

INSPECTION REPORT

MILLTHORPE SCHOOL

York

LEA area: City of York

Unique reference number: 121706

Headteacher: Mr A Wootton

Lead inspector: Mr B A Jones

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th April 2004

Inspection number: 258700

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

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Terms used in this report:

Students in Years 7,8 and 9 are at Key Stage 3, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools after Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1011
School address:	Nunthorpe Avenue York North Yorkshire
Postcode:	YO23 1WF
Telephone number:	01904 686400
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Griffith
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is an average sized mixed comprehensive school with 1011 students on roll. There are 517 boys and 494 girls. Students are drawn from a variety of backgrounds, but overall are above average in terms of socio-economic status. On entry, the intake is above average. The percentage of students whose first language is not English, at 1.3 per cent, is very low and there are no students who are at an early stage of learning English. Some six per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is below average. Around 17 per cent of students have special educational needs, which is broadly average and 2.1 per cent have statements of special need, which is also average. The school provides for students with a wide range of special needs. The large majority of students' special needs are specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) or social, emotional or behavioural problems. Last year, some 10 students joined the school and 26 left other than at the age of 11. The school is now larger than at the time of the previous inspection.

The school has specialist language college status in partnership with a nearby 11-18 school. It has very recently been awarded the Investor in People award. The school takes part in Project Trident and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The school was awarded the Schools' Achievement Award in 2001 and 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Lead inspector	
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector	
15079	A. Boys	Team inspector	Science.
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs. Geography. Vocational education.
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design.
12499	M. Durkin	Team inspector	English. Drama.
20287	D. Harris	Team inspector	English as an additional language, (EAL). Modern foreign languages.
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education.
22458	G. McGinn	Team inspector	History.
31850	D. Nevens	Team inspector	Music.
15678	J. Radford	Team inspector	Religious education. Citizenship.
2079	T. Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology.
31096	J. Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, (ICT).
8341	W. Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics.

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good and effective school. The school is led well and managed satisfactorily. Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, students are achieving well. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students attain well above average standards by Year 11.
- Standards and provision in ICT are unsatisfactory overall.
- Teaching is good and results in good learning. Teachers are assisted very effectively by learning support staff.
- The school is led well by key staff with a good contribution by the governing body.
- The school's language college status gives students excellent opportunities to learn different languages and broaden their cultural horizons.
- Students' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good. These, allied to the positive relationships that exist between students and their teachers, ensure an effective working atmosphere in lessons.
- The tracking of students' progress through Years 7 to 9 is not undertaken rigorously enough.
- The school has very good links with other schools and the community, which enhance the opportunities for students to widen their experiences.
- Extra-curricular provision and support for learning outside the school day are very effective in promoting good learning.
- The school has not made enough progress in providing for students' spiritual development, which is unsatisfactory.

The school has shown satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in April 1998. Standards have been maintained at a level well above average and students achieve well. The school has benefited from acquiring language college status, which has given an impetus to developing innovative teaching methods using ICT. The response to the issues in the last report has been good in most respects. However, there has been an unsatisfactory response in improving the provision in ICT generally and in improving the curriculum in physical education. Students' spiritual development is still unsatisfactory and there is no provision of a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Achievement is good. The examination results indicated in the table above show that this group of students performed much better than those in similar schools. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Students achieve well in all years, including those students with special educational needs, students from minority ethnic groupings and those students who are gifted and talented. There are no significant differences in the results or achievement of boys and girls. In ICT in Year 11 achievement is unsatisfactory, because this group of students have experienced a legacy of insufficient teaching time through their years in the school.

Students' personal qualities are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students' attitudes to work and their relationships with each other and staff are good. Behaviour is good and exclusions are low. Attendance is above average and

punctuality is good. Students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Their moral and cultural development is good and social development is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good in all years. As a result, learning is consistently good. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects throughout Years 7 to 11. The positive qualities of good attendance, attitudes and behaviour that students bring to their learning are significant in their good achievement and learning. The teaching of physical education to students who are not examined in the subject and teaching in citizenship are satisfactory. Teaching provision in ICT is satisfactory, but students do not receive enough time to learn effectively and achieve as well as they do in most subjects.

The curriculum is satisfactory and generally matches the needs and aspirations of students. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum. Pastoral care in the school is good because attention is given to the care and welfare of students. However, the school has not yet given enough attention to risk assessment procedures. Students receive good, well-informed advice and guidance so that they take courses that best meet their choices and fit their individual needs. The tracking of students' progress through Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Students in Years 10 and 11 have realistic and challenging targets to help monitor their progress effectively as they work towards GCSE examinations. The school has satisfactory links with parents and very good links with other schools and colleges and with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership. Leadership by other key staff is good, with a high level of teamwork. The whole-school approach to special educational needs has developed well since the last inspection. Overall, governance is satisfactory. Governors do a good job overall stemming from a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the school does not comply fully in providing an act of collective worship on a daily basis, although assemblies are of a good standard and some do meet the criteria for collective worship. The school has not completed fully the process of risk assessment.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting, supplemented by interviews held during the inspection. Parents are generally supportive of the school. Their children settle well and like school. They are pleased with the teaching standards and high expectations that enable their children to make good progress. Students like the school. They believe the teaching is good and expectations are high. A large proportion of students is concerned about behaviour and bullying, but most are happy that reported incidents are sorted out satisfactorily.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Increase the time allocation for teaching ICT and ensure that all subjects make a positive contribution to developing students' skills in using ICT.
- Put in place an effective system for tracking students' progress through Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that a greater emphasis is given to providing for students' spiritual development.

and, to meet statutory requirements ensure that:

- The school provides a daily act of collective worship
- Due attention is given to producing risk assessments to cover the school's activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students join the school with levels of attainment that are above average in English, mathematics and science, although the intake into the current Year 7 is average. Standards in other subjects vary, but overall are average. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average overall and by the time students leave Year 11, standards overall are well above average, reflecting students' good achievement through the school. Parents are very satisfied with the standards the school obtains and students, too, express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education they receive.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average.
- In Year 9, students achieve very well in art and design and design and technology. In all other subjects, students achieve well other than in physical education and ICT where students achieve satisfactorily.
- In Year 11, students achieve well across nearly all subjects and attain well above average standards. In German and art and design, students achieve very well.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well.
- In Year 11, standards are below average in ICT, and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Students' good levels of attendance and their positive attitudes and behaviour are important factors in their achievement.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average overall and students achieve well. In English and mathematics, standards of work are well above average. In these two subjects, students start the school with above average attainment and achieve well. Students achieve very well in design and technology from a starting point well below average, in response to very good teaching. They also achieve very well in art and design as teachers capitalise on the students' positive approach to the subject. In most other subjects, students achieve well in relation to their starting points and attain above average standards. In ICT, and physical education, students' progress is slower and they achieve satisfactorily, attaining average standards in ICT and below average standards in physical education. There is a similar pattern by the end of Year 11 and students achieve well overall and attain standards that are well above average. Standards are well above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in German and art and design. In the latter two subjects, students achieve very well. In physical education, students achieve satisfactorily, and well in the GCE course. Overall, the level of students' achievement is clearly linked to the good teaching they receive throughout Years 7 to 11. Students' good levels of attendance and their positive attitudes and behaviour, which are important factors in their achievement, supplement the good teaching. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT, primarily due to a history of insufficient time for this group of students.
2. Standards of literacy are well above average by the end of Year 11. Students' well-developed skills ensure that they have full access to the curriculum and that they are mainly able to respond to the learning demands that are made of them across the variety of subjects. Standards of numeracy are above average and numeracy skills are developed well in mathematics lessons. Students attain standards in ICT that are below average because there is insufficient attention paid to developing these skills in subjects across the curriculum and there is insufficient time allocated to teaching ICT as a separate subject.
3. There are no significant differences in the attainment and achievement of boys and girls or students from different backgrounds. Gifted and talented students and those with special

educational needs achieve well, attaining standards that are above what would be expected on the basis of their prior attainment. The highest attaining students and those with particular gifts and talents achieve well because teachers plan their work effectively to challenge them. They are also given good additional challenges through extra-curricular work, opportunities to study additional subjects in modern foreign languages and the chance to take examinations earlier than usual in mathematics. There are no students at an early stage of English language acquisition and those students who come from minority ethnic groupings achieve well, in line with their peers. However, the school's arrangements for monitoring the progress of students from different ethnic groups are not fully in place. Students with special educational needs achieve well. They make good gains in National Curriculum tests by the end of Year 9. Groups receiving additional support for reading in Years 7, 8, and 9 similarly show good achievement in reading score gains. Year 11 students with special educational needs following a course in Spanish make very good progress. In 2003 the 33 students on the school's special needs register gained an average of eight GCSE passes. Nearly half of those passes were at higher grades.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.1 (36.5)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.5 (38.5)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36.5 (36.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 225 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	67 (66)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	39.9 (34.7)	34.8 (34.7)

There were 192 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. Students achieved well and their rate of improvement was in line with the national trend. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average. These students achieved well in relation to their starting points to maintain these levels in their results, although the rate of improvement fell just below the rate of improvement nationally.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to work are **good**. Behaviour is **good** and exclusions are low. Attendance is above national averages and unauthorised absence is in line with the average. Punctuality is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Overall, the school's ethos is good, ensuring a good level of commitment to work on the part of students and teachers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well motivated and keen to learn.

- A high proportion of students is concerned about bullying and harassment, but most are satisfied that reported incidents are sorted out satisfactorily.
- The school makes very good provision for students' social development with resulting harmonious relationships.
- The school provides good opportunities for students' moral and cultural development.
- Students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

5. Students learn well as a result of their good attitudes. They are interested in their work and well motivated to achieve their best. Attitudes are unsatisfactory in only a few lessons where it is related to unsatisfactory management of pupils. Students accept community responsibilities willingly, such as taking part in sports matches, charitable fund-raising activities and musical performances.

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
88	0
1	0

6. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Exclusions are low with no permanent exclusions and very few students are excluded more than once. The majority of students who have had fixed-term exclusions from school are white boys. This reflects the gender differences found nationally and the predominantly white intake of the school. There are no significant differences in the attitudes and behaviour of students from different groups. Students respond well to staff's high expectations of good behaviour. Discipline is strict and usually fair. A significant number of students feel that some teachers are inconsistent in their use of sanctions, but inspectors found a good degree of consistency in teachers' treatment of students. Unsatisfactory behaviour occurs in only a very few lessons, and usually where teachers' management of students is unsatisfactory. Students are honest and trustworthy. They respect the environment and the school's property, but there is some abuse of each other's belongings, such as scribbling on planners.
7. Relationships across the school are good and students work well together in mixed groups. New students in Year 7 appreciate the support they receive from older students when they first arrive in school. However, more than half of students are concerned about bad behaviour and bullying in school. The complex nature of the accommodation makes it impossible to supervise all areas during break times and this could result in unobserved bullying. The vast majority of parents and students are happy that reported incidents are sorted out satisfactorily, but a few have ongoing difficulties. Relationships between students from different ethnic groups are good and reflect the harmonious relationships generally found in the school.
8. The school has not made enough progress in providing for students' spiritual development, which is unsatisfactory. The provision is not formally planned, and the school does not have a policy. This reflects an unsatisfactory response to the findings of the last report. Although the normal pattern of assemblies did not take place during the week of the inspection, only one assembly observed offered students the opportunity for reflection. There are a few examples to be found in subject areas, such as religious education, where students' spiritual development is promoted in their study of religious symbolism. In art and design, students' appreciation of Celtic art through studying beautiful manuscripts also has a strong spiritual dimension. However, other subjects do not actively plan to promote spiritual development and opportunities are missed to develop this aspect of students' development in a satisfactory manner.

