

INSPECTION REPORT

HEWORTH GRANGE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108407

Headteacher: Mr H Huddart

Lead inspector: Mr I Thompson

Dates of inspection: 20 –24 October 2003

Inspection number: 259125

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

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Terms used in this report

Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at Key Stage 3, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of Key Stage 2 after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the sixth form, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) or the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (A.level). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (AS), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (AEA).

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

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of abbreviations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, ICT refers to information and communication technology. PHSRE refers to the school's programme for personal, health, social and religious education. Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003 for Year 9 and 2001/2002, the last year for which national comparative data is available, for Year 11. Any reference to examination results in 2003 is to identify trends only.

Little reference is made to pupils for whom English is an additional language. Very few pupils are from backgrounds where English is not the first language of at least one parent. Only one pupil is at the early stages of English language acquisition and all have good access to the curriculum.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1334
School address:	High Lanes Felling Gateshead
Postcode:	NE10 OPT
Telephone number:	0191 4212244
Fax number:	0191 4202320
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr R Napier
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Heworth Grange Community Comprehensive School is a larger than average, 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. The school serves an economically deprived urban area of Gateshead and shares its site with a City Learning Centre. There are 1334 pupils on roll 135 of whom are in the sixth form. Lower than average proportions of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average in the main school and well above in the sixth form. The majority of pupils are white. Some 20 pupils are from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds – the largest group being Asian British. Only one pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The school's tests show that pupils' standards when they join the school are below average; for many, standards are well below average, particularly in literacy. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is broadly average, but the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, most of which refer to emotional and behavioural difficulties or moderate learning difficulties, is below average.

The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives aimed at raising standards and gained School Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2002 in recognition of its progress.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12271	I Thompson	Lead inspector	
9724	B Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector	
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics
17799	A Stoddart	Team inspector	Science
15051	L Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology
32211	B Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20412	D Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Citizenship; history
20825	B Ogden	Team inspector	Geography
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design
4757	D Morris	Team inspector	Music
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education; special educational needs
20718	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education
8361	M Burley	Team inspector	Biology
19229	S Morton	Team inspector	

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good standard of education. Good leadership provides clear direction. Standards are rising and pupils achieve well. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is well led and managed.
- The school provides a good climate for learning. Teaching and learning are good.
- Gifted and talented pupils achieve well as a result of the additional experiences provided for them.
- Pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour is very good in response to the school's high expectations for their conduct.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and contribute to the positive atmosphere in the school.
- The care, welfare and health and safety of pupils are very good.
- Pupils benefit from the school's good links with the community.
- Attendance is not good enough.
- Middle managers are not rigorous enough in monitoring the application of whole-school policies.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9 in art and design and modern foreign languages. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is unsatisfactory in geography and religious education.
- The school library is inadequate and does not support independent learning well enough.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have improved; teaching is better; exclusions are lower; accommodation has improved. Attendance has improved, but not enough.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	C	C	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	N/A	D	C	

*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 pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good.

Standards are below average at the end of Year 9, but this represents good achievement in relation to pupils' standards when they joined the school. By the end of Year 11 standards are broadly average, representing good achievement in Years 10 and 11. Students reach average standards in the sixth form and achieve well in relation to their earlier learning.

Pupils' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral and social development are good. Pupils have good attitudes; students' attitudes in the sixth form are very good. Behaviour throughout the school is very good. Attendance is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement. Curricular opportunities are satisfactorily broad and the school provides good opportunities for enrichment, for example, for gifted and talented pupils. The provision of extra-

curricular activities is a strength of the school. The school makes very good arrangements for pupils' care and guidance, but assessment data are not used consistently well enough to promote pupils' progress by ensuring that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school makes very good use of opportunities in the community to support learning. Achievement is affected by the way teaching time is organised for art and design in Years 7 to 9 and the provision of time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school's improvement, leads by example and takes people with him. Governors provide good support for the work of the school and hold it appropriately to account. Financial management is very good. Although the quality of middle management is generally good, the monitoring of teaching at departmental level is too informal and not rigorous enough. There are also some weaknesses in monitoring the implementation of whole-school policies, for example, for literacy and numeracy.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents, pupils and students express a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. Parents believe that it is a good school in which their children are doing at least as well as they might expect, that they are happy in school and that standards are improving. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. Parents do not feel well enough informed about progress. Inspectors agree that reports are not sufficiently informative. They are currently written in an unsatisfactory way and do not give parents a clear view of how well pupils are doing or what they need to do to improve. Pupils and students believe the school to be good. They feel that they are looked after very well. They consider that members of staff know them well and use that knowledge to help and guide them. They believe that they are taught well and expected to work hard. Inspectors agree with these views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve attendance.
- Improve the consistency of middle managers' understanding and interpretation of their role in monitoring:
 - the quality of teaching;
 - the application of policies for literacy and numeracy;
 - the use of assessment data to support achievement.
- Improve achievement in art and design and French in Years 7-9 and in geography and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills, particularly by improving the library as a resource.

For the sixth form

- Improve provision for the development of students' independent learning skills, particularly by developing the library as a resource for learning.

and to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils and students.
- Provide sufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

THE SIXTH FORM AT HEWORTH GRANGE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It is cost-effective because standards are average, results are improving, students are achieving well overall and its costs are almost balanced by its income. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, when the sixth form had only recently been reinstated.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- The quality of support, advice and guidance is very good.
- Links with other educational institutions are very good.
- Students very much appreciate what the sixth form provides, and their attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Library provision does not adequately support students' independent learning.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>In English and English literature, provision is good. Knowledgeable teaching in both subjects helps students to achieve well. In English, students are not sufficiently aware of available research materials and techniques, or of what they need to do to improve. In English literature, some Year 12 students are not yet sufficiently involved in lessons.</p> <p>Provision in Italian is very good. Teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned so that students achieve very well. Excellent use is made of the facilities in the City Learning Centre to enhance learning.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Good. Students show very good attitudes in lessons. Good teaching results in students achieving well. Leadership and management are good.</p>
Science	<p>Biology provision is good. Teachers' high expectations and their knowledgeable and enthusiastic approach help students to achieve well so that standards are above average. Students' work files, however, are not monitored sufficiently regularly.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p>Good. Students receive good support and guidance. Their work is checked closely and they are developing independence in the use of computers. Some students miss higher grades because they do not make sufficient use of plans, guides and evaluation in project work.</p>
Humanities	<p>History provision is good. Teachers' expertise aids students' understanding. Teachers provide good support for examination work. Students are not taking a sufficiently active part in lessons and lack a range of ways to display information usefully.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Provision for art and design is good. Teaching is very good. Students work hard with great enjoyment and make rapid progress as a result. The standard of work in journals does not yet match the standard of practical work. Lack of ICT limits students' learning.</p> <p>Provision for performance studies is very good. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well. Leadership and management enable students to gain the maximum benefit from teachers' expertise and a wide range of opportunities for</p>

development.

Business

Business studies was sampled. Good teaching was enabling students to achieve well.

General education

A sampled lesson in citizenship used a well-organised 'ideas' session to prepare for presentations by students who were achieving satisfactorily.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **very good advice, guidance and support**. They are well briefed before entering the sixth form, and, subsequently, have frequent opportunities to review their progress with tutors. These are very effective sessions because of the very good relationships between tutors and students. As a result, very few students fail to complete their courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. Effective leadership has secured the development of the sixth form since its reinstatement. The number of Year 11 pupils expressing interest in joining is substantially higher for next year than in previous years. Effective management ensures that all involved have the same expectations and operate according to the clear guidance provided in the sixth form handbook.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students clearly relish sixth form life and the opportunities it provides. Teachers respect their increasing maturity and students appreciate this very much. They are keen to work and do well. They feel valued and supported throughout their time in the sixth form. Though they can put forward ideas to tutors, they would welcome a more formal forum to represent their views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Although below average overall by the end of Year 9 standards are improving and by the end of Year 11 they are average. Achievement is good in relation to pupils' standards when they enter the school and when they begin their courses in Year 10. Standards in the sixth form are average and students' achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well overall. Achievement in design and technology and history is particularly good.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results are improving at a faster rate than nationally, recognised by school achievement awards in 2001 and 2002.
- Gifted and talented pupils make good progress as a result of the enrichment opportunities provided for them.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in art and design and modern foreign languages. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is unsatisfactory in geography and religious education.

