

INSPECTION REPORT

SHEPSHED HIGH SCHOOL

Loughborough

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120257

Headteacher: Mr A Stephenson

Lead inspector: Margaret Kerry

Dates of inspection: 26 – 28 April 2004

Inspection number: 258754

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	10-14
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	542
School address:	Forest Street Shepshed Loughborough Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE12 9DA
Telephone number:	01509 502112
Fax number:	01509 601113
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Glasper
Date of previous inspection:	8 - 9 July 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Shepshed High School is a mixed community middle school with a larger than average number of students. Students enter the school at the beginning of Year 6. The majority of students (96 per cent) are white, and there are a small number of students from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Very few students have English as an additional language and none are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of students who have special educational needs is average. This includes 7 students who have learning needs within the autistic spectrum, as well as 39 students with specific and moderate learning difficulties, and a small number of students with a range of other learning needs. The percentage of students who have statements of special educational need is above average (22 students). The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average, but other socio-economic indicators show that the school's social context is broadly average. There are fluctuations in attainment on entry, which is currently below average. The school received an Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9931	M Kerry	Lead inspector	
9052	H Barter	Lay inspector	
21866	D Tracey	Team inspector	Mathematics Science
12844	M Saunders	Team inspector	English
30937	M Clay-Dove	Team inspector	Information and communications technology History
31685	V Girling	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
2739	I Benson	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography Religious education
15075	B Stephens	Team inspector	Modern languages English as an additional language
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music
15590	S Slocombe	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
15109	T Comer	Team inspector	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
 Anglia House
 Clarendon Court
 Carrs Road
 Cheadle
 Stockport
 SK8 2LA

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This effective school gives its students a good quality of education. Standards are above the national average by the end of Year 9 and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good, and very good in Year 6. Leadership and management are very good, with a clear vision for improvement and very effective management of change by both senior and middle managers. **The school gives good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is good throughout the school and students with special educational needs make very good progress.
- The Year 6 teaching base provides a high quality experience.
- Leadership and management are very good and the leadership of the headteacher is outstanding.
- Teaching is of good quality, with some that is exciting and innovative.
- Students work hard and are well motivated.
- Governors are very effective in monitoring the performance of the school.
- The curriculum is well adapted to the needs of students and inclusion is strong.
- Some aspects of longer term planning need to be clearer in order to sustain improvement.

The school has made very good progress since being removed from special measures in 2002. Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen significantly, and the weaknesses noted in teaching have been very successfully rectified. Good progress has been made on the key issues for improvement, especially as regards accelerating the progress of all students and raising standards of literacy. Middle managers are now effective in their roles.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E	D	A	A
mathematics	C	C	B	B
science	C	B	B	A

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

Students reach above average standards and achieve well. Students enter the school at the start of Year 6 with attainment which is currently below average. In their first year they make good progress and achievement is good. Current standards in Year 6 are in line with national expectations, and better than the results in 2003. Results are improving at the same rate as that found nationally. By the end of Year 9, students reach above average standards and are achieving results in English and science which are well above average when compared with students in similar schools. Results in Year 9 are improving at a rate higher than that found nationally. English results are particularly improved, and all the core subjects show a convincing upward trend. Taken across the whole range of subjects, achievement is good. In English and art it is very good, and in French it is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs make very good progress, because of the very good arrangements that are made to support their learning. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have positive attitudes to school and to learning. They are well motivated and hard working in class. Behaviour is good, although there is a small minority in Year 9 whose conduct is unsatisfactory. Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good. The school is very inclusive in both philosophy and practice, and its ethos is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good. Teachers plan carefully for the learning of a wide range of students, who learn well as a result. **The quality of teaching is good and it is very good in Year 6.** Some of the teaching is excellent, and the best examples are exciting and innovative. Students gain great benefit from specialist teaching in Year 6. Students' learning is good: they work productively and at a good pace.

The curriculum is of good quality. It provides a broad range of relevant learning opportunities, well suited to the needs of the students. Good links with partner primary schools and the college mean that there is continuity between the different stages of education. Support and guidance are good, and there is good partnership with parents to support students' learning. The arrangements for induction into Year 6 give students good support as they transfer from primary school, so that they settle quickly in the short time before national tests at the end of Year 6. There is a good range of extra curricular activities, with a large proportion of students taking part. These increase students' self esteem and social skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding: he has provided a strong professional lead in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The leadership group is a cohesive team, which has successfully created a climate of continuing improvement. They support their colleagues well. The leadership of key staff across the school is very good. The governing body is well informed and monitors the school's performance rigorously. It works very effectively through well-organised committees. The quality of governance is very good. The requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is not fully met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents think well of the school. They have continued to have confidence in the headteacher and senior managers throughout the period in which the school was in special measures. Students appreciate the opportunities provided by the school and are proud to be members of the school community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that there are clear links between longer term goals, measures used to judge progress and the actions planned to bring about sustained improvement.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide an act of collective worship daily for all students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards in Year 6 are currently in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9 standards are above those expected nationally. Students make good progress from Years 6 to 9, and achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The experience which students get in Year 6 is of high quality and lays firm foundations for later progress in both learning and personal development.
- Taken across the four years in school achievement is good.
- Results at the end of Year 9 have risen rapidly in the last two years and were well above average in 2003 when compared with similar schools.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because of very well managed provision.
- The emphasis placed on improving literacy has been very effective in raising standards further.
- Results in Year 6 fluctuate, but are improving in line with the national trend. Students have some weaknesses in numeracy.

Commentary

1. Students enter the school from several different primary schools at the start of Year 6 with attainment which is currently below average. There is only a short time before they take the national tests. The school therefore has to work hard to ensure a smooth transition, help students from different schools form cohesive learning groups, and avoid any dip in standards on transfer. This it does successfully.
2. Since the last inspection, results at the end of Year 6 have been below and, in 2003, well below the national average, and below those obtained by students in similar schools. The results in 2003 came from a particularly weak year group, who had made good progress in Year 6 according to the school's progress records. Results at the end of Year 6 fluctuate, particularly in mathematics and science, but are rising in line with the national trend. Work seen during the inspection was of a higher standard than these most recent results suggest. This is largely due to improving teaching in Year 6, which is now of very good quality. Students who entered the school with below average attainment are currently reaching standards in line with national expectations in many subjects, although standards remain below expectations in mathematics, history, geography, religious education and design technology. In mathematics, students in Year 6 have weaknesses in basic numeracy skills, although these are largely overcome by the time they reach Year 7. As a result of very good teaching and learning in Year 6, which allows students to make good progress from modest starting points, achievement is good by the time students reach the end of the year. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and history and very good in art. In all other subjects, achievement is good.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.3 (26.3)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	25.3 (26.6)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	27.0 (28.5)	28.6 (28.3)

