science, history and music, but unsatisfactory in modern languages, art and business studies.
25. Students are set targets for their GCSE performance in Years 10 and 11 and a similar system is being developed for Years 7 to 9. The school is aware that the process of target setting needs improvement as it does not involve subject teachers and students themselves sufficiently. On occasion, students end up with two targets – one set by the school and a different one set by their teacher. Students have a general idea how well they are doing and this is discussed with tutors in individual interviews. In terms of detailed advice on how to improve their work, this varies across subjects. In some, particularly English and music, marking gives students good feedback on what they need to do, but in others, including modern languages, business studies and art, the feedback is not good enough.
26. The school has correctly identified the use of assessment to improve learning as a major area for development. In science, students are given helpful comments and clear targets, though

they are not clear enough on exactly what they need to do to reach them. In geography and physical education, students are involved in assessing their own work and through this are developing a clearer idea of their progress and where to focus their efforts.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and meets the broad statutory requirements. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is supported well by good staffing, accommodation and resources. Statutory requirements are not fully met in citizenship or in religious education in Years 7, 8 and 9.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The National Curriculum in citizenship is still being implemented and is not yet fully in place.
- Too little time is allocated to religious education in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There are some good vocational courses for a minority of students in Years 10 and 11. However the range available to all students needs to be widened, with improved coordination and guidance.
- There is a very good course in personal, social and health education.
- In Years 8 and 9, achievement in a second foreign language is limited by a lack of time.
- Extra-curricular opportunities in sport and music are very good.
- The accommodation is well maintained, with very good display of students' work. Students have many opportunities to use computers.

### **Commentary**

27. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 has some strengths and some weaknesses. Drama is taught in addition to the normal subjects and helps to develop students' speaking and listening and social skills. Personal, social and health education are very good. There is very good provision for students with special educational needs. However, religious education lessons do not cover the full locally agreed syllabus because too little time is allocated. In Years 8 and 9, all students take two foreign languages, but do not have enough time to reach the required standard in the second language. This problem has been resolved for Year 7 and future year groups. The introduction of National Curriculum citizenship has been slowed by staffing difficulties and it is not yet taught in full.
28. In Years 10 and 11, all students take English, mathematics and science, a GCSE short course in religious education and a GCSE short or full course in ICT. Students choose options from a wide range of GCSE subjects and vocational courses in business studies, ICT and leisure and tourism. In addition, there are some pre-vocational courses for a small number of students who have difficulty coping with a full range of GCSEs. The pre-vocational courses provide well for the students who are guided onto them, but do not lead to a qualification equivalent to GCSE. There is no overall coordination of the vocational provision and, as a result, not all students who would benefit from a vocational course are able to take one. The underachievement in the 2002 and 2003 GCSE results is partly due to some students having an unsuitable curriculum and failing to finish some courses. Curriculum planning is satisfactory and an annual review establishes where things might be improved. The school is undertaking a major curriculum review this year and intends to improve motivation through including more vocational courses which have equivalent status to GCSEs.
29. Students' guidance in choosing their options or making changes during their courses is in need of improvement. Students receive full information about the optional subjects, including the views of existing students, but most do not receive any individual advice on which are most suitable. In the last two years, some students have dropped GCSE subjects before completing them without any advice from senior staff. This has contributed to the underachievement.
30. Students who would benefit from a work placement are identified and their progress is monitored carefully. The placements are well planned and have a positive impact on the

students' attendance and self-esteem. However, the rest of their curriculum is not linked in effectively and this causes students frustration at having missed other lessons and needing to catch up. In some cases, their achievement in other subjects is adversely affected.

31. There is an effective enrichment programme for gifted and talented students. Activities run in conjunction with the University of Sussex and Roedean School, as well as summer schools, broaden their horizons and contribute well to their personal development. Able students can take additional GCSEs in Year 10 in statistics or individual sciences.
32. The provision for students with special educational needs is well planned to meet their specific needs. All students have full access to the curriculum. In addition they have well-targeted support in lessons from teaching assistants and are withdrawn for specialist support as needed. Every care is taken to minimise any disruption to learning in subjects. Each student's programme is kept under careful review.
33. Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. In music, many students receive instrumental lessons and take part in concerts. Music links with a local school for deaf children are mutually beneficial. There is an extensive and very popular sports programme. Good use is made of local clubs to provide coaching and to encourage students to continue sport after leaving school. Students taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award help in local primary schools. Fieldwork extends students' learning in geography, but there are missed extra-curricular opportunities in mathematics, science and art. Students have opportunities to further their citizenship skills in the election for the UK Youth Parliament and the school and year councils. Year 9 students help to plan and run their own outdoor adventure camp. The Combined Cadet Force is popular and provides students with the opportunity to gain a BTEC First Diploma in public services.
34. Resources and accommodation are good. The school is well staffed for the needs of the curriculum, with both teachers and support staff. Textbooks and equipment are sufficient and suitable. The number of computers is above average. The resources in the history department are particularly imaginative and help to support the good teaching. The accommodation is well maintained and very good displays all round the school celebrate students' achievements.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school provides a safe environment and cares for its students well. Guidance is good and students are provided with good support when they need it. There are good opportunities for students to be involved.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Care, welfare, health and safety are very good.
- Staff work hard to develop supportive relationships with their students.
- There are effective arrangements to help new students settle into the school.
- Students who are at risk of being excluded are very well supported.
- The school seeks, values and where appropriate acts upon students' views.

### **Commentary**

35. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are very good and implemented thoroughly. Working practices are safe, with comprehensive risk assessments for activities such as school trips. The school works well with other agencies, such as social services, to ensure that students get additional help when they need it. Students with special educational needs are very well known, supported and guided.
36. A large number of students leave the school by special buses in the evenings. These are very crowded, with students sitting three to a seat or standing. Although within the designated

capacity of the vehicles, such conditions are not desirable. The buses are not the school's responsibility, but it needs to continue its efforts to improve the conditions in which its students travel.

37. The school aims to establish good relationships and promote students' personal development. Year 7 students settle in quickly and the policy of keeping tutors and year heads with the same students as they move up the school ensures that students are well known. Tutors and heads of year genuinely care about their students and work well together to respond appropriately if a student is having problems. They monitor students' personal development informally, assisted by satisfactory systems that enable other teachers to inform them of successes and problems, including the students' diaries and the email system.
38. Students appreciate the support that the school provides through professional counselling, the listening service provided by Year 11 students and the anti-bullying council. There is a good pastoral support programme to provide additional assistance to individual students. Where appropriate, individual students have their curriculum modified in Years 10 and 11 to help them find an area in which they can achieve. The SPACE programme covers issues that are relevant to students' personal development in an accessible and informative way.
39. Most parents believe that the staff encourage students to become mature and independent. It is part of the school's ethos to involve students as partners in their education. The school council is active and has its own budget to spend. Its deliberations are acted upon by the school management team. Students believe that most teachers listen and value their views.
40. There is close liaison with primary schools and effective induction arrangements ensure that new students have a smooth transition. This is appreciated by parents and students. There is a good programme of careers education. From Year 7 onwards students are helped in SPACE lessons to evaluate their ambitions and their strengths and weaknesses. The careers staff are active and committed and encourage students to use the pleasant, well-equipped careers room. All students have a careers interview. A careers fair is held every other year and representatives from colleges come in to speak to students. The school participates in a project with Sussex University that encourages students from disadvantaged backgrounds to aspire to university education. However, the school recognises that students do not have enough first hand experience of sixth form education. From the students who left in July 2002, one in eight remained unemployed in September.