Commentary

1. Pupils enter the school with below average standards overall and for many, standards are well below average, particularly in literacy. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were average when compared to all schools nationally. However, in comparison to similar schools, standards were well above average, both overall and in mathematics and science, but were average in English reflecting many pupils' persisting difficulties with literacy. These results represent good achievement. The standards for pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 are broadly average. Lesson observations and analysis of work show pupils' achievement to be good. There are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.9 (32.3)	33.3 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.5 (35.3)	35.3 (34.7)
Science	33.2 (33.4)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 240 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. GCSE results have been improving at a faster rate than nationally over the last four years, but showed a slight fall in 2002. Overall, results were close to the national average and were well above average in comparison with similar schools. Results show a further improvement in 2003. Although these results are still provisional, indications are that pupils did better than might be expected in relation to their earlier learning. The challenging target set by the governing body based on pupils' performance at the end of Year 9 was met. This continuing improvement reflects good teaching, pupils' good attitudes to their work and the supportive learning atmosphere created in the school. There are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	39 (44)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.8 (39.8)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 240 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, standards are average in most subjects, but below average in French and physical education. Standards are well below average in English, reflecting many pupils' persisting difficulties with literacy, and in art and design because the organisation of the curriculum does not provide well enough for the development of pupils' basic skills. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average in most subjects, but below average in English and science. As the inspection was early in the academic year, the difference between present standards and standards reached in recent examination results probably reflects that pupils had either just started new courses or were little more than halfway through their courses. Standards in art and design are below average because pupils' basic skills are underdeveloped at the start of the course. In geography standards are below average, but reflect pupils' standards at the start of the course. Standards in religious education are below average because the curriculum does not provide sufficient time for pupils to reach higher standards.
4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their previous learning. This is because the school organises smaller classes for them and in most lessons teachers meet pupils' needs well. Focused support in small groups in the support area contributes to progress. In some subjects, such as science and geography where there is insufficient support, pupils do not do as well.
5. There are no significant differences in the achievement of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or whose home language is other than English. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well as a result of the enrichment activities provided for them. Pupils are identified by good procedures devised by the gifted and talented programme co-ordinator. The programme is a result of intensive training for co-ordinators arranged by the Excellence in Cities initiative and the local education authority. Pupils have responded well to enrichment activities at local universities that have had an important impact on pupils' aspirations towards higher education. The programme is well led and organised and includes effective monitoring and feedback procedures that focus on the needs of this group of pupils and extend their learning and confidence.

Sixth form

6. Students enter the sixth form with below average standards of attainment overall and achieve well. Standards in A level and equivalent examinations in 2002 were close to average overall and an improvement on the below average results of 2001. Girls performed slightly better than boys. All students achieved a pass grade, but there was a lower than average proportion of the higher A-B grades. Standards were well above average in chemistry and communication studies at A level. They were well below average in business studies, mathematics and geography. At AS level standards were well above average in history and ICT.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100.0	94.8 (89.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.8	39.4 (37.9)
Average point score per pupil	234.6 (182.4)	263.3 (n/a)

There were 39 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. For present students, standards are average. Many students enter the sixth form with lower than usual prior attainment and achieve well as a result of good teaching. Effective advice as to the choice of courses means that very few students do not complete their studies. Standards are above average in biology, ICT, Italian and performance studies.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are good overall and very good in the sixth form. Their behaviour is very good. Attendance is unsatisfactory in the main school, though good in the sixth form. Punctuality is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave very well during lessons and as they move around the school.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and contribute to the positive learning atmosphere in the school.
- The year group social areas are of considerable value in promoting pupils' social development.
- Students in the sixth form show a strong commitment to their studies.
- Attendance levels have improved slightly since the previous inspection, but are still unsatisfactory in the main school.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop the skills necessary to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Commentary

8. The calm atmosphere in the school points to the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for pupils' personal and social education. The school provides well for pupils' social and moral development. As a result, standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils consistently behave very well in lessons and around the school. They know that this is expected of them and that teachers will insist on high standards. This very good behaviour - a feature of almost all lessons observed during the inspection - helps pupils to learn effectively and to do as well as they can. Pupils also behave very well around the school. They move sensibly in crowded areas and show consideration for others. The school is racially harmonious reflecting the school's good provision for preparing pupils for life in a multicultural society. Cases of oppressive behaviour are rare, but handled sensitively when they do occur. Levels of exclusion are low for a school of this size.
9. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils interviewed during the inspection commented favourably upon the help and encouragement that they receive from their teachers. This encouragement was also acknowledged in the pupils' questionnaires. When lessons were particularly effective, the strength of the relationships between pupils and their teachers was always one of the reasons for their success. Pupils wanted to work hard and do well.

10. All year groups have common rooms or social areas where they congregate before school and at break and lunchtime. It is a very effective method of providing a focus for the classes in that year and encouraging a sense of belonging within the larger school community. Pupils feel that they have somewhere to go that is theirs, they learn to mix easily and willingly accept responsibility for keeping it tidy.
11. Pupils need to develop greater confidence in working independently. As they mature, they feel that they do not always know enough about study techniques. Sometimes, too, it is because there are insufficient opportunities to practise these routinely in lessons.

Attendance

12. Attendance levels have improved slightly since the previous inspection, though they are still unsatisfactory; lower than the national median. The rate of unauthorised absence fell during the year 2002/2003 and is now in line with national figures. Most absence is authorised. Part of this is due to pupils being taken out of school to go on holiday, despite the school's requests for parents to avoid school terms when making bookings. Many pupils have satisfactory levels of attendance. However, there are a minority of pupils who lack interest in education and cannot be bothered to come to school regularly, and this restricts the progress they are able to make. Not all parents support the school in their endeavours to ensure that pupils come to school. The school has a learning support unit (LSU) to help pupils who find regular attendance difficult, as well as learning mentors. Given the co-operation of pupils and their parents or carers, these strategies are effective.
13. The school records attendance accurately and monitors reasons for absence. In this they have good support from the education welfare service. Although the school contacts parents on the first day of absence where there is a pattern of irregular attendance, this is not routine practice for all absenteeism.
14. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection, but has still to reach a satisfactory level for the school as a whole.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.2
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.3
National data	1.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1299	14	2

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

Sixth form

15. Sixth form students have mature and positive attitudes; they take an active part in lessons and show responsibility for their work. They want to do well and are prepared to make the effort to succeed. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good and of a type that makes learning enjoyable and thus more effective. Students value the different approach that

teachers take with them, which acknowledges their increasing maturity. They contribute to the school community through involvement with such activities as the youth theatre and paired reading.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils achieve well largely because of the good teaching provided in a positive learning atmosphere.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Assessment procedures are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and improves as pupils move up through the school.
- Teachers set high expectations to which pupils respond well. Classroom management is very good.
- Very good relationships and pupils' good attitudes contribute to a purposeful learning atmosphere and support good learning.
- The use of homework to extend learning and develop pupils' independence is inconsistent.
- The use of assessment data for target setting and informing pupils as to how well they are doing needs improvement.