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

3. By the end of Year 9, students are reaching standards that are above the national average. The school has rightly prioritised improving standards of literacy as a way of raising standards overall. This has been a very successful strategy, and results at the end of Year 9 have risen rapidly since 2001. This improvement has been sustained since the school was removed from special measures in 2002. The results of all three core subjects show a convincing trend of improvement which is particularly marked in English. In 2003 results in core subjects improved again to above the national average, and were well above average in English and science when compared with similar schools. Current standards of work, taken across all subjects, are above average and represent good achievement for the students' four years in the school. Students' competence in basic skills has improved since the last inspection, especially in literacy. Although weaknesses in numeracy remain, especially in Year 6, these are not significantly hampering students' progress across the curriculum. The school has rightly prioritised the further improvement of students' numeracy from this September, linking it to performance management targets as has been successfully done with literacy. Students' competence in ICT is good.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.0 (31.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.8 (34.5)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.5 (34.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 141 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. The achievement of students from Years 7 to 9 is good. In English, history and art achievement is very good, whilst in French it is satisfactory. In all other subjects, achievement is good. Compared to their peer groups nationally, girls at the end of Year 9 achieved considerably better than boys in 2002. The school therefore targeted boys' achievement as an area for improvement, working particularly on boys' literacy. This has successfully raised boys' achievement in English, and significantly reduced the gender gap in all core subjects in 2003.
5. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. The school monitors the progress and performance of such students carefully. Students with special educational needs make very good progress overall and achieve very well. Learning support assistants provide very effective help to students, enabling them to be fully involved in lessons. Close liaison with partner primary schools prior to admission ensures that students' special needs are known and documented. This detailed information is very carefully incorporated into the planning by the special educational needs co-ordinator so that the learning and care requirements of students are met. Close monitoring of the progress of students with autistic spectrum disorders enables prompt action to be taken if they are experiencing difficulties. Gifted and talented students make good progress and achieve well. They are identified appropriately, and most teachers plan their lessons to include tasks and activities that match students' abilities and extend them fully.
6. Since the previous inspection in 2002, when the school was removed from special measures, progress in raising standards has been very good, especially at the end of Year 9. The key issues concerning improving standards in literacy, and accelerating the progress of all students have been very successfully addressed. Work remains to be done on numeracy, especially in Year 6, and this is already in the school's planning. Detailed plans include a focus on numeracy through performance management, as has successfully been done with literacy, and the appointment of a member of staff to lead the programme and monitor its success. The school has challenging targets, and performance against these targets is satisfactory.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **good**, as is their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well motivated and work hard: on occasions attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- The assembly programme contributes well to the spiritual and moral development of the students.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.
- A varied programme of enrichment activities enhances students' social and cultural development.
- In some Year 9 lessons the behaviour of a small minority of boys is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

7. The students show good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. They have a positive attitude to school and this is reflected in above average attendance and good punctuality. In lessons behaviour is good overall. However in a few Year 9 lessons the unsatisfactory attitudes and conduct of a small minority of boys affects the quality of learning, despite the school having employed a wide range of strategies to manage this behaviour. When moving around the school the students are well behaved. Although they are noisy, they cope very well with the narrow congested corridors and move promptly to their lessons. At break and lunchtimes they use the whole campus and interact well socially, demonstrating good relationships. These good relationships are also apparent in lessons where they collaborate well in paired and group work. The number of fixed term exclusions is broadly average while permanent exclusions are low. Some students express concern over bullying. This is mainly low level and serious incidents are rare. The school deals effectively with incidents that do occur, and creates a climate where no bullying, however minor, is condoned. The school is a racially harmonious community.
8. The students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The assembly programme is carefully planned and focuses on spiritual and moral issues from a broadly Christian viewpoint. Assemblies observed during inspection were lively and thought-provoking events. There is also a good focus on the other major world religions. The humanities give good support to students' spiritual and moral development. For example, three Year 9 groups combined for an outstanding lesson where the moral issues involved in deciding to go to war in 1939 were explored most effectively. Moral development is also well supported by the school's behaviour policy with its strong emphasis on knowing right from wrong. Social development is good and enhanced by a strong programme of extra-curricular activities including residential opportunities. The school council gives the students good practical experience of democracy and involvement in decision making, including participation in the interviewing procedures for new staff. In addition to their study of the religions of other cultures, the students gain good experience of other cultures through art, music and French. The students' appreciation of their own culture is enhanced through such events as theatre trips and visits to major art galleries. The provision for spiritual, moral social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection.
9. Students' attendance has improved further since the last inspection and is now above the national median. There is little unauthorised absence because students like coming to school and parents are clear about the requirement to report absences. The school has good

systems for monitoring any students whose attendance gives cause for concern including those who are absent for term-time holidays. Punctuality at the beginning of the day and at the start of lessons is good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.8
National data	6.0

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	0.3

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
534	21	1
1		
3		
3		1
1		
3	2	
1		
1		
1		
1		
1		
7		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. Teaching and learning are of good quality and are very good in Year 6. Students learn well, and are supported by good quality care and guidance, good procedures for assessment and a strong partnership with parents and the community. The curriculum is of good quality and is very inclusive. Extra curricular provision is good. Students' views are valued and they are involved in significant aspects of school life. The school's ethos is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The quality of teaching in Year 6 is very good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some excellent and innovative teaching which engages and excites students.
- Planning to meet the differing needs of students, including those with special educational needs, is a strength.
- The quality of teaching in Year 6 is very good and students gain great benefit from the specialist teaching provided.
- Teachers' insistence on high standards of behaviour ensures that students work productively and at a good pace.
- Teaching assistants support learning very effectively.
- The strong focus on literacy helps students to overcome barriers to learning.

Commentary

10. The quality of teaching is good and is much improved from the last inspection. Nearly all the teaching observed was at least satisfactory and over three quarters was good or better. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in English, ICT, art, history and religious education. In Year 6 the quality of teaching seen was high when looked at across subjects inspected in detail and those sampled: nearly all of it was good or better, none was unsatisfactory and a high proportion (two fifths) was very good or excellent.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 78 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (8%)	16 (20%)	42 (54%)	13 (17%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	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.

11. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour right from the start of Year 6, and this ensures that students work productively and at a good pace. High quality teaching enables students to make a good start in the next stage of their learning when they transfer from their primary schools, and builds firm foundations for later work. It is part of a high quality and coherent experience which students get in the Year 6 base. Many examples were seen here during inspection of students gaining great benefit from specialist teaching. In geography, teaching about rivers generated high levels of interest and excitement which were managed well, and excellent teaching in ICT enabled students to reach very high standards of competence in using pie charts, line graphs and bar charts to present data. In drama well-structured teaching led students to develop good performance skills in using voice and movement to convey emotion.
12. A significant strength of the teaching is planning so that a wide range of learning needs is met. Lesson planning routinely includes activities and strategies for higher, middle and lower attainers, as well as planning for students who have special educational needs, or are gifted and talented. Learning objectives are well focussed and precise and consistently shared with students. All of this work is underpinned by two very well formulated pieces of guidance – a teaching and learning policy and a policy for differentiation, written as part of the school's response to being in special measures. Teachers are expected to evaluate the success of their teaching with reference to the different needs of groups of students in the class. The success of this planning means that students are motivated and engaged by work well matched to their needs. Teaching which is satisfactory, rather than good, may lack pace, a clear learning goal for activities, or an insistence on quality performance. These are weaknesses in individual lessons however, rather than generic weaknesses of teaching as a whole. The challenging students in Year 9 are generally suitably managed, although in two lessons this meant that behaviour management rather than learning became central to the lesson. Homework is used well to extend learning.

13. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises effectively with subject teachers ensuring that the special needs of students are known and understood. She provides detailed information and guidance to subject teachers on strategies that are helpful in addressing students' needs. This is particularly important in increasing teachers' confidence in their ability to meet the wide range of special educational needs that they encounter in their lessons. The monitoring, assessing, and tracking of these students' progress is very thorough and provides clear information on their achievements.
14. Support staff work closely with subject teachers providing very good support to both individuals and groups of students in a skilful and unobtrusive manner. Support staff are equally skilled at supporting the learning of individual students, such those who are autistic, and in helping to manage learning on a broader front, for example by challenging unsatisfactory behaviour from a small group of potentially disaffected students.
15. Teachers are reflective about their professional work, and willing to take risks so that learning is enhanced. Much of the teaching generates excitement and interest amongst students so that they are engaged and motivated. Some of the teaching is innovative, as in the example of outstanding practice below.