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

There are satisfactory links with links with parents, who are supportive of the school. The school has good links with its partner primary schools and provides a range of educational opportunities for the local community. Technology college status and a new sports hall to be built this year will strengthen these links.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The annual reports on students' progress are very good.
- Students' diaries provide good home-school communication.
- There are productive links to help the local community, especially with ICT.
- There are good links with primary and special schools.

### **Commentary**

41. Parents are supportive of the school and feel that they can see its positive influence on their children's development. They are provided with good information about the school and are able to track their child's progress through the homework diary, which provides good two-way communication. Annual reports give very good information on progress. The school has recently reorganised the parents' consultation meetings in an effort to improve attendance. This



has been successful in increasing attendance at meetings with tutors, but many parents dislike the new arrangements for consulting subject teachers. The learning support department maintains very effective links with parents of students with special educational needs.

42. The school has carried out several surveys to ascertain parents' views, though parents differ in how much they believe their views are taken into account. There is an active parents association which organises social events and has raised funds for a minibus, lockers and stage lighting. Its financial support was crucial to the success of the school's technology college bid.
43. The school makes considerable efforts to support the local community. Its facilities are used by many local organisations, including Brighton Community Choir. Evening classes are run in conjunction with Brighton City College. There is extensive computer tuition including a Learndirect programme, in which participants learn on computers in their home from a tutor based at the school. Community links also benefit the students at the school. Year 11 students undertake work experience with a wide range of employers, mainly in Brighton. The local Territorial Army supports the Combined Cadet Force, whilst the police help with SPACE lessons on topics such as drugs.
44. The school is active in working with its partner primary schools. It runs summer schools for gifted and talented children and supports the weekend Children's University. It provides technical support for the primary school computers. Links between primary and secondary subject teachers are not so well developed, but in some subjects there are helpful 'bridging projects', in which students start a piece of work while at primary school and complete it in the secondary school. There are also good links with two local special schools. Students with learning difficulties successfully join music and drama lessons on a weekly basis and children from a local school for the deaf take part in joint musical activities.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership in raising standards and establishing the school's ethos. Leadership of other key staff is also satisfactory – many departments are well led, but there is some lack of clarity in the school's direction. Management is satisfactory and the school runs smoothly, but it is not sufficiently systematic to raise standards consistently. Governors are supportive and fulfil their role satisfactorily.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher and senior management team have established a good ethos and generally rising standards.
- There is a strong commitment to inclusion and students with a wide range of needs are catered for well.
- Heads of year and most heads of department provide good leadership and management.
- Strategic planning is not coherent enough to unite all leaders and managers in working consistently towards the school's vision.
- The monitoring of teachers' and departments' work is not structured enough to provide a shared understanding of the school's areas for development.
- Performance data is not used well by governors or heads of department to diagnose strengths and weaknesses.

### **Commentary**

45. The headteacher and senior management team have established an ethos in which most staff work hard to raise standards and the trend in results is upwards, though not steadily each year. The school has gained technology college status with a well-structured plan that has the

potential to improve learning in mathematics, science, technology and ICT. The school is soundly managed and there is much good practice within the school. However, planning and monitoring are not robust enough to ensure that policies are implemented consistently and that all staff are united in making improvements. The school's vision is not articulated clearly and there is not enough coherence between the school plan and departmental plans, together with arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and staff development. Consistency in the objectives of senior managers and heads of department is a key factor in moving the school forward.

46. There is a good climate for learning in most areas of the school. Students feel that most teachers treat them with respect and this contributes to their good attitudes to learning. This is not, however, consistent in all areas of the school, because the school's expectations of staff are not communicated clearly enough. The school has a strong commitment to inclusion, which is known and appreciated by students. An example is the very good provision for students with special educational needs, including those in the special facility. Students who are at risk of being excluded, either due to behavioural difficulties or inability to cope with school, are given very good support and alternative programmes and their progress is carefully monitored. The school has a satisfactory race equality policy and effectively monitors the performance of students from minority ethnic groups.
47. Examination results are analysed in some depth by senior staff as a basis for planning improvements to the curriculum. The data is not used as effectively as it should be, however, because it is not presented to staff or governors in a form in which they can easily identify strengths and weaknesses in performance and plan corrective action.
48. Many departments are well managed, though there is some inconsistency of practice because the expectations of heads of department are not clearly enough defined and oversight by senior management is too informal. Each department is overseen by one member of the senior management team. These links provide good support for heads of department but need to be more clearly defined and consistent, with clear guidelines for planning, target setting, monitoring by heads of department and senior managers and the submission of written reports. Performance management of individual staff is satisfactory in supporting individual development, but is not well linked to school developments. In-service training for teachers and support staff, however, has been reorganised and is now actively managed to support school priorities. The induction of newly qualified teachers is good and the school is effective in initial teacher training.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,360,504
Total expenditure	3,311,584
Expenditure per student	2,752

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	145,917
Balance carried forward to the next	194,974

49. Finances are managed satisfactorily. There are sound links between planning and spending though there are no formal links between budget planning and school development planning. Budget difficulties in the current year have led the school to increase class sizes in Years 7 and 8. This decision was made sensibly, after considering a range of options, but is having an impact on achievement. Governors and managers receive adequate information to monitor expenditure. There is not a sufficient separation between funding for the school and community activities to ensure that the school does not subsidise the community. The letters to parents requesting funding for geography field trips do not follow the school's charging policy in making clear that contributions towards activities in the school day are voluntary. The school follows best value principles satisfactorily, though governors have not been briefed on the full implications of these principles. The school's income is broadly average and in light of its satisfactory outcomes it gives sound value for money.

50. The governors share the school's vision of community, raising standards, ethos and inclusion. All necessary policies are in place and reviewed regularly. Governors undertake training and do their best to fulfil their statutory duties, except for the daily act of collective worship. They have a reasonable knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses through reports from staff and visits to the school. From time to time they challenge the school on financial matters or standards. Governors were involved in preparing the technology college bid but are not otherwise actively involved in strategic planning. They receive reports on standards but these do not give them the information they need to gain a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses or challenge the school over the action it is going to take.

## **COMMUNITY PROVISION**

The school is very active in supporting learning in its local community and commits considerable management time to this. Staffing is effectively managed. Community provision is good, though the benefits are greater to the community than to the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides good support for the Deans Community Education Forum.
- Work experience is well supported by employers in the Brighton area.
- Links with local special schools are very productive.