9. The school provides good opportunities for students' moral development. There is a clear code of conduct that students understand and accept. Teachers encourage students to respect each other, and be aware of the impact of their actions on others. Social development is very good. Students have a voice in school matters through the School Council. Most students are well aware of the responsibilities of living in a community. They show an understanding of the needs of others, well illustrated by their impressive efforts in fundraising for the needy. There are frequent opportunities for students to collaborate in small groups in all areas of the curriculum. This is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, residential visits and opportunities for travel and exchange visits in Europe. Students' cultural development is good. Many subjects, particularly art and design, history and design and technology, give students a good appreciation of their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of other cultures. In modern foreign languages, cultural development is very good. Years 7 and 8 have a special International Day each year, and the school joined in the celebrations for the European Year of Language. Most students have the opportunity to visit France or Germany. Language College status has had a very positive impact on students' cultural development.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0.7
National data	7.2	National data	1.0

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

10. Attendance and punctuality to school and lessons are good as they were in the previous inspection. Unauthorised absence is in line with national averages. Year heads monitor attendance well. The targeting of specific students to telephone on their first day of absence has improved their attendance. This good attendance, allied to students' positive attitudes helps to promote the good ethos in the school where hard work and effort are valued. Parents appreciate the need for good attendance and avoid taking holidays during term time. Registration procedures are good, but the use of registration time to enhance students' learning is variable.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education. The quality of teaching, the use of assessment and pastoral care are all of a good quality. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by very good extra-curricular provision. There are satisfactory links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **good** and leads to **good** learning. The assessment of students' work is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a consistency in the amount of good teaching across the curriculum and across all years.
- There is a significant element of very good teaching in the school and occasionally some that is excellent.
- The very good match of teachers to the curriculum ensures that teachers have the requisite degree of subject specialist knowledge.
- The assistance given to teachers by learning support teachers is very good.

- Students' positive approach to learning, their good behaviour in class and good relationships help to produce a good working atmosphere in lessons and are significant factors in their good achievement.
- Overall, teachers' use of ICT is patchy.
- In some subjects, teachers' marking does not give enough information about how students can improve their work further.
- The process of reviewing targets and tracking students' progress, including those with special educational needs, is not sufficiently developed through Years 7 to 9.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 138 lessons in Years 7 to 11

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	34 (25%)	64 (46%)	33 (24%)	5 (4%)	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.

Commentary

11. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in nearly all subjects. This consistency, along with a significant amount of very good teaching is appreciated by students and capitalises upon their already positive approach to their work. This ensures that good learning takes place in most lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is also good. Students are determined to achieve the best they can and teachers use this to challenge and stretch them. Teachers maintain a good level of expectation and demand. These demands generally accord with students' own expectations and those of their parents. The result is an orderly working atmosphere in classrooms where achievement is valued and students want to learn. These qualities are appreciated by parents and students. Where unsatisfactory teaching was observed, this was uncharacteristic of the teaching provision normally received by students. On occasion in art and design some excellent teaching was seen, where students were inspired by the teaching provided.
12. Teachers have good relationships with their students and engender positive relationships between them. This enables teachers to maintain a firm, but friendly approach in their teaching. Typically, students work hard and the atmosphere in lessons is one where students can be trusted to work independently. In some subjects like art and design, history, music and modern foreign languages, teachers give students a great deal of responsibility in determining how well they learn and they usually respond very well. In other subjects like science and physical education, some teachers are less willing to give students their heads and there is too much spoon-feeding. The very good library facility is a positive aid that is used effectively by some departments to encourage a greater independence in their learning among students.
13. Another feature that promotes the good learning that takes place is the way that students and teachers respect each other. Teachers are usually specialists in their subjects and have a good level of expertise about their subjects and the examination requirements in their areas. They plan conscientiously and bring these qualities to the lessons. Students respect this and play their part by taking responsibility for their learning, for example in the way they respond to questioning, in their positive behaviour and in their approach to completing homework. For their part, most teachers take good account of the needs of all students and adapt the work to meet them, for example those with special educational needs and the highest attaining students. As a result, students with a wide range of attainment learn and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of students with learning difficulties and students from different backgrounds, working well with the Learning Support staff to provide good support that meets the students' needs. There is no formal policy of organising classes so that boys or girls are not allowed to dominate in any one particular group (for example by

varying the seating arrangements in lessons) but such arrangements are made in some subjects.

Example of outstanding practice

Using a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom, including ICT, to promote excellent learning. An account of part of a French lesson for Year 9 students, where special needs were met.

A very brief observation from an inspector tracking students with special educational needs to confirm the quality of provision. In this example a Year 9 student is standing at the front of a large mainstream class, by the interactive whiteboard. It is towards the end of one section of the lesson. There is a noughts and crosses team competition, involving students in volunteering answers. All the language spoken, by teacher and students, is in French. The atmosphere is relaxed but purposeful. The student at the front of the class listens carefully and “writes” on the whiteboard to show where a team has given a correct answer. After a few minutes the activity finishes. The student returns to his seat. He adjusts CCTV equipment previously focused on the whiteboard onto a sheet of printed text ready for the next part of the lesson. All of this occurs over a period of about ten minutes. The impression is one of a (visually impaired) student completely at ease, brimming with confidence, fully involved in the lesson and learning very effectively.

14. There is a much greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs across subject departments compared with the last inspection. Teaching is good and teachers are supported very effectively by learning support staff. In the great majority of lessons, methods are matched well to students’ needs. Support staff are actively engaged in lessons, for example in posing questions to individuals thereby encouraging them to participate in class discussion. Relationships between individual students and support staff are very good and this enhances the quality of the support given. Specialist literacy support provides good challenge with, for example, Year 7 students seen learning spelling rules and identifying exceptions during a reading club activity. In a small withdrawal group, Year 8 students achieved well because good relationships promoted confidence in learning with a variety of activities and resources used to develop key skills, including handwriting.
15. Throughout the school, teachers know their students well and generally inform their knowledge with conscientious marking of work and maintaining good records. In Years 7 to 9 these qualities are not sufficiently organised to track students’ overall progress and this represents an area for the school to improve its practice. There are some examples of very good use of marking techniques that point the way to further improvement to the student, but there is also marking that does not inform the student what needs to be done to take the work to a higher level.
16. The use of ICT in other subjects has improved since the previous inspection and is satisfactory overall. However, teachers’ use of ICT is patchy. This reflects the lack of a coherent approach to developing this aspect of teaching in the school and the still below-average provision of computers. Currently, there is no strategy to map, record and assess how well students are taught ICT. There is some very good practice, for example in modern foreign languages. Here the additional funding attracted by the school’s language college status has been used very effectively to innovate and use computer technology in the classroom. Modern foreign language teachers have all become very skilful at using electronic whiteboards, now installed in their classrooms. In the capable hands of these teachers, learning a language is characterised by colour, fun and flexibility where students can practise in different ways, such as competition and role play, so that their pronunciation and fluency improve. In other subjects, students receive limited experiences in ICT.
17. The school takes literacy teaching seriously as a means of raising standards and following close involvement with the Key Stage 3 Strategy, the school has increased awareness of whole school literacy. There have been effective training sessions for all staff and a whole-school policy on literacy identifies clear aims and acknowledges the important role that all staff play in improving literacy skills. The teaching of literacy skills is good. The school does not have a

written policy for developing students' numeracy skills across the curriculum or provision for checking and supporting that it is being addressed effectively. Teachers have been made aware of the new approaches to the teaching of mathematics but at the moment only a few subjects are planning effectively to support these skills in lessons. However, students' competency in mathematics is above average and numeracy skills are taught effectively in a number of subjects such as science, geography and design and technology as well as in mathematics. In art and design, students' measuring skills are developed and used effectively when dealing with ideas of shape and space.

18. Because students' behaviour is generally good, little time is lost to disciplining students and there is a common purpose to most lessons that allows teachers to teach without interruption. In much of the very good teaching for example they use pair and group work imaginatively to stretch students and demand the best of them. Students often learn well from each other because teachers require students to use the technical language of their subject and require the class to listen carefully. Thus in question and answer activities, students will take on the response of a fellow student, question further and add their own contribution. This was seen clearly in a mixed ability class in English dealing with the use of parody, where students were keen to add their own worked examples. In another example, students left the classroom to work at nearby computers and return to report their progress. Where this occurs, for example in leisure and tourism lessons, no pace is lost and students work responsibly outside the immediate sphere of control of the teacher.

The quality of assessment of students' work

19. Overall, assessment is good. Year 6 national test results and other data are collected and recorded about students' attainment when they enter the school. This is used effectively to set targets for students for the end of Year 9. The targets are reviewed for students in Years 10 and 11. Not enough opportunity is provided for the involvement of pastoral staff and the process involves a significant amount of time by senior management. The process of reviewing targets and tracking students' progress is not sufficiently developed through Years 7 to 9. Most subjects use data well to meet the needs of individual and different groups of students and to analyse students' performance in external examinations. Good procedures are in place to support students' achievement. However, they do not always give students enough information so that they know how well they are doing in relation to national standards or what they must do to improve their work to reach higher levels. The good practice which exists in some subjects, for example history, is not shared across the school to enable all subjects to provide good support to students in improving their standards.
20. Assessment is used well to monitor the progress of students with special educational needs in key literacy skills with appropriate testing and re-testing of spelling and reading of identified students in Years 7, 8 and 9. Local authority services are used appropriately for the additional testing of individual students. There are gaps in the procedures for monitoring students' progress in relation to individual education plans. Current arrangements for setting and reviewing targets do not take sufficient account of guidelines in the Code of Practice.

The curriculum

The range of learning opportunities provided by the curriculum across Years 7 to 11 is **satisfactory**. Activities provided for curriculum enrichment are very good. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is very good. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's language college status provides students with excellent opportunities to study different languages and to widen their experience of other cultures.
- There are very good extra-curricular activities and support for learning outside the school day.

