

INSPECTION REPORT

TRENTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 124388

Headteacher: Miss E Merryman

Lead inspector: Mr I Hodgkinson

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th February 2004

Inspection number: 258839

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	743 pupils
School address:	Allerton Road Trentham Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST4 8PQ
Telephone number:	01782 234534
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Findley

Date of previous inspection: May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school primarily serves the suburban wards of Trentham and Hanford, to the south of Stoke-on-Trent, where there is a mix of socio-economic conditions; Trentham is relatively affluent, Hanford relatively poor. Historically, the school has been one of Stoke's highest performing state schools. It takes nearly all of the students from its two local primary schools, and has also drawn nearly a third of its students from across the city. Numbers on roll have declined markedly, however. The proportion of students leaving before the usual time of transfer has been high, and numbers of those joining have been below average. Significant teacher redundancies were made at the end of the last academic year as a means of preventing a large forecast budget deficit.

The decline in numbers was accompanied by a significant fall in standards of attainment. To arrest this decline, there has been a great deal of recent change in the school. The key problem was seen as student behaviour, which had declined to the extent that it was adversely affecting learning in many areas and making relationships unpleasant. Many steps have been taken to address this, including extensive multi-agency work through the Behaviour Improvement Programme. The *Excellence in Cities* programme has given a prominent role to the mentoring of students, and has promoted many positive links with the local community.

Since the last inspection, the proportions of students with special educational needs and of those entitled to free school meals have increased, and they are, along with the 2.1 per cent of students with statements of special educational need, now in line with the national average. The proportion for whom English is not their first language has also increased and is now above average, although only one student is at an early stage of English acquisition. These proportions were all below average at the time of the last inspection. Those with special educational needs requiring action beyond that which can be provided solely by the school mostly have emotional or behavioural difficulties, and some have specific or moderate learning difficulties. Ninety-two per cent of the school's students are White British. Many other minority ethnic groups are represented by small numbers of students. Overall attainment of students on entry to the school, and the socio-economic backgrounds of students, are average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Lead inspector	
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector	
30888	Ms A Higginbotham	Team inspector	Mathematics
28199	Mr P Lawley	Team inspector	English
18076	Mr H Dodd	Team inspector	Science
10209	Mr V Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design
1782	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology
22849	Dr R Catlow	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
4317	Mr K Madrell	Team inspector	History
16950	Mrs C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
22501	Mrs S Jones	Team inspector	Music
32241	Ms J Rundle	Team inspector	Physical education
1578	Mrs M Sinclair	Team inspector	Religious education
13101	Mr M Kell	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

After a period of considerable decline in standards, Trentham High School has begun to improve again, with GCSE results much better in 2003 than in 2002. The school is still underachieving because national test and GCSE results are still too low and students underachieve in some subjects, but the school's **overall effectiveness, and the value for money it provides, are satisfactory.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the school is being given good direction by the headteacher and senior team in developing and improving its ethos and raising standards of behaviour and achievement;
- there has been considerable underachievement, especially by boys, in national tests and examinations in recent years;
- provision for mathematics, art and design, drama and physical education is good, but provision is unsatisfactory in geography, modern foreign languages and music;
- while overall attendance to school is good, punctuality to school and to lessons is poor. The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of students are unsatisfactory;
- implementation of school policies is inconsistent. In particular, the use of assessment information to show students (including those with special educational needs) how to improve and to monitor their progress, and the arrangements for the performance management of teachers, are unsatisfactory;
- the school's links with the community are strong and support the learning and personal development of students very well;
- the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in Year 11 and for information and communication technology (ICT) across subjects.

Improvement over the last year has been substantial but, overall, the school has made unsatisfactory improvement since its last inspection in 1998. Relative standards have fallen, especially at GCSE level. The monitoring of students' progress and the implementation of policies on assessment and marking have not improved, and hold down standards in some subjects. The library and ICT have been underused in developing students' independent study skills. The proportions of good and very good teaching are, however, noticeably stronger now.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			Similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Standards achieved overall are unsatisfactory. In Year 9 national tests, students' results have, in recent years, been in line with the national average but below, or well below, the average for similar schools. Science results have been rising and English results falling. Current overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Boys' GCSE results have declined significantly since 1999, although girls' results have been above average. Overall, results in 2003 improved on 2002 and met the national average, but were well below the average for similar schools and showed unsatisfactory progress from Year 9 tests. Overall, achievement by Year 11 is unsatisfactory, and is held back by the poor attitudes to learning of a significant minority. All students gained at least one GCSE in 2003.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory overall. Most students' attitudes to school and to learning are satisfactory, and their understanding of the responsibilities of living in a community is good. Attendance is well above average. Punctuality to school and to lessons is poor, and teachers do not challenge this with sufficient rigour. Behaviour is unsatisfactory, with a high number of temporary exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Good, very good and excellent lessons in many subjects are well structured with engaging activities to enthuse the students, but not all teachers plan lessons well enough to sustain students' interest through long lessons. In too many subjects, marking and assessment are not used well enough to track students' progress and show them how to improve, and to help teachers plan effectively. The curriculum is satisfactory, and supported by very good links with the community and good extra-curricular opportunities, but constrained by the quality of accommodation and resources. Provision for the support, advice and guidance for students is unsatisfactory, because of weaknesses in the assessment and monitoring of students' progress and development. Careers guidance, mentoring support and support for newly arrived students in Year 7 are, however, of a high quality.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior team gives the school good direction. They ensure that the school has remained rigorously focused on its priorities for improvement. Governance is satisfactory; governors provide good scrutiny of the school's work and contribute much to its development, but they have not ensured that there is complete updating of policy, coverage of the National Curriculum or that a daily act of collective worship is fully in place. Management structures are newly in place and, while management is now satisfactory, it has yet to ensure that there is consistent implementation of school policies.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students share the views that teachers expect students to do their best, but many think that the behaviour of students is unsatisfactory. Parents feel the school is well led and is improving, but many feel that they do not get adequate, regular information about the progress of their children. A high proportion of students feels that the school does not take enough account of their views and that assessment of their work is not helpful. Inspectors agree with these views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise students' achievement in national tests and GCSEs, most especially in geography, modern foreign languages and music;
- improve the behaviour and punctuality of students;
- improve marking and assessment practices, and use assessment information more effectively to set targets, monitor performance and guide planning;
- implement performance management arrangements for all staff;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure full entitlement of students to religious education in Year 11, and to the use of ICT in subjects;
- ensure the quality of arrangements for a daily act of collective worship in tutor time;
- complete a disability access plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards achieved overall are unsatisfactory. Students have underachieved in national tests and GCSE examinations in recent years. The performance of boys at GCSE declined significantly between 1999 and 2002. GCSE results, including those of boys, rose from 2002 to 2003, indicating success for the school's improvement strategies, but they were still unsatisfactory given the students' capabilities. Currently, students' achievement is satisfactory overall for Years 7 to 9, although still unsatisfactory by Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been significant underachievement in national tests and GCSE examinations in recent years, particularly for boys.
- Girls' GCSE results have been above average over time.
- There are clear signs of improvement in students' achievement, resulting from better behaviour, more stable staffing and improvements in teaching and learning strategies.
- Students achieve well in art and design and physical education, and very well in drama. They also achieve well in science in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in geography, modern foreign languages and music.
- Lower attainers make good progress, both in Year 9 tests and in getting at least one GCSE at grade A*-G, as a result of effective mentoring and learning support.

Commentary

1. Over time, students' attainment on joining the school in Year 7 is broadly average in terms of the proportion of students getting to the nationally expected Level 4 or above in their Year 6 tests. Attainment on entry is a little above average in some years, including the current Year 7. For the last three years, national test results for Year 9 have been broadly average, when compared with all schools nationally, across English, mathematics and science (although they were above average in science in 2003 and English in 2002). The trend of increase in the school's results has been below the national trend. The main reason for this lower trend is a relative and absolute decline in English test results; mathematics results have kept pace with national improvements over five years and science results have exceeded them. Both English and mathematics results in 2003 were below average at the high National Curriculum Level 7. The school strongly exceeded its statutory targets for test results in mathematics and science in 2003, although fell some way short in English. In all subjects, results have been close to the national average for boys and girls, and there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls over time. In 2003, boys' results overall were slightly better than girls'.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.6 (34.4)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.2 (34.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.7 (33.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 147 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. When compared with schools which take students of a similar level of attainment on entry, the 2003 Year 9 national test results were below average overall. They were below average in English and mathematics, but above average in science. Mathematics results at the higher-

than-expected Level 6 and above were well below average. Comparing the students' performance in these tests to their performance in Year 6 tests three years earlier indicates some underachievement; the rate of students' improvement (or 'value added') was below the average for all schools, and well below the average for similar schools. Test results in 2002, in comparison with similar schools had been better; they were above average for all subjects and well above average in English. More detailed analysis of 2003 test results indicates some underachievement at higher levels of performance for boys and girls in English and mathematics. The lowest attainers in Year 6 tests improved most in their Year 9 tests.

3. Currently, inspectors judge attainment by Year 9 to be average overall and achievement to be broadly satisfactory. This is the case for mathematics and English. In science, art and design, drama and physical education, attainment is above average; students achieve well in these subjects because they are enthused by well-planned lessons. In science and art and design, effective assessment systems help teachers plan and show students what they need to do to improve. In French, Spanish and geography, too many students underachieve because of unsatisfactory teaching and poor use of assessment to help teachers plan and students improve. Students are also not achieving high enough standards in music because of recent staffing and accommodation difficulties which the school has now largely addressed. In other subjects, students' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is below average in design and technology, but students' achievement is sound given their capability in design and technology on entry to the school. Boys' achievement is being well supported in Years 7 to 9 by behaviour improvement strategies, such as boy-girl seating arrangements in classes, and mentoring support.
4. At GCSE, the proportion of students gaining five grades A*-C fell to 42 per cent in 2002, having been 56 per cent in 2000. Results improved so that 49 per cent gained five GCSE grades A*-C in 2003; this was in line with the national average although short of the school's statutory target of 52 per cent. The target of 99 per cent to get one grade A*-G was achieved, as all students gained at least one GCSE, thanks in some part to the role played by learning mentors in supporting achievement of lower attainers.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	49 (42)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	33.9 (34.7)	32.4 (34.7)

There were 153 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. This rate of improvement in GCSE pass rates marks a considerable improvement, but the results still indicate underachievement for the students concerned. In relation to schools whose students attained similar scores in their Year 9 tests, these results were well below average. The students' progress, from their Year 9 test scores to their GCSE results (their 'value added') was below average.
6. Girls' GCSE results have improved year-on-year in recent years. In 2003, girls' results were well above the national average, and they have been above the national average over the last three years. Boys' results, however, declined continuously and substantially to 2002. In 1999, boys' results were above average; by 2002 they were below average. In 2003, they had recovered to a little below, but close to, the national average.