### **Commentary**

51. The school's catchment area includes a number of settlements with quite different characteristics and aspirations. Students come from the disadvantaged estates on the eastern side of Brighton, as well as the more affluent 'Deans' – Woodingdean, Ovingdean, Rottingdean and Saltdean – each of which has its own distinct identity. The school makes considerable efforts to support the local communities and involve them in its work.
52. Much community provision is coordinated by the Deans Community Education Forum. This is chaired by the school and involves a range of local partners in organising courses. Most take place in Rottindean's Whiteway Centre, which is more central, but the school is used for classes in sport and art. Evening classes are run in conjunction with Brighton City College. The management of the Forum provides an effective balance between community consultation and the need to get things done.
53. The school provides several successful community courses in ICT. The Learndirect programme is for adults learning computer skills at home from a tutor in the school. There is a community computer club after school and a fully-subscribed summer course. Adults, including teachers from local primary schools, work towards the European Computer Driving Licence. The school provides technical support for the primary schools and houses a community access point to enable residents to access local government via the internet.
54. There is an on-site nursery, which is managed by the governors. This is well run and provides effective child care. Most of the places are available to local families. The school provides good support for its partner primary schools and two special schools. Students from one local special school are successfully included in lessons on a regular basis. The school's facilities are regularly used by community organisations, such as the Ramblers Association, and local clubs, such as the Brighton Youth Theatre. Overall the school has made real efforts to serve its local community despite the difficulties presented by its location within a complex area.
55. Community links also benefit the school through, for example, well-organised work experience. The community supported the school's plans for a new sports hall and its bid for technology college status. The technology college plan provides support for the learning of ICT, technology, science and mathematics in local schools and by adult community groups. The plan's

community objectives are mainly extensions to existing activities rather than innovative new practice. They will, however, strengthen the school's links with its community and may halt the decline in take-up for community activities that has occurred in recent years.

## **THE WORK OF THE SEN UNIT**

Students attend the special facility because they have learning difficulties, often caused by dyslexia. They have specialist teaching and attend mainstream subjects. The special facility gives students very effective support.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good, and very good in specialist lessons. In a minority of subjects they are unsatisfactory.
- Students' progress is tracked very closely and targets set for improvement.
- Students have full access to the curriculum.
- The special facility is very well led and managed.

### **Commentary**

56. Students in the special facility make good progress in improving their reading and spelling, and achieve well at GCSE. Over the last three years all students gained at least one GCSE and in 2003 three students gained five GCSEs and one gained two C grades. Over the last eight years nearly half went into employment, and the others went on to further education. Two students went to university and four showed exceptional talent in sport. Students grow in self-esteem and confidence. This is especially evident in specialist lessons, but students also make good progress in many subjects, including mathematics, science, physical education, history, music, business studies and horticulture. Year 8 students in history, for example, worked at an impressive level in understanding the qualities of leadership and relating these to the Sioux nation.
57. Specialist teaching is focused on specific skills and is often creative, giving students enjoyment in their work and determination to succeed. A Year 7 lesson, for example, included a series of challenges linked to students' individual targets. Students kept their own scores and were keen to win, challenging each other and delighting in their own and each other's success. Lessons in the special facility provide good support for students' literacy, numeracy, general knowledge, memory, life and study skills. They also provide good support for students' work in subjects. Students' learning is enhanced by visits to museums and the effective use of ICT.
58. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects. Students are thoroughly integrated and their needs are well known. In many lessons, they receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants. In a Year 8 science lesson, for example, students with a very limited concentration span were helped to make very good progress in learning about the digestive system. Where support is less consistent or work is not well matched to students' needs, learning is slower. Large teaching groups in modern languages limit individual support. In some subjects such as geography and physical education, students make good progress in most lessons but in some their progress is hindered by poor behaviour of other students.
59. Students' needs are assessed carefully and their progress is monitored very closely, using standardised tests and students' own evaluation of their progress at the end of each specialist lesson. Their individual education plans and Statements of Special Educational Needs are reviewed regularly and new targets set. Parents and external agencies are fully involved in these reviews.
60. The coordinator of the special facility is deeply committed to ensuring that students achieve well. She is highly skilled and has a very clear vision of how to enable students with severe

learning difficulties to succeed. Working in close partnership with the school, she ensures that provision is very well planned, delivered and reviewed. Staff are very well supported and deployed. Resources are good and the accommodation creates a very good learning atmosphere which is highly valued by students.

61. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in maintaining very high standards, and in introducing significant improvements in new schemes of work, increased use of ICT, and improved liaison with the school and community.

## **WORKPLACE LEARNING**

Provision for workplace learning is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Year 11 work experience is well managed and effective.
- The alternative education programme and school-time enterprise programme provide useful workplace learning for students who might otherwise drop out of school or not cope with the full academic curriculum.
- Teachers' approach to students who miss lessons because of work placements is not always satisfactory.

### **Commentary**

62. The school provides three types of opportunity for students to experience learning in the workplace. All students go on work experience in the autumn term of Year 11. An alternative education programme (AEP) is provided for a few students, mostly boys, whose behaviour or attendance indicate the need for a more practical approach to learning. In addition, the school takes part in a local authority initiative, the school-time enterprise programme (STEP), to provide a suitable curriculum for students with learning difficulties. These programmes are mainly for Year 11 students.
63. The work experience programme is well organised and managed. The school has good links with many local firms that provide placements. The school is energetic in finding new placements, particularly in new technology areas. Students are prepared well in SPACE lessons and have good support from staff while on their placements. Guidance booklets also support their learning before, during and after their placement. Debriefing is systematic and most employers value the work students do while they are in their organisations.
64. Students' placements on the AEP and the STEP are very carefully managed. There is very good liaison between senior staff in identifying students who will benefit and students are given careful guidance. Placements are usually for one day a week, but sometimes more. Students are usually well motivated and sign a contract with the school to attend regularly and behave appropriately. Most approach their work placement as a privilege and improvements in attendance and behaviour have been demonstrated. Boys in particular, who might otherwise have dropped out of education, have remained included because of their work placement. Students' progress is carefully monitored and there is strong liaison between the school and employers.
65. The school acknowledges a lack of overall coordination of its vocational provision, of which workplace learning forms a part. One effect is that students on work placements are insufficiently well reintegrated into classes they miss. Teachers' approach to these students is not consistent. Some make sure that students catch up with work missed, but others sometimes overlook students' needs, or regard them as a problem because of their absence. The new head of Year 11 is seeking ways to make this reintegration smoother and more consistent.

## **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 **satisfactory**.

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

- Students' interest in reading and creative writing is developed well in Years 7 to 9.
- Oral skills are above average.
- Drama lessons in Years 7 to 9 make a good contribution to students' personal development.
- The highest-attaining students in Year 7 are not challenged enough in lessons or homework.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
- Individual student tracking and target setting are not yet in place.

##### **Commentary**

66. GCSE results have been average in recent years. Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 2003 were also average, though they have fluctuated considerably over the last four years. This fluctuation is partly due to many staffing changes, which have resulted in a lack of continuity in teaching. There has been an overall improvement in results since the last inspection in line with the national trend. Current standards are average in Year 9 and Year 11. By the end of Year 9, higher-attaining students write interesting, detailed pieces and can explain how writers use particular techniques to create character and build tension. By the end of Year 11, the highest attaining write stylishly and accurately. Middle-attaining students structure essays competently and compare literary pieces. Students achieve satisfactorily across the school in English and drama.
67. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All teachers are subject specialists, and generally students are appropriately challenged. In Year 7 mixed ability classes, however, the work is pitched too much to the middle. Across the school, teachers ask questions, explain and mark work carefully, usually highlighting things to improve. Computers are used well for presentation and research, and teachers are beginning to use them in the study of literary texts. Most students have positive attitudes, but there are lessons where teachers have to spend too much time managing some who are noisy or silly. Lessons could often be enlivened by including activities such as role play, or by stimulating students' imagination with pictures, objects or sound effects. There is not enough monitoring of teaching in order to share best practice.
68. The 'reading challenge' in Years 7 and 8 is increasing students' interest in reading, and in particular is engaging boys. It is also helping students to write imaginative short stories and explore different styles, such as science fantasy or autobiography. The study of poetry, however, is underdeveloped. In some lessons, teachers make good use of methods from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, resulting in a crisp pace and activities that motivate students and improve their achievement. To improve achievement further, attention should be given to engaging students more actively in activities at the start of lessons.
69. All students in Years 7 to 9 have a weekly drama lesson, which is significant in developing their speaking and listening skills. A Year 8 lesson included a small number of students from a neighbouring special school. The mature attitudes of all concerned made this a valuable experience in working with others and contributed to their personal development.