- The very good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is helping to promote good achievement throughout the school.
- The curriculum provision in ICT is unsatisfactory.
- There is an unsatisfactory curriculum in physical education because it lacks balance.
- In religious education, the use of time in Year 9 to begin the GCSE course limits opportunities for broader curriculum provision.
- The school does not fully comply in providing a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

21. The school's designation as a language college has had a significant impact on the curriculum. It has stimulated a more international outlook with students benefiting from visits abroad for sporting, historical and cultural reasons, as well as providing opportunity for learning different languages.
22. The school has been partly successful in tackling the key curriculum issues from the last inspection. The programme of personal and social education and citizenship is now good with the effective introduction of a separate lesson in Year 7. The management by subjects and coordination of provision for students with special educational needs has also improved, especially the very effective learning support in the classroom. There have been improvements in accommodation, especially the building of a large, well-used library, so that students' learning is enhanced. However, although all students now receive their statutory entitlement to ICT and religious education, there are still curriculum problems created by inadequate allocation of time. There is no provision for a daily act of collective worship. There are still weaknesses in the curriculum in physical education. There are no students disapplied from the National Curriculum or national tests. Most students have full access to the National Curriculum although boys do not have equal access to the courses in dance.
23. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced with all the subjects of the National Curriculum provided. There are some strong features: all students study both French and German in each year and there is the opportunity to take Italian at the end of the school day. Drama provides additional breadth. Subjects have a fair and equitable time allocation, except ICT and religious education. Although ICT is now provided effectively as a separate subject in Year 7, the time allocation in Years 8 and 9 is inadequate so that provision overall is unsatisfactory. The school has plans in place to increase the time allocation next year. The locally agreed syllabus in religious education is satisfactorily covered in Years 7 and 8, but the constraint of having to use the time in Year 9 to begin the GCSE course limits opportunities for broader curriculum provision. The curriculum in physical education is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 as it lacks balance in the proportion of time spent on the different programmes of study.
24. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. All subjects of the National Curriculum are provided and all statutory requirements are met. The curriculum provides more breadth than previously reported: there are excellent opportunities to study two languages through the successful "Early Bird" system and other provision for Italian outside timetabled time; drama continues to be provided. However, there is still insufficient time for religious education so that time has to be taken from Year 9 to enable the short GCSE course to be completed. Although all students now receive their statutory entitlement of ICT through a separate lesson, inadequate time allocation, including in earlier years, results in their achievement and overall provision being unsatisfactory. The curriculum in physical education is also unsatisfactory as it is limited both in time and opportunities for a variety of skills to be developed.
25. Curriculum development in terms of new vocational GCSE courses has been limited to the introduction of leisure and tourism and health and social care, with single groups of students taking both courses in Years 10 and 11. These courses offer students good opportunities for progression into college courses and employment. Both courses are developing well in terms of college, business and community links. The integration of related work placements as well

as links with the school's work experience programme further enhances the vocational aspects of these courses. The introduction of a GCSE course in manufacturing next year had been planned although there has not been sufficient interest from students for this to go ahead. There are good opportunities for some students to follow extended work placement programmes in Years 10 and 11 through well established links with the local authority's training centre. Additional flexibility is provided for some students who follow a "preparation for working life" course in place of taking a GCSE option.

26. The very good range and quality of enrichment of the formal curriculum continues to be a strength of the school. The school sets a high priority on encouraging and developing the student as a whole person through a variety of experiences and opportunities. Consequently, time is effectively allocated to activities involving large groups of students, such as the Year 9 "Industry Day" and the summer activities week. There is a very good programme of outdoor activities, including a very successful one-week outdoor pursuits trip for all Year 7 students. There is a wide variety of visits abroad in languages, history, physical education and music that effectively extends the students' horizons and range of experiences. There is an extensive programme of well-supported sports activities. The creative arts are prominent in the enrichment programme with good participation in music and drama and gallery visits in art. There is very good support for learning outside the school day as nearly all subjects provide examination revision sessions and catch-up clubs.
27. Overall, the match of teachers and their subject qualification to the curriculum is very good. The governors and the headteacher have no significant difficulties in recruiting high quality staff when vacancies occur. The match of support staff to the curriculum is very good. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum. The secretarial and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.
28. Resources to support learning are satisfactory, overall. They are very good in modern foreign languages and good in science, geography and art and design. The provision of computer equipment for ICT is satisfactory overall, but in many subject departments the range and availability of equipment is variable and this inhibits the contribution ICT can make to the students' learning. Accommodation is good overall. The majority of subjects benefit from rooms that are close together and specialist accommodation for languages, science, design and technology, art and design, ICT and drama are good. Accommodation for music and religious education has been improved since the previous inspection. The outstanding new library and resources centre makes a significant addition to the provision for students' learning and they value it highly. Problems persist for physical education however, especially when the gymnasium is needed for examination purposes, and outdoor facilities are restricted because of poor weather. There is no dedicated specially equipped area for students with special needs and some classrooms are too small for full classes in mathematics and health and social care. Buildings are generally well –maintained and are treated with care by students. Plans for further expansion and refurbishment are realistic.
29. Curriculum provision for students with special needs is good. The high quality of the support given to individuals by a very strong and effective team of support staff is a significant feature of the provision made. They are appropriately deployed with priority given to students with the most significant needs, including ensuring that the requirements in statements are fully met. Provision in subject areas is better than at the time of the last inspection and there is now greater consistency of good provision. Opportunities are further enhanced through reading and homework clubs and through courses offered to students in Years 10 and 11, including humanities and a modular mathematics course. The Spanish course provided for some students is excellent in terms of the learning opportunities provided. Extended work placements match the needs of some older students well by broadening their opportunities to achieve.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes **satisfactory** care of students' welfare, health and safety. Staff provide good pastoral support. The advice and guidance based on effective monitoring in Years 10 and 11 is good and has a positive impact on achievement. However, the same quality of tracking progress is missing in Years 7 to 9. The school takes satisfactory account of students' views and involves them in its work and development through the school council.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff take due care of students' safety, but formal risk assessments are incomplete and a number of minor health and safety issues have been brought to the attention of the school.
- Induction arrangements for new students are good.
- Academic progress and personal development are very well tracked in Years 10 and 11 to provide students with good support and guidance and improve achievement.
- Procedures for tracking students' progress through Years 7 to 9 require improvement.
- Good advice is provided on post-14 and post-16 options.
- High quality support is given to individual students with special educational needs.
- Registration time is not well enough used by form tutors to monitor students' development and enhance learning.

Commentary

30. Procedures for dealing with students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory overall. First aid procedures are good and there is good support from the school nurse. Satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with child protection issues. Good heed is paid to students' safety in lessons and on visits out of school. Risk assessments are unsatisfactory overall and a number of minor health and safety issues have been brought to the attention of the school. Internet service provision is safe and secure. Supervision is satisfactory but made difficult by the layout of buildings. Many students dislike being locked out of the buildings at lunchtime. The canteen offers a range of healthy food but the majority of students opt for cheaper unhealthy snack foods.
31. Pastoral procedures are good and support the needs of individual students well. Induction arrangements are good because of the good links established with local primary schools. As a result, students settle well into school. Most students find staff approachable for help and advice. Members of the senior management team support the progress of older students very well through regular individual interviews. This takes a great deal of their time and is not feasible to undertake in Years 7 to 9. As a consequence, the tracking of younger students' progress is inadequate because the school has not put an alternative procedure into place. Year heads play an important role in monitoring students' development. The use of registration time is variable and requires improvement. Many form tutors do not use it well enough to track students' personal development and academic progress or to enhance learning.
32. Support for students with behavioural problems and for those returning from exclusion is good. There are good links with outside support agencies. High quality support is given to individual students with special educational needs including those with complex needs. Trusting relationships between staff and these students are very strong because of very good knowledge of needs. Students have full confidence in the support they receive.
33. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) provides a comprehensive programme to guide students through school choices and prepares them very well for life after school. Advice on the option choices for Year 10 is good. The careers programme is good and supported well by the Connexions service. Students in Year 10 do two weeks of useful work experience. Students' views are satisfactorily canvassed informally in the individual interviews with senior management team and formally through the school council. Most students feel that staff listen

to them and respect their views. They have had an impact on school uniform, the availability of water in classrooms and dining arrangements.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **satisfactory** links with parents. There are **very good** links with other schools, universities and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents like the school and it is oversubscribed.
- Student planners are not used effectively to communicate with parents.
- There is no active Parents' Association to support the work of the school.
- There are very good links with the local and wider community to widen students' experiences and enhance learning.
- Very good links with primary schools ease transition to secondary school, particularly for students with special educational needs.
- There are very good links with other schools, which are particularly strong in the area of modern foreign languages.

Commentary

34. The school has satisfactory links with parents that enable parents to support students' education. Parents consider this to be a good school, where teaching is good, expectations are high and their children make good progress. They are pleased with the way their children settle in school. A significant number of parents are concerned about behaviour and bullying, but most say that reported problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. Parents of students with special educational needs are kept fully informed about provision made and reviews of progress. Arrangements for the entry of individual students with complex needs are extremely thorough with parents meeting with subject teachers beforehand.
35. The school values its links with parents. Termly newsletters are informative, but there is as yet no active website. The governing body annual report to parents and prospectus are informative, but contain no statement on school security. Student planners are not used effectively to communicate with parents. Some are not checked regularly by tutors. Parents feel that they would like more information about the work being done by their children. The use of homework is good in the way it is used to reinforce and extend the work in the classroom. However, its organisation, while satisfactory overall, does give rise to some concern by parents. This is because teachers do not always adhere to homework timetables and planners are not checked sufficiently to ensure homework is set and completed. The vast majority of parents support their children's learning well at home by providing computers and Internet access, but some would like more information on how they can help their child learn. A significant number do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Annual reports are generally good, although comments vary between teachers and attainment is not linked to national standards. Attendance at consultation meetings is high. There is good attendance at music and drama performances.
36. Parents state that they find the school approachable and any concerns or complaints are resolved effectively and sensitively. They appreciate the friendly and helpful reception staff and the good contact made with them whenever there is a problem. A small proportion of parents feel the school does not adequately seek their views. The school does occasional surveys of parental satisfaction, and recently published results of such a survey in the newsletter at the end of the spring term. Parental attendance at governing body annual meetings is low. Recent parent governor places were filled but not oversubscribed and no election took place. There is

no parents' association to support the work of the school or ease the communication between school and parents.