Commentary

16. Teaching and learning are good overall in all years. Very few lessons were seen that were either inspirational or unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, history and music. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in English, science, design and technology, history, ICT, and physical education. Both pupils and parents feel that teaching is good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	25 (16%)	71 (46%)	53 (35%)	2 (1%)	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. Many strengths of teaching can be identified. Learning benefits particularly from the very good relationships between teachers and pupils and the good attitudes that pupils bring to their work. The result is that classroom management is very good, a purposeful learning atmosphere is evident throughout the school and little time is wasted. Lessons are well planned. The common features of the good and better lessons are the way that teachers match work to pupils' needs so that they are challenged appropriately, pace is maintained and the teaching methods used promote good learning, for example, by providing high quality demonstrations or making pupils think for themselves. Occasionally, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, the warmth of relationships leads to a too relaxed approach to work so that it is insufficiently demanding and pace suffers. In these lessons, teachers do too much for their pupils and restrict the development of their independent learning skills. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well because of the extension activities and additional challenges provided for them. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was the result of lessons not being planned well enough to meet pupils' needs. Lessons lacked pace and challenge and pupils were not given enough

opportunities to be productive. These factors combined to result in unsatisfactory progress in the lessons and unsatisfactory learning.

18. The school does not provide classroom support for pupils with special educational needs. In the early years, pupils are grouped into smaller classes, but in Years 10 and 11 many classes have a wide range of attainment. Consequently, teachers' planning for pupils' individual needs is more than usually important. Where teachers plan effectively for the involvement of pupils with special educational needs, such as in history and design and technology, pupils' progress is good. In geography and art and design pupils' progress is not as good because work is not as well targeted for progress. Teaching in the support area links well with individual education plans (IEPs) and Learning Mentors work effectively with individual pupils.
19. Three factors require development and improvement in an otherwise positive picture. Homework is not used consistently enough to extend classwork or to help pupils to develop independent learning skills and take responsibility for themselves. The use of assessment across the school is satisfactory overall. It is good in the sixth form. However, although there is good practice in some subjects for assessing pupils' work, in many there is inconsistent application of assessment policies. In some subjects, little use is made of national levels in the assessment process and in others marking is not thorough or constructive enough. The result is that pupils are not sure of how well they are doing or what they must do to improve. The school collects and issues an appropriate range of data to departments, which shows pupils' attainment at various stages throughout the school. Teachers are not generally accustomed to using the data to monitor pupils' progress with the result that it is not being used as well as it should be to plan for individual needs. Subject teachers know which pupils have special educational needs, but few subject targets relate clearly to IEPs. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly against their targets in the review process, but ongoing assessment is not recorded effectively enough to take action quickly to meet pupils' needs. Teachers note activities and behaviour in preparation for reviews, but these records do not document achievement fully nor do they always indicate areas for improvement. The inconsistencies in the application of the homework and assessment policies point to a need for more rigorous monitoring of teaching by curriculum leaders.

Sixth form

20. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and a high proportion was good or better. This is an improvement compared with the previous inspection. Teaching was very good in Italian, art and design and performance studies.
21. A strong feature of the good teaching is teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They use these effectively to guide students' learning. Teachers combine their good subject knowledge with well-planned lessons and a variety of activities that effectively meet the needs of their students and particularly encourage independent learning. These attributes of good teaching are reinforced by very good relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves. As a result, most students have very good attitudes to their work and achieve well. Students in Italian, art and design and performance studies are particularly keenly motivated in lessons and show excellent concentration, effort and pride in their work.
22. Teaching is not so effective when at times teachers do not ensure sufficient participation by students to build up their confidence and allow them to learn from each other. Students' files are not always monitored closely enough. Students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school has sufficient accommodation and resources for its needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good enrichment activities provided for gifted and talented pupils contribute well to their development.
- An unusually broad choice of second language is offered to pupils; many continue to study two languages in Years 10 and 11.
- A broad choice of science options is available in Years 10 and 11.
- The Success Study Programme meets the needs of pupils well.
- An extensive extra-curricular programme is available.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met in relation to collective worship and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

23. The school's curricular provision is satisfactory. A recent innovation is the teaching of French to some partner primary pupils by Heworth Grange staff. In Years 7 to 9 achievement in modern foreign languages is hindered and standards are not as high as they should be because the curriculum has not been revised to meet fully the demands of recent changes to the National Curriculum. In art and design, the way in which the time for the subject is allocated affects the continuity of pupils' learning and their achievement. The time allocation for PSRE in Years 10 and 11 also leads to unsatisfactory achievement in religious education.
24. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities in arts, music and sport. Many staff, past and present, contribute actively to the programme, which is taken up by many pupils. The enrichment programme provided for gifted and talented pupils is effective in promoting their achievement. Some very good work has been done using ICT in languages. Pupils also have opportunities to broaden their horizons by visiting universities. A number of clubs offer additional activities to all pupils at lunchtime and after school. The languages department is able to run four educational visits annually. This has a positive impact on language take-up in Years 10 and 11. The alternative curriculum is effectively meeting the needs of disaffected or low attaining pupils, but there are no other alternative courses provided in Years 10 and 11. The school takes the opportunity of some disapplication from subjects to assist these pupils in training for employment. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The withdrawal system removes a minority of pupils from subjects. Pupils do not follow the timetabled subject when removed for extra tuition; this affects progress in the focus subject. Some extra learning opportunities and social activities are available for pupils during extra-curricular and registration time. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's provision of well-trained Learning Mentors, but, with so many pupils needing support, more assistance is needed in classrooms, especially in Years 7 to 9.
25. A curriculum review is currently being undertaken and a variety of options considered. Work-related courses are not offered at present, other than one GNVQ in the sixth form. Pupils in the Success Study Programme follow a limited range of GCSEs and have work-based placements in the community. The attendance and motivation of this group led to considerable success in GCSE examinations. The school aims to widen vocational provision and is presently establishing links with further education providers to ensure that there are pathways beyond school for those who choose this route.
26. The provision of resources for learning is satisfactory overall. Textbooks and equipment are sufficient in number and quality and suitable for the school's work. The number of computers in the school is above average and contributes to the good provision for ICT. The physical education department has a good range of equipment and a video camera to record pupils' performance and indicate how they can improve. In English there are a range of texts and carefully prepared worksheets to support pupils' work. The range of instrumental opportunities is very good in music. Library provision is poor. Access is difficult and the inadequate contents are a barrier to pupils' achievement and do not support independent learning.

27. Accommodation is generally satisfactory in most departments because staff work hard to make the best of their classrooms. In design and technology there are several areas of the department where there are barriers to learning because of damage caused by leaking walls and unsatisfactory ventilation. Although there are parts of the school that are difficult for disabled pupils to gain access to the school's building plans for the future tackle this issue. The shared access to the City Learning Centre is a strength in the school's accommodation and inspires good learning. The library accommodation is poor.

Sixth form

28. The sixth form provides a good range of academic courses for students. Only one vocational course in ICT is currently available, but the range of provision is satisfactory overall.
29. Other provision to enrich students' sixth form experience is good overall. Students particularly appreciate the challenges of work experience within the local community, to visit local universities through the Partnership Programme and, where relevant to their courses, visit theatres and art galleries. A residential experience at Royal Holloway, University of London is open to all students at the end of Year 12. The 'Excellence Challenge' programme provides further opportunities.
30. Students are very effectively prepared for work and higher education. A very thorough programme of advice and support is available including 'profiling sessions' with tutors and careers interviews conducted through Connexions Tyne and Wear. A particularly useful section of the sixth form handbook details Internet sites providing access to information on universities, professions, jobs and 'the gap year'.

Care, guidance and support

Standards of care are very good. The quality of support, advice and guidance provided for pupils has improved this term and is now good. Arrangements to involve pupils in the work of the school are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year group social areas provide a sense of community and of security for pupils so that they feel they are well known and cared for.
- The headteacher interviews all Year 11 pupils early in the autumn term to advise them on the next stage of their education.
- Sensitive support for pupils on the reduced curriculum programme increases their level of achievement.
- Opportunities for pupils to play an active part in the work of the school are limited.

Commentary

31. Pupils feel that they are looked after very well. They consider that members of staff know them well and use that knowledge to help and guide them. The year group common rooms or social areas are an important part of this care. They help to give pupils a sense of belonging to a smaller community while allowing the year staff to keep a close watch on their personal development.
32. The headteacher interviews all Year 11 pupils individually each year, early in the autumn term, to provide impartial advice on the next stage for them. This is in addition to the effective careers guidance they receive in tutorials and through the Connexions service. Pupils interviewed considered these interviews to be particularly helpful.