70. Oral skills are well developed in Years 10 and 11, with students having opportunities to give speeches and discuss. Most students take GCSE English, which includes the study of literary texts. They make satisfactory progress in developing their own writing and analysing the writing of others. Fewer students are entered for English literature GCSE than is the case in most schools. These are the higher-attaining students, and results are above average. The department has considered ways of entering more, and numbers are rising. Drama GCSE is an option, and those who take it attain average standards. They learn how to create and sustain roles and use a variety of drama techniques, such as thought tracking, still images and mime, to convey plot and character.
71. The department is led and managed well. Test and examination results are analysed, and changes are made to what is taught when underachievement is identified. For example, boys are motivated by carefully selected reading matter and the use of computers. As a result the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is narrower than is found nationally. The department has recently defined assessment levels for drama to help students to understand more clearly how they are doing and how they can develop further. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, with teacher turnover preventing the department from developing more quickly.

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

72. Literacy skills are broadly average across the school. They are developed well in some subjects, but not in all. The best practice is in history, where teachers regularly reinforce the meaning of key terms and teach students how to structure their writing. Students are encouraged to write in different styles and for different purposes. Year 10 students, for example, prepared newspaper articles on the Treaty of Versailles, writing from the perspective of different countries. In art, on the other hand, students do little writing and key words are not stressed. Many departments display subject vocabulary on their walls, but not all teachers correct mistakes in punctuation or paragraphing. Students' oral skills are generally good, and some departments help to develop these particularly well. In SPACE lessons, for example, students brainstorm ideas, take part in discussions and use role play.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

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

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

- Standards are below average in Year 9, and for a significant number of students in Year 11.
- GCSE results in French are well above average, but fewer students take a GCSE in modern languages than is the case in most schools.
- Where teaching is lively and well planned, students have positive attitudes and achieve well.
- Too much teaching is dull, affecting attitudes and progress.
- Leadership and management do not provide clear direction for improving attitudes and raising standards.
- Students are not well informed about their progress and how they can improve.

#### **Commentary**

73. In recent years, about three-quarters of students have continued with a language to GCSE, but in the current Year 10, this has declined to one-third. GCSE results in French are regularly above average. A small number of students take German or Spanish. Results in German have varied considerably and in Spanish they have declined from above to below average. A small number of students take a vocational course in French, in which standards are well below average. For current students in Year 11, standards are average overall and their achievement is satisfactory.

74. Standards are below average in Year 9 and achievement is unsatisfactory because much teaching fails to interest students. Consequently students are bored, concentration wavers, and many choose not to continue with a language in Year 10. In Years 8 and 9, many students take either Spanish or German in addition to French. Insufficient time is allocated, so that progress in both languages is slow. Opportunities to speak and write in the foreign language are limited, and these skills remain underdeveloped. Lessons in Spanish and German can be up to ten days apart, so that revision is needed before new work can be started. Students learn vocabulary and rules, but do not develop the skills needed to produce language from memory. The school has recognised the lack of time and has improved the curriculum for Year 7 and future year groups by including only one modern language.
75. In Years 10 and 11, there is more time and a sharper focus on examination criteria, so that progress improves. Students write descriptively in Spanish and German, and advance to writing accounts of holidays and work experience in French. Students who participate in the good range of trips, residential visits and exchanges benefit orally, although they do not have enough opportunities to speak at length in lessons.
76. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are following the guidance of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and are beginning to use the three-part lesson well. However, students do not learn enough because the pace is often slow and content unimaginative. Methods and resources are unvaried, with little use of ICT to improve language learning. There are not enough regular opportunities for students to use the foreign language in meaningful situations, so that they do not gain a clear sense of purpose. There is some good and very good teaching to higher-attaining classes. In Year 8, for example, students learned how to form and use the perfect tense through a well-sequenced series of short tasks involving listening, speaking and writing. They responded enthusiastically to challenging work, conducted entirely in French. Generally, expectations are too low, too much English is used, and work is not well matched to what students already know. Teachers find it difficult to cope with overlarge classes, especially where there is a wide range of special needs. Consequently students with special needs make little progress. Marking is poor. Much work is unmarked or simply ticked, so that students receive very little guidance on how to improve. Students cannot take textbooks home, and much homework consists of learning or completing work, missing an opportunity to extend the more able, especially in writing.
77. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and prepares students adequately for the examination. Coursework requirements lead to a significant improvement in written work. Students continue to struggle in oral work, needing much support and rarely acquiring the skills, knowledge or confidence to converse. Pronunciation is often weak.
78. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is scant lesson observation or sampling of students' work. Assessment is improving but is not used for planning or setting targets. Teachers' assessments are unreliable because there is no shared understanding of National Curriculum levels. An audit has identified the weaknesses in monitoring, assessment and skill areas, but planning does not include strategies to deal with them. Although progress has been made in providing alternative courses in Years 10 and 11, there has been unsatisfactory improvement in standards since the previous inspection, and the quality of teaching and learning has declined.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well overall, although in some lessons the work is not appropriate for the full range of ability.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students are aware of their overall progress because of good assessment and tracking.
- Leadership and management are good.
- ICT does not support learning as effectively as it could in Years 7 to 9.
- The start and end of lessons are not as effective as the main body of the lesson.
- The support for mathematical skills in other subjects is not systematically planned.

## **Commentary**

79. GCSE results have been above average in most recent years and this standard has been maintained since the last inspection. National Curriculum test results in Year 9 are also above average and have been rising broadly in line with the national trend.
80. Standards reached by current students are above average in Year 9 and Year 11. Students in the present Year 9 entered the school with below average standards and their achievement is very good. This is due to a programme of work which is very carefully planned and effectively taught. In Year 7 mixed ability classes, however, work is not always appropriate for the full ability range and some higher attainers are not fully challenged. Current Year 11 students entered Year 10 with above average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. Their examination coursework is well managed and of good quality. However, timetabling constraints result in a wider range of attainment in some Year 10 and 11 classes and the work set does not always suit the full ability range. This, together with the more lethargic approach of some older students, is the reason achievement is less good in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
81. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach basic skills well. They have high expectations and generally provide lessons of appropriate challenge to which students respond well. They explain new concepts clearly and most teachers question students well to be sure they understand before setting them tasks. In some lessons, for example, they use individual whiteboards to check understanding and are skilful at adapting plans in response to students' existing knowledge. In these lessons students confidently settle down to work and their learning is good. In a minority of less effective lessons, teachers do not sufficiently check students' understanding before they proceed onto individual tasks. The lack of understanding of a minority of students has a detrimental effect on their attitudes and their learning.
82. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is used well. However, learning in some lessons could be even better if the skills required in the main part of the lesson were practised in the mental starter activity. Review sessions at the end of lessons often have little input from students and therefore do not effectively develop learning. Marking informs teachers of progress but does not always let students know how they can improve their work.
83. Courses are appropriate and teachers are given good guidance. The assessment and tracking of students' attainment is thorough and students are set appropriate targets. The use of ICT in learning mathematics has improved since the last inspection and is used satisfactorily in GCSE coursework but needs to be developed further in Years 7 to 9. The development of literacy skills is satisfactory overall. Mathematical language is developed well with younger students, who compile mathematics dictionaries, but opportunities for oral work are sometimes missed in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

84. In several subjects, students' numeracy and data handling skills are used frequently and consolidated well. In science, for example, they calculate forces and turning moments. In geography, they draw graphs of population data. In business studies they calculate cash flow.