37. The school has very good links with the local and wider community to enhance students' learning and personal development. Frequent high-quality extra-curricular and residential visits enrich provision. Students have a good awareness of the responsibilities of living in a community. A very good range of useful work experience placements is found locally for students in Year 10. The community makes good use of school facilities. Students support local and national charities well, for example £800 was recently raised for the special baby care unit. They entertain the local elderly at Christmas and deliver Christmas parcels to them. Very good links with the police support good behaviour both in the school and within the community.
38. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges, which are enhanced by its language college status. Transfer mechanisms from primary schools are effective and students settle well. There are excellent links with another secondary school with language college status and management arrangements for shared and linked provision are very good. Staff teach modern foreign languages in several primary schools, which enhances links and helps students who go on to attend the school. There are also good sporting links with primary schools and a good range of sporting fixtures against secondary schools. The very good links with York College support transition to post-16 education and work-related-learning very well. Regular meetings between secondary heads are facilitated by the local education authority and enhance management and school development. The school makes an effective contribution to the training of teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **good** and management is **satisfactory**. The headteacher's good leadership, along with good support from governors and key staff, has secured the continued improvement of the school. The overall management of the school is satisfactory. Governors play an effective part in the school's development, but there are issues of non-compliance in the school's management of risk assessment and in providing a daily act of collective worship. Overall, governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's open, consultative approach has won the support of staff, governors, parents and students.
- The governing body has a very good knowledge of the school and plays an effective role in holding it to account.
- Senior staff and those in other key positions contribute well to the leadership of the school.
- Leadership in English, modern foreign languages, history, geography and art and design is very good.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- Strategic planning does not look far enough into the future.
- The school does not fully comply with the requirement to ensure full risk assessments are undertaken.
- The school's response to some issues from the last inspection concerning provision for ICT, the spiritual development of students and the curriculum in physical education has been unsatisfactory.

Commentary

39. In the relatively short time since his appointment the headteacher has made a priority of gaining the support and confidence of his staff and governing body. This approach has not brought about major changes, but it has laid the foundation for managing change in the future. At the heart of the headteacher's vision for the school is the raising of standards through improving

the quality of teaching and learning. This aim is reflected well in the school's development planning and is fully understood and supported by staff. Good initiatives are now in place to "coach" staff in ways of encouraging students to take more responsibility for their learning, although it is too early to see the impact of this initiative across the school as a whole. Staff working groups and subject departments are actively discussing fresh approaches to their teaching and adapting them to suit their needs. A lively debate has been instigated and is leading to gradual improvements in classroom practice, reflected in the good teaching observed during the inspection.

40. The three senior staff on the senior management team provide good leadership and whole-hearted support for the headteacher. Together with him they form a small but effective team of senior managers. They are good role models for both staff and students and have a strong, approachable presence around the school. Close links between them and middle managers are well established and ensure frequent dialogue and good communications. Through these links, heads of subject departments are held to account for their subject's performance. They are expected to review results and the quality of teaching to ensure that standards improve. This approach, together with good training, has led to the development of effective leadership in these middle managers who have become more accountable and self-evaluating as a result. Leadership in English, modern foreign languages, history, geography and art and design is very good.
41. Strategic planning is satisfactory and is appropriately driven by the central aim of raising standards through teaching and learning. Department plans reflect this aim. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, planning is still focused on the short and medium term and lacks a longer, more ambitious vision. Leaders provide good role models for other staff and students, and parents and students are positive about the manner in which the school is led and managed. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is satisfactory. The good system of performance management, supplemented by some monitoring by subject heads and the senior management team is effective and has led to teaching provision that is good overall. The governors, too play a part in this process. However, the senior managers have identified the need to improve teaching further by identifying and spreading the very good and occasionally excellent practice that exists.
42. Governors play a key role in both the leadership and the management of the school. They have a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses gained through first hand experience as they capitalise on their close links at individual department level. Thus, they are in a position to hold the school to account for the standards and quality produced. Governors can and do act as a critical friends to the school, both challenging and supporting very effectively at senior and subject departmental levels. The governing body has not ensured that the school fully meets the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, or that the necessary risk assessments have been carried out. In responding to the key issues of the last report, governors ensured that the school's response has been satisfactory overall. However, the response to issues concerning provision for ICT, the spiritual development of students and the curriculum in physical education has been unsatisfactory. Overall, the governance of the school is satisfactory.
43. The school is managed satisfactorily. There are good systems and strategies in place to guide the school's progress. Similarly there are effective measures in place to review, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. The school is improving in the way it gathers and uses data to analyse its performance and to compare itself with other like institutions to ensure that standards are as high as they should be and that any underachievement is identified and tackled. The head teacher and other managers are aware of the importance of curricular innovation and, for example, have gone some way to offering alternative vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that the needs of all students are met. However, there are still some areas of weakness that reflect unsatisfactory responses to some of the last inspection findings. The overall provision for ICT is still unsatisfactory, although there are well-formulated plans to remedy this in the next academic

year. Spiritual development is still not provided in a logical and cohesive manner. The curriculum in physical education does not offer a balanced provision.

44. This is an effective and inclusive school where students state that they feel valued and where minority groups thrive and achieve as well as their peers. The governing body is actively involved in oversight of special needs. Improvement in the provision for students with special educational needs since the last inspection is good with better provision in subject areas. The management of support staff is very good. A very strong team of support staff has been developed and fully integrated into the life of the school. They provide high quality support. Management has been effective in enhancing the usefulness of individual education plans although weaknesses in monitoring and review procedures in relation to guidelines in the Code of Practice remain. Accommodation is satisfactory. It offers good informal support for students outside of lessons. There is not, however, a specialist area for withdrawal groups that provides a stimulating learning environment including good access to ICT. The provision for the highest attaining students and those who are gifted and talented has recently received a boost as some funds have become available and a co-ordinator has been put in post. Good systems and strategies are being put into place to ensure that subjects plan more formally to meet the particular needs of these students.
45. The school leadership successfully promotes equal opportunities and inclusivity. Students state that they like being at the school, and parents feel the same. Equal opportunities issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed and responsibilities are now clearly defined. The school has an equal opportunities policy and policies on dealing with racial discrimination and ensuring racial equality. The co-ordinator for equal opportunities and inclusion provides satisfactory leadership. This ensures that teachers are aware of equality issues, resulting in good provision for equality of opportunity in most subjects other than in physical education, where boys do not have the opportunity to learn dance. Development plans tackle these issues and priorities are clear. The school's arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity and monitoring the progress of different groups are good overall, apart from the systems for monitoring the progress of students from different ethnic groups, which are not fully in place.
46. The school has taken a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are good. These are fully implemented and are having an increasing impact on raising the standards of teaching and learning. There are very good and effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. The effectiveness is enhanced by giving priority to the training needs associated with the school improvement plan, departmental plans and those needs identified as a result of performance management reviews. The induction of staff new to the school is very good. Newly qualified teachers in particular receive a very good programme of mentoring, support and guidance, as well as attending meetings on a wide range of relevant whole school topics. The school is also a very good provider of initial teacher training.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,198,429	Balance from previous year	211,336
Total expenditure	3,375,223	Balance carried forward to the next	34,541
Expenditure per student	3,338		

47. Financial planning and management are good. There are effective procedures in place to ensure that the school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. The principles of best value are applied effectively. Specific funds are used appropriately. The costing of

priorities identified in the school improvement plan are not precise enough. However, the school plans its financial development strategically to good effect and the governing body is fully and effectively involved in the process.

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 **good**

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well Above Average	Well Above Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results in Years 9 and 11 are well above average.
- Teaching in all years is good and results in good learning.
- Leadership is very good and gives a clear lead to the subject's development.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good.
- Marking is inconsistent and some students are not aware of how to improve.

Commentary

Examination results

48. In 2003, results in the Year 9 national tests were well above average for both boys and girls. Results were well above those of similar schools. In the 2003 English language and English literature GCSE examinations, results were also significantly above national averages for both boys and girls. A significant proportion of the students achieved the highest grades.

Standards and achievement

49. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average compared to the national average. This represents good achievement. Current standards reflect the previous years' results. Students show perception when responding to a wide range of literature. For example, when conducting character studies of Sherlock Holmes, they express themselves clearly, whether to others in class or in writing. Students are keen to do their best and their positive attitudes are an important factor in their good achievement. In Year 11, standards are also well above average. Analysis of course work reveals that the students have built well on their previous skills. They are all able to write accurately, confidently exploring themes and language in "Romeo and Juliet", while the highest attainers produced sensitive comparisons of contrasting poems. These standards reflect the results of previous years.

Teaching and learning.

50. Teaching is a departmental strength and leads to good learning. All teaching is good and there is a significant proportion of very good teaching. The teachers' very good subject knowledge helps the students to build on their prior knowledge, giving them the confidence to explore new learning. The department plans well to ensure that schemes of work are appropriate and that

lessons have challenge and pace. Objectives are clearly identified and teachers check that they have been met by all of the students. Particularly impressive is the way in which the department matches teaching to the different needs of the students, encouraging all to achieve well. As a result, students in mixed ability classes achieve well, whether they have special educational needs or are high attainers. In order to improve students' learning further, there should be a more consistent approach to marking, so that all students are aware of their standards and know how to improve. Occasionally in lessons students become confused when the teacher tries to impart too much information.

Leadership and management

51. Leadership is very good. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been tackled and there has been good improvement since then. The department has high expectations and its principles are clear so students know exactly what is expected of them. There is good team collaboration on curriculum development and this now needs extending to include consistent marking and target setting.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. As a result of involvement in the Key Stage 3 Strategy, the school has increased awareness of whole school literacy with effective training sessions for all staff. A whole-school policy on literacy identifies clear aims and acknowledges the important role that all staff play in improving literacy skills. The school takes literacy teaching seriously as a means of raising standards. The literacy coordinator's plan to audit current practice will enable the school to further develop and spread the good practice that already exists in many departments. For example, in modern foreign languages, students read aloud fluently and expressively. In English, students are able to communicate clearly and contribute fully to discussions. Their listening skills are well developed. In music, students do not use technical vocabulary extensively. A lack of emphasis on writing skills in physical education means that some students flounder when they study the course for GCSE. Research skills are developed well across many departments with guidance in research styles in science and good use of dictionaries in English.

Drama

53. Teaching in drama was sampled. Results in 2003 GCSE were significantly below average. In the observed lessons and in work seen, standards were broadly average in Year 9 and Year 11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons include a range of tasks and Students in Years 10 and 11 are motivated and work well. Students in Years 7 to 9 are not as committed and classroom management strategies are not strong enough to keep them engaged. The schemes of work are planned to place an emphasis on developing practical skills and different genres of theatre. Insufficient emphasis on written evaluation in Years 7 to 9 does not fully prepare students for syllabus and examination requirements in Years 10 and 11. The subject provides a yearly school production that is much appreciated by students and parents.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages (French and German) is **very good**

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average (German) Above average (French)
Achievement	Good	Very good (German) Satisfactory (French)
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good (German) Good (French)

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in German are well above average and students achieve very well. Higher attainers in particular make very good progress.
- Students' learning is greatly enhanced by good teaching that makes imaginative use of the department's excellent ICT resources.
- The excellent curriculum for languages, both within and outside the school day, contributes significantly to students' cultural and linguistic development.
- The languages department and the Language College are very well led.
- Students do not achieve as well in French as they do in German.
- The best practice in teaching and marking is not yet shared throughout the department.