33. Pupils following a reduced curriculum receive sensitive support and guidance. These pupils study fewer subjects, in smaller classes. They have additional support from learning mentors and the learning support unit in connection with attendance, social skills, literacy and numeracy. GCSE results for the first group to complete the course were considerably better than expected.
34. Formal opportunities for pupils to become involved in the work and development of the school are not extensive, though satisfactory. The processes for electing the three delegates to the Gateshead Youth Assembly have been extended this term to form the beginnings of a school council. Pupils are expected to look after their social areas, but consider that there is more that they could usefully contribute to the work of the school.

Sixth form

35. Sixth form students receive very good support and guidance.
36. Students are well briefed before entering the sixth form. However, if they feel they have made the wrong decision, they can change to a different course within a period of five weeks provided they make up the work missed. This is one of the reasons why hardly any students fail to complete their courses. Students also get very good guidance during their time in the sixth form. Half-termly reviews, where pupils reflect on their progress, form the basis for a more detailed discussion in individual profiling sessions with tutors. Students take these seriously and find them very helpful. These interviews also advise students about further study and other opportunities. They are a very effective form of support, given the very good relationships that students enjoy with their teachers and tutors.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Links with the community are very good and highly productive. Links with other schools and colleges are good, best at Post 16.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes extensive use of resources available locally to help pupils and students, as well as providing services for its immediate community.
- Annual reports to parents are impersonal and do not consistently give a clear view of progress.

Commentary

37. The school takes full advantage of its very good links with the community to support pupils' learning. There are opportunities in most subjects for outside visits to illustrate aspects of curricular subjects. These include visits to concerts, theatres, art galleries for drawing classes, work with local artists and musicians. Sixth form students can attend master classes and conferences at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities, in English language and literature, mathematics and history. These visits also allow them to see what studying at university can be like. Many pupils and members of staff are involved with the youth theatre. Workshops and concerts are held in the school. Charitable projects raise money for local causes. The school's facilities are used by local organisations. The presence of the City Learning Centre on the school site – though separately managed – also provides an effective link. The school has satisfactory links with its partner primary schools. Some good work is done in modern foreign languages when staff from Heworth teach with primary school colleagues.
38. Parents receive one full report each year. These are currently written in an unsatisfactory way: they do not give parents a clear view of what their children can do, cannot do and need to do in order to improve as individuals. The quality of the information in annual reports was also an issue in the previous inspection report.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides very good leadership. Management is good. The governance of the school is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors are proud of the school and give it effective support overall.
- The headteacher's very good leadership provides a clear sense of direction that is supported and shared by all.
- Management is good overall. Financial management is particularly good.
- Monitoring of some aspects of the school's provision is not rigorous enough.
- Governors do not meet their statutory obligations in respect of providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

39. Governors know the school's strengths well. They are fully behind the headteacher's vision and support the school's values strongly. They are very proud of its distinctive qualities. They are used to questioning why things are happening and follow up problems well, particularly in relation to the school's buildings. Their oversight of finances is good. The governing body has clear aims and policies to guide the work of the school. All the policies required by law are provided. Despite the strong features mentioned, governance is unsatisfactory because governors do not meet their legal obligations in respect of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Their own checking of how rigorously aspects of management referred to below are monitored could be improved.
40. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a vision for the school as the centre of the community that has sustained it through several difficult years. He leads by example and is well supported by the senior management team in translating vision into practice. The staff shares this vision. Teachers have been and are prepared to work together as a team to make it a reality. The effectiveness of leadership is confirmed by improvements in standards, teaching and accommodation that have taken place during a prolonged period of financial restraint and sacrifice. The quality of appointments, the very good induction process and the timetabled opportunity to work together on professional development all contribute to the creation of effective teams and enhance the sense of community in the school. They have been factors, too, in the improved quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
41. Management is good overall. There are some notable strengths in middle management in both the pastoral system and among curriculum leaders, and their experience, often acquired over many years through long-standing working relationships, benefits the pupils, particularly by providing good models for them to follow. Some weaknesses in monitoring arise out of the relative informality of these relationships. The monitoring of teaching at departmental level is not rigorous enough. The monitoring of special educational needs, assessment, literacy and numeracy is not consistent enough. The headteacher should ensure that the requirements of these delegated responsibilities are fully met.
42. Financial management is very good and supports the school's development priorities well. Much time and effort has been put into creating a buildings development fund so that the school's accommodation can work for the benefit of pupils and the community. Although the school is underfunded in comparison with other Gateshead schools and slightly below the average for schools nationally, its financial systems are sufficiently effective to have produced a reduction in staffing, a restructured curriculum and a system for cover of absent teachers, which cuts costs and ensures continuity of teaching. Day-to-day management of the school's finances is very efficient and the principles of best value are applied to all aspects of the

school's work. The principle of making full use of available funds for current pupils and students means that the school manages with a very small contingency reserve.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,405,328
Total expenditure	3,551,766
Expenditure per pupil	2,662

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	146,693
Balance carried forward to the next	255

Sixth form

43. The sixth form is led and managed effectively. Students are achieving well because leadership ensures good teaching overall. There is a strong focus on support for the individual and flexibility in meeting students' choices. Students appreciate this approach and are pleased with their decision to join the sixth form. The substantial increase in numbers expressing interest in joining in 2004 is testimony to successful leadership. The sixth form handbook is a very good guide for tutors and effective management ensures that its principles and procedures are followed by all, to the benefit of all students.

COMMUNITY PROVISION

The provision for community education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of the community as a resource for learning and provides opportunities for continuing learning for the community.
- The presence of the City Learning Centre on the school site provides an effective link with members of the local community who use its resources.
- Arts activities such as youth theatre productions are used effectively as a means of reaching out to the local community.
- Sixth form students attend master classes and conferences at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities.

Commentary

44. The school takes full advantage of the many resources available in the area to provide pupils with considerably more than the basic curriculum. Routine visits to concerts, theatres and art galleries are part of school life. Pupils have also attended life-drawing classes and worked with notable local artists such as Antony Gormley and musicians from the Northern Sinfonia. Local resources from the community such as the police and emergency services contribute to personal, social and religious education lessons. The school also uses the community to give pupils in Years 10 and 11 the opportunity to succeed in a smaller range of subjects when they have difficulty with the full curriculum

45. Master classes and conferences at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities enrich the sixth form curriculum and contribute to raising students' aspirations for the next stage of their education.

46. Arts activities are seen as a very effective way of reaching out to the local community. Many pupils and members of staff are involved with the youth theatre. Workshops and concerts are held in the school and other local venues. Very often these have a charitable purpose. Pupils also raise considerable sums for local charities in other ways.

47. The City Learning Centre – self-contained, but on the school site – provides an effective link with the community by making the school known to those who use it. Local organisations also use part of the school itself such as the sports facilities. A Christian fellowship group meets at the school at weekends and provides a weekly session for pupils.

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

The overall quality of provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result. Their achievement is also good in relation to their capabilities.
- Teachers encourage and manage pupils very well. Pupils’ attitudes are correspondingly good and their behaviour is very good.
- Management does not ensure sufficient consistency in teachers’ marking.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

48. Despite fluctuations, particularly in Year 2000, the trend in results at the end of Year 9 is a rising one. Performance in 2003 was close to that of the previous year, which was slightly below average. Given that standards on entry were well below average for many pupils, this represents good achievement. At GCSE level, A*-C grades for English in 2002 were significantly below average; provisional results for 2003 were slightly lower. Nevertheless, the average points score is likely to be in line with the national average. Given standards at the end of Year 9, this represents good achievement, particularly for lower attainers, all pupils entered having obtained at least a pass grade in the last two years. English literature results have been substantially higher and well above average, reflecting the fact that examination entry in this subject is restricted to higher attainers.