Shape and measurement are used in design and technology and art. However there is no overall plan to ensure that students have the skills they need to access work in other subjects or that opportunities to improve their numeracy are not missed.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Good teaching and learning result in good achievement by students throughout the school.
- Students build well on a secure foundation of existing knowledge.
- Higher-attaining students in Year 7 classes and in middle sets in other years are insufficiently stretched.
- Students do not have a clear enough view of exactly what they need to do to improve.

### Commentary

85. Examination results are improving slowly. GCSE results were average in 2002 and improved in 2003, though they remained broadly average. National Curriculum test results in Year 9 were also average in 2002, but improved significantly in 2003. Compared with similar schools, students do better than expected at the end of Year 9 and about as well as expected at the end of Year 11.
86. Standards in Year 7 are average. However, by the end of Year 9 they are above average, reflecting the most recent National Curriculum test results. Standards are also above average in Years 10 and 11, which is higher than recent GCSE results suggest. This is because a new single science course has been introduced, which is better suited to lower-attaining students as it emphasises relevance and scientific applications. Students achieve well in science. In almost all lessons they work to full capacity in response to interesting and varied teaching, often involving paired discussion or role play. The great majority has a secure foundation on which to build new understanding as a result of teachers' emphasis on key learning points and encouragement to think for themselves. Students are above average in explaining processes such as photosynthesis, but in Years 7 and 8 their skills in evaluating evidence from scientific investigations are not well enough developed. In a few lessons, particularly in Year 7 and in lower sets in other years, higher-attaining students achieve less well than they should because lesson planning takes insufficient account of the full range of students' abilities.
87. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen and were very good in about a quarter. Lessons are well structured, often with a starter activity that captures students' interest. For example, 'digestion bingo' was used in Year 8 to help review their knowledge of the various stages in digestion. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject are key factors in helping students learn quickly. This was the case in Year 11 when the teacher engaged students' interest with background information about the lives of famous scientists. Students engage fully with the activity of the lesson because teachers frequently demonstrate that they value and respect their answers: "That was a good answer, but do you mind if I add xyz to it?" Very occasionally, particularly in Year 11, lower-attaining students show little interest in the subject material, despite the best efforts of teachers, and learning is not as good as it should be. In some lower sets, there is too much emphasis on presentation rather than scientific principles. Homework is well used to consolidate and extend students' learning from lessons.
88. The science department is well led and managed. Teachers work well together as a team, for example in introducing the new single science course in Year 10. Another successful innovation is 'assessment for learning', in which assessment criteria are used to set students sharply-defined learning targets. Teachers also make helpful comments in their marking though

these are not always followed up. As a result, students usually know their target level or grade, but not what they should do to reach it. Insufficient opportunities for teachers to share good practice result in inconsistency between teachers, for example in planning lessons to meet the needs of all students.

89. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards are higher now. High-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 are better catered for by a curriculum that allows them to take four separate science subjects, but deficiencies remain in ensuring that all students are appropriately stretched. Teaching continues to be good. The technology college plans are beginning to improve standards through the new GCSE science course and use of electronic resources to improve teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are good and are leading to improved standards.
- Students enjoy ICT and work hard.
- Standards in Year 9 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is good overall, but only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment of students' progress is weak in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

90. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have in recent years been below average. Rapid action taken by a new head of department and a largely new team of teachers is already leading to higher standards.
91. GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 were below average and below those of other subjects in the school. The most significant failing was in the planning and execution of coursework and this has now been rectified. A new vocational ICT course has been introduced which is more relevant and appropriate to students' needs. Standards in the current Year 11 are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. This is because the course is taught well and the practical approach interests them.
92. Year 9 students' knowledge is below average and they have limited skills in using most software packages. This is because until this year they have been largely taught by non-specialist teachers. Graphics skills are well developed and many students can create a simple animation. Most understand that spreadsheets are used for calculations but only the highest attainers enter formulas accurately. Students' knowledge of databases is poor. Their use of computers to control events such as traffic lights is satisfactory, but this is taught in technology lessons. Students are well informed about the danger of disclosing personal information on the internet but their wider knowledge of how computers affect our lives is underdeveloped. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is similar to that of other students.
93. Most teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their enthusiasm inspires students' interest. Year 9 students, for example, became thoroughly engrossed in producing pamphlets for a sports centre, skilfully using desktop publishing and thinking carefully about their design and their target audience. In a small minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers have insecure knowledge and students learn inaccurate information. In most lessons teachers have high expectations for the quantity and quality of work. This leads to a fast pace and productive learning. Year 10 GNVQ students worked very hard on their office documents such as agendas and minutes to meet a tight deadline. Teaching methods are consistently good and teachers use digital projectors well to demonstrate software skills. They foster a positive ethos which

leads to good relationships and behaviour. Students receive good individual help during practical work. Lesson finish with a whole-class review session, but this is often too short for students to gain much benefit. In Years 10 and 11, students' work is regularly assessed and they value the comments made by teachers on how to improve. Assessment is used well to track students' progress and leads to appropriate action if targets are not being met. There are realistic plans to assess students in Years 7 to 9 but these have yet to be implemented.

94. Standards have declined since the last inspection but are now beginning to improve. The head of department has succeeded in developing a shared vision for the improvement of teaching. Teaching methods are more consistently good than they were in the last inspection and learning is promoted by improved access to computers.

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

95. Students often use computers in their work in other subjects and this contributes to their interest and quality of learning. This is a key aim in the technology college plan. They have good access as the school is well resourced with computers. The technology and music departments have their own computer suites which are used well. Many subjects use specialist software well to enhance learning. In art, for example, students skilfully manipulate images and edit photographs. They use the internet for research in history and geography. They make increasing use of emails and use computers well to present their work. They have too few opportunities to practise their use of databases and spreadsheets.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good overall.
- Leadership and management are effective and are leading to improvements.
- Most students have positive attitudes and work well.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is too limited to enable best practice to be shared.
- Assessment procedures are improving. Target setting for individual students is in its infancy.
- Good work has been carried out to ensure that both boys and girls achieve effectively.