Commentary

Examination results

54. In 2003 GCSE results in German were well above the national average and better than in 2002. All students achieved very well: high attainers by gaining a large proportion of grades A* or A and lower attainers by gaining at least a grade E. Results in French were above average and the highest attaining students achieved as well as they did in German. The proportion of grades A* and A in both German and French were above average and higher than any other subject in the school. Most students achieved satisfactorily and did as well in French as in their other subjects. In both languages girls did better than boys. Almost all students took one foreign language and many took two at GCSE.

Standards and achievement

55. In Year 9, standards in both French and German are above average. Considering that nearly all students at this level are studying two foreign languages, and several with Italian on top of that, achievement is good overall. Speaking is the strongest skill and many students describe their home circumstances in both languages confidently and with authentic accent. Higher-attainers also have a very good grasp of grammar in French and German, manipulating word order and endings with unusual facility. At this stage, however, many students are slightly held back because they cannot describe what they did in the past. Higher-attainers in particular would benefit from an earlier introduction of a past tense to enable them to read, write and speak more extensively in the foreign language.

56. Standards of work seen in Year 11 mirror the GCSE results of the past two years. In German standards are well above average and all students are achieving very well. In French, too, high-attaining students are well on target for the top two GCSE grades, especially in the quality of their speaking. It is at the middle and lower levels of attainment where the difference between German and French lies. In German these students are highly motivated and achieving very well. They understand and respond well to elementary questions in German, and have unusually accurate pronunciation. Their writing, too, is fairly well developed and they are very well rehearsed in the demands of GCSE. In French, overall standards are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Although teaching is still good overall, students of middle and lower attainment are not as well motivated and have larger gaps in their understanding. They therefore do not bring the same qualities to their learning and do not achieve as well as they do in German. Students with special educational needs learning Spanish from a fresh start are now very motivated and achieving very well. Equally, keen linguists learning Italian as a third foreign language are achieving high standards.

Teaching and learning

57. Students learn well on the whole because teaching is good. In almost half of lessons seen teaching was very good, leading to equally good learning. Teaching was never less than satisfactory. Two aspects stand out in particular and explain why students learn well. Firstly, teachers have all become very skilful at using electronic whiteboards, now installed in every room in the department. In capable hands this technology brings colour, fun and flexibility to learning a language. Students now have much more chance to practise new language in different ways, such as competition and role-play, so that their pronunciation and fluency improve. Secondly, teachers expect high standards of work and behaviour from students and generate a very good working atmosphere. Lessons are well paced and carefully planned to give students the best chance to learn through practice.
58. A minority of teaching, mostly in French, lacks this pace and challenge, relying too much on the teacher talking and not planned well enough to allow students to be active. For some students it leads to boredom and inattentiveness. This detracts from the overall teaching quality in French, which is good rather than very good, whereas in German, it is very good. In both languages, marking of students' work is mostly helpful and thorough, but in some cases lacks rigour in expecting high standards. Despite being very good linguists themselves, not all teachers use the language enough in the classroom or insist on its use by students for routines such as apologising for being late.

Leadership and management

59. The department, and the joint Language College arrangements, are led with real vision and energy. It is a measure of this very good leadership, and the support from senior management, that modern foreign languages have become a pioneering department that has won Language College status for the school, and is attracting interest from outside. This in turn has brought the reputation and the funding that have allowed real innovation and have attracted very good new teachers, support staff and language assistants. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and the department is managed well. In order to improve further on standards the department needs now to share best practice through more systematic checking on the quality of teaching and marking.
60. The award of joint Language College status has allowed the school to create a very strong team of specialist teachers and support staff, and to purchase the latest in language teaching technology. Very good leadership of the modern foreign languages department, and of the joint Language College arrangements, is ensuring that these assets are put to best use for the benefit of students. They benefit from learning two, and in many cases three, foreign languages, and from the unusually rich menu of foreign visits and cultural activities the school provides.

61. Since the previous inspection the curriculum for languages has become superbly broad and wide-ranging. Within the timetable almost all students, regardless of their attainment, study at least two foreign languages between the ages of 11 and 14. Italian is added as a third language for the keenest students and Spanish for those who benefit from a new start. To enable students to take two languages and to avoid giving up another subject at GCSE, lessons are run before and after school. Outside the taught curriculum there is a very rich offering of language activities for the many who wish to take part. All this adds to students' cultural and linguistic awareness and enriches their personal development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Achievement is good because teachers plan well to meet the needs of different groups of students.
- Good leadership provides a clear vision for improving standards further.
- Students' progress is not tracked well enough through Years 7 to 9.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided to monitor teaching to ensure that there is a focus on improving standards to match the very best.

Commentary

Examination results

62. Results in the 2003 Year 9 national tests and in the Year 11 GCSE examinations were well above average. In relation to their earlier learning, students' achievement was good.

Standards and achievement

63. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is well above average. This represents good achievement as they enter the school with skills in mathematics that are above average. Most students manipulate numbers confidently in their heads. Algebraic skills are developed well and students can identify patterns and find rules confidently in investigations. In Year 9, the highest-attaining students understand how to solve simultaneous equations. By the end of Year 11, standards are also well above average and students achieve well. In Year 11, the highest-attaining students, who successfully completed GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10, apply their algebraic skills well to proof by induction. The lowest-attaining students understand how to find areas of simple shapes but still have difficulty with calculations involving angles.

Teaching and learning.

64. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good. The good subject knowledge of teachers ensures that new skills and concepts are clearly explained. Skilful questioning involves students well and provides opportunities for students to share ideas and strategies with each other. As a result, students make good progress in lessons in their understanding of new skills. Teachers plan well for the needs of all students and consequently students with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, achieve well. A range of activities challenge and stimulate students although more opportunities could be provided to use computers to support students' learning. The mathematics strand of the government's national initiative in Years 7 to 9 is being implemented well in teachers' planning and is having a significant impact on raising students' attainment. A good range of starter activities is used at the beginning of lessons to engage students' interest and develop their mental and oral skills. Students' attainment is assessed regularly and they understand how well they are doing. Marking, however, does not always provide sufficient information for students about what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of students' behaviour. This ensures that students behave well, cooperate well and work productively on their tasks. This is encouraged by the good relationships with the teachers and with each other.

Leadership and management

65. The department is led and managed well, with clear vision and direction. Students' performance is analysed well and evaluated and acted upon. Clarity of purpose has been established with other members of the department and there is a clear commitment by all to improvement. Provision is good for different groups of students so that their needs are well catered for and they achieve well. Assessment is good but the results are not used well enough to track students' progress through Years 7 to 9. The sharing of very good teaching practice is inhibited because teaching is not checked often enough to ensure that all teaching can strive to match the very best. Improvements since the previous inspection have been very good; standards in tests and examinations and teaching have improved and all groups of students now make at least good progress. Although some improvement has been made in using computers, further improvements can still be made.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Students' competency in mathematics is above average and numeracy skills are developed well in mathematics lessons. In science, students develop a good understanding of sampling techniques for practical investigations. Students' graphical skills are good; they represent information effectively in, for example, science, geography and design and technology when analysing surveys. In art and design, students' measuring skills are developed and used effectively when dealing with ideas of shape and space. However, the school does not have a written policy for developing students' numeracy skills across the curriculum or provision for checking and supporting that it is being addressed effectively. Teachers have been made aware of the new approaches to the teaching of mathematics but at the moment only a few subjects are planning effectively to support these skills in lessons. As a result, opportunities are missed to reinforce and extend students' numeracy skills in all subjects across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 11 achieve well because teaching is good and they have positive attitudes to work.
- Teaching is effective in preparing the students for tests and examinations, enabling them to attain results that are well above average.
- Teachers monitor students' progress effectively to set individual targets for improvement in Years 10 and 11, but this is not as well developed in Years 7 to 9.
- A minority of lessons are not planned well enough to meet the wide range of students' needs.

Commentary

Examination results

67. Results in the 2003 national tests for Year 9 students (SAT tests) were well above average and above those in similar schools. This continued a rising trend of improvement. The results fell short of the target set, due to the underachievement of a small number of students. Boys achieved slightly better results than girls, when compared to the national difference. The results were a further improvement on the 2002 figures. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and comparable to the results that students gained in other subjects. The results improved on 2002, continuing a rising trend. There was no significant difference in the standards attained by boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

68. Students of all abilities achieve well throughout the school. Students' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is above average. Many students are currently reaching standards that are well above average and the department's effective approach to examination preparation means that students are on course to attain similar results to recent years in the national tests. This represents good achievement compared to their standards on entry to the school. They have a very good knowledge of previous work they have covered, recalling with accuracy scientific facts such as cell structure, reactivity of metals and basic work on electric circuits. Their understanding of underlying principles, such as conservation of energy, is less secure, although still above average. They attain above average standards in their experimental work, showing a good understanding of fair testing and measures to ensure reliability in results. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average and students achieve well, having made good progress in all aspects of science. Investigational work in Year 11 is well above average and students are able to evaluate their work effectively.

Teaching and learning

69. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good. Two unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection but these were not typical of the overall standard. In most lessons teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan work that engages the students' interest and enables them to learn well. For example, a Year 11 lesson was enlivened by the inclusion of a practical task to simulate sampling techniques, helping the students to understand and progress well. The level of challenge for the highest attaining students is good and there is a strong emphasis on the skills needed to succeed in tests and examinations. However some teaching does not make learning objectives clear enough and does not fully consider the needs of all the students, particularly where there is a wide range of attainment in a group, so learning is not as effective in these lessons. Teachers frequently ask questions to check the students' understanding but they sometimes miss opportunities to extend learning by using open-ended questions that encourage deeper thinking about science. Plenty of opportunities are provided in science lessons for students to develop their skills in English and maths and as a result they communicate well and handle calculations and graph work confidently. Good use is made of computers to enhance learning, for example by carrying out individual research on the solar system. However, the use of data-loggers is not sufficiently well developed due to limitations with the available equipment. The quality of learning is enhanced in most lessons by the students' good behaviour and positive attitudes to work, helping them to achieve well. In a minority of lessons some students are inattentive because the work is not well enough planned to engage their interest throughout the lesson. Teachers assess the students' progress regularly and these assessments are used well in Years 10 and 11 to set targets for improvement but this good practice has not yet been extended into Years 7 to 9. The learning support staff are effective in helping students with special educational needs to achieve well. Ideas from the national strategy to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 are being incorporated into teaching. For example, a Year 7 lesson on cell specialisation helped the students to learn effectively by including a variety of activities that kept them fully engaged and interested in the topic.