Standards and achievement

49. Standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11. These judgements represent good achievement in relation to prior attainment and an improvement in the picture of results particularly at GCSE. There are no significant differences in the achievement of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or those whose home language is not

English. Higher attainers reach appropriate standards. Given their starting points, lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs achieve well by the end of Year 11. In Years 10 and 11 average attainers are not precise and clear enough in written expression – a less conversational tone, more confident use of literary terms and greater accuracy would help these pupils to obtain C grades. Errors in spelling and in sentence punctuation persist through the age range. The youngest pupils lack practise in writing at length and in developing research and retrieval skills that will help them to become independent. Nevertheless, pupils can tackle a wide range of interesting texts, write in a variety of styles and often show pleasing personal involvement in their writing. One sign of this is the pride many take in careful presentation. Pupils listen well, and their skill in this area contributes significantly to their achievement.

Teaching and learning

50. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils gain confidence because teachers have a clear purpose, show pupils how to tackle work and provide much help in clearing up misunderstandings. They create good relationships and a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom because they know and manage pupils very well. Pupils respond with good attitudes and very good behaviour, and achieve well as a result. The very good teaching that exists in the department is marked by rapid movement through a variety of related activities. Pupils' responses, oral or written, are commented on and suggestions are made for improvement. Immediate action or change is expected. The result is that pupils work very hard, produce more and improve faster than might otherwise be expected. Only on one occasion during the inspection was teaching not satisfactory because of mistakes arising from not planning the right level of work or sufficiently structuring it. Teachers' marking is usually encouraging and helpful, but teachers are not consistent about making clear to pupils what their standard is or the specific changes or adjustments they should make to their work in order to improve.

Leadership and management

51. The department is led well. The teaching team share and effectively promote the school's values. Management, though effective in most respects, does not ensure that there is consistency of practice in relation to marking. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Positive features mentioned in that report are still present. Standards of achievement and teaching quality have been maintained and the trend of results is a rising one.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is satisfactory overall, but requires further development given that pupils enter the school with literacy levels well below the national average. A programme for staff training is underway. A series of measures has also been implemented to support pupils. About 45 pupils attended a literacy summer school, although not all of them completed the fortnight. Those with very weak skills are placed in three teaching groups and receive an extra lesson each week to work on their basic skills. Good use is made of the literacy progress units that have been designed for this purpose. To help pupils further, 'booster' classes are provided in Year 9, which are attended by some 70 pupils.
53. There is evidence that the problems of low levels of literacy are being tackled. Key words relevant to the subject are used very well in physical education and music where they help the pupils to express clearly what they have learned. In history, geography and in business and communication studies, frameworks for writing are helping pupils to create longer pieces of work using good structures and appropriate language. In design and technology a strong emphasis is placed on research skills and, as a result, pupils are able to find information from a variety of sources, including books and the Internet. They are then able to sort, make notes and put the information in order. Focus on the use of technical words allows them to make effective evaluations of their products. Further development across departments of this important work is compromised by the unsatisfactory quality of books in the library. Pupils often go to great lengths to present their work well and some of it is word-processed. However, there is little

evidence of computers being fully exploited to help pupils to create a wide range of writing such as letters and newspaper articles. Overall, the explicit teaching of literacy skills remains an area for continuing development, but a satisfactory framework has been put in place to enable this to happen.

Modern Foreign Languages

French was the principal focus of the inspection and is reported below. A wider than usual range of second languages is taught to many pupils. German, Italian and Spanish were sampled. Examination results in German and Spanish were below average in GCSE examinations in 2002, but close to average in 2003. Italian results have been consistently above average. By the end of Year 9, pupils attain average standards in these languages and achievement is satisfactory. They have well developed listening skills and are able to extract meaning from simple texts. Higher attaining pupils are starting to manipulate language and write simply in the present tense. In German, pupils' writing skills are better because the course they are following has a very clear structure that supports learning well. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average in German and Spanish, but above average in Italian. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' earlier learning. In all years, teachers are very successful in motivating pupils, whose enthusiasm for languages is evident. The pace of learning is brisk, expectations are high and learning objectives are met.

French

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wider than usual range of second languages is taught to many pupils.
- Teachers are very successful in motivating pupils so that they learn well.
- Teachers make very good use of language in the classroom so that pupils gain confidence in speaking.
- The French curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory and standards are too low as a result.
- Monitoring of teaching and standards is not rigorous enough.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

54. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average, but pupils achieved half a grade higher in French than in their other subjects. Girls perform better than boys.

Standards and achievement

55. By the end of Year 9, pupils show very good understanding of spoken language. Their speaking and reading skills are better than their writing because they have more practise. Overall, standards are not as high as they should be because the curriculum has not been revised to meet fully the demands of recent changes to the National Curriculum and the resources used are outdated and do not allow progress to be made at a fast enough pace. By the end of Year 11, writing skills are well developed for higher attaining pupils, but others lack confidence and accuracy. Listening remains the strongest area as a direct result of the very good use of the language in the classroom by teachers.

Teaching and learning

56. Teachers have good knowledge of French. They structure lessons well; a good range of activities captures the interest and enthusiasm of all pupils. Homework is not used as well as it might be to extend learning because of a lack of resources, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

57. Because teachers motivate pupils well, their attitudes to the subject are good. They are keenly involved in lessons, enjoying working in pairs and groups and concentrate well throughout. Marking and assessment do not give a clear indication of what pupils need to do to improve. Teachers plan well and ensure that the differing needs of pupils are met. However, the unsuitable resources make it difficult for pupils to achieve as well as they should in Years 7 to 9. Writing skills and grammatical understanding are not sufficiently developed. This means that many pupils start their GCSE course without a secure grammatical foundation.

Leadership and management

58. The new head of department has created an effective team. Heads of the individual languages taught are good role models for other staff. Management of the modern languages department is unsatisfactory because the curriculum in Years 7-9, particularly in French, is unbalanced, with not enough attention given to writing and developing language skills at the right pace. The restricted resources, referred to in the previous inspection, have not been updated and this is affecting standards in French. Assessment is not used well enough to help pupils to improve. Overall, progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of good teaching.
- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear direction for the subject.
- Computers are not used often enough to support pupils' learning.
- Marking does not inform pupils well enough of their standards or what they need to do to improve.

- Homework is not used effectively to support pupils' progress.

Examination results

59. Results in the 2003 Year 9 national tests were average. Results were well above average when compared with similar schools. Improvements made in previous years were maintained. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were average in comparison with all schools nationally and above average for similar schools.

Standards and achievement

60. By the end of Year 9, pupils' numerical skills are average; most pupils can recall their tables when doing mental calculations. Higher attaining pupils understand how to use the concept of proportion to find 'best value'. Pupils' data handling skills are satisfactory with most pupils able to draw a range of graphs effectively. By the end of Year 11, pupils have developed their problem solving skills enough to be able to identify patterns, find rules and use formulae to predict results. Algebraic skills are still weak for many pupils; only highest attaining pupils are able to solve equations confidently. Progress is good given pupils' below average standards when they joined the school. The National Numeracy Strategy has had a clear impact on standards with the result that pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

61. In Years 7 to 9, teachers plan lessons well; a range of oral and mental activities is used to begin lessons so that pupils are able to develop their numerical skills effectively. Time is usually given at the end of lessons to allow pupils to reflect on what they have learned. A variety of activities are used to develop pupils' skills and understanding; these are usually suitably challenging for pupils. In Years 10 and 11, however, learning is too often led by the teacher; pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to work independently. Good attention is given to pupils' literacy skills; key words are identified in teachers' planning, displayed in classrooms and teachers focus on them during lessons. Insufficient attention is given to pupils' ICT skills; computers are not used often enough to support pupils' learning. The day-to-day marking of pupils' work is not consistent across the subject; it does not inform pupils well enough of their standards or what they must do to improve. Homework is not used well enough to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good; good relationships and effective management ensure that pupils apply themselves well to their work and appear interested. Teachers plan well for the needs of different groups of pupils. Thus, pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; skills and concepts are explained well and questioning usually explores well what pupils already know.