7. For individual subjects at GCSE, performance has varied considerably. The stronger performers have been art and design, biology, drama and history. Students did well in physical education in 2003, especially relative to their performance in other subjects. Girls did well in business studies and in statistics in 2003. Weaker performers have been design and technology, ICT, French, Spanish, geography and religious education. Mathematics results have also been a little below average over time. Relative to other subjects, students, especially boys, did poorly in English literature in 2003.
8. Inspection evidence shows that some of these relative strengths and weaknesses remain in Years 10 and 11. Students continue to underachieve in French, Spanish, geography and music, for the same reasons as underachievement occurs in these subjects in Years 7 to 9 (see paragraph 3). Achievement is also unsatisfactory in religious education in Year 11 because half of the year group do not follow the course, and the achievement of those that do has been disrupted by timetabling and staffing difficulties which are now largely resolved. In design and technology, while achievement overall in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory because strategies to improve performance are yielding success, there are significant numbers of boys who underachieve in Year 11 because of poor attitudes to their work. Changes to the structure of courses for ICT have improved standards and achievement considerably for Years 10 and 11. In art and design and physical education, attainment in GCSE courses is above average and achievement good; standards are high and achievement is very good in drama. In other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, attainment is average and achievement is satisfactory.
9. Generally, students of all ages with special educational needs achieve as well as other students in the different subjects of the curriculum. In English, students with special educational needs achieve better than their classmates, but in geography and modern foreign languages they do not achieve as well. In these last two subjects, the classes are of mixed ability and students with special educational needs are not supported by learning support assistants, students do not make sufficient progress because their behaviour and attitudes disrupt learning or because they are not provided with activities that match their needs and abilities. While there has been some underachievement by higher attainers in recent tests and examinations, able and talented pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, and do well in sport.
10. The school has 46 students on the register of students with English as an additional language, of whom only one is at an early stage of learning English. Five other students have some difficulty with English, mostly in writing and reading. The student at an early stage of learning English is making good progress, considering the short time he has been in the country. The other five students make satisfactory progress within the groups they are in. All other students achieve either satisfactorily or better. A small number of these students performed very well in GCSE examinations, and in Year 9 tests in English, mathematics and science. The school has not kept up-to-date records of the achievement of minority ethnic students, and in particular of those with English as an additional language as a group, and is, therefore, unaware of how well these students achieve in relation to other students in the school.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes of students are satisfactory. The behaviour overall is unsatisfactory because of the poor behaviour of a significant minority of students and a high level of exclusions. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of students is satisfactory. The attendance of students is good but punctuality is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The attitudes of the majority of students towards their learning are good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent; but the poor attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of students adversely affects their own and others' learning.

- The school is committed to raising standards of behaviour within the school, but not all teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour management procedures or insist on high standards of behaviour within lessons.
- The number of students excluded for a fixed term is very high.
- Procedures to monitor attendance are very good.
- The punctuality of students to morning tutorial sessions and lessons is poor.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities to develop students' understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Commentary

11. Students' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Most students are interested in their studies and are able to sustain their concentration; however, teachers have to work hard to maintain this. Students respond well in lessons where the teaching is interesting and exciting, where they are challenged to achieve and where the range of activities keeps them actively learning throughout. This was frequently observed in drama, mathematics, art and design and physical education lessons. In these lessons, students' attitudes are often good and, on occasions, excellent. Where teaching is less effective and students' interest is allowed to deteriorate, they demonstrate a lack of enthusiasm for their studies with the consequent lack of progress in learning during the lesson. However, even in unsatisfactory lessons students' attitudes often remained positive. There is a significant number of students throughout the school who show an indifference to education and teachers have to work extremely hard to motivate them. These students are very dependent on teachers in lessons and often teachers have to revert to tightly-structured lessons to keep them engaged in learning. This reduces the development of all students' ability to become independent learners and opportunities for taking responsibility for managing their own learning. The recently introduced vocational and work-related curriculum taught at the college has had some success in addressing the negative attitudes of some students in Year 10.
12. The behaviour of students is unsatisfactory. The majority of students are well behaved and courteous towards others. However, by their own admission, when teaching is dull and lessons are too long they deliberately misbehave. There is a significant minority of students who do not behave well. In lessons, their behaviour often disrupts the learning of other students. This reflects the concerns expressed by both students and parents prior to the inspection. There is a strong commitment by the school to improving behaviour and new procedures have been introduced to move the responsibility for routine behaviour management to subject departments. However, these procedures are not consistently applied by all teaching staff. Use of the Quiet Room, to which students are sent when their behaviour is not manageable within lessons, is not monitored rigorously enough to ensure appropriate use of this facility, or for teachers that may need behaviour management training.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	688	184	3
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	2	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	8	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	9	0
Information not obtained	10	4	1

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

13. The school has recently been successful in its bid to become part of the Behaviour Improvement Project and this has enabled a Learning Support Centre to be set up in January to improve standards of behaviour within the school. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this, or other strategies the school has recently put in place. Learning mentors are very effective in providing high quality support to individual students with behavioural difficulties. The number of students excluded from the school last year was high compared with national data and has shown little improvement during the current academic year. The high number of students excluded during the spring and summer terms can be attributed to students failing to meet the higher standards of behaviour required by the recently appointed headteacher and senior team. It is anticipated that the Inclusion Promotion Centre will support students who would otherwise be subject to fixed-term exclusion. It will enable them to keep up with their studies whilst staff work with them to analyse the reasons for their poor behaviour and help them develop strategies to avoid a repetition.
14. The spiritual development of students is satisfactory. The religious education syllabus, and teaching, provide good opportunities for the spiritual development of students and opportunities exist in some subjects, such as music, to enhance this feature of personal development. However, other subjects such as English, history and geography have not clearly identified this aspect in their teaching and opportunities are missed. The moral and social development of students is satisfactory. Students are aware of right and wrong actions and most have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Most are able to demonstrate an understanding of the effect of their actions on others but this is not always evident in lessons where some disrupt the learning of others quite deliberately. Opportunities to show initiative and accept responsibility are limited. Year 11 students act as prefects but are designated duties by teaching staff. Year 11 students do offer good support to younger students in paired reading

activities. The school council is about to be reconvened. Students' cultural development is satisfactory. They are aware of their own cultural heritage but less so of those that differ from their own. Whilst some subjects, such as religious education, music and art and design, have a well-planned element of multicultural education in lessons, other subjects have not approached this in a systematic way. There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop an awareness and appreciation of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exists in this country that will prepare them to live in a multicultural society. Assemblies are often of a high quality, and a 'Daily Reflection' in tutor groups offers some good opportunities for spiritual reflection. However, the quality of the 'Daily Reflection' session varies between tutors and often little time is given to discussion or reflection; the school does not comply with the statutory requirements to have a daily act of collective worship.

Attendance

15. The attendance of students is good and well above the national average for all schools. The school has recently invested in a full-time education welfare officer as part of the Behaviour Improvement Project. Although overall attendance levels are high there are significant numbers of students whose attendance is below 90 per cent. The education welfare officer and learning mentors work hard with students and their families to raise the attendance of this group. The majority of parents are supportive of the school in ensuring the high attendance of their children. The punctuality of students both to school and lessons is poor. Expectations that students should arrive on time amongst teaching staff are not high enough and too many teachers are unwilling to challenge students.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.4	School data	1.8
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and the quality of lessons has improved since the last inspection. The school offers a curriculum of satisfactory breadth and quality, although there is a lack of balance in the timetable. There is a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Care, guidance and support for students are unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in the assessment and monitoring of students' progress and development and the limited involvement of students in decision-making.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Students' learning is better in Years 7 to 9 because poor attitudes to learning hold back progress for some, especially boys, in Year 11. Assessment of students and the use of assessment information are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of lessons has improved overall since the last inspection, with more lessons that are good or better and fewer that are unsatisfactory.
- Good, very good and excellent lessons in many subjects are well structured, with engaging activities to enthuse the students.
- Teaching and learning are very good in drama, and good in mathematics, art and design, physical education, and in science in Years 7 to 9.

- In too many subjects, marking and assessment are not used well enough to track students' progress and show them how to improve, and to help teachers plan effectively.
- Not all teachers plan lessons well enough to sustain students' interest through long lessons.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in French, Spanish and geography.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to help them to learn in many subjects.

Commentary

16. Difficulties in teacher recruitment, and in the stability of staffing of subjects in recent years, adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and caused difficulties for the implementation of policies to raise standards. Inspection evidence suggests that the appointment of appropriately qualified teachers in many subjects is now having a very positive effect on improving teaching and learning. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has fallen since the last inspection, whilst the proportion of lessons judged good or better has risen. Before the inspection, parents and students had suggested that the frequent use of supply teachers in mathematics led to poor behaviour and unsatisfactory lessons, but recent staffing stability has improved overall teaching quality; mathematics lessons are now mostly good and often very good or excellent.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 100 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (4)	20 (20)	39 (39)	30 (30)	7 (7)	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.

17. There is a considerable variation in the quality of teaching and learning between subjects. This variation is strongly linked to the quality of teachers' planning, and to the quality and use of assessment. The school has long 70-minute lessons, and teachers do not all plan well enough to keep up the pace of learning for all groups through these lessons. Where such planning is good, and where students are very clear about the purposes of their activities, students apply themselves well and make good progress. This is often the case in drama, where teaching quality is particularly high, and in mathematics, art and design and physical education, where teaching and learning are good. In science, the application of the principles of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to plan and structure lessons has led to good teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. Where there are weaknesses in planning and too narrow a range of activities to engage and motivate all groups of students, learning is unsatisfactory, the pace of learning falls and, in these cases, students' behaviour deteriorates. There is a strong link between the quality of teaching and the standard of students' behaviour in this school, although some students in Year 11 have more generally poor attitudes to learning. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall in French, Spanish and geography, but shortcomings in planning for lessons lead to variations in teaching quality in a number of subjects, including English and design and technology.
18. There are weaknesses in the quality of marking and assessment in many subjects, including geography, history, French, Spanish, music, physical education, religious education and citizenship. Often, marking fails to identify the levels at which students are working in relation to national standards, and to indicate what students need to do to improve. The use of assessment data to measure and track the performance of individuals, specific groups of students, subjects, classes, teachers and the whole school is weak. Such shortcomings in the use of assessment information contribute to the weaknesses in teachers' planning, identified in the previous paragraph, because the objectives of activities and lessons are less clear (to students and to teachers) when specific targets for achievement have not been identified. Subjects where satisfactory or better assessment arrangements are in place, including mathematics, science, and especially art and design, are those in which the quality of teaching and learning is generally better.