Example of outstanding practice

Role play in a Year 9 history lesson helps students understand the options available to politicians in 1939 as a response to Germany's foreign policy, and to appreciate moral arguments and evaluate evidence

Nearly 70 students had come together for the activity. Three contemporary pieces of evidence on the bombing of Guernica helped students to focus on the period; a French political cartoon, an English newspaper article, and a print of Picasso's painting 'Guernica'. Students evaluated the different messages in the sources. The three teachers then transformed the atmosphere by going into role as Lord Halifax, Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt, explaining that they were going to debate their views of the political situation as it stood in 1939 and asking for the views of the students as conference delegates. Each political 'character' addressed the conference and a debate ensued between the three of them. The students were totally engaged by the quality of the presentations. Then the 'delegates' broke into groups to discuss the validity of the political standpoints and to prepare their assessment of the situation. The teachers stayed in role and visited the groups to discuss their point of view and to question and be questioned by the 'delegates'. This ensured that students were challenged to think deeply about the evidence the politicians were presenting to justify themselves. The feedback by the 'delegates' was enthusiastic and sometimes heated, showing how involved the students had become in the task. Some groups concluded that both Lord Halifax and Winston Churchill had valid arguments and that the real issue was about the timing of when to abandon appeasement, and how to judge the evidence to know when the policy adopted by the government was not working. This lesson displayed how well students can respond to a creative teaching and learning style which was aimed at making them think independently, evaluate evidence and express their own views. Students left still arguing amongst themselves as to what was the right thing to do.

16. All teachers have had a performance management target linked to developing literacy within their own subject areas. The effect of this, as part of a programme of training and support to help improve the teaching of literacy, is very evident. The teaching of these basic skills has been strengthened, and good practice embedded in the teaching and learning across the school. The key issue to strengthen practice in this area has been successfully addressed.
17. The quality of assessment is good. Students find the revised target setting process helpful. Most are aware of what they do well and how they need to improve. Assessment and target setting are particular strengths in English and mathematics. Day to day assessment is used well to inform planning, although there are some weaknesses in music and design technology. Marking is generally thorough and gives good guidance on how to improve, although there are weaknesses in science, the humanities and modern foreign languages. Procedures for the identification and assessment of students' special educational needs are clear and very well implemented. Records are comprehensive, regularly updated, and provide a clear picture of the department's involvement with individual students. Statutory requirements are met fully.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good**. There is good extra-curricular provision. Accommodation is satisfactory, although with some limitations, and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned at both whole school and subject levels.
- Provision for students who have special educational needs is very good.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities.
- Students with diverse needs all have very good access to the curriculum.
- The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is not fully met.

Commentary

18. All students are provided with a good quality broad curriculum. The good links that the school enjoys with partner primary schools and the neighbouring community college ensure that students not only have a smooth transfer between schools but also have coherence and progression in their learning.
19. In Year 6 all students are provided with the full National Curriculum and religious education (RE) as well as personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). They continue to learn French which they have started in their primary schools. The range of experiences is extended to include drama and, within design and technology, work in resistant materials, textiles, electronics and art and design.
20. In Years 7 to 9, a broad programme of specialist provision provides a firm foundation for progression to the community college and for students to choose subjects that they will study in Years 10 and 11. This broad programme is characterised by a second foreign language being taken from Year 7, an effective programme of careers education and guidance from Year 8, and a well-devised modular programme of key skills, which includes sporting and creative activities as well as ICT and community placements, in Year 9.
21. The overall curriculum strategy and the detailed planning within learning areas ensure that single subject and modular programmes are coherent. Planning ensures that all students make appropriate progress in gaining knowledge, skills and understanding and in the application of literacy, numeracy and ICT within their learning. Without a modular approach to humanities and technology, students would not experience detailed studies in history, geography and RE or the full range of design and technology skills as well as art and electronics. As a result of this structure, statutory requirements for the taught curriculum are fully met.
22. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. They all have full access to the curriculum. Where students experience learning or physical difficulties, strategies are adapted to ensure that the needs of all students are met.
23. A wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities and out-of-hours learning complements the curriculum for all students in Years 6 to 9. This programme is open to all students, including those that have special educational needs. More than half of all students undertake at least one activity. All aspects of the programme provide students with good opportunities for social interaction that increase their confidence and self-esteem. Thus, the whole curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' academic and personal development.

24. Accommodation and resources are good. Teachers' qualifications and experience are well matched to the current curriculum. They are well supported in their work by teams of strategically deployed teaching assistants, technicians, site and other support staff and administrators, most of whom know the students well. Together they contribute significantly to the school's overall effectiveness. Learning resources, including the library, provide good support for students' learning. Although there is good provision of ICT facilities, there are some difficulties with access. Accommodation is adequate in relation to the school's current curriculum, although not all rooms are sufficiently flexible or well maintained.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. Students receive good quality support, advice and guidance. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are cared for well by an established and well-managed pastoral system.
- Students with significant behaviour problems are well supported so that they are at less risk of exclusion.
- The school values students' opinions highly and seeks their views on important areas of its development.
- Students are well supported when they start school and when they leave at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

25. The school makes good provision for students' care and welfare, including their health and safety and arrangements for child protection. The management of the pastoral system is good. Heads of year and tutors know the students well and provide good continuity of care and support. The progress files kept by students are a good means of monitoring and reviewing personal development and wider achievement. Students have good relationships with staff and know who to go to if they have any worries. Parents are confident that their children are well cared for and that problems are sorted out effectively.
26. The school promotes the principle of supporting and including all students, whatever their need. It has been pro-active in seeking outside support and advice to manage a group of students in Year 9 whose behaviour has given cause for concern throughout their time in school. Initiatives such as lunchtime clubs, 'buddy' support and opportunities for taking responsibility through involvement in paired reading with Year 6, are a few examples of the efforts the school has made to include these students and to keep exclusions to a minimum. Some of these students have achieved a good degree of personal success in some of these activities. The school also works closely with other external agencies, such as the Autistic Outreach Service, which provides help and advice to staff, students, and parents.
27. Students are very clear that their views are heard and valued. Staff listen to them carefully if they want to discuss academic or personal matters which concern them. Nearly all students spoken to said that they value the school council as a way of making their views known and heard. The school places high importance on students' opinions and ideas. There has been good consultation with students about areas of school improvement including involving them in interviews for a recent staff appointment.
28. Arrangements for induction into Year 6 are well managed and carefully planned so that students feel confident when settling into their new school. Parents report that this is a much improved area of the school's work. Transition arrangements for students moving on to the community college are also good. Through the GCSE launch programme, students are given good advice about possible study and career options. Good support is provided by Connexions for a group of more vulnerable students to help them make choices about their futures.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **good** partnership with parents. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**. Links with the community are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with parents are good and, as a result, they have confidence in the school.
- Students' end of year reports do not give parents clear enough information.
- The school has very good links with the community who support it well in its work.
- Good partnerships with primary schools and the community college support the continuity of students' learning.

Commentary

29. The school has retained the confidence of parents throughout the difficult period of special measures. This good partnership has been maintained because it has consulted with them and kept them fully informed about its work to achieve improvement. Parents have confidence in the headteacher and senior managers, and see that they have a high commitment to the school and its students. Parents are positive about the school's communication with them and feel that it listens and deals well with their concerns. The consistent use of planners by tutors to communicate with students and their parents is a particularly good feature.
30. Most parents feel well informed about their children's progress because they are in regular communication with teachers and tutors. The annual reviews of students with statements of special educational need are well attended by their parents. Through the introduction of the autumn target setting meeting, parents are now better informed about the areas in which their children are doing well, those that they need to improve and how they can support them to make the necessary progress. Parents are less positive however, about the end of year reports which they say are too bland, do not give them enough information and are sometimes confusing. Inspectors agree with parents' views. Reports do not give parents a clear enough picture of how well students are achieving in each subject.
31. The school has a well-established place in the local community and uses its very good links effectively to enrich the curriculum for students. The local community supports the school very well. For example, the co-operation of local businesses and professions means that Year 9 students have very good access to a range of community placements as part of their work in key skills. Parents appreciate the opportunities afforded to students to participate in community events, such as the school band playing at the opening of the community library.
32. Links with primary schools are providing students with continuity in their learning as they move from Year 5 to 6 through, for example, the provision of summer schools. Opportunities for teachers to work with primary colleagues to share expertise are good. The recent moves to share attainment information and to look collaboratively at students' progress over the whole course of Years 3 to 6 is a very good initiative. There are good relationships with the partner middle school which enables Year 9 students to work together in preparation for their move to the community college. The school's links with the college are good. The joint development of the GCSE launch programme for Year 9 students is a particularly good feature. There are good opportunities for staff and students to work together and, for example, to take part in large musical productions which are highly valued by the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding, and the leadership of other key staff is very good. Management is very good. The quality of governance is also very good.