Leadership and management

62. The department is led and managed well; a clear direction is provided and there is a commitment by all teachers to continue to raise standards. Teachers work well as a team. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection; standards are higher and the quality of teaching has improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Although the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well in terms of the mathematics lessons themselves, few other departments have planned well enough for development of numeracy in their subjects. Teachers have been made aware of the numeracy strategy, but the lack of a policy for mathematics across the curriculum is resulting in not enough attention being given in teachers' planning to support pupils' numeracy skills. Little evidence was seen of pupils being given opportunities to use numeracy in their work. Where

numeracy is tackled effectively, for example, in design and technology, pupils cope well with the skills required.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 are improving at a faster rate than nationally.
- The teachers' expert knowledge and good lesson planning promote good learning.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and good attitudes help to make lessons effective.
- The good breadth of curriculum choice provides well for all pupils' needs and aspirations.
- Pupils are not given sufficient guidance on how to improve their standards.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

64. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were below the national average. Results in physics and biology improved on the previous year, those in dual award science and chemistry fell. Although boys performed better than girls in that year, there is no significant gender difference overall. In 2003, results in dual award science improved, physics improved again, chemistry improved slightly, but biology dropped further. Single award science was introduced in 2003 and all candidates gained a grade. There is no long-term trend of improvement. Pupils' average points score in national tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The trend since 1998 has been steadily upwards at a faster than average rate.

Standards and achievement

65. Pupils enter school with below average standards. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and standards are average by the end of Year 9. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in relation to pupils' earlier learning, although earlier shortcomings mean that standards are below average by Year 11. By Year 9 pupils understand food chains, pyramids of numbers and how animals and plants are adapted to their habitats. By Year 11 they make informed predictions about the outcomes of practical situations, test hypotheses experimentally and use word processors to present their findings.

Teaching and learning

66. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities, which make learning effective. Pupils behave very well and teachers' expert knowledge makes lessons productive. Good class management and assistance from teachers allow pupils with special educational needs to make steady progress. Teachers mark regularly and praise good

work, but pupils are given little guidance on how to improve standards so that good learning that takes place in the classroom is not effectively reinforced elsewhere with a consequent effect on achievement. For a significant number of pupils achievement is also hindered by absence.

Leadership and management

67. Leadership and management are good. Teachers' work is organised to make best use of their specialist knowledge. The range of subjects and a scheme of work, which provides well for pupils of differing levels of attainment, satisfy all pupils' needs and are efficiently organised. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have risen steadily in Year 9, but there is no long-term trend of improvement at Year 11 in all the science subjects.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good because of the high standards set by teachers.
- Pupils achieve well overall because of the good teaching.
- Pupils are developing a greater independence in the use of computers and the school has more computers than usually found in a school of this size.
- Learning is not extended or reinforced using homework across the department. Good practice is not shared in this or in the use of questioning to test learning.
- Increased curricular opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 because of the good leadership and participation in the national strategy for ICT.
- Management of learning for those pupils not following a GCSE course and the management of learning for pupils using ICT in other subjects of the curriculum requires improvement.
- Good use is made of information by teachers to support pupils' progress, but pupils cannot presently relate this information to national grades.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory overall. Good in GCSE course
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination Results

68. Results in GCSE examinations were near to, but below, the national average in 2002. These results had risen in relation to 2001. In 2003 results were below those of 2002. Over the last three years the number of pupils entered for examination in ICT has risen. Teachers' assessments of pupil standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were average. They have risen from below average three years ago.

Standards and achievement

69. By the end of Year 9, pupils' standards are below average. Pupils have well developed communication and information handling skills, but underdeveloped measurement, control and modelling capability. More opportunities are also required for pupils to reflect critically and evaluate their work using extended writing. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' below average standards on entry to the school. By the end of Year 11, pupils following the GCSE course have well-developed systems and project management skills, which they use to solve web based communication, data handling and spreadsheet based problems. These pupils make good progress in relation to their earlier learning. Pupils not following an ICT course use ICT in a range of subjects and make satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning

70. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, which creates a positive learning environment where pupils are happy to respond to questioning. Questioning techniques are well developed in some classrooms, but this good practice needs to be shared across the department. There is a high level of expertise demonstrated by the teachers as they circulate the class throughout the lesson to monitor progress and challenge pupils further. However, an inconsistent approach to homework means that opportunities are missed in many lessons to reinforce and extend learning. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They are keen to use the new technologies, apply them to problems and they work with a good degree of independence. Teachers use information about pupils' progress to support them well and pupils know what to do to improve, but they cannot presently relate this information to national grades.

Leadership and management

71. The leadership of the department is good; there is a clear vision and aspiration for improvement. The curriculum is good and constantly re-evaluated. Management is also good, national resources have been tested, are being used very well and are helping to raise standards further this year. Data is used to monitor and support progress. Improvements in the management of learning for those pupils not following a GCSE course and the management of learning for pupils using ICT in other subjects of the curriculum are required. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Technical support is now available, all pupils follow a course in Year 10 with significant ICT elements; all pupils now make at least satisfactory progress and computers have been upgraded and are all suitable for their use. The school has 20 computers above the number usually found in a school of this size.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. There is satisfactory use in most subjects of the curriculum. The physical education department use heart monitors, video and cameras as a third umpire; teachers in music use composition software and the science department use the Internet and data-logging equipment. The geography department is developing the use of the Internet and interactive software to support learning. There is very good use in business education where communication using the computer is being covered very well. There is good use in design and technology where ICT is used often. Control technology is developing and computers are used in design work and in manufacturing work (CAD/CAM). The Internet is used well generally for research, and appropriate information is selected and presented using word-processing and publishing software. Further developments are required in the use of ICT across subject work, in particular within the art and design department as a creative tool. There is a City Learning Centre on the school site with a very high standard of equipment available that is used by pupils and in teachers' professional development. The school uses its time allocation well with the equipment used by most departments of the school. A good mathematics lesson was seen using CLC resources to develop pupils' understanding of perimeters and areas.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The good relationships between pupils and teachers contribute to a good working atmosphere.
- Standards in examinations are well below national average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Too many lessons have insufficient pace and challenge so progress suffers.
- Assessment, marking and target setting do not give pupils enough idea of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

73. Results in GCSE examinations are well below average. Whilst there has been a slight improvement over each of the past three years, less than 30 per cent of candidates achieve a higher grade C or above. The performance of girls is significantly weaker than that of boys.

Standards and achievement

74. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their earlier learning, although there is significant variation between the higher and average and lower attainers who find difficulty in understanding basic concepts, cause and effect or geographical patterns. The lack of basic skills, particularly literacy, and the ability to recall information affect standards. Higher attaining pupils can evaluate their work, use maps and diagrams systematically. Lower attaining pupils write short answers developing their ideas less well. There is little evidence of the use of ICT in written work. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average representing unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11. The majority of pupils who choose to study geography begin the course with below average standards overall. The time allocation for the subject makes it hard for pupils with low literacy skills to reach higher standards because of the difficulties they have in coping with coursework requirements and in answering examination questions. In addition, other factors are working against raising standards and improving achievement in geography. Some lessons are slowed by the absence of any support even in classes where a majority of pupils have special educational needs. A lack of confidence in their own ability means that many pupils are too dependent on teachers and need very specific, clear guidance and instruction on what to do, which restricts their learning and ability to tackle extended examination questions. These

factors contribute to the trend of much lower than average results and unsatisfactory achievement overall.