19. The quality of students' learning is constrained in many subjects by the lack of opportunity for them to use ICT to carry out a range of tasks, including research and communication. Students' literacy skills are average, and they show good speaking and listening skills in a number of subjects, but writing suffers too frequently from poor spelling, punctuation and presentation. There is not enough consistency between teachers in their expectations of the standards of students' writing. Students' skills in applying number to the solution of problems in a range of subjects are satisfactory.
20. In classes and subjects where students have been placed in sets, those with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily. Teachers provide activities that build on students' prior learning, enabling them to acquire new skills and understanding in a planned and progressive way. At these times, teachers' management of students' behaviour is satisfactory and, therefore, time is used effectively and efficiently. Teachers are supported well in their work by learning support assistants; they make an important contribution to promoting learning. However, there are far too few learning support assistants for all students who need support to receive it at the appropriate time. Consequently, in a number of lessons no additional support is available and classes may have students spanning a wide ability range. The most skilled teachers manage and organise these sessions in a way that enables all students to learn but, at other times, the needs of students are so great and varied that their attitudes and behaviour disrupt learning.
21. The quality of teaching and learning of students with English as an additional language is generally satisfactory. However, there has been no recent whole-school training for teachers in the language needs of these students. Because the numbers of these students is relatively low in each year and teaching group, teachers are generally aware of students' language difficulties, and teaching is mostly satisfactory. In one lesson, however, a student was seen to be struggling to read and understand the level of English expected of him. In a few cases, where students with English as an additional language have special educational needs, they are provided with support from learning support assistants, although these have no training in the students' language needs.

The curriculum

The curriculum has satisfactory breadth and quality, but some shortcomings in terms of balance. The quality of education is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Overall, the quality of accommodation and resources is unsatisfactory at present, but clear plans are in place to make appropriate improvements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, especially in sport.
- The curriculum and careers programme prepares students well for working life and further education.
- The curriculum is enhanced by very good links with the local community.
- The school's timetable imposes a number of constraints which impact adversely on learning.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in Year 11, for the use of ICT in subjects, and for the daily act of collective worship.
- Accommodation and resources are currently unsatisfactory, and there is no disability access plan, although plans are in place to make necessary improvements.

Commentary

22. The curriculum offers satisfactory breadth and quality. Its key strengths are in Years 10 and 11, where it offers three separate sciences or a combined science programme; a broad range of ICT and business courses, including applied GCSE ICT; and a well-managed work-related programme with Stoke-on-Trent College involving 14 Year 10 students out of school for two whole days on pre-NVQ courses in a range of vocational settings. Set alongside a high quality programme of careers education, advice and guidance, and a citizenship curriculum which is enhanced by very strong links with the local community, the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 offers good preparation for working life and further education. There are weaknesses in the breadth of the curriculum on offer, such that little music is taught in Year 7 and none in Year 10, although able and talented Year 10 students can join an extra-curricular class, through which some can take GCSE a year early. There is no history taught in Year 10. Only one language can be studied in Years 7 to 9 and only one will be available in the school when Spanish is phased out this year. There is a very small uptake of modern foreign languages in Year 10, where the subject, like design and technology, has been made optional, thereby pre-empting the change in statutory requirements. Not all students are taught religious education, as the law requires, in Year 11. Whilst the school has made good efforts to provide a daily act of collective worship through its assemblies, and daily reflection time in tutor groups, the programme in some tutor groups does not have a sufficient spiritual content or offer sufficient opportunity for reflection.
23. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education, which addresses many issues relevant to young people in the local community, and which has input from many local community groups with appropriate expertise. Relationships education is given a strong focus, but drugs education does not figure prominently enough in the planned programme.
24. The school has an unusual day of four 70-minute periods. The long lessons cause difficulties for some teachers in planning sufficient activities to keep all students fully engaged; they contribute to some unsatisfactory learning and poor behaviour, although many teachers manage the time in lessons well. Timetable arrangements lead to many subjects having two long lessons on a single day, and this, too, adversely affects the motivation of some students. The timetable also creates some imbalance in the curriculum, so that core subjects of English and mathematics have relatively low amounts of teaching time in relation to other schools and, whilst they cover the appropriate curriculum, the shortage of time may affect the depth of treatment of topics and hold back results, especially at Year 9. ICT lessons, by contrast, have a very large proportion of time in Years 7 to 9 and, while this benefits the development of students' ICT skills, they would benefit from many more opportunities to apply those skills in other subjects.
25. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. There are many opportunities in sport and drama, and students attain high standards of performance, including representative sporting honours at international level. Parents and students spoke highly of the number of trips and visits which enable students to learn outside of school, and students are introduced to many local clubs and societies through their contact with the school. In addition to revision clinics and study support activities, there are subject-related clubs such as the Technology Club which involves students in competitive design work. As part of the *Excellence in Cities* programme, the school's identified able and talented students are able to participate in a good range of challenging activities organised through a local cluster of schools. Within the curriculum, provision for the able and talented is improving as subjects are encouraged to plan more specifically to meet their needs.
26. There have been significant improvements and refurbishments to some areas of the school, including some science laboratories. There remain, however, many shortcomings in the quality of accommodation and resources which have an adverse effect on learning and the behaviour of students. The school has been successful in winning funding through the New Opportunities Fund for a new sports hall, although the go-ahead for the project has been subject to some

delay. Currently, and until the new sports hall is built, indoor facilities for physical education – including changing facilities – are poor. In order to provide indoor facilities for physical education, the school has to use up other facilities, including the dining hall, and such dual use is unsatisfactory both for managing the accommodation and creating a pleasant social space for diners. Accommodation for design and technology is poor and provides a further barrier to raising standards in that subject. Around the school, the site presents some difficulties for monitoring behaviour; there are a number of very narrow corridors and staircases, and rather concealed entrances to toilets and cloakrooms. The school's policy of keeping toilets locked to prevent their misuse, with a key available on request, has caused some consternation among parents. The school has clear plans for improving accommodation and is currently working on a disability access plan with its local education authority (LEA).

27. The school library had just moved to a new location at the time of the inspection. It is a very pleasant and exciting space, well equipped with new computers and already well used by a number of groups for learning. While the library's stock of books is increasing it remains low and there are as yet no established procedures for lending books. Its impact on raising the literacy of most students is, therefore, very limited. The school has, however, devoted library resources to the supply of non-fiction books to each classroom for its *Extended Reading In Class* scheme for quiet reading in afternoon tutor periods, aimed at raising literacy. This is well managed by tutors. In most subjects, available learning resources are satisfactory, but the school's ICT resources do not support learning well. While the school does have fewer computers than the national average, computer rooms are not heavily booked, and this would indicate that teachers in subjects are not always taking sufficient advantage of available resources. There are, however, shortages of specialist ICT facilities, especially in science and design and technology. In drama, where standards of teaching and learning are high, students cannot take a full range of options on the GCSE course because there is a lack of technical equipment.
28. After a period of considerable instability in staffing, there is now a good match of well-qualified teachers to the curriculum. Support staff also make a good contribution to students' learning. In design and technology and science, technicians contribute well to the smooth running of the departments. At present, there is only a part-time technician in ICT who has insufficient time to maintain the computer hardware and manage the school's network as required. Likewise, there is an insufficient number of learning support assistants to give adequate classroom support to students with special educational needs.
29. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs, and for those for whom English is an additional language, is satisfactory, as they have the same opportunities as other students. The limited literacy skills of a number of students with special educational needs frequently restrict the effectiveness with which they are able to benefit from the curriculum on offer. The school now provides supplementary sessions during tutor time and before school to help these students. Focused handwriting sessions and paired reading time, during which Year 11 students offer their help willingly, are important developments in raising overall standards.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' **care, welfare, health and safety** is **satisfactory**. Arrangements to deploy support, advice and guidance to students based on the monitoring of their performance is unsatisfactory because of shortcomings in the collection and use of assessment data. The involvement of students, through seeking, valuing and acting on their views, is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment information is not available on a regular basis so students can be tracked to identify potential underachievement.
- Induction arrangements for students coming into the school are very good.
- The careers guidance students receive is very good and prepares them well for the next stage of education.
- The annual academic review days involving tutors, parents and students enable targets to be set to help students improve their work.
- Learning mentors provide high quality support to students referred to them and have been successful in increasing the number of students who gain at least one pass at GCSE.
- Students' views are sought from time to time, but they do not feel their opinions have much impact.

Commentary

30. The arrangements for the induction of students from primary school are very good. There is a carefully constructed programme of visits to the school to familiarise students. A learning mentor works with pupils in primary schools the year prior to transition and builds effective bridges between the two phases of education. Students who feel less secure about transition are given additional visits and often allocated community mentors as additional support.
31. Pastoral teams have been reorganised this academic year from a house-based system to heads of year. The change is aimed appropriately at improving the quality of support and guidance available to students. Heads of year have fewer students to support than heads of house and can give that support more effectively. Roles and responsibilities within the pastoral teams are still being clarified. There are inconsistencies across tutor groups and the quality of tutorial sessions is not rigorously monitored. Lateness in the morning is not consistently challenged. Academic review days when tutors have individual interviews with parents and students, provide an effective opportunity for progress to be discussed and targets set to improve standards of work. However, the lack of an assessment system that enables regular monitoring of students to identify underachievement is unsatisfactory and does not allow appropriate support strategies to be put in place early enough. Individual subjects, such as mathematics and art and design, have devised their own assessment systems and students are clear about their level of achievement and how they are progressing towards their predicted grades. Year 11 students were given target GCSE grades to compare with current performance during the month before the inspection. However, many students when interviewed had little knowledge of their potential grades for the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests or at GCSE, and had set their own targets to ensure they can access the post-16 courses they want.
32. Reviews of students' statements of special educational needs are carried out in line with statutory requirements. Individual education plans (IEPs) for students, however, have deficiencies. In particular, the targets set in one plan may have no links whatsoever with those set in the previous or subsequent plan. Therefore, there is no continuous and systematic approach to addressing students' needs through integrated IEPs that link together over time, based on careful assessment and monitoring of progress.
33. Learning mentors work very effectively with students who are referred to them for support, and have been particularly successful in helping to increase the number of students achieving at least one pass at GCSE. Multi-agency meetings take place on a regular basis and this helps to co-ordinate the support offered to students and increases the range of options open to the school.
34. The student at an early stage of learning English has a small amount of appropriate specialist support provided by the LEA outside school hours. In addition, he receives some support from a learning mentor during school hours, but no in-class support.