There is non-compliance with statutory requirements in that an act of collective worship is not provided daily for all students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation support continuing improvement.
- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding: he makes a particularly strong contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The leadership group's vision for improvement has created a self critical and reflective climate where teachers are ready to innovate and to take risks to enhance learning.
- Curriculum co-ordinators are effective in improving standards in their subject areas.
- Governors have monitored the school's performance rigorously through their standards committee.
- The links in the school improvement plan between longer term objectives, measures for judging students' progress and achievement and actions to bring about improvement are not always sufficiently clear.

Commentary

33. The leadership of the school is clearly focussed on raising achievement through two well-formulated goals. Since being removed from special measures in 2002, the school has continued to improve. The rigorous and systematic monitoring and evaluation which are undertaken by the headteacher, senior managers and curriculum co-ordinators have been highly instrumental in securing further improvements in standards and quality. Monitoring performance and taking appropriate action is a key strength throughout the school.
34. The headteacher has given outstanding professional leadership in improving teaching and learning. The policies on which current practice is based are well devised and give very good guidance to teachers and support staff. The headteacher is very active in monitoring the quality of classroom practice and in modelling teaching that is itself of a high standard.
35. The headteacher and leadership group have very successfully created a climate of improvement, which has been embraced by all staff. The leadership of key staff is very good. Teachers are reflective, willing to take risks and to innovate. Self evaluation is very good, and is routinely carried at all levels of the school: teachers regularly evaluate the success of lessons as well as curriculum co-ordinators evaluating the work of a subject area. The self-evaluation document produced in preparation for the inspection (S4) was an accurate analysis of the school's effectiveness.
36. The school is at a watershed of its development, moving forward on many fronts as it improves its performance and with a new building scheduled for 2007. It is important at this stage to keep planning tightly focussed on raising achievement in order to sustain improvement and meet the school's goals. The current school improvement plan is satisfactory. The actions identified are the result of good analysis, and the evaluative questions contained in the plan are effective in deciding whether or not an objective has been achieved. However, the vital links between longer term objectives, the quantitative indicators which will be used to measure success and the actions which will bring about sustained improvement are not sufficiently clear. There is some loss of clarity in this regard between the current and the previous school improvement plans. The school is beginning to look closely at more refined progress indicators than the PANDA can offer, especially as a means of judging progress and value added at the end of Year 6. This is a good development which needs to be pursued.

37. The key issue on improving the effectiveness of middle managers has been very successfully addressed. Curriculum co-ordinators are effective in their roles, and the good quality of their work is raising standards further within subject areas. There is good induction for those who are new in management posts. Clear systems support those with management responsibility. Performance management has been particularly effectively used to tackle whole school issues such as literacy and assessment for learning.
38. Governance is very effective. The governors monitor the school's performance closely through the work of the standards committee. Other committees are well organised and effective. Governors are well informed about the work of the school and have supported improvement very well. Although statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students are not met in full, governors have ensured that the spiritual development of students is promoted by a good quality programme of frequent assemblies and through the curriculum. As a result, the spiritual development of students is good.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,767,112
Total expenditure	1,740,530
Expenditure per pupil	3,119

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	20,311 *
Balance carried forward to the next	26,582 *

* Including capital and Standards Fund

39. Financial management is good, and the costing of the school improvement plan is meticulous. The school has a deficit agreed with the LEA, once capital and Standards Fund balances are excluded. There is a repayment plan in place. Areas of expenditure, including the agreed deficit, have been benchmarked to other local schools as part of the practice to obtain best value. The school is well forward in its moves to implement workplace reform.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 and 3

Note: In the previous inspection, which removed the school from special measures, subjects were not reported in full. Judgements on improvement since the last inspection are therefore based on what was reported in the previous inspection, supplemented by scrutiny of departmental development planning, assessment data and teachers' progress records covering the five terms since July 2002.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sharp focus on literacy has led to improved attainment.
- By the end of Year 9 standards for boys and girls are above national expectations.
- On account of very good teaching students make very good progress.
- The department is very well led and operates according to clear, shared principles.
- The majority of students are weaker in speaking and listening than in reading and writing and this limits their capacity for independent learning.
- Some students depend too much upon their teachers for motivation and progress.

Commentary

40. Students' attainment when they enter the school is below average. Standards in tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were below average because of the nature of that particular year group, even though students make accelerated progress over this first year in the school. By the end of Year 9 results in 2003 showed both boys and girls attaining well above average standards in comparison to other schools nationally.
41. The inspection confirmed this positive picture. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Year 6, and very well over Years 7 to 9. This was evident in the progress made in lessons, in the improvement over time in writing, and in the meeting of carefully tracked individual targets for improvement. Current standards are in line with expectations in Year 6, representing good progress for this group of students. Standards are above expectations in Year 9, which represents very good progress for this particular year group.
42. Students make these strides in response to very good teaching across all years. Year 6 lessons focus consistently on developing literacy through a motivating variety of activities. Purposes are very clear (for example how to plan a story) so that students know what they need to do and how to succeed. Relationships are warm and supportive, teachers know their students as thoroughly as they do their subject, and students generally respond by wanting to do well. The same quality of teaching and learning is apparent in Years 7 to 9, similarly informed by strategies to develop students' literacy skills. For example a lower attaining Year 9 group was brought by their teacher's enthusiasm and high expectations to show sophisticated understanding of techniques of persuasion in their own work and in *Animal Farm*. No teaching was less than satisfactory. Nearly all was good or better. Some was outstanding. Overall teaching and learning were very good. Meticulous marking and target setting are additional features of very good teaching. As a result students know their current level of attainment and what they need to do to improve.

43. Occasionally, the quality of learning however does not match that of teaching, because some students depend too much on their teachers for motivation and focus. In a lower attaining Year 9 group, boys in particular required a high level of attention and support to make the progress which they did. Very skilful teaching is needed to enable these students to make good progress over time. Many students need more practice in using talk for learning in order to make them more confident and independent in expressing and amplifying opinions and judgements.
44. The department is very well led. The curriculum co-ordinator provides a very good model of committed, student-centred planning and teaching. The department operates in clear and principled ways to advance students' achievement. Planned opportunities to observe and reflect on each other's teaching would further promote the team's collective effectiveness. Management is also strong. The best use is made of the teaching rooms, some of which are cramped, through colourful and motivating display. Resources for English are well chosen and take into account students' interests and aptitudes. The curriculum and methods of teaching are developed in the light of rigorous monitoring of the department's work. The use of assessment data to record and advance students' progress is also very well developed.
45. Students' experience of English is enhanced by substantial extracurricular provision. Booster classes, the homework club, residential and theatre trips, poetry and other competitions promote students' achievement in and enjoyment of the subject.
46. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Examination results, boys' achievement, standards of literacy, the quality of teaching and learning: all show substantial progress. The last report identified the department as one of the strengths of the school. That position has been maintained and built upon so that students are increasingly well served by the very good teaching they receive.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. Literacy development is central to the school's primary aim of supporting and raising students' achievement. The literacy co-ordinator effectively oversees a comprehensive set of strategies to develop students' skills. There has been valuable collaboration with the LEA to provide training for all staff. At the time of the inspection, provision was judged by the majority of subject inspectors to be good. Particular strengths were seen in English and humanities where a consistent emphasis on matters of literacy in planning, teaching, and marking enabled students to make very good progress. A less successful element of the literacy programme is reading time in tutorial sessions in Years 7 to 9. Better use could be made of this time by making its purposes explicit and undertaking some active teaching of literacy skills in all sessions. In some sessions there was a lack of focus. By contrast, in Year 6, good use was made of paired reading with Year 9 students giving good additional support to younger peers in improving their reading skills. The overall impact of the literacy programme is clearly raising standards, so that by the end of Year 9 standards of literacy are above average.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership and management of the department result in a well co-ordinated approach to teaching and learning.
- Achievement is good in German, and in French in Year 6.
- Lower and middle attaining students achieve better than expected in French by the end of Year 9, but some higher attaining boys underachieve.
- Good tracking of students' attainment and achievement supports progress.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good in German.
- The marking of students' written work rarely contains comments to help them reach higher levels.
- The very good relationships between teachers and students create a positive learning environment.