Teaching and learning

75. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, it varies. Pupils are not being stretched to do as well or as much as they can in all lessons. In some lessons, the quality of teaching is good when objectives are clear and what is required is explained so that all pupils understand. Pace and the level challenge are demanding so that learning progresses well. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons, although they contain good features, pace is not consistently quick enough and pupils are not fully stretched. Consequently, not as much is achieved in these lessons as is required for good progress. Assessment arrangements and marking do not consistently tell pupils clearly how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are very good. Pupils' behaviour, willingness to work in groups, pairs or individually is also a strong feature. Fieldwork activities have been developed well to extend geographical skills. They are well liked by pupils who speak highly of their visits and work that they see as extending their learning. Teachers have very good command of their subject, and enthusiasm that they try hard to communicate to pupils.

Leadership and management

76. The department is satisfactorily led and managed in unhelpful circumstances such as the time allocations and lack of support for pupils with special educational needs, although there are weaknesses in management. The monitoring of teaching is insufficiently rigorous and the marking policy is inconsistently applied.

77. Since the previous inspection, there has been only modest improvement. Attainment at GCSE is rising, but very slowly. ICT facilities have been upgraded and allow better opportunities, particularly for interactive learning. Fieldwork is now fully established across all years.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teachers encourage pupils to analyse the information they record.
- The positive behaviour and attitudes of pupils support their learning.
- Clear planning by teachers, supports pupils' achievement.
- Pupils do not understand the use of National Curriculum Levels and so cannot identify the elements of a high level answer.
- Pupils' understanding of events and periods of history is hampered by a lack of suitable audio-visual resources.
- The library does not support pupils' private study or research for investigation.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

78. In 2002, results at GCSE were in line with the national average. Results have risen steadily since the previous inspection. Girls are gaining a greater proportion of the higher grades than boys. Pupils are achieving well in comparison with their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

79. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. Achievement is good because teachers ensure that in most lessons pupils are using the facts they learn, not simply noting them. Pupils are using sources confidently to obtain information, and they have a simple understanding of the value of the individual sources. Good use of questions makes pupils reflect on new information and they are encouraged to develop their answers. Higher attaining pupils present information clearly and with much detail, although many pupils do not organise their information logically, without clear direction from the teacher. Pupils use ICT for research and presentation of information, but the library does not provide enough useful books to enable more independent research or resources for private study at home. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average and represent good achievement in relation to these pupils' standards at the beginning of the optional course. Where pupils are challenged by the teachers' questioning and the demand to justify their statements, many achieve above average standards. Pupils are well supported by teachers and build up a secure understanding of the periods and events they study. They recognise that many factors contribute to events and change, and can identify the impact of social attitudes on development in medicine. They make links over time and consider different viewpoints of events, such as the settlement of America. They are beginning to identify motive and to evaluate the sources they use. Work at times is very carefully structured, especially for lower attaining pupils. This way of working builds up their confidence and supports their learning, but at times restricts the independence and achievement of higher attaining pupils.

Teaching and learning

80. Teaching and learning are good because teachers plan lessons well to ensure that they proceed at a good pace and involve pupils in a variety of activities that encourage them to think about what they learn. The lack of video players is preventing teachers from using valuable video footage that would support pupils' understanding of unfamiliar periods. Pupils trust their teachers and relate to them well, sharing teachers' high expectations of behaviour and achievement. Teachers provide good support for the development of literacy through marking and the use of a variety of different writing tasks. Pupils' work is marked well, but the involvement of pupils in their assessment is at an early stage. They are evaluating their efforts, but their understanding of what they should do to raise the level of their work is unsure.

Leadership and management

81. The subject is very well organised and the emphasis that the department places on developing pupils' thinking skills is permeating teaching successfully. New ideas are considered and recent developments in the use of ICT support pupils' learning. Despite teachers' other significant responsibilities they work as a team. Although there is limited monitoring, the clear schemes of work and review of standards ensure that there is consistency in teaching. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9.
 Insufficient evidence is available for Years 10 and 11 to make a judgement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers manage their pupils well and create the right atmosphere for learning.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in the subject are thorough in Years 7 to 9 but not good enough in Years 10 and 11 so that pupils do not know how well they are doing.
- ICT has been used successfully to improve the standard of work on Buddhism in Year 10.
- Not enough time is provided in Years 10 and 11 to allow proper coverage of the locally agreed syllabus so that arrangements do not meet statutory requirements.
- Homework is not set on a regular basis with the result that there are few opportunities for pupils to develop skills of independent learning.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Standards and achievement

82. Religious education is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and within the programme of personal, social and religious education in Years 10 and 11. Religious education has not been the focus of lessons in PSRE this half term and Year 11 pupils' work was not retained at the end of Year 10. Consequently, judgments on standards and achievement are based on limited evidence of written work and interviews with pupils.
83. In Years 7 to 9, well structured courses enable most pupils to gain the expected knowledge of Christianity and three other major religions. Year 9 pupils have acquired a reasonable knowledge of religious ceremonies marking important stages in life, but show limited ability to compare and evaluate the different practices. Lesson tasks provide some progression from factual knowledge to understanding and evaluating religious practices, but not enough to challenge higher attainers in the Year 9 mixed ability classes. In discussions about the work of Martin Luther King, pupils appreciated the power of religious concern for justice behind the campaign for civil rights in America and were beginning to think through their own opinions on standing up for their beliefs. Homework is not used to develop reflective writing from such discussions, or to promote independent enquiry. Standards are below average at the end of Year 11 and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. They produced informative booklets on Buddhism in the summer term, using ICT and Internet research. However, only a few of the PSRE modules over the two years provide such systematic study of religious beliefs and ethics, with the result that pupils are not able to reach the standards expected in the agreed syllabus by the end of Year 11. Pupils' knowledge and experience of the subject varies, depending on the extent to which teachers include religious teachings on topics that have a different emphasis, such as sex education and citizenship studies. The curriculum lacks the necessary rigour, in terms of continuity of learning and depth of study to do justice to

the subject at this level. Pupils' attitudes are generally favourable and behaviour in classes is very good.

Teaching and learning

84. The subject is taught by the teachers of personal and social education, most of whom have built up an expertise in the subject over many years. They manage their pupils well, establishing good relationships and an atmosphere conducive to learning. Clear and interesting explanations engage pupils' attention, although go on too long, at the expense of more varied activities to quicken the pace and raise the level of challenge. On occasions, class discussion failed to involve enough pupils through questioning, but small group discussion was used effectively to help Year 9 pupils to express their views on religious protest movements. Marking and assessment of work is fairly rigorous in Years 7 to 9. Apart from the general grading system for PSRE in Years 10 and 11, there is no specific assessment of pupils' performance in the subject. Homework is seldom set and this limits the development of pupils' research and writing on topics. Teachers are increasing their use of ICT to support learning and the creation of an Intranet site for pupils to research Buddhism in lessons has been a notable success.

Leadership and management

85. The ICT developments and the creation of an electronic database for recording and monitoring pupils' progress are among the stronger aspects of leadership and management in the subject. Good teamwork and regular weekly meetings ensure efficient running of the department. Sound planning intends to take assessment further in Years 7 to 9 with the introduction of levels of attainment. The main area for development is the lack of systematic monitoring, evaluation and development of the teaching in Years 10 and 11. There has been little change since the previous inspection. Time for the subject still falls well short of that recommended for coverage of the agreed syllabus. The one major improvement has been in accommodation, which now comprises a modern suite of rooms, capable of supporting departmental plans to make greater use of new technology.

TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good assessment strategies ensure that pupils know how to improve.
- Good specialist teaching is raising attainment and promoting independent learning.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation in areas of the department is a barrier to learning.
- Limited use of creative thinking and National Curriculum Levels impedes standards at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

86. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were just below the national average for grades A*-C and above at A*-G. Both boys and girls do better in technology than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

87. By the end of Year 9 standards are average. Pupils progress rapidly from very limited skills and knowledge at the start of Year 7 and achievement is good by Year 9. They gain good making techniques because specialist teachers emphasise quality and accuracy. Pupils use their design booklet well, which is an improvement on the previous inspection report. Pupils with special educational needs perform as well as their peers, because good information is provided to guide their work. Extension work is provided for pupils with talent in the subject. By the end of Year 11, overall standards are average. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils show good study skills. Pupils' practical skills are good because they use tools safely and handle materials well. Projects indicate that pupils have a clear understanding of the design process, but narrow research limits their flair in designing. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to consider other designers' work. Good ICT skills, integration of technical language and a keen eye for accurate measurement improves their accuracy in writing and construction.