35. The careers guidance that students receive is very good. There is a well-planned and co-ordinated programme that is effectively supported by the school-based Connexions personal advisor and prepares students well for the next phase of education or the world of work. Interviews with Connexions are arranged for students in Year 9 who may benefit from alternative curriculum arrangements, such as college placement. Students benefit from the Wider Participation Programme organised by *Excellence in Cities* to raise their aspirations towards entering higher education.
36. Procedures to ensure the health, safety and welfare of students are satisfactory but there is an absence of protective clothing in design and technology. Provision for child protection is satisfactory; key staff and new staff have received appropriate training but there are no guidelines in the staff handbook, or recent whole-staff training sessions to keep up awareness of this important issue. There is insufficient filtering of the school Internet system to stop students entering some inappropriate sites.
37. Students' views are sought from time to time, but they do not perceive them as having much effect. The lack of an active school council impedes their ability to become involved in the day-to-day life of the school or provide a forum for them to express their views. All Year 11 students automatically become prefects, losing their status if they misbehave, but the day-to-day organisation of their duties is by teaching staff and some feel they are being used at break and lunchtimes to provide cover for teaching staff rather than valued for the work they do.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is satisfactory. The quality of the school's links with the community is very good. The school's links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has extensive links with community organisations which make very positive contributions to students' learning.
- Transition arrangements for students from primary to secondary school are very good.
- Links with other schools, colleges and universities are effective in raising the aspirations of students.
- Forty per cent of parents who returned the questionnaire felt they were not well informed about their children's progress. The quality of information given at academic review days varied between tutorial staff.
- A significant number of parents felt that the school did not seek or take account of their views.

Commentary

38. Links with the community are very good and support and enrich students' learning opportunities. The community links co-ordinator organises community involvement to support a range of pastoral and curriculum areas, such as personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons. Year 11 students, for example, had the opportunity for discussion with their local Member of Parliament. Currently, students are involved with the development of Hanford Park as a community resource. Extensive use is made of community mentors to support individual students. Members of the community have been actively involved in the discussions over the proposed community sports hall.

39. The school's partnership with other schools, colleges and universities is good. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary school are very good. Students interviewed in Year 7 felt settled and at ease in the school. A learning mentor works well with local primary schools to ease the transition process. Links with both Keele and Staffordshire Universities have been developed through the Able and Talented and Six Towns Projects. Students are introduced to higher education and are given the opportunity to sample university life.
40. The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is satisfactory. Concerns were expressed through the OFSTED questionnaire about the standard of behaviour within the school, the information parents received about progress, how they can help their children and the fact that their views were not systematically sought or taken into account. Parents' concerns were largely borne out by the inspection findings. Parents receive an annual report and have the opportunity to attend an Academic Review Day with form tutors and their child. They say that the quality of these meetings is variable and depends on individual tutors having the knowledge of the personal and academic progress of each child. Marking of work does not always give parents a clear indication of students' progress, and updates on progress between annual reports are not routinely available because assessment procedures are not in place to allow this. The views of parents and other stakeholders were sought before the school drew up its five-year strategic plan in 2003. Good information evenings are held for parents at points of transition, for those joining in Year 7 and leaving in Year 11.
41. Behaviour Improvement Programme funding is providing positive support for parents in the form of courses such as SHARE family learning and the Positive Parenting Programme. Learning mentors tutor on these courses alongside senior staff and are involved with effective home-school liaison when difficulties with students arise. They play an important role in this aspect of the school's work. An inaugural meeting was held in the autumn term to re-establish the Parent Teacher Association.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior team provide good leadership in establishing clear values and setting the school's direction. The leadership of other key staff, a number of whom are new to the school, is satisfactory. Management of the school is satisfactory. Although financial management is good, there are inconsistent practices in other aspects of management, especially in assessment and monitoring, across the school. Governance is satisfactory but some statutory requirements are not fully met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher sets a clear direction and guides the school well in its short-term and long-term development and is supported well by the senior team. They have shown strong resolve in implementing policies to address the school's underachievement.
- Arrangements for performance management of teachers are unsatisfactory, and there are shortcomings in the use of assessment data and monitoring systems.
- Governors provide good support and expertise.
- Funding is used well to support curriculum developments.
- There are good arrangements for the induction of new staff.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirements for religious education in Year 11, and statutory requirements for ICT are not met in all subjects across Years 7 to 11.

Commentary

42. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that she has effectively communicated to staff, governors, parents and the wider community. The strategic plan (2003-08) identifies two principle aims: the raising of achievement of all students; and the development of a fully integrated and thriving community school. These are appropriate. The plan offers a concise and clear analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses; it is based on broad consultation with the major stakeholders. The short-term school improvement plan (2003-04) identifies the immediate priorities for improvement. These are also appropriate and demonstrate clear direction for the school.
43. The headteacher is supported well by her senior staff in providing good leadership across the school. The headteacher and her senior team demonstrate the capacity to lead the programme of school improvement. For example, priorities for raising attainment and tackling behaviour, identified in the current school plan, are showing improvement in a short time. Roles and responsibilities on the senior leadership team have recently been revised appropriately to lead and manage the school's plan for improvement.
44. Overall, the management of the school is satisfactory but some areas, such as monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning (at department and whole-school levels), assessment and student tracking and performance management of teachers, are unsatisfactory. These areas have been identified as priorities for development.
45. The arrangements for the performance management of teachers are currently unsatisfactory. A number of teachers have not been reviewed within the last eighteen months. This is mainly due to the high degree of staff changes that have recently taken place but the school must now ensure that all teachers are observed and appropriate targets set. The school provides satisfactory access, both in-house and external, to professional development opportunities for staff and offers good support to teachers who are new to the school. Newly qualified teachers receive sympathetic induction into teaching with appropriate non-contact time, and good monitoring to enable them to make a successful start to their teaching career. The school has a long history of effective involvement in the initial training of teachers. It has close links with several nearby teacher training institutions and plays an important role within the local education authority for the Graduate Training Programme. Satisfactory procedures are in place for the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff.
46. The school regularly reviews aspects of its performance, through a good programme of supported self-review and consultations which have included seeking the views of students, staff and parents. This is used effectively in formulating the school improvement plan and the individual departmental development plans.
47. The leadership and management of most departments are satisfactory. There is good leadership and management in mathematics, science, art and design and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in geography and modern foreign languages. There is a general weakness in the use of performance data. A detailed scrutiny of examination performance between the senior leadership team and heads of department was introduced in the autumn term; this is a positive addition to support departmental evaluation. There is good use and analysis of performance data in design and technology but, in most departments, it is underdeveloped. There is no analysis about the achievement of different ethnic groups or of those students with special educational needs. The use of data to set targets is unsatisfactory.

48. The school's special educational needs co-ordinator remains responsible for overseeing the school's provision, although the special needs department has very recently been incorporated into the learning support centre provision. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and up to date with current thinking and provides satisfactory leadership and management. Opportunities to develop the department further are limited by the co-ordinator's very limited non-teaching time and other commitments. There are shortcomings in some aspects of the whole-school management of special educational needs provision. For instance, there are two very different special educational needs policies in circulation, and the current staff handbook makes no references to special educational needs or individual education plans. The school receives a budget for its work with students with special educational needs, but there are no clear principles that govern how it should be spent. Therefore, the school buys in additional tutorial time from the local education authority's support services for individual and small group work, even though there are too few learning support assistants to provide classroom support as, and when, it is needed. These arrangements are not underpinned by a clear policy that explains such decisions. Similarly, the school needs to develop a clear rationale for placing those students who do not require support additional to that provided by the school, on the special needs register and giving them individual education plans.
49. An assistant headteacher has recently taken over the co-ordination of provision for students with English as an additional language. The school has not kept up-to-date records of the achievement of its minority ethnic students as a group, but is taking steps to rectify this situation. A few students take GCSE examinations in their home language, but the school does not yet analyse closely enough students' levels of literacy in these languages on entry to the school, so that early entry to GCSE in their home language is not considered. Finance has been obtained to support minority ethnic students and those with English as an additional language, and a learning mentor, as yet untrained, has recently been employed. There are insufficient materials to support reading and resources which celebrate the ethnic diversity present in the school.
50. Financial management is good. The school has taken decisive action to bring its finances under control. There are very clear links between planning and spending. A disciplined approach to budgeting ensures that each year the existing curriculum is adequately resourced and there are funds available for developments. Day-to-day management of finances is very careful, and financial reports to governors are well designed to give them exactly the information they require. The school's most recent audit report indicated that overall the school's financial systems were well operated. Recommendations made in the report have now been acted upon. The financial management of the school is successful in applying the principles of best value to its work.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£2,262,748
Total expenditure	£2,246,774
Expenditure per student	£2,988

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	£13,210
Balance carried forward to the next	£13,510

51. The roles and responsibilities of the school's administrative staff have recently been revised. New appointments have ensured more effective support to staff and better communication with parents and the wider community. The school generally runs smoothly and administrative staff are efficient. There are weaknesses in the construction of the school timetable and some classes have a poor balance of their lessons over the week.

52. Governance is satisfactory and governors provide good support for the school's development. They are fully committed to the school's aims and contribute to policies and plans. They are actively involved in setting the major priorities in the development plan. Governors provide a good range of expertise from their own backgrounds and have strong links with the local community. They are developing a better understanding of the school through reports from the headteacher and subject leaders, and from visits. They have a satisfactory knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide challenge as well as strong support. Governors are aware of their statutory duties and have worked hard to address those areas in which requirements are not fully met; work is in progress to improve in all of these matters. Requirements are not fully met for religious education in Year 11, for a daily act of collective worship, and ICT in some subjects across Years 7 to 11.
53. The school has identified three principle aids to raising achievement. The Leadership Incentive Grant has been used successfully to restructure the senior and middle management of the school and to improve the quality of administrative support. *Excellence in Cities* funding is used effectively to promote students' learning through the use of mentors, but its impact on raising the achievement of gifted and talented students has been more limited. The Behaviour Improvement Programme is being implemented and there are early indications that it is having a positive impact on the quality of students' learning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a variety of methods well to hold students' interest and attention.
- Good subject knowledge is used well to introduce students to a wide range of literature.
- Planning and use of time do not extend students fully for the total duration of lessons.
- Insufficient attention is given to overcoming common weaknesses in students' writing skills.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well because of good planning for their needs and effective support by additional staff in the classroom.