Leadership and management

70. The department is led well and management is good. Development priorities are clear and appropriate, ensuring that there is a focus on standards and quality. Assessment results are analysed and targets for improvement are set. Measures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced but there is scope for further development of these to eliminate inconsistencies in planning and marking and to share good practice within the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with standards continuing to rise and teaching quality improved. The quality of education has also been enhanced through a major programme of laboratory refurbishment, although one laboratory is still below standard and does not provide a good learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has identified the need to improve standards and has implemented procedures to achieve this.
- Limited teaching time in all years has depressed standards.
- Students are not involved in assessment so do not know how to improve.
- There has been some improvement in the use of ICT by other subjects, but weaknesses remain and there is no planned strategy to ensure that every student receives their entitlement.
- Teachers' planning does not take enough account of the learning needs of different students in their classes.

Commentary

Examination Results

71. Results in the 2003 GCSE short course were below average and were amongst the lowest in the school. This was the first time the course had been offered and it started late in the year with less than the average time for lessons.

Standards and Achievement

72. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is average compared to national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement as students enter the school with varied experience of ICT. Students create presentations on a variety of topics, though only the higher attaining students make them fully interactive. They can write a sequence of instructions to control a set of traffic lights but are less secure in their understanding of the need for complete accuracy. By the end of Year 11, standards are below national expectations. Students use basic ICT skills well, but do not have a solid understanding of more advanced features of software. They can explain why it might be necessary to include tests to check the validity of data input, but are unable to demonstrate how to do this. When they evaluate topics such as the design of a logo for a company they comment on the process used and not the visual impact of the logo.

Teaching and Learning

73. The quality of teaching and learning throughout Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory, but students' achievement has been, and continues to be, depressed by lack of enough teaching time. Teachers plan lessons and provide short structured activities. However sometimes there is too much explanation before students are able to undertake the activities and as a result they are confused about what they have to. Students engage well in discussion but expectations are not always high enough to ensure students extend their basic skills and understanding of ICT. There are no supplementary tasks to allow higher attaining students to progress their level of skill. The limited time available in Years 7 to 9 restricts the range of activities that teachers can provide and so standards are not rising. In Years 10 and 11 time is also limited so teachers are not always able to introduce more complex skills and understanding. As a result students are unable to use advanced features such as validation routines and absolute cell referencing. Homework is set to consolidate learning or prepare students for the next topic, but it is not always checked effectively. Teachers provide individual support and students are able to work independently and with each other. Generally they have a positive attitude to their work and ICT and when they are set challenging tasks, attention is good. Students with special educational needs are supported well and achieve satisfactorily as a result. Teachers assess work against National Curriculum levels and examination requirements. However students are not involved in setting their targets or evaluating their own progress. As a consequence they do not always know what to do to improve.

Leadership and management

74. Major issues from the previous inspection have not been tackled effectively enough. All students now have a separate ICT lesson. However, the limited time given to lessons in all

years is having a detrimental impact on standards and students are not achieving as well as they should in comparison with other subjects. Recognition of this issue has resulted in plans to extend the time available in the next academic year. There has been no progress in involving students in assessment procedures, which has also had an impact on standards. The daily management of the department is satisfactory. There is appropriate documentation and teachers are supported well by a technician. Resources have improved but the number of computers is still lower than the national average. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. There is still need to ensure all staff understand their roles in the management of ICT in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The use of ICT in other subjects has improved. Two computer suites have been installed around the school for use by other subjects. These rooms are used by a number of subjects to enhance teaching and also provide students with opportunities to improve the quality of their work. Very good use of ICT in modern foreign languages helps students to extend their understanding of structure and language. In leisure and tourism, students use the Internet to research information about hotel accommodation in different countries. Physical education students use ICT to present effective reports on personal exercise programmes. However, there are still a number of subjects where the lack of interactive white boards, insufficient ICT resources or limited access to ICT rooms prevents greater development of students' ICT skills. As a result, ICT does not contribute fully enough to subject learning. In more practical subjects such as design and technology, art and design and music, students receive limited experiences in ICT. Students are competent in using ICT, but skills are still at a basic level. An audit of the contribution that departments make to students' ICT experiences has been undertaken. However, there is no strategy to map, record and assess how well students receive their entitlement to ICT.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The specialist teaching ensures a good level of consistency in the quality of learning.
- The improving range of resources and teaching methods enhance the development of students' independent learning skills.
- Assessment strategies are very effective in raising students' awareness of how to improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the routine use of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Although the quality of fieldwork opportunities is good, the range of opportunities is too limited.

Commentary

Examination results

76. GCSE results in 2003 were above average, but below average at the highest grade. Achievement was good with students' performance broadly matching their results in other subjects taken. Results in 2002 were similar but better in terms of students gaining the highest grade. There were no significant differences between boys' and girls' results in either year.

Standards and achievement

77. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is above average. This represents good achievement as they enter the school with skills in geography that are average. By the end of Year 11, standards are again above average and close to well above average, again showing good achievement. A striking feature of the work of both younger and older students, including higher and lower attainers is the good quality notes and diagrams they produce. These provide a good basis for revision, for example in explaining volcanic eruptions. Developing an understanding of how people affect the environment is another striking feature of younger and older students' achievement. They examine, for example, the impact of a ski resort on a locality and the impact of the development of the Brazilian rainforest. Younger students develop key skills well by the end of Year 9 and these are consolidated very well by the end of Year 11. Their literacy skills develop well and younger students write appropriately on, for example, "life as a raindrop", "the migrants' diary" and a newspaper article on fair trade. In GCSE coursework higher attainers in particular display high level literacy skills, for example in assessing the reliability of research methods in an investigation of tourism. The quality of coursework is good overall with some achieving the very highest standard. Investigation skills develop well by the end of Year 9 and are a very strong feature of students' achievement by the end of Year 11, including their ability to conduct research and test different hypotheses. Students' independent learning skills are enhanced by the development and use of resources that challenge them to think for themselves.

Teaching and learning

78. Teaching and learning are good with a significant element of very good teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and this is a key element in ensuring the development of a wide range of skills. Planning is good so that students experience a clear sequence of activities in their learning. In some of the teaching, the level of challenge is too variable. In the best teaching a high level of challenge is either sustained or builds progressively. Resources are used very well to develop students' independent learning skills. Innovative methods requiring students to make decisions and solve problems are very strong motivators although a high level of challenge, again, is not always sustained. The development of key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are emphasised well in planning. Opportunities to use ICT in teaching and learning are limited due to the demands made on available facilities and the absence of equipment in classrooms. Assessment is very thorough with, for example, a strong emphasis on GCSE requirements and how to achieve higher grades. Homework is used well to extend the challenge of lesson activities.

Leadership and management

79. Very good leadership and management have resulted in the identification of key priorities that impact on students' achievement, including revising schemes of work, developing resources and enhancing assessment procedures. Action has been taken within a short time period to address these priorities, with the full involvement of the department. Improvement from the last inspection has been good with improvements in assessment and in the development and use of resources to enhance independent learning. Students' fieldwork skills are not as well developed as their other work because there are insufficient opportunities provided to engage in

this aspect of their study. Resources development has not yet addressed the needs of individual gifted and talented students.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 11 learn and achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Good learning is encouraged by effective innovations in teaching strategies and the very good assessment procedures.
- The effect of good learning is enhanced by the students' good attitudes to work.
- Very good leadership provides the subject with a clear vision and direction, but the monitoring and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom observation is not well enough developed.
- The rich, historical environment around the school is not used enough to further promote students' experiences in history.

Commentary

Examination results

80. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were just above average and some of the lowest in the school. This break with a rising trend was much attributable to long-term absence of a key member of the department. Boys performed as well as girls, but not nearly as well in history as in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

81. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is above average. This represents good achievement as they enter the school with skills in history that are average. Students understand well the causes of the First World War. The emphasis in the teaching on thinking, literacy and enquiry skills ensures that students of all abilities make good progress in research work, such as the interpretation of Britain's colonial role in India. Higher attaining students in Year 9 write detailed and accurate accounts of slavery in America, using a high level of ICT and literacy skills. By the end of Year 11, students maintain above average standards and achieve well. For example, the good standards of interpretation and evaluation of sources are further developed, as seen where Year 11 students confidently analysed the reasons for the failure of the League of Nations.

Teaching and learning

82. The quality of teaching overall is good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating activities. Innovative strategies that effectively develop students' skills of thinking, research and independent working, are used to good effect by teachers to engage

students well in their work. This is ensured by planning for the needs of all students. Students with special educational needs achieve well because they are challenged by appropriate material and receive very effective help from learning support staff. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of students' work and behaviour, although there is some inconsistency in challenging higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 to critically analyse key historical issues. The well-planned enquiry work, such as when Year 10 students examined the Home Front during the First World War, has clear learning objectives, challenging tasks and good resources. This strongly develops their ICT and literacy skills, especially in extended writing. Students' ability to identify with events in the past is less secure; for example they are given insufficient opportunities to write in ways which would require them to view events from the perspective of when they occurred. Marking and assessment are done consistently very well by all teachers, with students often assessing their own and others' work. This gives students further insight into the weaknesses as well as the strengths in their work. They consequently know their attainment level and how to improve. They also have good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is also good. They show strong interest in the activities and cooperate well in the frequently used group work. This is encouraged by the very good relationships with the teachers and with each other.

Leadership and management

83. The department is led very well; management is good. A clear vision and direction are provided. The strong commitment to improvement is indicated by the lead provided in adopting new teaching styles to raise standards. The positive response has led to good progress being made since the last inspection: standards are higher in Years 7 to 9, teaching has improved, schemes of work are being revised to incorporate the new teaching and learning strategies and very good assessment procedures introduced. There is a successful visit to the Belgian First world War battlefields for Year 10 students. However, the richness in the school's locality is not exploited sufficiently to enrich students' knowledge of local history in other years. The sharing of good practice is inhibited because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom observation is undeveloped.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 11 learn and achieve well because of good teaching and their own positive attitudes to the subject.
- Very good methods of assessment enable students to recognise their weaknesses and improve their work.
- Lessons are carefully planned to offer good opportunities for students' spiritual development.
- Inadequate curriculum time in Year 10 means that students have to begin their GCSE course in Year 9 before some of them are ready for it.

- Standards of spelling are too low because there is no agreed approach to the identification and correction of spelling errors.

Commentary

Examination results

84. All students follow the GCSE short course in religious studies. Results have risen steadily in recent years, and in 2003 they were well above average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, and the results compared well with students' grades in other subjects.

Standards and achievement

85. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. They meet the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus and exceed them in the area of learning from religion. This represents good achievement for students whose attainment on entry is broadly average. Most students, both boys and girls, have a firm knowledge of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major world religions such as Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. They also have a clear understanding of how religious beliefs influence daily habits and decision-making. The focus in teaching on the development of thinking and enquiry skills enables students to justify their viewpoints with confidence in class discussions and written work. Higher attaining students compare ideas and attitudes clearly and concisely with very effective use of evidence. Lower attaining students grasp the main points, but do not always answer in sufficient detail. Because of a shortfall in lesson time in Year 10, all students start their GCSE course at the beginning of Year 9 and the programmes of study are very challenging for students of this age. Lesson observations and discussions reveal that some students find difficulty in getting to grips with abstract philosophical and theological theories, and do not find the work as interesting as in other years. Despite this, students achieve well and work seen during the inspection shows that standards in Year 11 are above average. Students have a good understanding of the difference between absolute and relative morality in issues such as the sanctity of life, wealth and poverty and the stewardship of the environment. They are also adept in evaluating different religious responses to moral dilemmas through group presentations and written answers. Students are preparing themselves carefully for the examination and the anticipated grades match the well above average results of last year.