### **Commentary**

96. GCSE results are above average and have risen over the last three years. The number of students opting for GCSE is rising as a result of good teaching and interesting lessons. Current standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are also above average. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good as students join the school with below average geographical knowledge and skills. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory but should improve as target setting and individual tracking of students' progress is implemented. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Students have a much better understanding of place through studying Brazil, Japan and Great Britain, for example, and a greater understanding of the relationships between physical and human geography.
97. In Years 7 to 9, teachers use the methods of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Most lessons have clear objectives and teachers quickly engage students with an effective starter activity. In the main part of the lesson, appropriate and varied tasks are used to develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding. Students are challenged appropriately and in most lessons expectations are high. In a lesson on mapping skills in Year 7, for example, students responded well and made good gains in learning as a result of accurate, engaging and skilled teaching. In

a very small percentage of lessons teaching is poor as a result of inadequate planning and poor behaviour.

98. Most, but not all, lessons finish with a crisp test of what has been achieved. Learning would benefit if this approach were used more consistently. Overall, learning is good and students move on quickly in their understanding. They are expected to think for themselves and learn independently. In a Year 10 lesson on the factors influencing birth and death rates, for example, students did their own research and most developed a clear understanding of why the rates vary from one country to another. Particular attention is given to planning tasks and questions that encourage both boys and girls to participate and achieve well. Work is marked consistently, with helpful comments on how well students have done and how they can improve. A good system of self-assessment has been recently introduced which enables students to assess their own progress across units of the syllabus.
99. Improvement since the last inspection is good and is continuing. Teachers are aware of students' individual needs. Students enjoy the subject and respond well. Computers are used to support learning and a good range of field study and practical activities are provided to interest students and help them relate theory to practice. There is a need to share best practice through more regular monitoring of teaching. The review of planning by senior management is not regular enough to identify and rectify weaknesses in provision.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes excellent, though some lessons could challenge students to take more initiative.
- Assessment is helpful in tracking students' progress, but Year 9 National Curriculum assessments are not accurate enough at the higher levels.
- The curriculum is very well planned to stimulate students' interest and enjoyment of history.
- The department is very well led and managed, but checking of teaching is not regular enough.

### Commentary

100. GCSE results were average from 2000 to 2002, but improved to above average in 2003. Students also do well in the certificate of achievement. There is a continuing trend of improvement and current standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, with boys and girls achieving equally well.
101. Students' have good knowledge and understanding and develop good historical skills. Most recall earlier learning very well. Their use of evidence develops well from Year 7 onwards, along with a good ability to compare, explain and make links. Year 7 students for instance, compared the respective rights of the claimants to the throne in 1065, checking evidence to support their explanations. Higher-attaining students often make insightful comments, such as Year 10 students' explanation of the links between medicine and the health of the people in Ancient Greece.
102. Written work is mostly detailed, well presented and structured. It reflects good literacy, numeracy and independent research skills. GCSE coursework is well researched, with higher-attaining students in particular making critical use of sources, evaluating evidence and explaining their findings. ICT is used well for research and presentation. Lower-attaining students produce a substantial amount of work, but their work along with that of some average

attaining students, tends to be more descriptive and less evaluative. Their answers are sometimes too brief.

103. Teaching is often creative and imaginative, stimulating students to work at a high level. Students enjoy history, relishing the challenge and pace, and benefit from teachers' very good subject knowledge and clear presentations. Searching questioning helps students to recall key points. Resources, including video, are used well to illustrate events and foster empathy. Lessons are extremely well planned and managed in a calm, productive learning atmosphere. Students receive good individual guidance and those with special educational needs achieve well because of work that is well matched to their needs and very good support from teaching assistants. In some lessons, however, there is too little opportunity for students to take initiative in exploring issues for themselves. Homework is set regularly but is not always sufficiently challenging.
104. Marking is regular but does not always provide enough guidance. Progress is assessed through regular tests which are carefully planned and moderated, but Year 9 assessment is not always sufficiently accurate in judging attainment at the highest National Curriculum levels.
105. The head of department's inspiration, vision and enthusiasm result in very high expectations for teaching and learning. This has led to improving standards and a curriculum which enthuses students. There is very close team work and a shared commitment to improve. Teaching is well supported, but practice across the department is not checked regularly enough to ensure consistency in teaching and marking. Nonetheless, very good progress has been made since the last inspection in sustaining and building upon the high standards identified at that time.

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

**In a Year 7 lesson, students gained a very good understanding of the issues surrounding the succession to the throne in 1065 after the death of Edward the Confessor.**

The teacher's introductory quick-fire questioning helped students speedily to recall their earlier learning, and to understand what was now expected of them. Each used their own whiteboard to show their answers, which encouraged them to respond confidently as they were used to doing this in primary school. A very clear explanation gave students an excellent understanding of the events that followed Edward's death and of the personalities of the contenders for the throne. Each student was required to write to one unsuccessful candidate, explaining the reasons. This led them all to think deeply about the issues and how they could be explained. They were challenged to examine the evidence for themselves and work accurately as historians. An outstanding mediaeval display set the scene and stimulated students' imagination. Working productively in groups they created a hive of activity. Students with special educational needs received very good support from a teaching assistant and also made excellent progress.

#### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teaching and learning are good with some very good practice.
- Lessons contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Not enough time is available in Years 7 to 9 to cover the full syllabus.
- Leadership is good with clear vision and a capacity to develop the subject.
- There are no visits to places of worship and very few links with faith communities to increase students' interest in religions.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are very limited.

## Commentary

106. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In Year 11, all students enter a GCSE short course. Results in 2002 were average but fell in 2003. Standards seen in the current Year 11 are average. Achievement in all years is satisfactory. There is a small percentage of underachieving students in Years 10 and 11 but appropriate testing, tracking and mentoring procedures are being introduced this term to raise standards and students' achievement.
107. Teachers make effective use of the guidance in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. They are clear about what students are to learn and begin lessons with exercises that quickly interest and engage them. Teaching methods are varied and appropriate. At the close of most lessons the quality of learning is tested effectively. Expectations are high and students are challenged to think and work independently or cooperatively in pairs. In the best lessons, students use computers, videos and a wide range of activities to explore ideas, express their own opinions and develop their understanding of religious beliefs. Year 9 students, for example, gained a very good insight into how beliefs influence actions, both in general and for Christians in particular. In most lessons students respond positively and learn more quickly as a result. Learning is good overall and in the best lessons, students make very good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding. Satisfactory attention is given to matching work to the full range of ability. When teaching assistants are present, they are deployed effectively.
108. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The subject is now taught separately from personal, social and health education and a short course GCSE has been introduced in Years 10 and 11. As a result, students' knowledge of religious beliefs and values has improved. However, the time allocation in Years 7 to 9 has been significantly reduced this year. This prevents full coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. It also means that the subject is not given equivalence with geography and history, as recommended by the Department for Education and Skills.
109. The head of department has a clear vision and appropriate strategies to raise standards. Assessment is being improved so that students will know the national level at which they are working and how they can improve. However, planning is not sufficiently detailed and arrangements for reviewing progress are inadequate. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are very limited and time needs to be found to enable the best practice in teaching to be shared.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and lead to good achievement.
- Students enjoy design and technology and work well.
- Leadership and management are good and helped the school gain specialist technology status.
- Assessment is good in Years 7 to 9 but in Years 10 and 11 it is not used sufficiently to check students' progress.
- Most students complete GCSE courses successfully but a small minority do not because they find the courses offered too difficult or uninteresting.