Commentary

48. All students learn French in Year 6. Students continue with French in Year 7 and are offered one module of German. They are then offered the opportunity to study French and German in Years 8 and 9. Half way through Year 9 they choose either French or German. Both languages were focussed on in the inspection, as the take-up of German in Year 9 is strong.
49. By the end of Year 6 standards in French are impressive. All students make good progress and those who have had French in their previous school build successfully on their primary experience. Students have good listening and speaking skills and copy words and phrases accurately. In one Year 6 lesson students followed a lesson conducted largely in French. Their pronunciation was good and they handled familiar language accurately and with confidence. This represents good achievement for higher and middle attaining students as well as those with special educational needs.
50. Results in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national expectation for middle and lower attaining students. They have improved recently. However, fewer higher attaining students than average attained level 6 or above. Girls attained significantly higher results than boys, and overall, results were in line with the national expectation. A significant minority of higher attaining boys underachieved in French after four years' study of the language. This is related to weaknesses in marking and target setting for the highest attainers. The standards of French and German observed in lessons and in students' books were overall in line with expectations, which indicates that last year's teacher assessments were accurate. This represents good achievement in German, where students have only a two-year course, and satisfactory achievement in French. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
51. Teaching and learning in French in Year 6 are good. Teaching and learning in French in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory overall. Some good teaching and one instance of unsatisfactory teaching were seen. Evidence from work scrutiny in French showed that there is good teaching in Years 7 and 9, and satisfactory teaching in Year 8. In a Year 9 mixed ability French class, students described a series of pictures about holidays using two past tenses, and students in a higher attaining group used the past tense accurately. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the expectations were very low, most of the lesson was conducted in English and consequently all students underachieved in that particular lesson.
52. Teaching and learning in German in Years 7 to 9 are good. In a Year 9 mixed ability German class with a large number of students with special educational needs, over half of the students talked and wrote about school using past, present and future tenses. Generally students in German showed a good grasp of the use of a range of tenses.
53. The teachers' good subject knowledge and linguistic skills provide students with a good model for learning. Learning in both languages is enhanced by very good relationships. In both French and German students are motivated by brisk, well-structured lessons using interesting

activities and resources. They also benefit greatly from the very effective techniques used to present and practise language orally and they learn well in pairs and small groups. This was particularly evident in Year 7 French and German classes where students produced long dialogues cued by visuals and mime.

54. In some French classes in Years 7 and 9 a minority of boys were not attentive and did not work well independently, despite the persistent efforts of the teacher. Frequent monitoring by the teacher ensured that the reluctant learners continued to make an effort in their learning and that the rest of the group progressed very well.
55. In many lessons in French and German there were good opportunities for students to develop their general literacy. There is limited use of ICT to enhance learning. The marking of students' work in French and German is regular, and there are good tracking procedures in place to monitor the progress of individual students and to raise their achievement. However, students are rarely set targets to help them understand the level of the work they are producing and know what they must do to reach the higher levels.
56. The head of department has a clear vision, has developed an appropriate departmental plan and detailed schemes of work. She monitors teaching and learning rigorously, supporting colleagues to improve where this is needed with comprehensive feedback. The fact that not all the languages rooms are in close proximity makes day to day monitoring by the head of department more difficult. The annual trip to France improves motivation and develops cultural awareness.
57. There was no specific reference to modern foreign languages in the last report, but since the results in the Year 9 teacher assessments are higher and a large proportion of the teaching and learning are good, improvement since the last report is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.
- Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are above average.
- Assessment and target setting are good.
- The quality of leadership and management are good.
- Basic number skills in Year 6 are underdeveloped.

Commentary

58. Students' results in 2003 in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 were well below both the national average and those for similar schools. These results were a marked decline on previous years and were a result of the nature of that particular year group. In 2003, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above both the national average and those for similar schools. Results at the end of Year 9 show a rapidly increasing trend.
59. Current standards in Year 6 are below average. Students enter the school with below average attainment. Although they make good progress as a result of good teaching, they still have some deficiencies in basic number skills. Because of these remaining weaknesses, their achievement in Year 6 is satisfactory. Teaching strategies such as parental involvement in students' mathematical education lead to good progress in all aspects of the subject. As a result of these strategies, students' graphical and data handling skills are appropriate for their age.
60. Current standards are above expectations in Year 9 and show a significant upward trend over the four years that students spend in the school. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good

progress in their lessons. When related to their starting points, students' achievement over their time in school is good. For example, current Year 9 students are very competent in the fields of algebra, geometry and statistics, even though basic skills remain only in line with expectations. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well as a result of work that is well matched to their capabilities coupled with good support from teachers and learning assistants.

61. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are well planned with a good focus on what students are to learn. Students' behaviour is generally well managed and the positive attitudes they bring to lessons contribute significantly to improving standards. Teachers mark books carefully so that students know how to improve. Assessment procedures are accurate and as a result teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Students are able to make faster progress in their learning because teaching is more directed to their individual needs. Good use was made of the three part lesson. The use of, for example, starter and plenary activities gave the teaching a sharper focus and resulted in students making more rapid progress in their learning.
62. The department is well led and managed. Much good work has gone into ensuring that schemes of work are appropriate to students' needs. Strategies for raising students' attainment, for example through the introduction of CAME (cognitive acceleration in mathematical education), are good. There is a good focus on the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning which is raising students' achievement by improving the quality of teaching.
63. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are above average and improving. Priorities for improvement are appropriate and being fully implemented. Teachers and support assistants are working well together on raising standards in mathematics across the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Despite weaknesses in numeracy in Year 6, students' competence in mathematics satisfactorily supports their learning in all subjects when looked at across the school. No instances were seen of weaknesses impeding progress in other areas. In science, ICT and physical education the use of mathematics is good. Numerical skills, graphs and data handling are used to good effect. In other subjects such as geography and design technology, mathematical skills support learning satisfactorily and often develop further through application to new situations.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well across all years.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are above average.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Day to day marking of students' work could be more effective.
- ICT is not used sufficiently.

Commentary

65. Students' results in 2003 in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 were well below both the national average and those for similar schools. As in mathematics, these

results were a marked decline on those of previous years and were to do with the nature of that year group. In 2003, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and well above those for similar schools. There is an encouraging upward trend of results in this age range in recent years.

66. Students enter the school with attainment that is below average for their age. As a result of good teaching in Year 6 they make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science and currently reach standards which are in line with expectations for their age nationally. For example, they have a good understanding of solids, liquids and gases and how mixtures can be separated. As a result their achievement is good. Standards continue to improve in Years 7, 8 and 9. By the time they are in Year 9 standards have risen to above those expected for their age. They have a good understanding of biology, chemistry and physics. Their science enquiry skills are above average because most lessons involve students in doing experimental work. This improves both their skills and their interest and motivation. Their achievement is good because they make more rapid progress than would be expected from their starting point. For example, the oldest students can write word equations for chemical reactions successfully. Students with special educational needs make good progress because work is well matched to their capabilities. Dedicated support from learning assistants contributes significantly to these students' good achievement.
67. Teaching and learning are good across the school. Teaching methods are often imaginative capturing the students' attention. This improves learning. Lesson planning focuses clearly on what students are to learn. Work is challenging for all levels of capability. The introduction of well structured three-part lessons has improved the quality of learning by giving a sharper and more immediate focus. Teachers have a good command of the subject, and explanations of scientific concepts and theories are clear and understandable, making it easy for students to learn. Marking is regular and precise but students do not have sufficient advice on how to attain a higher standard of work. Teachers work very closely with teaching assistants and this is a significant factor in the good progress of students who have special educational needs. The department has effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Although students get some experience of ICT in their science lessons, this is limited. They would benefit from a more 'hands on' approach, for example, by individual data logging experiments.
68. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear focus on priorities for improvement. An effective team of teachers, support assistants and technical staff has been created so that the department functions efficiently on a day to day basis. The introduction of the National Strategy for science has been well managed resulting in students improving their science enquiry skills. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. In particular standards and teaching have improved resulting in raised achievement. The department is in a good position to move forward.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning styles are varied, provide students with challenge and enjoyment in the subject and result in them achieving high standards.