Teaching and learning

86. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lesson activities that stimulate students to work things out for themselves and to develop their study skills through discussion, careful listening and critical observation. Students generally respond enthusiastically to these opportunities and behaviour is usually good. Clear lesson objectives, good resources and tasks that are carefully matched to students' different needs enable students at all levels of attainment to achieve well. ICT is used effectively for presentation and research. Sessions of reflection make a strong contribution to students' personal development, as in a Year 7 lesson where students listened intently to a song on the theme of justice and racial equality. Good relationships with teachers and each other allow students to explore spiritual themes with confidence. A significant strength of the teaching is the very well-planned system of assessment through which the rigour and regularity of teachers' appraisal provides students with a very effective model for evaluating their own work and that of others. Consequently, students have a very clear idea of how well they are doing and of the ways in which they can improve the quality of their responses. Although literacy skills are generally well promoted, the lack of a coordinated approach to the identification and correction of spelling errors is a barrier to improving the low standards of spelling.

Leadership and management

87. The department is well led and management is good. A very clear vision and sense of purpose are evident, with the result that good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards are much higher, teaching and resources and accommodation have improved and schemes of work have been effectively revised to meet students' needs. Students' spiritual awareness is well developed through visits to local churches, class discussions and presentations from outside speakers. However, the school has not taken action to increase the allocation of time in Year 10, which would enable students to begin their GCSE course at a more appropriate stage.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Aspect	Year 7-9	Year 10-11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes to the subject that contributes to their high level of achievement especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Well above average standards are achieved in the food, graphics and textiles GCSE courses.
- Teaching in all years is good and often better and enables the students to learn effectively.
- Not enough attention is given to the ongoing assessment of work or the setting of short-term improvement targets for individual students.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT, including computer-aided design and computer aided manufacture, to support teaching and learning particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

Examination results

88. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that students attain levels that are in line with the national average. In 2003, students gained results in their GCSE examinations that were well above the average at the higher A*-C grades. The results in the food and textiles courses were well above average, in graphics above average and in resistant materials they were in line with the average. Overall, these results are similar to those in 2002.

Standards and achievement

89. In the work seen in Year 9, a similar level of attainment to recent teacher assessments is evident, and achievement is very good as the students' starting point in Year 7 is well below average. They reach average standards by the end of Year 9. Girls do slightly better than boys. Making and constructional skills are more highly developed than design and graphical skills for many students. In general, the girls have better developed design skills than the boys. Higher attaining students have a more secure grasp of subject knowledge and vocabulary. Greater and more consistent use needs to be made of ICT to support and extend the learning. However, this is inhibited by the lack of ICT facilities in the department, including those for computer aided

design and manufacture. As a result, students' learning in these areas is not as well developed. The teachers use challenging projects and tasks in a variety of materials that make increasing demands on students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. As a consequence all students make very good progress from a low starting point in terms of experience and attainment. The curriculum planning, however, in Years 7 to 9 does not focus enough on the systematic and progressive development of design and graphical skills, alongside the students' making skills.

90. The Year 11 work seen during the inspection is above average. At this stage, students are on course to replicate the well above average GCSE results of recent years. Standards are well above average on the food, textiles and graphics courses. The standards achieved by the girls continue to be higher than the boys on most GCSE courses. The girls' design skills continue to be better developed than those of the boys, especially the boys at the middle to lower levels of attainment. The girls' work usually shows more rigorous analysis of their research when developing their designs. The strength of the boys' work continues to be their practical making skills. Very good behaviour, high levels of concentration and the very positive attitudes of the students add to the effect of the good and often better teaching, and ensure that achievement is at least good in all years.

Teaching and learning

91. Teaching and learning are good in all years, with many lessons that are very good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a range of stimulating projects and tasks that challenge the students and this leads to very good achievement and progress. Lessons are very well planned with clear learning objectives. However, the teachers do not always share with the students what they are to learn at the start of the lessons or review the progress made at the end. Where this occurs, lessons lack the sharp focus generally found. The teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to involve the students with the learning, and questioning, explanations and demonstrations are particularly effective in developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Resources of good quality are provided to support the learning. In all lessons the teachers give high levels of individual support and well-informed feedback, which encourages the students and raises their level of motivation. There was a loss of pace in the learning in some lessons where the teachers did not set time deadlines for the completion of classwork tasks set.

Leadership and management

92. The department is well led and managed. In the absence of the head of department, the second in department has provided a good lead to her team and managed the department's affairs well. The departmental improvement plan has appropriate priorities linked to further raising attainment and developing the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results in GCSE examinations in recent years have been well above the average and teaching is now good and often better. Accommodation for textiles is much improved and the food rooms have been refurbished. However, the assessment system still does not pay sufficient attention to the ongoing assessment of the students' work as it develops through each project, or to the setting of intermediate targets for improvement. As a consequence opportunities are missed to increase the rate of students' progress and achievement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9 and rise to well above average in Years 10 and 11 owing to the high quality of teaching and students' very good attitudes to work.
- Achievement is very good, as students enter school with only average skills and a limited knowledge of art and design.
- Leadership and management are very good and have made the department one of the best in school.
- Progress since the last inspection has been good, owing to the determination of the teachers to address the comments in the last report, provide a broad curriculum and positive art experiences for the students.
- Art makes a very good contribution to students' cultural education.
- There are limited resources for ICT, which restrict the amount and type of projects that can be attempted.

Commentary

Examination results

93. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average for grades A* to C and all students gained at least an E grade. Results have been consistently high for many years and are among the best in school. Girls usually perform better than the boys do, but boys' attainment is well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

94. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is above average. This represents very good achievement as they enter school with only average skills and a limited knowledge of art and design. They build up skills and knowledge on short projects and consolidate these on larger pieces of work towards the end of Year 9. Drawing skills are good, as students observe closely and show good tone and texture in their works. Portraiture and figure drawing are both above average as students know about proportion and the higher attaining students can also depict attitude. Students persevere until they mix the colours they need and they apply them carefully, especially when using very fine brushes. Painting is also above average. Clay work is good. Students know how to keep clay workable and manipulate it effectively to produce tiles and models, using their designs as starting points. Appreciation of art and artefacts from people of different countries is very strong. Celtic, Victorian, Mayan and Aboriginal works are good examples where students' cultural knowledge has been enhanced. Most projects draw upon the work of recognised artists, so students recognise and are affected by, for example, Moore, Lowry, Magritte and Rousseau and often express sensible opinions about the works they study.

Sketchbooks show that most students complete their homework, which is used well to consolidate work in school, but only a few from the highest attaining students contain examples of self-generated work.

95. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average, particularly in drawing, painting, printmaking and printing. Students understand the impact of working through a theme with an interesting variety of media and their sketchbooks are used as inspiration for larger pieces of work. They plan and experiment freely on their chosen themes, research thoroughly and present good quality portfolio sheets with well-argued comments and appraisals. Annotations are well written and prove why so many students gain high grades as they demonstrate higher order critical thinking skills. They complete a good amount of work, so can select the best for exhibition, which raises their grades. Use of ICT is best from the highest attaining students and many boys. Students use the computers for word processing, saving and distorting images and searching the Internet, but there are limited resources for ICT, which restrict the amount and type of projects that can be attempted. Achievement overall is very good, as the examination courses are very demanding of students' time and individual effort and students have to become accustomed to thinking for themselves and working to agreed specific deadlines.

Teaching and learning

96. The quality of teaching overall is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 and leads to good and very good learning. Extremely thorough tracking of individuals, detailed target setting and follow-up are the main factors for the higher quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11. The teachers are very well skilled and enthusiastic about art, which in turn motivates the students and helps to raise standards. Expectations are very high. Teachers plan sophisticated work, give secure background information and insist that students persevere and concentrate in lessons to produce the best they can. They prepare thoroughly and choose high quality resources and support literature to ensure students learn what they should and give them the stimuli to discover more. Relationships are very good. Teachers obviously enjoy the company of young people, share and demonstrate their skills and give up their free time so all students, especially those needing extra supervision, have every chance to achieve highly. Students respond very well to the teaching, enjoy the challenges offered, try hard and show pleasure in what they produce. Teachers are very patient in helping individuals and the lower attaining students who often lack confidence, benefit most from this. Assessment is very thorough. Marking is clear and helpful, especially on ongoing pieces, to inform students of quality and where and how work needs improving.

Leadership and management

97. Leadership and management are very good. The development plan includes clear intentions to raise standards by constantly updating the scheme of work and gaining funding to put innovations in place. The department has worked hard to address the comments in the last report and progress has been good. Students are enjoying increased independence in their work; those who are gifted and talented have special extra work to ensure they achieve their potential; sketchbooks are better used; target setting has improved greatly and the use of ICT has increased. The art and design department promotes itself effectively by displaying students' work in the studios and around school.

Music

Provision in music is **good**

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have improved students' learning through a revised curriculum, extended extra-curricular opportunities and better accommodation and resources.
- Good teaching and students' positive responses to it promote good achievement.
- There is a significant increase in the numbers of students opting for music in Year 10.
- Subject-specific ICT facilities are not available to students in Years 7 to 9.
- A small minority of students in Years 7 and 8 do not learn as well as their peers.

Commentary

Examination results

98. Students' standards on entry vary considerably but overall are slightly below average. Teachers' assessments of students in Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. However, in work seen standards by Year 9 are above average. GCSE results in 2003 were average, but with a higher than average proportion of A*, A and B grades. Results have varied over the last three years because of differences in the number and capabilities of students entered. Standards seen are currently average to above average in Year 10 and well above average in Year 11.

Standards and achievement

99. By Year 9, achievement by the majority of students is good. They gain a good balance of skills, knowledge and understanding of performing and composing music using mainly electronic keyboards. Their analytical listening to a wide range of interesting and stimulating music is particularly well developed by regular listening perception tests. They develop useful command of keywords and technical vocabulary, but have no subject-specific ICT skills, as facilities are not available. Students' achievement by Year 11 is also good. The majority of students are good performers and these skills, plus their impressive ICT capabilities, provide them with very wide resources for composing. The technical and expressive level of creative work is uniformly high. Students in Year 11 are also developing very good oral and written critical reasoning. Students with special needs achieve as well as others because of tasks which are adaptable to their capabilities and the good support of their teachers, teaching assistants and fellow pupils. Gifted and talented students are encouraged to extend tasks in more ambitious ways and most play an important part in extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and learning

100. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good complementary subject strengths and performing experience. Students benefit from well-planned lessons in which their learning is reinforced by studying topics from different aspects such as listening, performing and composing and through whole class, group and individual activities. The new scheme of work provides pupils with helpful work sheets and composing frames and good use is made of illustrative audio and video examples. In Years 7 and 8 however, small differences of expectation, classroom organisation, behaviour

management and use of time between teachers, result in inconsistencies in the learning of a small minority of inattentive students. The recently introduced assessment system in Years 7 to 9 has not had sufficient time yet to impact as strongly as it will on students' progress. Very good learning in Years 10 and 11 results from teachers rigorously challenging students while encouraging and respecting their views and opinions, which develops their self-confidence and independence. Overall the good quality of learning promotes students' positive, enthusiastic and productive responses and their personal development.