Commentary

54. Results in national tests taken at age 14 in 2003 were close to national standards, and have remained so over three years. Girls' performance exceeded boys', as is the case nationally, but both were close to the national profile for their gender. Nevertheless, girls' performance fell from its position in the previous year which was well above the national average for girls. Results were similar to mathematics but below science. Overall results were below those found when compared with other schools, where students have similar levels of attainment on entry to the school.
55. GCSE English results were in line with national averages. Boys and girls were close to the national averages for their gender but, in English literature, boys were much further behind than girls. English literature results were close to the national picture overall. Results have fallen since the last inspection. In both English and English literature, results were below average for those reaching higher grades A* and A.
56. By the end of Year 9, students' standards of speaking, listening and reading are in line with those expected nationally. They answer questions briefly, although they do not regularly speak at length because teachers do not draw them out to their fullest extent. Students read fiction with fascination and enjoyment, although their reading aloud lacks expression and assurance. They understand technical terms such as 'simile' and 'metaphor' and apply them securely to what they read. Standards of writing are as expected nationally. Students write competently about the books and plays they study. They compose simple letters and reports well, although lower attainers' control of tone and style is uncertain. At the same time, the majority of students spell inconsistently. A significant minority do not communicate their ideas clearly to the reader, because they do not use sentences and paragraphs competently. This is because teaching does not identify and give sufficient priority to overcoming limitations in writing skills which are common across the age range.
57. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average. Students understand key features of the books they read in response to teaching, which deploys good subject knowledge to introduce them to a wide range of literature. At this level, they collaborate well to discuss ideas and share each other's understanding in discussions. Higher attainers explain well the social issues underlying what they read, but middle and lower attainers do not develop an understanding of themes and issues beyond recounting basic events and describing the superficial features of characters. Students demonstrate a reasonable grasp of the themes and content of the poetry they

encounter. They also respond well to a wide range of types and styles of literature, ranging from modern novels to nineteenth century poetry.

58. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It has considerable strengths in the teaching of a wide range of English literature. Teachers use a variety of methods which hold students' interest well. They use good subject knowledge to question students and check their understanding. At the same time, planning across the age range does not use available time consistently well to ensure that students are extended fully to learn what they are capable of in lessons. Written work is marked adequately. Students with special educational needs benefit from good planning and the use of additional staff in the classroom who enable them to achieve well. Other students achieve as expected, because teaching is thorough and matched suitably to their level of understanding.
59. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following a period of staffing instability, during which many classes were taught by non-specialists or temporary teachers, systematic planning of lessons for the younger age range has now commenced. It has led to improved teaching and learning. This is well considered to redress the decline in standards and teaching quality since the last inspection. Such developments have been comparatively recent, however, and overall improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Standards of writing across the curriculum are average, whereas speaking and listening are good in several subjects. For instance, in mathematics, physical education and design and technology, teachers promote good discussion work. It underpins students' confidence and ability to explore ideas and specialist terms. In religious education, by contrast, opportunities are missed to extend and deepen understanding even where initial student contributions to classroom discussions are lively. Elsewhere, students lack the practice to order their thoughts before expressing simple ideas to other people in a meaningful way.
61. Good provision is made to help students whose reading is limited. Older students help younger ones well during regular reading sessions. A whole-school initiative is successful in helping students to read non-fiction. The supportive lunchtime clubs are very popular with students who want to read fiction or do extra written work. Writing suffers too frequently from poor spelling, punctuation and presentation. It is not used reliably to explore and organise ideas and to communicate information understandably to the reader. Students' work with computers neglects chances to polish and refine writing. Presentation and handwriting are generally below the level expected, for example in modern foreign languages, and for middle and lower-attaining students in history. These problems persist because teachers' expectations and demands are too low. Students' achievement in writing is less than it should be as a result. On the other hand, where teachers emphasise the need for quality in writing, standards are better. For instance, higher attainers in history use writing well to extend their understanding of ideas. In physical education theory, written work is logical and well organised because teachers insist that students take care and attend to detail in what they write. In chemistry and biology, students benefit from good advice on how to structure their reports. Very good teaching of literacy skills in food technology, extends students' vocabulary, understanding and written skills well.
62. The school has received financial support, high-quality training and very well-focused advice from outside agencies and specialists to help it improve literacy teaching across the curriculum. Very good quality work has been done to consult and involve teachers in development, and to suggest to them good methods to improve student literacy in the classroom. Despite this, policies and intentions are not yet implemented consistently in practice. Their intended effect on standards is limited as a result, even though planning for the future is sound.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH AND SPANISH

Provision in French and Spanish is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have been well below the national average in recent years.
- Students, especially boys, achieve unsatisfactorily.
- Standards by Year 9 are below average, overall, and many students underachieve.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, and students often make inadequate progress in lessons.
- A small proportion of teaching is good and in these lessons students make good progress.

Commentary

63. In 2003, GCSE results were below average overall and, in Spanish, were well below average. Students' performance in languages was below that in most of their other subjects. Boys achieved particularly badly in Spanish. There was a slight improvement overall in 2003, but GCSE results have fallen consistently over recent years.
64. Standards in the books and lessons seen in Year 9 were below average. Many students underachieve because of unsatisfactory teaching. In Year 9, only the higher attainers in French achieve well, because of well-organised and appropriately challenging teaching. In Year 8, achievement is unsatisfactory overall, because the needs of most students are not met adequately in the large mixed-ability classes. This combination of classes that are not set by ability, and inadequate teaching, affects most seriously the development of students' speaking and listening skills.
65. Standards in the books and lessons seen in Year 11 were below average overall. Higher attainers in the top sets in both French and Spanish achieve satisfactorily but, overall, most students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Many students lack confidence in speaking, and they are given insufficient opportunity to practise this skill intensively. Students do not write enough or extensively enough at an early stage, and many have difficulty in writing descriptions and using tenses accurately without very close guidance from teachers. In Year 10, where languages are now an option, students make slow progress overall, because the grouping of students has reverted to mixed-ability classes after setting in Years 8 and 9, and the needs of the higher attainers, in particular, are not met.
66. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. A small proportion of teaching is good and students learn well in these classes. Overall, however, students do not learn as well as they should. Most teachers use too much English and do not enable students to engage actively in listening to, and gaining confidence in, using the foreign language through intensive practice. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of materials and techniques to stimulate students' interest through, for example, the overhead projector, television clips or whiteboard technology. Students' written work is often poorly presented and teachers' marking does not give a clear idea of how students have performed or of how they can improve. Teachers often do not plan clearly enough to match the sequence of teaching activities to the diverse needs of the students in the classes they are teaching. In addition, teachers do not set clear targets, assess them rigorously or track students' achievement closely and consistently.
67. Standards in examinations, teaching and overall management have fallen since the last inspection and overall improvement since that time has been unsatisfactory.
68. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory overall. Despite the recent correct identification of some areas for development, and some improvement in

examination results, little has been done to halt the decline in standards. Because there is minimal observation of teaching in the department, there is very little sharing of the good practice that does exist. Planning for change is not rigorous enough.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good.
- The subject benefits from enthusiastic and committed new leadership and staff who work well together as a team.
- Relationships in lessons are very good and the students behave well and work hard.
- All students have the opportunity to take the GCSE statistics examination.
- Too few students achieve higher grades in the examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11.

Commentary

69. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show the proportion of students reaching the nationally expected Level 5 is in line with the national average. When compared with similar schools, the proportion is also in line, which is an improvement on the previous year. However, the proportion of students reaching the higher levels is well below the average when considering the prior attainment of the students. Boys and girls perform equally well.
70. GCSE results in 2003 were just below the national average for grades A*-C, which is the same as the previous year. The number of students achieving grades A*-G in the last two years has been just below the national average. The girls' results were better than the boys'. No students attained an A* grade, either in mathematics or statistics. Statistics results were below average overall, but represent a valuable additional qualification for students.
71. Standards of work seen in lessons, and in the students' books throughout the school, were at the nationally expected level. Most students are able to draw accurate graphs and interpret and analyse data. The connection between fractions, decimals and percentages is well understood by most students. Students' attainment on entry is around the national average. Achievement by the majority of students at the end of Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory. In all years, students with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority backgrounds make sound progress. Where students with special educational needs are supported in lessons, they benefit from this, however, this support is not always provided.
72. Teaching and learning are good overall. The majority of lessons seen were good or very good and some were excellent. All lessons were at least satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives which are shared with students. In the best lessons, the teachers have high expectations of the students, the pace is good and a variety of tasks has been prepared to challenge the students. Some very good starter exercises were seen; for example in a Year 11 high attaining group the students were matching pairs of graphs with pairs of equations which helped their understanding of the meaning of, and use of, graphs. The endings of lessons are more variable in quality. Teachers make effective use of questioning, encouraging students to explain their answers and solutions to the rest of the class. Where teaching was less good, the pace, challenge or variety of activities were usually insufficient.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 9 middle attaining group lesson, the variety of tasks prepared, and the pace and challenge of the lesson, ensured the students made very good progress.

A very good exercise, where mental multiplication of two two-digit numbers was carried out using a grid, started the lesson briskly. The basics of scatter diagrams were taught in a very clear way, with the teacher doing just enough work with the group to ensure that the students could complete the diagram themselves. Some practical measurements of a sample of students' hand spans and circumference of heads were swiftly taken after an excellent discussion on random and representative sampling, and another graph was drawn without the teacher's help. There was excellent questioning throughout the lesson, and also in the closing plenary discussion, by means of relevant and searching questions prepared for use on an overhead projector. This final question and answer session demonstrated to students and teacher alike that the students had a thorough understanding of line of best fit, the different types of correlation and the use of scatter diagrams to make predictions.