- The leadership and management of the subject is very good, creating an ethos where innovation is encouraged and team members are valued.
- The ICT technician makes an outstanding contribution to learning.
- The limited access to ICT facilities, particularly laptop computers, is a barrier to students using their ICT skills to enhance their learning across the curriculum, especially in Year 9.

Commentary

69. The students enter the school in Year 6 with a range of experiences in ICT. Their standards are below those expected nationally. However, in the short time until the end of Year 6, students make very good progress and reach standards which are overall in line with national expectations. This improvement is maintained in Years 7 to 9 resulting in standards which are overall above the national expectation by the end of Year 9, as reflected in teacher assessments in 2003 and by observation of current work in class. Some students by the end of Year 9 are reaching standards which are well above average.
70. By the end of Year 6 students can use their ICT skills to present information in different ways. Lessons were seen in which students discussed the relative merits of using bar charts, pie charts or line graphs to present statistical information. They can question the moral implications of whether different styles of presentation affect the way data is interpreted. This approach results in students developing a good understanding of the relationship between the use being made of ICT and the audience for which it is intended.
71. By the end of Year 9 students have gained an impressive range of skills that they apply to subjects across the curriculum. They have the ability to select appropriate ICT tools and software programmes to help them study, research and present their work. The students are using ICT as an effective tool to support their learning in subjects across the curriculum.
72. The quality of teaching and learning in ICT are good, with some excellent teaching in Year 6. Teachers are confident in their own knowledge and skills, which allows them to explain and demonstrate skills in a clear and precise way. This helps students to learn complicated procedures quickly. The students understand what they will be able to do by the end of the lesson that they could not do at the start; the objectives are attainable but challenging. Teachers frequently talk to the whole class, sharing good ideas, creating a sense of teamwork and ensuring that lessons have a good pace. The relationships between teachers and students are excellent. The enthusiasm of the teachers is reflected in lessons that are interesting and stimulating. All the teachers highlight the way ICT skills are used in the outside world, making the lessons relevant to the daily lives of students. Extension work provides more challenge for higher attaining students and those with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Numeracy skills are used in the analysis of spreadsheets and the students can talk about their work coherently, reflecting the effective literacy policy pursued by the department.
73. Leadership and management are very good. The acting curriculum leader has undertaken a rigorous analysis of the teaching of ICT resulting in the programmes of study being developed into detailed lesson plans that ensure all students can achieve their potential. Teachers feel supported and a team ethos has been developed. The provision in ICT represents a very good improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. Many of the teachers are competent in the appropriate use of ICT to support the teaching and learning in their subjects. Power point presentations are effectively used in assemblies and in lessons; a good range of software is used in English, mathematics, music, languages, science, design and technology, humanities and PE. The effectiveness of ICT to help students learn could be further improved if students and teachers had more flexible access to facilities and laptop computers. The work of the ICT technician across the curriculum is outstanding.

The high quality support given and the level of expertise available significantly enhances students' learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching enables all students to learn effectively, make good progress and achieve well as they move through Years 6 to 9.
- By the end of Year 9 standards are above those for students of a similar age nationally.
- Leadership and management are very effective in raising standards and supporting the development of good teaching and learning.
- The highly effective planning of a modular curriculum provides continuity in learning and ensures that statutory requirements are met.
- Marking and assessment procedures to support students in setting well defined targets need to be further refined to raise standards even higher.

Commentary

75. Students enter the school in Year 6 with a range of experiences in the subject. Standards are below those expected for students of a similar age nationally and in relation to some areas of learning in geography they are well below. In Years 6 to 9 the school works hard to enable students to make good progress and achieve well. Because of the limited time available, attainment by the end of Year 6 in geography is still below that expected for students of a similar age nationally. By the end of Year 9, however, a range of inspection evidence shows that attainment is above expectations. This represents good achievement in Year 6 and in Years 7 to 9, with some students achieving very well.
76. As they move through the school, students work hard, are well taught and their achievement is good. They consolidate their prior learning, quickly master new concepts and skills and respond well to high levels of challenge that enable them to think and work increasingly as geographers.
77. In geography teaching and learning are good overall in Year 6 and Years 7 to 9. Sometimes they are very good. The teaching is well planned and the levels of challenge and demand in the learning are high. Students progress well and acquire knowledge and develop understanding of the geo-physical processes such as those that relate to the formation of rivers. In Year 6 many students quickly used the technical vocabulary they had learned appropriately. They could provide clear definitions of terms such as source, tributary and basin and describe these features accurately. The scrutiny of a large sample of work and discussions with students both show that good teaching enables similar progress to be made in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9 students show good understanding of the topics covered. Well-chosen teaching methods, learning resources and the strategic use of question and answer sessions provide good levels of stimulus and support for students' learning, including those who have special educational needs. Effective use is made of ICT in, for example, using Excel spreadsheets to analyse statistics associated with the development of the European Union.
78. Written assignments are well presented and students take pride in their work. Marking is thorough and each student has an Assessment Portfolio with samples of work to help them track their progress and develop target areas for improvement. The further refinement of

marking and assessment procedures to enable more focused targets to be set for each student is a priority in the subject development plan.

79. The leadership and management are very good. The modular curriculum is well planned to ensure continuity in learning, the use of innovative and exciting teaching and learning strategies to raise standards, and to meet statutory requirements.
80. Progress since the last inspection is very good. Especially notable are the improvement in the curriculum structure, in the quality of teaching and learning and in the organisation and management of the subject within the humanities area.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Varied and imaginative teaching and learning styles excite and engage the students resulting in good achievement by the end of Year 9.
- Leadership is very effective in enabling teachers to develop exciting lessons.
- Assessment of students' progress is rigorous and helps them set targets and improve, but targets should be used more systematically.
- High quality, detailed planning maintains continuity within the subject despite the modular organisation of humanities in the school.

Commentary

81. The students enter the school in Year 6 with standards overall below those expected nationally, and in some important respects well below expectations. By the end of Year 6 standards remain below national expectations, although students have made good progress in the short time available and achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9 standards are in line with national expectations and this represents good achievement over the students' four years in school. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good, as students build on the foundations laid in Year 6.
82. In Year 6, students learn to present their work well and show increasing attention to detail. They try hard to reach their own conclusions from the evidence they are using and start to understand the importance of cause and effect. By the end of Year 9, students are able to evaluate historical sources and discuss the significance of the evidence in forming a picture of the past. Many students produce extended pieces of work which reflect their interest and enthusiasm for the subject. They are keen to debate the motives of people in the past and to understand the options political figures had in various situations. Students have well developed skills in working as part of a team. For example, good collaborative work was seen in a Year 9 class researching the effects that the Second World War had on peoples' living conditions and then sharing their information with each other in small groups. Homework is completed well.
83. Teaching and learning are good: they are very good in Years 7 to 9. Much of the teaching seen was good, and some excellent. The high standards of teaching are possible because the history modules are planned in great detail and the teachers translate these into lesson plans that are well matched to the attainment and learning needs of the students. Effective use of both extension work and learning support assistants ensures that all students are challenged, able to reach the learning objectives of the lessons and encouraged to reach their potential. This includes students who have special educational needs. It is this approach that explains the good standards of achievement reached by students by the end of Year 9. Lessons are interesting, and students are encouraged to think for themselves and express their own views.