## Commentary

110. GCSE results have been consistently above average over the past few years and above the average for the school. Current standards are above average in Year 9 and in Year 11. Students' achievement is good in all years, a judgement that takes into account 2003 results as well as how current students are doing. Students with special educational needs achieve well too.
111. In Years 9 and 11, students have a good knowledge of structures and materials, enabling them to select correct ingredients and components when making things. They use hand and power tools confidently and safely. They measure, cut and join parts accurately and finished articles are of a good standard. In preparing their designs, students undertake relevant, focused research. For GCSE, however, research is not always broad enough and relies too heavily on surveys. They analyse their research findings well, but often do not make enough use of the analysis to guide their design ideas. Students in all years explore a range of ideas before preparing their final design, particularly in graphics and electronics. They evaluate their products well. In Year 11, however, while evaluations contain personal reflections on the success of their work, they are sometimes short of objective measurements.
112. Teachers' expertise and enthusiasm are particular strengths. They foster a positive ethos which leads to good relationships and behaviour. As a result, students become engrossed and quickly gain new knowledge and understanding. Teaching methods are good. Teachers set challenging targets for students' work and set high standards through good demonstrations of practical skills. Students know exactly what is required of them and as a result their learning is good. During practical work, teachers ensure that all students make progress through careful individual guidance. Year 7 students, for example, made good progress in learning to chisel. After a skilled demonstration that highlighted safety, students practised using a chisel themselves. Each received expert advice and the class were soon working at a very good standard. Planning is flexible and takes good account of the needs of different students, which is an improvement since the last inspection. In a Year 11 food lesson, for example, students were at different stages. Some used computers to research and write new recipes while others were cooking from recipes they had already designed. Many lessons finish with a summary, but these are too often rushed, with students not given enough opportunity to review what they have learned. Students are assessed regularly in Years 7 to 9 and the results are used well to follow their progress. In Years 10 and 11 they are set targets, but there is insufficient assessment to check their progress in meeting them.
113. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved because of strong leadership. The head of department has developed a shared vision for the improvement of teaching. The department is well placed to meet its targets set out in the school's plan for specialist technology status.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and Design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high in painting and drawing and students achieve well in two-dimensional work.
- Teaching and learning for the fine art GCSE examination are good.
- Only a small proportion of students take a GCSE in art and these are mostly girls.
- Students do not learn enough about the historical context of their practical work.
- They do not link practical and theoretical knowledge well enough, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Marking does not give students sufficient information to guide and improve their work.



## Commentary

114. GCSE results in 2002 were below average, mainly because of staff illness. In 2003, they rose to well above average, with a very high proportion of A\* and A grades. Far fewer students take GCSE art than in most schools and most are girls. The examination is in fine art and almost all students' work is two-dimensional, largely painting and drawing. Standards in these skills are high across the school, with attractive displays that celebrate students' good achievement in these aspects.
115. Standards on entry are average. By the end of Year 9, standards are also average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Teachers place a very high emphasis on the technical skills of painting and drawing. This leads to above average standards in these elements. In other practical areas such as three-dimensional work, standards are average. Although students' planning of projects includes an appreciation of artists' work, there is not enough regular emphasis on this and, as a result, students view this contextual work as distinct from their practical activities. Their understanding of how to link research with practical work develops too slowly. They do not learn well enough how to evaluate art work or to make critical annotations in their sketchbooks. Standards in these aspects are below average.
116. This pattern continues into Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average in painting and drawing, but as they proceed with the GCSE course students do not do enough written evaluation of their work. Towards the end of Year 11, this is redressed by 'bolting on' these elements, often in extra-curricular sessions or art clubs. This is not satisfactory for those who are unable to attend. Students achieve well in relation to the requirements of the chosen course.
117. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and, in the context of the chosen examination, good in Years 10 and 11. Students are taught skilfully how to draw and paint well. Achievement is lower than it would be if teaching ensured that students developed their understanding of both practical and contextual aspects of the subject together. Mathematical aspects of shape and form are well developed, for example through students' use of shading to represent three-dimensional objects. Students' literacy skills are not reinforced well enough, however. They do not learn how to write critically, using subject vocabulary. Students use ICT creatively and well, especially in Years 10 and 11, for example to manipulate and distort images. Marking and assessment of students' work are not good enough to help students understand how to improve.
118. Departmental management is satisfactory. Since the last report the curriculum range has narrowed significantly and the appeal of the subject has declined, especially for boys. However, examination results have risen and overall improvement has been satisfactory.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well and reach above average standards.
- Students make good use of ICT in lessons.
- A few students in Year 9 show underdeveloped keyboard skills and insufficient knowledge of music notation.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons.

## Commentary

119. GCSE results were well above average in 2002, but slightly lower in 2003. For current students, standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. There is no significant difference between the standards attained by boys and girls.
120. By Year 9, many students show satisfactory rhythmic skills and sing with an accurate sense of pitch. They play their own parts well in ensembles. They quickly learn to play tunes by ear and improvise simple pieces. They use music technology well when composing. For a few students, skills in reading notation and playing keyboards are weaker. Students enter school with variable musical experiences and their achievement is satisfactory. They enjoy lessons, develop confidence as performers and work well in groups. Students with special educational needs receive effective support and make satisfactory progress. Students from Downsview special school attend lessons on a regular basis and are successfully integrated into the activities. More musically able students make good progress, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
121. By Year 11, students perform well, both individually and in groups. They create compositions that show some development of ideas. A few students reach well above average standards in performing and composing. All students use music technology skilfully to devise and refine their work. They use music vocabulary accurately during listening tasks. They have positive attitudes and are committed to improving their skills. Students with special educational needs make good progress. More musically able students make very good progress in all aspects of the work.
122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good class management skills and ensure that all students take part in musical activities. They have good subject knowledge and use this well to promote students' learning. In Year 11, for example, the teacher rehearsed a Steve Reich composition with students, resulting in a successful performance. Students gained a good understanding of the effect Reich produced from repeated rhythmic patterns. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Assessment procedures are good and ensure that students understand their targets.
123. Leadership and management are good. The director of music has clear objectives and has done much to promote the subject within the school. There is a good range of classroom instruments and music technology and a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Students take part in concerts and have achieved success at the National Festival of Music for Youth. Over 200 students receive weekly instrumental lessons.
124. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There has been a slight decline in the standards at the end of Year 9. Standards at the end of Year 11 have remained the same, but the overall quality of teaching has improved. There has been an increase in the number of students receiving instrumental lessons.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is good and enables all students to experience a large number of activities.
- There is a very good extra-curricular programme and high standards are reached in competitive sport.
- There is not enough sharing of best practice to ensure a consistent approach to teaching.
- Students' standards on entry to the school are not assessed accurately enough to monitor their progress effectively and set accurate targets for GCSE.