73. As a result of effective teaching, most students acquire knowledge of basic skills and concepts which enable them to work on their own to improve their understanding. Literacy skills are improved by the good displays of key words, the insistence of teachers on the correct use of mathematical language and the good oral work in lessons. Students have a positive attitude to mathematics, they behave well in lessons and relationships between students and with their teachers are good.
74. Leadership and management of the department are good. The new head of department has a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards and has made an impressive start to re-writing the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9. She is supported well by the commitment and hard work of the team of teachers. She has brought in new ideas and resources and is a good role model. The department is responding very positively to the National Numeracy Strategy and this is raising standards. Assessment procedures are good, students are tested regularly, they are aware of National Curriculum levels and have targets set. However, the quality of day-to-day marking is not always satisfactory. Practical resources are good but textbooks are not well matched to the National Curriculum. Graphical calculators are used effectively to support the teaching of graphs.
75. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Staffing and resources have improved. The proportion of lessons which are good or better has improved dramatically. The staff have worked hard over time to minimise the effects of the staffing problems on students' learning. The monitoring of students' progress is now more thorough. GCSE results are less good in terms of the proportion of students achieving A*-C grades, although present results are in line with students' prior attainment.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Students' numeracy skills are satisfactory. The key features of the National Numeracy Strategy have been shared with all staff in the school at a training day and departments have identified opportunities to extend students' mathematical understanding in their schemes of work.
77. Students are using their mathematical knowledge and skills adequately to support their learning in other subjects. Analysis and interpretation of data are used effectively in science and geography. Measurements of weight, volume and length are carried out efficiently in design and technology, and there was good development of spatial awareness in graphics. Venn diagrams were used well to assist analysis and interpretation of sources in history. In ICT, there was good use of Excel for drawing bar charts and pie charts to present information for different audiences, and questionnaires were analysed from databases.
78. A good has been made to increasing the opportunities for students to use number in a variety of subjects to improve the accuracy of their work. The quality of this provision now needs to be monitored so that areas for further improvements can be identified.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student attainment at the end of Year 9 is above national expectations.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have good relationships with their students.
- ICT resources are inadequate.
- The department has good laboratories but some science lessons are taught in classrooms.

Commentary

79. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average. 2003 national test results were above the average for all schools, and above the standard reached by similar schools, judged on prior attainment. This shows an improvement since the last inspection, and represents good achievement for the students, given their average attainment when joining the school in Year 7. Over the last three years, student attainment has improved in line with the national trend, and 2003 saw a significant improvement with over three-quarters of students achieving at least National Curriculum Level 5. This improvement was due, in part, to the implementation of teaching and learning strategies recommended in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, particularly the whole department's commitment to a three-part lesson structure and the introduction of booster classes for Year 9 in the weeks leading up to the National Curriculum tests.
80. At first sight, attainment in the GCSE double-award course appears to be below national expectations with only 37 per cent of students obtaining grades A*-C in 2003. However, when the results of students taking the separate science GCSE courses in physics, chemistry and biology are taken into account, the A*-C percentage increases to a figure of 50 per cent, which is very close to the national average.
81. Results in the separate GCSE science courses show that students perform best in biology, where 2003 results were above the national average for grades A*-C. In physics and chemistry, attainment in 2003 was below the national average. The time allocation of four lessons per week for the triple science course has, until recently, been the same as that given to the double-award course, but significantly more content needs to be taught. This poses a real challenge for both teachers and students. The move to six periods per week, implemented in the current Year 10, could improve the examination results from 2005 onwards. The department has a commendable policy of allowing all students to enter a GCSE science examination. The achievement of students by Year 11 is satisfactory.
82. Teaching and learning across Years 7 to 11 are satisfactory overall. Nearly all lessons seen were satisfactory or better. An example of a very good lesson was with a Year 9 class studying terminal-velocity and free-fall parachuting. Learning objectives were explained at the start and revisited at the end of the lesson to ensure that all students were clear about the science they had learnt. The teacher's explanations were very clear and the lesson contained a rich variety of student activities and stimuli: a short video, teacher demonstrations, with student participation, and a selection of differentiated worksheets. This kept the students fully interested in the subject matter throughout the lesson with high quality learning being very apparent. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, students were unclear about what they were required to do and uncertain about the science they were learning.
83. The leadership and management of the science faculty are both good. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future of science in this school. Her hard work and strong dedication to bringing about improvement sets a good example to the rest of the science staff. Her leadership is fair and she has established a harmonious team of staff all united in their endeavour to improve standards. Initiatives, such as the provision of after-school booster classes for Year 9 and revision sessions in Years 10 and 11, are already beginning to have an impact on improving standards. The day-to-day running of the department

is also good. A satisfactory system is in place for the assessment and monitoring of students' progress and most of the students spoken to during the inspection had a fair idea of their existing level of performance and how this compared with their individual target for a National Curriculum level or GCSE grade.

84. The science department has very good technical support with two well-qualified and experienced technicians. The chief technician is highly organised and runs matters very efficiently. Most of the laboratories have recently been refurbished and they create a very comfortable learning environment. However, some science lessons are still being taught in classrooms. Resources are good in terms of textbooks and equipment but there is a severe shortage of ICT equipment. Two lessons were observed where the students were struggling to see what the teacher was doing at the demonstration bench. The use of laptops, data-projectors and video-cams to show students large, clear images of demonstration experiments and computer simulations has become normal practice in most schools but are virtually non-existent here.
85. Since the last inspection standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and better systems are in place for the assessment of students' progress and the use of data for target setting. The quality of the laboratory accommodation is now much better. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject have been unsatisfactory, but improvements are underway.
- The number of computers is improving and the new library facilities are of high quality, but the shortage of machines in the computer rooms slows the progress of students.
- The recent curricular initiatives, based on the national initiative in Years 7 to 9, are interesting and exciting and provide good learning opportunities for the students.
- The newly introduced applied ICT course in Year 10 is a popular option that further develops ICT capability appropriately, but the previous course followed at examination level was unsatisfactory and only a quarter of the students gained a grade.
- There is insufficient filtering of the school Internet system to stop students entering some inappropriate sites.

Commentary

86. In Years 7 to 9, current standards meet national expectations, and are improving year on year, because all students are now receiving regular lessons of ICT every week. For Year 9 students last year, the overall numbers attaining the higher levels of performance were low because of inconsistent opportunities for learning in the previous years. In lessons, standards are better year on year because the national strategy, with high quality materials and interesting tasks, is improving students' learning. All students enjoy their lessons, keep well on task and teachers have a clear idea of what to expect. The achievement of boys and girls is satisfactory, but some boys are poorly organised and this affects the quality of their work and reduces their assessed standard. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. In an excellent lesson for lower attainers in Year 9, exciting delivery by the teacher, a wide range of teaching and learning methods, together with the teacher organising students' work with them, enabled excellent progress to be made. Students' work in this case was above the national expectation.

Example of outstanding practice

A lesson for low attainers in Year 9. The project was the justification of a new sports centre in their

locality, and each student had constructed a survey, analysed the data using a database, presented information using a spreadsheet with graphs, researched on the Internet to gather designs and pictures of the locality, and then prepared a presentation for a specified audience.

The teacher took very effective steps to help the students to be organised in their learning. Every worksheet and piece of work they did was hole-punched in the top corner and held together with a treasury tag. This enabled students to review their work at the beginning of each lesson and look back at what they had done. This ensured progress. They were able to select and use their previous work for a presentation at the end of the project. The teacher marked the work, showing what needed to be done and students drafted and redrafted their work appropriately. At the end of the project, the teacher added a cover sheet which identified what they had achieved, allocated a level and identified what they needed to do in simple language to get to the next level.

87. In 2003, the results in the new GNVQ course were very poor. All students in the year followed the course but only 41 gained any accreditation; this was because the students had too little taught time and had to work extremely hard outside lessons to even keep up. In addition, the school was only able to use general teachers on the course and their level of expertise was inadequate to cover the technicalities of the subject with subsequent failure for the students. This course has been wisely removed. It has been replaced with a GCSE short course for all students. In Year 10, there is now an option of following a full course in the new Applied ICT GCSE. A review of students' work shows a significant improvement over previous years, and students' standards are being raised systematically. A major factor is that students are now taught entirely by specialist teachers. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards of work by Year 11 are now in line with national expectations and students' achievement is satisfactory.
88. In some rooms there are insufficient computers for each student to do individual work. Some are given written work to do and change shifts to get onto a machine. This is unsatisfactory, not well managed, slows progress and impacts on standards. The layout of some rooms means that students are too close together with problems of jogging and jostling. There have been recent purchases of new computers, but this still has not solved the problem and more are needed. The school has fewer machines than the national average.
89. Leadership and management, including for whole-school provision of ICT, have been unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient development of the use of ICT across subjects of the curriculum. When using the school Internet, there is insufficient filtering of the system as required to stop students entering inappropriate sites and this is unsatisfactory. During the absence of a teacher, students were given work to do that they had done previously and, consequently, made little progress. This, too, is unsatisfactory. Staffing of, and time available for, the GNVQ course assessed in 2003 led to poor results. However, the new GCSE course has been introduced well, as has the national strategy for ICT in Years 7 to 9, and these are serving to raise standards. A working party has been formed to plan how the other departments can deliver ICT in their subjects as they ought. Signs are that leadership is improving and better management is starting to have an impact, but there is still much to do.
90. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory because examination results in 2003 were poor, and there remains a lack of use of ICT to help learning in other subjects. Recent improvements to the curriculum, teachers' expertise and standards, however, bode well for the future.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. Students do not make enough use of computers in their lessons to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Insufficient use is being made of computer rooms and there are times when they are lying idle. As a consequence, the skills that students acquire in their ICT lessons are too seldom practised and developed in other lessons. Although many students use ICT at home and out of taught time for presenting work, particularly their GCSE coursework, this is not the case for all. Shortcomings in the use of ICT adversely affect teaching and learning

quality in French, Spanish, science, history, religious education, design and technology and music. ICT is, however, well used in art and design.

92. The opportunities for drafting and redrafting work, which would support the raising of writing skills across the curriculum, are too seldom planned for in lessons.
93. Overall, the provision for ICT across the curriculum is poor, and is failing to meet statutory requirements. The school is aware of this and has recently formed a working party that is starting to address the issue and plan for improved provision. The library's 15 computers, which are just coming into service, will enable departments to book computer access on a systematic and regular basis and will help to support provision.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment of students is too low, particularly at GCSE.
- Work is not tailored to meet the needs of students of all abilities.
- Marking does not give students the knowledge of how to improve.
- Poor behaviour of a significant minority of students disrupts learning in some lessons.
- Some lessons are well planned and draw on a range of resources.