The relationships between teachers and students are excellent, and the emphasis on high expectations and mutual respect is a strength.

84. Students' work is monitored closely. For example, in exercise books teachers identify the areas for improvement, and at the end of each unit of work an assessment exercise is completed. From this students learn what they have achieved and what skills need to be developed to reach the next level of attainment. This target setting needs to be used more systematically to inform subsequent learning. In some instances marking is not sufficiently precise and related to what needs to be done to improve. Strategies for improvements in these areas are already included in the departmental development plan. Students are encouraged to develop their ICT skills; they use PowerPoint for presentations and the Internet for research to good effect. Many students word-process their work.
85. The history units are very well managed within the humanities area. Subject leadership is very good. Teachers are given very detailed plans of what is to be taught. They are encouraged by the curriculum co-ordinator to try exciting approaches to the subject; this results in teachers feeling confident about their subject knowledge and in trying new teaching styles; this in turn helps the students engage with the subject and enjoy their learning. Teachers are also expected to, and do, identify new vocabulary and develop literacy skills in line with the school's policy. The subject gives very good support to the development of literacy skills.
86. The improvement since the last inspection is good. Teachers and students are well motivated and working in a very effective team to raise standards in all aspects of the subject.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching contributes to good achievement and the raising of standards.
- Very good leadership and management promote good curriculum planning, continuity in learning and the contribution the subject makes to students' personal development.
- Marking and assessment procedures to support students in setting well defined targets need to be further refined to raise standards even higher.

Commentary

87. Students enter the school in Year 6 with varied experiences of religious education (RE) and standards that are below those expected for students of a similar age. In Year 6 students quickly benefit from focused work on specialist topics within the local Agreed Syllabus: this work successfully complements their prior learning. By the end of Year 6 standards are still below expectations but, by the end of Year 9, they are in line with those within the Agreed Syllabus. All learners are consistently supported and challenged as they build up their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the beliefs and practices of a range of faiths and the responses of their adherents. Given the varying starting points of each student on entry to the school, their progress through Years 6 to 9 represents good achievement. This includes students who have special educational needs.
88. Teaching and learning are good. A variety of methods are used to help students explore a range of demanding topics. Teaching seen in Year 8 was clearly focused on enabling students to explore various aspects of suffering within a Christian perspective, using a range of sources and media. This helped students to consider the human response to personal suffering. Some groups also developed a good understanding of suffering and Karma within Hinduism. Students responded maturely to the tasks and showed significant insights and depth of understanding. The sensitivity of teachers in providing guidance to the completion of tasks and in responding to questions enabled students to achieve well. The scrutiny of a wide range of

work and discussions show that students make similar gains in knowledge and understanding in other years. Rates of progress vary, but by the end of Year 9 most students have a clear understanding of the responses of adherents to their faith and the impact these have on their daily life. Some higher attaining students are reaching standards well above expectations.

89. Students' written responses to tasks are well presented. They make effective use of ICT in their work, using digital photography in their study of the local Parish Church. Teachers' marking is generally thorough and each student has an Assessment Portfolio with samples of work to help them track their progress and develop target areas for improvement. The further refinement of marking and assessment is a priority in the subject development plan.
90. The leadership and management of humanities are very good. The planning of the modular approach to the Agreed Syllabus ensures continuity in learning and coverage of the programme of study to meet statutory requirements. Although there is no subject specialist within the humanities team, the co-ordinator seeks support from the local authority consultant and other sources to inform the detailed planning of RE work.
91. Progress since the last inspection is very good. Especially notable are the improvement in the RE curriculum structure, the quality of teaching and learning and in the organisation and management of the subject within humanities. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal development.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An enthusiastic team of specialist teachers encourages students to learn well.
- Good use of practical demonstrations and visual aids ensures that students understand lesson aims.
- Achievement is good.
- Day to day assessment is used well but not always enough to inform planning for the differing needs of all students.
- The lack of standardised procedures for teacher assessment leads to a lack of consistency across the different areas of the subject.
- There is insufficient access to computers to aid designing and making processes.

Commentary

92. Attainment on entry is well below that expected nationally. By the end of Year 6 students increase their technical skills, knowledge and understanding and achieve well. Attainment is below average. By the end of Year 9 students continue to achieve well and are working at a standard in line with that expected nationally. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that students' attainment was well above average. This was not supported by work seen during the inspection, and the co-ordinator recognises that there is a need to improve procedures for teacher assessment so that they are more accurate and are consistent across all the areas of work of the department.
93. Strengths are seen in the students' development of ideas at the planning stage in resistant materials and in the quality of their technical skills in control technology. An example of the latter is the high standard of animated figures produced by higher attaining students in control technology in Year 7. The descriptive use of language in written evaluation is particularly strong in food studies in Year 6 and good machining skills are taught in textiles in Years 7 and 8 which

prepare students well for GCSE courses at the community college. By the end of Year 9 students' evaluations are perceptive in food studies, and higher attaining students in control technology produce hand held games with high quality finish and decoration, moving parts, lights and music. Computers are used well to aid design but access to the facilities available now limit further learning.

94. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Students learn well due to the considerable specialist knowledge and evident enthusiasm that teachers display. Practical demonstrations and good use of visual aids inspire students to do their best. They in turn listen intently to teachers and to one another and generally want to do well. Many return at lunchtime and after school to continue with their work and are proud to take it home when completed. On occasion, the planning of lessons is not detailed enough to meet the needs of students who have difficulties and does not have an appropriate level of challenge for the highest attaining students. Feedback in lessons is good and helps students know how to improve their work, but some marking lacks the necessary detail to inform target setting and planning sufficiently.
95. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear vision in strategic planning and systems are in place to promote greater consistency in assessment, share good practice and make the team very effective. There is good liaison with partner schools to ensure that developments in the use of computers are compatible across phases. Good progress has been made on all the actions identified in the previous action plan and the current plan is sharply focussed.
96. A good contribution is made to students' social development through successful collaborative work and the many clubs available for a spread of ages and abilities out of lesson time. The environment is enhanced by the lively displays of high quality work around the school.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Art was not inspected in detail. Two lessons were observed, and a sample of work from Years 6 to 9 was scrutinised. In one lesson teaching was satisfactory, and in the other it was excellent. Achievement in art is **very good**. Students are working at a standard above national expectations by the end of Year 6 and by the end of Year 9 standards of work are very high. Students are offered opportunities to work in a wide variety of two and three-dimensional materials including textiles, clay and glass. Specialist teachers convey their enthusiasm and considerable knowledge to students who respond by creating work that ranges from interesting to stunning, as in the glass pieces inspired by looking at the work of Kandinsky, Klee and Miro in Year 9.

Most students achieve very well because of a high level of attention from teachers and the excellent use of practical demonstration and visual stimuli. Although generally planning to meet particular needs is of a high standard, there are a few occasions when this is not the case, and progress suffers as a result.

Art makes an excellent contribution to the cultural development of students. Trips to major galleries in London inform and inspire them and give context to creating their own work. Students study widely, and in depth, the work of artists and craftspeople in their own culture and cultures abroad. They also work extremely well together and produce large sculptures inspired by the totem poles of North American Indians, fantastic textured and patterned pieces inspired by aboriginal designs and colourful, highly patterned pieces based on studies of Islamic carpet design (Year 6).

Drama

Two lessons were observed in each of Years 6 and 9 where teaching was very good and good respectively. Students have one lesson each fortnight. This is insufficient for students fully to

develop their skills and understanding of the subject. Nevertheless, the high standards attained by Shepshed students at GCSE in the upper school indicate the value of the introductory work they do in Years 6 to 9.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and well matched to the individual needs of the students.
- There is a very good emphasis on practical music making in class.
- The management and control of students is good.
- Resources are very well used to support students' learning.
- Extra-curricular activities and instrumental teaching are under developed.
- The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment does not influence lesson planning sufficiently.