## Commentary

125. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average and students achieve well. A minority of students reach above average standards and show advanced skills in games such as rugby, football and netball. They understand how to use tactics and strategies in order to outwit their opponent. They evaluate their own and others' performance accurately but when speaking about it they do not use technical vocabulary confidently.
126. In Year 11 also, standards are average and students achieve well. The boys have advanced skills in football and the majority of students have an exceptional understanding of tactics in many games. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve well. They respond well to the high level of challenge and practise hard in order to improve their skills. Those with special educational needs are often talented sports players. Their success in the subject adds to their self esteem.
127. A minority of students opt to take a GCSE in physical education. GCSE results have been average over the last three years but have improved each year. Standards of current students are average overall, and achievement is satisfactory, though a minority of Year 11 students are below average because their theoretical knowledge is not deep enough. They have a poor attitude to studying theory and this causes them to underachieve. The students in Year 10 however, are already above average. They make good use of knowledge gained in other subjects and think through answers intelligently. Their notes are well written and are a good resource for revision. Standards in the GCSE dance course are above average. These students achieve very well and their attitudes have a positive impact on their learning.
128. Teaching and learning are good. All teachers have high expectations of students' work, behaviour and sporting attitudes. The pace of learning is always brisk and lessons have clear objectives. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and demonstrate good performance effectively. They plan well and mostly ensure that the needs of different groups of students are met though, in a few lessons, higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged. Literacy skills are supported well but planning for the development of numeracy and ICT is not as effective. The GCSE dance course is taught well with a good range of tasks to develop all the required skills. Target setting for GCSE students is not sufficiently sharp.
129. A popular extra-curricular programme provides students with a wide range of activities to further their interests. A 'sport for all' approach encourages students of all abilities to participate and join clubs in the community. Individuals and teams enjoy success at school, district and county levels in athletics, football, gymnastics and rugby.
130. Leadership is good and provides a positive model of enthusiasm and drive. There is a clear direction for curriculum development. Formal monitoring of teaching has yet to be established to ensure that the best practice is shared. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. A Junior Sports Leaders Award and a GCSE dance course have been introduced. Standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching has improved.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

In addition to GCSE courses in business studies and travel and tourism, the school offers several other vocational courses. Each of these is taken by a small number of students, who in most cases are carefully guided onto the courses because they are unlikely to succeed with a full range of traditional GCSE courses. Business studies was inspected in depth and the other courses were sampled:

- In travel and tourism, GCSE results were below average in 2002 but improved in 2003. One lesson was seen, which was satisfactory.
- The pre-vocational programme is certificated by the Open College. Three lessons were seen, which were all good or better. This is an effective course in which students are very motivated by the relevance of the activities, and learn ICT, practical and social skills.
- The horticulture course is taken by students with special educational needs and is accredited by Plumpton Agricultural College. One excellent lesson was seen which included several students from the local special school. The lesson was very well planned and engaged students in both the theory and practice of horticulture.
- The BTEC in public services is available only to students who are in the Combined Cadet Force and gives an introduction to the uniformed services. One lesson was seen, which was good.

### **Business Studies**

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teachers are well qualified and experienced.
- Regular and substantial homework is a key feature of students' learning.
- There is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning, homework or assessment.
- Although the curriculum and work experience are well planned, students would benefit from more contact with business organisations.
- Students are well behaved and have very good attitudes to their work.
- Students' language skills need to be improved to achieve higher GCSE grades.

#### **Commentary**

131. GCSE results were average from 2000 to 2002, but improved in 2003 and were above the 2002 national average.
132. Standards in the current Year 11 are average overall, which represents satisfactory achievement for these students. There is no significant difference between girls' and boys' achievement. The average and lower-attaining students' written work would be improved with more attention to basic skills, such as expression, punctuation and spelling. This, combined with improved analytical skills, such as the use of market research in their study of mini-enterprises, would help them to achieve the higher GCSE grades.
133. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers know their subject well and produce interesting materials. They illustrate topics with up-to-date examples so that students acquire a sound understanding of how businesses work and use terminology accurately. Regular revision through questioning and short tests results in good retention of previous learning, including more complex topics such as demand and supply and cash flow. There are not enough opportunities, however, for students to work in groups, communicate their own ideas, and solve problems. Homework is very good. It is varied and substantial and contains an element of research to foster independent learning. Extension work for more advanced students is completed well and with enthusiasm. However, while detailed comments are attached to

students' coursework at a later stage, some earlier work is not marked, and there is insufficient constructive feedback to help students improve their answers. Errors in basic skills are not corrected. Students with special educational needs get extra help on request, but teachers do not make enough use of their individual education plans when planning their work. Accommodation and resources are good: students have ready access to computers to support their learning. Displays are of high quality and remind students of key words and the business context. Teachers expect students to be well-behaved and attentive, and students respond by displaying good attitudes to the subject and working hard. Most students complete the course.

134. The management of the subject is satisfactory, but its effectiveness is limited because it is too informal. The curriculum is well organised and examination requirements are met. Day-to-day management runs smoothly through informal teamwork. However, beyond the minimum requirements of performance management, there is no formal monitoring of teaching, homework or assessment. This is needed to widen the range of teaching methods, eliminate the inconsistency in marking and improve target setting for Year 10 students. There are regular team meetings, but their informality hampers planning. For example, the department lacks a calendar of business visits and visits by external speakers to complement the students' work experience in Year 11.
135. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because links have still not been properly established with local businesses and there are still insufficient detailed comments on students' work to help them improve their performance. Both of these were matters for improvement at the last inspection.

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

The school has a very good programme for personal, social and health education, which is very well managed and taught by an able and dedicated team of teachers. The course fulfils statutory requirements for sex education and careers education and teaches students effectively about the dangers of alcohol, smoking and drugs. Four lessons were seen and all were taught well. Standards are above average by Years 9 and 11.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- Curriculum planning is inadequate and the full National Curriculum is not covered.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory because students do not learn the full subject, though in parts of the course standards are above average.
- Students' progress is not properly assessed or reported to parents.
- Management is unsatisfactory because there is no monitoring of the standards achieved, teaching or the curriculum.
- Resources are inadequate.

### **Commentary**

136. The school has planned to teach citizenship partly in SPACE lessons and partly through other subjects. An audit has been carried out to establish which subjects cover elements of citizenship and a scheme of work drawn up. There are some good modules planned in history and SPACE, but overall the coverage is too patchy and incomplete. The first two elements of citizenship – knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and developing skills of enquiry and communication – are only partially covered. For the third element, there is no programme that ensures that all students have opportunities to develop their skills of participation and responsible action. The scheme of work relies too heavily on lessons which

make only incidental contributions to citizenship, where students are not aware that they are learning a distinct subject.

137. As a result, standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. However in some topics taught through history or SPACE, students reach above average standards. In history, for example, Year 8 students recognise almost all the world's political leaders, past and present, and can identify characteristics of leadership. In SPACE lessons, students gain a firm grasp of the risks of underage drinking and unsafe behaviour and develop strategies to avoid risky situations.
138. Overall judgements cannot be made about teaching and learning since only two citizenship lessons occurred during the inspection, both in Year 8. One was a good SPACE lesson, in which students learned actively through brainstorming, role play and discussion in pairs. The other was a history lesson and was also well taught. Students were actively involved, including some with special educational needs, who were well supported by a teaching assistant.
139. The history department covers elements of citizenship well and has made adjustments to its resources and scheme of work to accommodate this new subject. In Year 9, for example, students consider the equality of women in contemporary society at the same time as studying the history of the topic. In a SPACE lesson, one student wrote a letter to a councillor making the case for recreational facilities for young people.
140. Overall, the management of citizenship is unsatisfactory because the planning is inadequate and there are no arrangements to monitor what is being taught. There are not enough resources to teach the subject properly and there is no scheme of assessment through which students' standards and achievements can be reported to parents by the end of Year 9.

## **PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

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

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