Commentary

94. Standards overall are well below the national average and there has been little significant change over the last three years. In 2003, A*-C grades at GCSE were well below the national average and compare unfavourably with results at the time of the last inspection, when they were in line. The results of boys were better than those of the girls.
95. When students enter the school, they do so with limited geographical skills. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below the national average. Students' achievement, relative to prior attainment, is unsatisfactory. This is compounded in some classes where, for a significant number of students, poor behaviour is a barrier and the class as a result makes unsatisfactory progress. Students, in many cases, do not fully explain the links between geographical processes and the impact they have on the world.
96. In the work seen during the inspection, students were working below the national average at the end of Year 11. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory and work is not tailored to their needs. Efforts put in by students in some classes often go unchecked and unrewarded, and they are not reinforced by work that can be attempted at home. Students with special educational needs, and the small number who speak English as an additional language, are making some progress towards their targets but would greatly benefit from further assistance. While words that are used by geographers were fully explained, they did not feature highly in their talking or writing.
97. The quality of teaching and learning overall is unsatisfactory, although most lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory or better. While some lessons are planned well, with objectives shared with students and an appropriate range of activities and resources, including ICT, the attitudes and behaviour of some students limit their progress. Analysis of students' work, and discussion with students, indicate unsatisfactory progress. Marking does not help as it does not adequately give students the knowledge of how to improve their work, nor is it related to National Curriculum levels and students are unable to describe how they could move

to the next level. Students in Year 11 had only vague ideas about their predicted grades and could not describe how they were going to achieve them. Attempts to allow students to learn independently were, as a consequence, small in number. The longer lessons are not suitably paced, and there are insufficient activities over time to fully stretch the students.

98. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. This is because below average standards have not shown any improvement and there is no clear strategy or development plan in place to improve them. There are no systems in place to use assessment data to help teachers plan, and to help students to try to improve their own personal standards and achievement. The systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and marking students' work, are unsatisfactory. Fieldwork occurs only in Year 10.
99. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards, and the quality of teaching and learning, have declined markedly.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Under the leadership and management of the new head of department there is now the capacity for the department to improve.
- Assessment procedures and target setting are unsatisfactory.
- GCSE results are well above average, but only a small number of students opt for the subject in Years 10 and 11; the course is not available to this year's Year 10 as a result.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to support their learning.
- Opportunities for educational visits are limited.

Commentary

100. GCSE results have been consistently high for the last three years, with almost three-quarters of the students entered gaining passes at the higher grades A*-C. The small number of students who opt for history generally do better than they do in their other subjects. For current students, standards are average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs and those designated as gifted and talented, is satisfactory. However, sometimes the standard of presentation of students' work is unsatisfactory.
101. Students have satisfactory historical knowledge, understanding and skills. In lessons, they show an understanding of the impact of key personalities and events, which they link and discuss well. Year 8 students, for instance, showed a developing knowledge of the Civil War and could successfully analyse causes in a variety of ways. Students' ability to analyse and interpret sources is being developed well. There are some good examples of extended writing on the life of Richard Arkwright by students in Year 9; however, the overall quality of students' written work is only satisfactory. Research for GCSE coursework is satisfactory: students make critical use of historical sources; evaluate the evidence to link causal factors; and make perceptive judgements which they explain clearly. Sometimes their coursework is supported well through the use of ICT.
102. Lessons were only observed in Years 7, 8 and 9 because there were no Year 11 lessons during the days of the inspection, and the subject is not available in Year 10. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment, and good use of a range of imaginative and effective approaches in the classroom. Where teaching is good, high expectations, pace and challenge enable students to make good progress with their learning. Learning assistants provide good support for students

with special educational needs. Most students display satisfactory attitudes to learning and behave well. In a few lessons, however, the pace of learning is slower, the teaching is satisfactory, but the attitudes and behaviour of some students are unsatisfactory. Work is now marked regularly and most marking provides good guidance for improvement, though this has not always been so. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory; they are not used to monitor students' progress or to set targets for improvement. There are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT to support their learning.

103. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department has a very clear vision and a strong commitment to raising the profile of the subject within the school. Planning has identified an appropriate set of priorities, including the development of the subject in Years 10 and 11. Schemes of work and documentation are good but opportunities for students to undertake educational visits are limited and this is unsatisfactory.
104. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. For a long period of time the school was without a head of department. During this period, standards of students' work fell and the popularity of the subject declined. A new head of department has taken up post recently and there is now the capacity for improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good teaching and learning in lessons, due to high quality planning and resources, underpinned by the teachers' good subject knowledge.
- Learning over time is not well supported by good homework, marking and presentation.
- Standards for the current Year 11 GCSE group are below average, and achievement across Year 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Half of Year 11 is not taught religious education and statutory requirements are not met.
- The short course GCSE has been carefully chosen to reflect students' interests.

Commentary

105. In 2002, a very small number of students took the GCSE examination. Results at grades A*-C were above average. More students took the short course in 2003 and the results were below the national average. Timetabling and staffing difficulties had an adverse effect on learning, as they do for the current Year 11. These problems are now resolved and the attainment in this Year 11 class is higher; students' understanding in lessons is broadly in line with national standards. However, a scrutiny of work in their books shows that attainment is lower than normally seen and, over time, students in Year 11 have not achieved as well as they should. Homework and marking are not effectively used to reinforce and extend knowledge. Poor presentation and organisation of work also hinders learning. These factors also influence the attainment of Year 10 classes and, to a lesser degree, standards in Years 7 to 9, where good teaching and learning seen in class is not always consolidated well. Overall standards across Years 7 to 10 are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Half of Year 11 is not taught religious education and statutory obligations are not met.
106. By Year 9, students know the basic teachings of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, and they reflect on such questions as the existence of God and the role of prayer. Those with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, helped by carefully prepared resources. The expectations of the locally agreed syllabus are met. GCSE students in Years 10 and 11 refine their understanding of Christianity and relate this to issues such as war and justice. They benefit from studying the short course which reflects their interests well, especially those of the

boys. Religious education makes a significant contribution to citizenship, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

107. Teaching and learning in lessons are good. Very well-informed specialist teachers give well-planned lessons that stimulate and maintain interest. Introductions highlight links with previous lessons and outline the learning objectives. Students can place their current work in a meaningful context. Well-executed plenary sessions test and extend understanding. A good range of teaching and learning activities promotes student participation. Students react well to these strategies and their attitudes are positive. Unsatisfactory aspects of teaching relate to factors that are important to good learning over time. Marking is inconsistent and does not inform students of what they need to do to improve. Homework is not always set and is of variable quality. High standards of presentation, and well-organised work to facilitate easy revision, are not common. Higher attainers are not challenged and nor, on occasions, are latecomers to lessons.
108. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision of future development and is supported by a strong team. Much has been done to revitalise the subject, including the writing of good schemes of work and well-prepared resources. However, the subject is not yet as strong as it was at the time of the previous inspection; improvement since then has been unsatisfactory. There are still areas that require improvement. Initiatives in literacy, numeracy and assessment have begun but they have not yet been fully implemented. There are links with local Christian groups but not with other faith communities and, as result, students' horizons are not widened. The department is aware of the need for more training to support effective ICT.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are significantly below the school and national averages and both boys and girls have not done well enough. Effective strategies to improve standards are, however, now in place.
- Teaching of food technology is particularly lively and engaging and makes a very positive contribution to the development of students' literacy skills.

- Accommodation is poor and resources are limited.
- There is an absence of protective clothing.

Commentary

109. Students enter the school with low standards as many have experienced little design and technology before. In 2003, teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 as just below average, which was confirmed during the inspection. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Students' designing and making skills are mostly sound, although in developing designs students draw on a narrow range of sources of information, and students are not fully aware of the way in which resources act as a constraint on design. Resources and accommodation reduce the range of opportunities available and depress standards.
110. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a course from a satisfactory range of options. GCSE results have been significantly below national averages overall, lower than their other school subjects for both girls and, particularly, boys. Standards are now rising in lessons, and the department is correctly focused on getting all students to complete their coursework as poor performance in this area has significantly affected their final grade and their success in the examination. Achievement is now satisfactory; girls make sound progress, and so do many boys, but there is a significant minority who do not work hard enough and who can be disruptive.
111. In the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better. Scrutiny of books and folios indicate a satisfactory level of teaching and learning overall. The department has suffered from staff shortages and used supply staff who were unable to provide the quality of specialist teaching required. Marking often offers sound strategies for improvement. Assessment is helpful to students for examination coursework but is applied too late to allow effective improvement strategies to work. Overall, students' relationships with their teachers are satisfactory, and often good. In a particularly well-organised classroom with very effective displays, the teaching of food technology uses imaginative ways to keep students interested and to identify what they are going to do and how they are succeeding.
112. Some students in Years 10 and 11 have poor attitudes to their work. The long lessons of 70 minutes mean that the pace of lessons needs to be carefully planned with a range of different activities that keep students interested and motivated. The staff have not developed sufficiently effective strategies to fully meet the needs of students with behavioural difficulties. When on individual work, things are better, but constant vigilance is required by the teacher to keep all the students on track. A significant number of students have not developed the self-discipline and learning behaviour to work effectively without constant supervision.
113. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and are promoting developments which have led to the recent raising of standards. A good start has been made in introducing literacy and numeracy strategies, and both are having positive effects in improving the precision of students' work. Accommodation is limited, spread around the school and of generally poor quality. The food rooms are satisfactory, but the workshops and design studios are cramped, depressing and restrict the range of resources that can be made available to the students. The computer facilities available to the department do not provide an adequate resource for the wide range of applications that should be in use, but computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) has been introduced. The use of modern, smart materials is not sufficiently well developed, and a shortage of resources limits the range of work covered. Because of the shortage of money, the department has chosen not to purchase aprons for children to use, and this presents a safety hazard that should be rectified.
114. Since the last inspection standards have declined, and the department has been through a period of significant difficulty. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. However, with substantive staffing and sound leadership and management, there are good plans for consolidation and development, and current progress is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

DRAMA

115. Drama was sampled. Drama GCSE results have been high overall for the proportion of students gaining the higher grades (A* and A). They have also been significantly better than other subjects taken. Standards of work seen match the previous very good examination results. Very good and excellent teaching promotes very good learning. Teaching ensures that students are challenged to think independently and collaboratively, and to reflect thoughtfully on what they do. They are encouraged very well to mix analysis with committed and creative practical acting exercises. For example, a group studying scene endings in well-known plays communicated through expressive body language, and a fine control of mood and suspense, to present an improvised scene. It was astutely investigated and analysed sensitively by fellow students, who made highly constructive suggestions about performance practice. Achievement is very good, because students are encouraged very well to have high expectations of themselves, and to develop ideas thoughtfully and patiently over extended series of lessons. The curriculum in drama has shortcomings because lack of suitable accommodation and resources prevents an adequate amount of coverage of the technical elements of the syllabus.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve above average results in test and examinations.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- The department uses assessment information very well to guide its planning of lessons and the curriculum.
- The work of the department is strongly led and well managed.
- Many classes are very large for a practical subject in the space available.