Commentary

97. Standards of attainment are above expectations in Year 6 and also in Years 7 to 9. The students in Year 6 are achieving well in relation to their standards on entry to the school: they continue to achieve well through Years 7 to 9. Students are given a good grounding in musical notation in Year 6 and use this effectively to identify notes on the staff and the keyboard. They use keyboards confidently, selecting timbres well. However, when performing, there is generally insufficient use of fingering systems. The students listen perceptively to each other's performances and are able to make constructive criticisms. Compositions show a good level of inventiveness and there is good progression through from Year 6 to Year 9. The Year 9 song writing project produced some exciting compositions enhanced by good choices of timbre and texture. Gifted and talented students are well challenged by tasks which enable them to perform at a higher level. Lower attaining students and those with special needs are fully integrated into all the activities and make good progress as a result of a good level of individual help and well matched work. For example in class performances a range of parts of different levels of difficulty is provided. The students hold independent parts well and show good rhythmic sense. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls.
98. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 6 to 9. The teachers are good musicians and use their expertise well for demonstration and illustrating their explanations. They manage the students well, ensuring a productive working atmosphere. The students respond to this and concentrate well when working in groups, often without direct supervision. Work is well matched to the needs of different groups of students. There is a very good focus on playing together with the whole class being involved in a performance. Resources are very well used; for example a Year 8 class performance involved keyboards, synthesiser, amplified bass and rhythm guitars, flutes, various percussion instruments and microphone for the vocalists. Assessment is insufficiently used to influence lesson planning and students should be made more aware of how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels. The current reorganisation of the facilities means that there is insufficient use of ICT at present.
99. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory overall. The head of department provides a good role model but the division of his responsibilities between the school and the neighbouring college increasingly militates against effective leadership and management. With the development and growth of music in the college the time spent by the head of department in the school has been substantially reduced. The effects are felt most in such areas as extra-curricular activities and instrumental work, which are insufficiently developed. The accommodation in the school is unsatisfactory. Although at present the school is able to use

the facilities of the college for some lessons, which eases the situation, the main room is too small and there are insufficient practice rooms for group work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Above average standards have been maintained and the staffing situation has been stabilised, which has improved continuity.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students benefit from expert and enthusiastic teaching by subject specialists.
- A range of extra curricular physical activities and games is well attended.
- Achievement is good in Years 6 to 8, and for many students in Year 9.
- There are limited strategies to deal with disinterested, poorly motivated students in Year 9.
- There is good inclusion of students who have special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities.
- There is a lack of information from partner primary schools on students' abilities and attainment.

Commentary

100. The standards reached at the end of Year 6 are in line with national expectations. As no information is received from partner schools on students' experience of physical activities, the department carries out its own assessment procedure during the first term. In Year 6, students benefit from being taught by knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist subject teachers, so students' progress and achievement are good. Students understand why it is important to warm up before vigorous activities which they do effectively, safely, and independently. Throughout the school an emphasis is placed on the importance of a healthy, active life style. Students understand the effects of exercise and keep a personal record of physical tests they carry out. This gives them an appreciation of how and why their personal fitness improves. By the end of Year 6 most students are competent swimmers, and the few who are not receive additional lessons.
101. In 2003 standards at the end of Year 9 were above national expectations. Evidence from school data, observation of lessons, and discussions with teachers indicate that for the current Year 9 students, standards are in line with expectations and achievement is satisfactory. The majority of students are enthusiastic, enjoy lessons, make good progress and achieve well. However, despite teachers' efforts to interest and encourage students, a significant number, whilst willing to take part in lessons, do not always exert themselves fully. The department lacks an effective strategy for dealing with these particular disinterested, poorly motivated students, although teachers are successful at managing the normal range of students' behaviour.
102. The situation in Years 7 and 8 is better, and students' achievement in these years is good. Students develop the understanding, skills, techniques, and strategies that enable them to participate confidently in physical activities and games. In learning how to throw a javelin safely and skilfully, Year 8 students displayed high levels of concentration, followed the teacher's instructions carefully, and performed well. Students with special educational needs are fully involved in all lessons. Their individual requirements are well known to the staff and very effective support is provided when necessary. They make at least good, and often very good, progress.
103. The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on learning. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The range of the teachers' individual expertise provides well-informed and specialised teaching. Activities are well-planned and appropriate so that skills, knowledge, and techniques are developed logically. Students are introduced to and use the specialist

vocabulary that is applicable to the task or activity on which they are working. The teachers' extensive knowledge of each student fosters good relationships which help provide an environment that is caring, safe, and conducive to learning. Behaviour is good because most students respect the teachers' efforts to help them. Any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with firmly and fairly, with minimum disruption to the lesson. Assessment procedures are effective overall but are still not sufficiently refined for students to clearly understand what is required of them to effect improvement. The teachers give freely of their time both at lunchtime and after school to provide a variety of well attended physical activities and games where students can further develop their interests and expertise.

104. Leadership of the department is satisfactory, and management is good. The co-ordinator for physical education has accurately identified those areas needing improvement. Some plans lack detail. He provides good support to members of the department by sharing his expertise and offering sound advice and guidance. The programme of regular observations has successfully improved teaching, but monitoring now needs to be more rigorous with a greater focus on learning and achievement. Teachers and the co-ordinator work closely together in organising and managing the tasks necessary for the department's smooth running.
105. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, with particular improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Teaching and learning were observed in personal, social and health education (PHSE) and work sampled within class. Of the eight lessons seen three were in Year 6 and five in Years 7 to 9. Years 6 and 9 were undertaking modules on sex education, Year 7 were working on personal skills development and Year 8 were exploring human relationships with animals and animal rights.

The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good. Overall, it was good, and students achieved well. The teaching of sex education was undertaken sensitively, with appropriate ground rules being established for discussion, and a good awareness of different students' levels of readiness for the topic. Relationships were very good, allowing the subject to be explored with the minimum of embarrassment. Students generally responded maturely and made good gains in knowledge and understanding. Information was presented clearly and straightforwardly, and there were usually good opportunities for discussion. There was good involvement of the school nurse in a Year 9 lesson on contraception. In one Year 6 lesson, complicated instructions for assembling a cut-out of the baby in the womb were not sufficiently well sequenced to allow the students to get the most out of the activity. In discussion, the students showed good knowledge of the development of the baby in the womb from their previous learning in the area.

Most of the teaching was well planned, activities were varied and pitched at the right level for the students. Occasionally, the material provided to form tutors was not sufficiently challenging. In one Year 7 class, where attitudes and achievement were unsatisfactory, students could not see the relevance of the somewhat mechanical tasks they were expected to undertake in recognising personal skills. In Year 8, students enthusiastically undertook work on animal rights. In one lesson where teaching was very good there was very lively discussion, well informed by a range of information presented by the teacher and a deputy headteacher who was invited to participate. By the end of the lesson students were able to express and justify views about the human exploitation of animals, and had significantly developed their understanding of the moral issues involved.

The area is well co-ordinated. Statutory requirements in respect of sex and relationship education, drugs education, and careers education and guidance are met.

Citizenship is taught in modules within PHSE. No teaching was observed during inspection, as no modules were in progress. The area is well led and co-ordinated by a deputy headteacher and heads of year. Statutory requirements are met. The subject is effectively assessed through progress files

which are updated following each unit of work. The progress file is a good means of recording a wide range of citizenship-related activities that supplement the teaching modules. Assessment includes helpful self-evaluation by students, and is closely related to the programmes of study. Attainment and progress is reported in each of Years 7, 8 and 9.

Subject areas also contribute to the citizenship programme, and evidence of this was seen during inspection. In history the subject material was well used to promote moral debates and to help students understand the nature of citizenship. Examples were seen in Year 7 lessons where the Norman Conquest raised issues of justifying the right to be king and also in Year 9 lessons where the role of the electorate in supporting a government going to war was discussed.

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	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
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	3
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	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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