Leadership and management

101. Leadership and management are both good. In a relatively short time, the head of department has established an increasingly strong focus for music, through a revised scheme of work in Years 7 to 9, a change of GCSE examining board and by providing students with greater opportunities for enrichment activities, supported by better accommodation and resources. A higher than average proportion of students is involved in instrumental lessons and vocal and instrumental ensembles, which are directed well and some of which reach very high standards. The rapid increase in the number of students who choose to continue music in Years 10 and 11 is one indicator of the success of these developments. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11 (Core course)	Year 11 (Exam. course)
Standards	Below average	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The above average GCSE results reflect good teaching in the examination courses in Years 10 and 11.
- A very good extra-curricular programme gives all students, particularly the gifted and talented, opportunities to excel in school and beyond.
- Health and safety risk assessments in physical activities are incomplete.
- Curriculum planning and organisation, and the lack of regular monitoring of students' progress in Years 7 to 9 hinders students' achievement in the subject.
- The expectations of teachers and students are not always high enough in relation to standards of work.

Commentary

Examination results

102. The 2003 GCSE examination results were above average, and they were well above average in the proportion of A* - C grades gained.

Standards and achievement

103. During the week of the inspection it was only possible to see athletics, tennis, rounders and cricket. Work seen showed that standards are below average in Year 9. This reflects satisfactory achievement in relation to students' starting point on entering the school. Standards in cricket are average and boys achieve well, demonstrating effective batting and fielding skills in play. Year 9 girls are underachieving in tennis. Most students have failed to master the basic skills of the game and they are still learning Year 7 work. Overall, students' achievement in athletics is also unsatisfactory. This underachievement can be accounted for by the minimal amount of time devoted to these aspects, curriculum organisation which hinders continuity and the lack of regular monitoring of students' progress in Years 7 to 9. Students with special needs are well integrated and achieve as well as other students. By Year 11, standards remain below average in the non-examination course. Standards in athletics are average and the students who opt to follow this course achieve well. However, boys and girls who have chosen tennis and rounders are underachieving. Overall, students in Year 11 are achieving satisfactorily. GCSE students attain above average standards in practical coursework, and they show a good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects of the subject. These students achieve well. Standards in extra-curricular sport are high, reflected in the success of high attaining students at county, regional and national level in a wide range of sports.

Teaching and learning

104. Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, there is a significant proportion of good teaching and learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE course. New teachers are beginning to have an impact on a legacy of student underachievement in practical work. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers motivate the students and create a good climate for learning. This is evident in the high levels of participation, standards of dress and good behaviour seen in lessons. Most students have good attitudes, enjoy the subject and support extra-curricular activities well. The good teaching combines pace and challenge to ensure students are actively involved in interesting, well-planned activities that match their abilities, and enable them to learn well. Where teaching is less successful, it is not rigorous enough, and there are insufficient demands on students to do better. The expectations of teachers and students are not always high enough in relation to standards of work. Consequently, second-best work and low levels of concentration are accepted, on occasion, and teaching lacks a consistent focus on quality and improvement. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but further work is required on developing assessment criteria. The tracking of students' progress through Years 7 to 9 is not undertaken rigorously enough.

Leadership and management

105. Staffing has recently undergone a period of rapid change. A strong new team is in place, and the head of department is aware that there is much to be done to raise standards of attainment. The department is already moving forward. Good work is in progress updating documentation, and schemes of work have been revised. Monitoring of teaching and learning is in place, and the department has begun a self-evaluation process, satisfactorily. This requires more focus on the achievement of middle and low attaining students. The strong extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students, especially the gifted and talented, to achieve sporting success in school and beyond. Weaknesses in the curriculum identified in the last inspection have been addressed, satisfactorily. However, curriculum planning remains an area for concern in relation to its balance, depth, continuity and inclusivity. Currently, boys do not have access to the dance curriculum. Aspects of curriculum organisation hinder students' achievement in the subject; units of six hour's duration are insufficient to ensure depth in students' learning. Health and safety risk assessments have not yet been completed. The school has some way to go towards achieving the aim of the national strategy for 75 percent of

students to have two hours per week of quality physical education by 2006. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The GCSE examination has been introduced and these students are achieving well. There is more good teaching.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Leisure and tourism

Lesson observation evidence was limited to two Year 11 lessons. Teaching and learning were good in the first lesson seen and very good in the second one.

106. Following visits to two local hotels, students were planning the final piece of work for a marketing portfolio. The group included a wide range of ability with individuals displaying varying degrees of motivation. In the first lesson they looked at examples of promotional material with each deciding which one was the most effective against chosen criteria. Lower attainers found this difficult although one-to-one dialogue with individuals ensured that all remained focused on what they were to learn. In the second lesson they started work on their own pieces of promotional material. They worked very productively and, through encouragement, gained the confidence to develop their own ideas with a good level of detail achieved by all students in the initial planning stage. Over the two lessons teaching was very effective in drawing out the talents of individuals with, for example, one student using previously acquired skills to plan the design of a website.
107. Achievement is good. GCSE results that account for one third of the final grade for current Year 11 students show six out of ten achieving higher grades and all achieving pass grades. In work seen they use ICT to investigate and plan holiday activities for senior citizens. Higher attainers meet higher-grade requirements, for example in evaluating an organisation's customer service. Year 10 students display good investigation skills in researching different tourist venues. They use ICT well for both research and in presenting their findings.
108. Links with the local college, other schools, local businesses and tourist venues are developing very well. Students' learning has been enhanced by work outside the classroom such as visits to local hotels and tourist venues, and by work placements as part of a study of customer service. Staff collaborate very well in planning and developing the course. The fact that three staff are involved in teaching the course provides good opportunities to share good practice although this has not been extended to the monitoring of teaching and learning. The local college is a valuable focus for the wider sharing of good practice with other schools.

Health and social care

One Year 11 lesson was seen. Teaching and learning were good.

109. Students worked in groups and achieved a good understanding of how toys contribute to children's development through an investigation of a wide range of different toys. Personal experience was used well to enhance students' learning. Relationships were very good. Learning from the group activity was good, although there was insufficient time for groups to complete feedback on their findings. Students made good gains in understanding how different toys contribute to different aspects of development and of related safety issues. They were motivated well by the activity and enjoyed the investigation. Learning was consolidated well through a case study taken from an examination question of two families and how their different circumstances influenced the development of their children. Again there was insufficient time to complete the task.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled.

110. The school has good arrangements for the teaching of PSHE which is taught by a dedicated team of teachers. Lessons were sampled in Years 7, 8, 9 and 11. Teaching and learning ranged from one uncharacteristic unsatisfactory lesson to very good with most lessons being good. PSHE is effective in increasing students' knowledge and awareness of health and personal safety, and includes valuable contributions from visiting specialists. In Year 11, the school nurse led a very informative session on testicular and breast cancer. Year 9 students were establishing sensible ground rules as a basis for learning about relationships and sex education. In Year 8 lessons, students gained knowledge about the characteristics of a good variety of jobs and careers through the use of the 'Real Game' teaching/learning resource. Students in Year 7 demonstrated a comprehensive prior knowledge of the hazards of smoking.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because they enjoy the wide variety of enrichment activities that the school provides for them and bring a positive attitude to their studies.
- Effective methods of assessment include students' own comments on their progress.
- Subject lessons across the curriculum do not make firm connections with work in citizenship.

Commentary

Examination results

111. No examinations at GCSE have yet been taken in the subject.

Standards and achievement

112. Citizenship is taught in all years by an experienced team of staff as part of a programme that also incorporates personal, social and health education. During the inspection it was only possible to observe the teaching of citizenship in Year 11, but information on work in other years was gained from subject documentation, discussions with students and staff and an examination of work done by students in all years. This evidence showed that standards in Year 9 matched national expectations. Students are aware of their responsibilities towards others, both in school and as citizens in the local community. They produce ground rules for respecting others and cooperate well in group discussions such as those on option choices for GCSE.

Standards in Year 11 are also in line with what is expected from students of this stage of their schooling. Students can explain the safety measures available to protect the rights of customers when they buy goods on the Internet. They also make effective use of different forms of communication, such as formal records for work experience and cards showing the dangers of drug-taking and alcohol abuse for use by Year 7 students.

113. The strongest area in the provision for citizenship is the range of opportunities available for students of all ages and abilities to take an active part in school and community-based activities. Boys and girls alike achieve well because they enjoy the different activities. For example, during an "Industry Day", Year 9 students produced toys suitable for pre-school children, and students in Year 7 were involved in a mock public enquiry about the proposed development of the York Central site. Students become members of the School Council and raise considerable amounts of money for local and national charities. They take part enthusiastically in sports activities, competitions, concerts and school productions, as well as attending civic events and going on residential visits. Students' understanding of citizenship is also developed in school assemblies through talks on the nature of society and on unacceptable behaviour such as bullying. The Language College has a direct impact on students' appreciation of international communication because of pen-friend links, e-mail contacts and exchange visits with students in different European counties.
114. The contribution to the knowledge and understanding of citizenship by subjects across the curriculum is an area for development. Although the programmes of study identify where aspects of citizenship might be explored, there is limited evidence of explicit reference to citizenship in lessons. Links are made in English, for example, through discussions on community and society in Year 11, in connection with work on the novel "Of Mice and Men", but there are few references elsewhere.

Teaching and learning

115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in the area of group activities and class discussions when students study topical issues and learn how views are formed and expressed. Students speak of their enjoyment in talking about subjects that interest them, such as the rights and responsibilities of school-age citizens. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the subjects of the curriculum. The reason that standards are not higher is that teachers do not make students clearly aware of the connections with citizenship in the work of the lesson and students do not make the link themselves. Procedures for the assessment of students' achievement represent a strength because all areas of provision in the subject are included in the evaluation, to which the students themselves contribute. Reports for students in Years 7 to 9, which have recently been introduced, give parents a comprehensive picture of their children's progress.

Leadership and management

116. The subject is well led with a strong sense of purpose. The management of the large department is good. The systems for assessment have been successfully implemented and students benefit from good links with local service providers and companies involved in special projects. There is a shared commitment within the teaching team to further development of the subject and equal opportunities for all students in terms of their access to learning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