Commentary

116. In Years 7 to 9, students make good progress in the development of creative skills and gain above average results in assessments at the end of Year 9. These standards were confirmed on inspection. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to develop creatively and results are above average in GCSE and GNVQ examinations. The analysis of progress, from results at the end of Year 9 to results at the end of Year 11, indicates very good progress from stage to stage.

117. In Years 7 to 9, students develop skill in drawing from observation and pictorial composition, alongside knowledge, skill and understanding of techniques in textiles and ceramics. These answer criticisms made at the time of the last inspection when students were seen to be relying too much on secondary sources, such as photographs. Students develop socially at this stage, often working collaboratively in groups on large-scale work. Very good use is made of art historical material as a source of ideas; 'cubism', in particular, yields good results. Achievement, in relation to general standards on entry, is good; girls achieving particularly well. Students are able to use ICT effectively and their sketchbooks form a good record of progress.

118. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to make good progress, which allows them to develop further the interests gained in the earlier stage. A strong feature of work at this stage is the standard of work in ceramics. Students produce large-scale, well-constructed designs, showing skill in glazing and decoration. Pictorial composition, based upon observation, is also strong, showing a good understanding of colour and composition. There is good application of

ICT in the development of design ideas, but the impact of this is restricted by limitations in resources.

119. The quality of teaching and learning, overall, is good and, in some instances, especially in Years 10 and 11, is very good. This, again, constitutes an improvement from the last inspection when concern was expressed about the subject limitations of non-specialist teachers. There is now no non-specialist teaching in the department and teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Work is carefully planned and lessons well prepared. Good use is made of sensitive one-to-one tuition, which has a particularly beneficial effect upon students with special educational needs and those with special talent for the subject. In both cases, very good progress is evident. Assessment is thorough, and detailed analyses of progress are used to determine curriculum decisions. Classrooms are often very crowded as large classes fit into a limited space; this creates difficulty for managing practical sessions and contributes to some noisy working by some classes.
120. The department is well led and managed and staff work together effectively. Good displays of work are mounted as an aid to learning and as motivation to students at all levels. Resources are used effectively. Documentation is particularly detailed and indicates effective planning. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory** but improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are not achieving as well as they should.
- National Curriculum requirements for ICT in Years 7 to 9 are not being met.
- Procedures for assessing students' work are not fully in place.
- Students show good attitudes and behave well in lessons.
- The extra-curricular provision for able and talented students is good.

Commentary

121. Standards in music by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are below national expectations and students are not achieving as well as they should, given their attainment when they come to the school in Year 7. This is because students have been taught, during the last year, by different teachers, including non-specialists. There is now a new head of department who, at the time of the inspection, had been at the school for a few months and who is making a significant difference. GCSE results for 2003 were below national averages but, since the previous inspection, numbers of students have been small so comparisons with national figures are statistically unreliable.
122. Students in Year 9 have a basic knowledge of *Blues* music and know how to play chords on a keyboard. However, their knowledge and understanding of musical conventions and key music vocabulary is limited and their composing skills are underdeveloped. In Year 11, students' composing skills are below expectations. They have composed successful short pieces consisting of simple, well-phrased melodies based on simple chord structures, but these compositions lack the necessary development of ideas to gain the higher marks. By contrast, their current work on their integrated assignments is often more interesting and reflects the capabilities of individual students. Gaps in their knowledge and understanding are gradually being filled by more consistent and specialist teaching. Able and talented students in Years 8 to 10 achieve well because they receive instrumental tuition, attend a GCSE class after school and perform in extra-curricular music activities.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory overall. It is more effective in Year 11 because the teacher has identified the individual needs of students more clearly and plans accordingly. Questioning is used well to check out students' knowledge and understanding and to reinforce learning. Modelling is used as an effective method to focus students' learning and, as a result, they acquire a better understanding of what they have to do and how. However, key musical learning, which focuses on the development of musical skills and understanding of key music vocabulary, is not always clearly identified and plenary sessions could be used more effectively to assess and reinforce learning. Students show good attitudes, behave well in lessons and are generally well focused on their learning. This is because of the teachers' high expectations and respect, and the support given to help students improve.
124. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The new head of department has made significant improvements since being appointed. Music is now taught in Year 7. However, the half-termly rotation with drama is unsatisfactory because of its impact on the continuity and progression of musical learning. Since the previous inspection the music accommodation has been much improved, including the development of a small music technology area. However, the lack of practice rooms restricts teaching strategies, opportunities for group work in lessons and the development of instrumental lessons. Recently, there have been improvements in music ICT resources but these are not yet complete. This means that students do not have access to suitable music ICT resources to meet National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9, and to enhance their composing and performing skills in Years 10 and 11. Procedures are not yet fully in place for assessing, recording and tracking students' progress, and assessment information is not being used enough to inform planning. Opportunities for music making outside the classroom are being established and the '*Trentham True Notes*' orchestra has performed successfully to many different audiences both in and out of school. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and frequently very good.
 - There is good leadership of a stable team of specialists who work to their strengths.
 - Standards are above average by Year 9 and in the GCSE course.
 - There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities and achievements, including links with other agencies.
 - Assessment, target setting and marking procedures do not give students clear enough indications about how they can improve.
 - Accommodation for changing, storage of equipment and a lack of a joint staff working area is unsatisfactory.
125. Students join the school with mixed experiences of physical education. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average and this represents good achievement across Years 7 to 9. Standards in the core physical education for all students are average by the end of Year 11, with satisfactory achievement. Standards in GCSE have risen over the past four years, results are above the national average and students achieve significantly better in physical education than in other subjects in the school. Students achieve well on the GCSE course.
126. Teaching and learning are very good overall, especially in Years 7 to 9. Learning is good in Years 10 and 11, but is constrained by a lack of commitment to learning by some boys. Students benefit from a stable team of specialist teachers who have very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm. These teachers deliver well-planned lessons with a good range of activities and are skilled at using questioning to improve students' understanding of their work.

Teachers' good relationships and high expectations ensure that students make good progress. Students with lower ability make the same progress as others because teachers modify tasks and use good demonstrations. Higher attaining students have additional opportunities during extra-curricular games; these could be further developed by introducing more challenging activities during lessons. Data is not used to best effect in highlighting individual talents and helping teachers to plan.

127. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, good achievements by teams and individual excellence, with representation at city and national levels. Very good links with other agencies provide additional opportunities, such as 'Project Oarsome', cycling, and the use of local sports club facilities.
128. Leadership and management of the department are good overall; there is good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development. The curriculum has been reviewed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and to suit the facilities at the school, but schemes of work are not fully planned to meet the needs and abilities of all groups of students. There are some weaknesses in assessment and analysis of students' progress over time, in target setting and in marking to show students how to further improve their standards. The timetabling of two lessons on one day has an adverse effect on students' enthusiasm and attitudes to learning.
129. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have improved. The school has successfully bid for funding to improve indoor physical education and sports facilities, although these remain poor at present. The reviewed curriculum now ensures that statutory requirements for physical education are met. The accommodation for changing, storage of equipment and the lack of a joint staff working area are still unsatisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

130. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), which has been linked this year, in a new timetable arrangement, to the school's citizenship lessons. It draws strongly on links with the local community, with many community groups contributing actively to its delivery. This allows for a very effective focus on relevant local issues. The development of relationships forms a strong part of the PSHE curriculum. Drugs education, however, does not figure sufficiently prominently in the programme.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most of the teaching helps students to become responsible citizens.
- The citizenship curriculum includes a variety of events and activities which stimulate student thinking.
- Opportunities to take part in citizenship activities, using good community links, and often in innovative ways, are increasing.

- There is no assessment and recording system in place to provide teachers and students with a clear picture of standards achieved.
- Not all subjects have been sufficiently involved to see what they can offer to the citizenship curriculum.

Commentary

131. Standards are average at the end of Year 9. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of aspects of the society in which they live. A Year 8 class was coming to an understanding of their rights and responsibilities with the help of a visitor from the local police, while a Year 9 class was looking at the option-making process for their final two years at school. The variety of work that students undertook helped them to think, work and discuss with their teacher, as well as each other, and they developed their skills appropriately.
132. By the end of Year 11, students' knowledge and understanding are average. Students are coming to terms with what it is like living in a democratic society. This was evident in a Year 11 science lesson where the citizenship element was a consideration about what government policy was needed to regulate cloning, while in a Year 10 lesson they were considering transferable skills and work styles as part of a careers module. Student achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11, reflecting prior attainment, is satisfactory. The girls' achievement at both stages is a little better than the boys'.
133. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons seen had clear objectives, which were often shared with students. Students of all abilities were encouraged to think, reflect, write about and discuss issues they were presented with and this they did well. When the issues under consideration were controversial they were dealt with sensitively, like the work done by Year 11 on cloning. Students use school-made resources well but they are not always matched to the students' abilities. Marking of work is irregular and does not give students the knowledge of what they need to do to improve their performance in citizenship, and there is not an adequate system in place to assess, record and track students' progress in the subject. ICT is used in some parts of the curriculum but could be used more for research and learning. Opportunities for participation in decision-making are limited; students have not been able to actively take part in an election or to be members of a school council.
134. The management of citizenship is satisfactory, and the curriculum is co-ordinated well by a senior manager and the school's community links co-ordinator. They have planned work to give clear objectives for each lesson, and there is satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum for citizenship. The school has sought opportunities, with the aid of good community links and innovative projects like designing gardens and campaigning, to improve a local park to help students to take part in both school and community-based activities. Plans are in place for a citizenship week, which will cover a range of issues and involve many subject departments. Not all subjects, however, have been sufficiently involved in planning to provide elements of the citizenship curriculum in their lessons.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Students' achievement	5
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	3
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well students learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets students needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for students	5
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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