Teaching and learning

88. The quality of teaching is good and secures good learning; there were examples of very good teaching in food, graphics and control. Characteristics of these lessons were teachers' ability to challenge pupils' independent decision making. Teachers make good, consistent use of written, verbal and self-assessment to ensure that pupils realise that mistakes are part of learning and understand what they must do to improve their work. Good planning uses time targets to maintain pace of learning, relevant homework to extend thinking and pupils' participation in demonstrations and feedback. Although assessment is good it uses National Curriculum Levels only at the end of a unit, which misses an opportunity to clarify continuously pupils' understanding of their attainment levels and targets.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership is good. It has established a wide overview of design and technology as a response to comments in the previous report. Teaching and non-teaching staff are a cohesive team. They have reviewed the schemes of work, assessment strategies and the use of ICT to raise standards. Management is good. It is supportive and continually strives to raise standards through good systems for monitoring classroom standards. Management makes close links to school planning through good work with the department's line manager.
90. Unsatisfactory accommodation in the resistant materials areas of the department limits both designing and making. In addition, the top floor of the technology block has poor ventilation, which affects pupils' concentration.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in textiles are very good leading to good achievement in this aspect of the subject.

- Pupils do not achieve well enough in Years 7 to 9, or in the general art course at GCSE.
- A lack of cohesion in the department results in inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning and, consequently, in differences in achievement within the department.
- Assessment and marking are unsatisfactory so pupils do not understand well enough how to improve.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Examination results

91. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average. They fell further in 2003. Significant differences exist between results on different courses. Textiles grades have been average recently. General art and design results have been very poor. Pupils achieve well in textiles, but those taking the general art and design course have not done as well in art and design as in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

92. Pupils' standards when they join the school are below average. By the end of Year 9, their skills, knowledge and understanding are well below average. Except for textiles, where standards are above average, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. The way in which the time provided for art and design is organised hinders pupils' progress because the gaps between the modules are too long for pupils to remember learning well. Unsatisfactory planning of pupils' work further impedes learning, as at the time of the last inspection. Skills in drawing and painting are particularly weak by Year 9. Although pupils study one artist's work in each module, they seldom remember this learning into the next year. The organisation of the curriculum particularly disadvantages lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, whose retention of skills and knowledge is less secure than others.
93. Pupils who follow the GCSE textiles course achieve very well and Year 11 practical work is often of a very high standard. Hand and machine embroidery representing Monet's pictures, for example, is skilled and intricate. These very high standards are not matched in pupils' sketchbook and journal work; their evaluative skills are not good enough to reach high standards in written commentary about learning. Pupils following the general art and design course start with poor skills in key areas such as drawing and painting. Although standards in Year 11 are somewhat better than in 2003, pupils' skills are still well below average. Attendance is sometimes unsatisfactory, or attitudes negative, and few pupils on this course achieve well enough.

Teaching and learning

94. The quality of teaching varies significantly within the department. Teaching in textiles is very good, with lively interesting lessons occurring in a stimulating learning environment.

Relationships are very good and pupils develop a sense of pride and pleasure in their final pieces. Pupils often recognise their textiles work as amongst the best they do. In general art and design lessons, teaching lacks pace so pupils work very slowly. When teaching is unsatisfactory, the teacher does not concentrate on basic skills, such as brushwork or use of pencils, well enough for pupils to develop good habits. Although teachers talk to pupils about how to improve, written marking and assessment of pupils' work are unsatisfactory. Pupils can not refer to specific targets to track their own improvement.

Leadership and management

95. The new head of department has not yet had time to make an impact on standards. Since the previous inspection, standards have fallen. Few of the many criticisms in the report have been improved. Key issues for the new department leader relate to the development of teamwork, curricular organisation, assessment and monitoring pupils' achievement.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 because teaching is well matched to pupils' needs.
- A high proportion of students learn to play musical instruments, contributing to their achievement.
- Extra-curricular groups are well supported and achieve good standards.
- Leadership is good.
- Very good use is made of ICT.
- Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 are not accurate enough.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

96. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average. GCSE results over the past three years show a rising trend. They were broadly in line with the national average in 2002 and improved in 2003.

Standards and achievement

97. In work seen during the inspection in Year 9, standards are average, representing good achievement in relation to pupils' below average standards on entry to the school. Pupils show average knowledge and understanding of the elements of music and apply these satisfactorily to composing and performing tasks. For example, they know and understand chord sequences

for 12-bar blues and can play walking basses derived from them with reasonable accuracy. Knowledge of styles and composers is as expected, musical vocabulary is well taught and the use of ICT is good. In work seen during the inspection in Year 11, standards are average representing satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' earlier learning. A high proportion of pupils attain well performing on instruments, but there are a number who struggle to attain an average standard. Pupils with good playing skills attain better results in composing than weaker performers. Knowledge of representative styles such as minimalism and serialism is satisfactory.

98. A good proportion of pupils enhance their musical knowledge and understanding with additional instrumental lessons, for which the school makes generous provision of teaching and instruments.
99. The very good extra-curricular provision is well supported by pupils, students and staff, offering further valuable opportunities to extend and enhance musical attainment, greatly appreciated by school and community, and making a significant contribution to pupils' social, personal, cultural and spiritual development.

Teaching and learning

100. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 because lessons are planned more closely to pupils' individual needs. Teachers have good knowledge and expertise and plan well to give a good variety of activities within the lessons and to take account of individual needs of all the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Pupils enjoy their music lessons. Very good use is made of the high quality ICT facilities and this has a significant impact on learning.

Leadership and management

101. The department is well led with a clear vision for improvement. Management is satisfactory. Assessment and record keeping, although satisfactory, do not make sufficient impact on pupils' progress. When asked, pupils are vague about how to improve their levels. Practice in awarding and using levels in Year 9 teachers' assessments in particular, needs to be reviewed to ensure accuracy.
102. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. GCSE standards have been maintained broadly in line with national standards and the department has continued to achieve high standards of musical performance. ICT has developed considerably.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well especially in dance.
- Leadership is good and management is improving.
- Extra-curricular activities give good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning.
- Pupils do not receive sufficient guidance on how they can improve their theory work for GCSE.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good

Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good
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Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

103. The standards achieved in GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average and there was little improvement in 2003. Three times as many boys were entered for the examination in 2002 and boys' results were better than girls' results. In 2003 girls' results were close to average expectations, but boys' results were below this. The department has been hampered by extensive building work this year affecting accommodation and activities.

Standards and achievement

104. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and, by the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils on the GCSE course and the curriculum course are achieving well. This includes pupils with special educational needs. Boys achieve better than girls in practical lessons in Years 10 and 11 because boys' attitudes are better. For example, there are very few non-participants in boys' lessons and boys come equipped and ready to take part. In girls' lessons in Years 9 and 10 there are too many non-participants, who are not sufficiently effectively engaged in lessons and achieve little. Leadership of girls' physical education has recently changed and planning is in place for improvement. Girls achieve better than boys in GCSE theory lessons because their literacy skills are better and they record work more accurately.

Teaching and learning

105. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers demonstrate well and give clear explanations that help all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to understand. Questioning is effective and teachers have high expectations. For example, in a Year 7 dance lesson pupils achieved well because the teacher checked pupils' understanding all the time and provided a professional example on video to encourage improvement so that pupils completed tasks well. Teachers do not always share objectives with pupils so that pupils are often unaware of intended outcomes. Teachers usually review learning well to check understanding and consolidate knowledge, but do not identify strengths and areas for improvement. Talented pupils are encouraged to participate in external clubs, but provision for these pupils is not well developed.

106. There is a strong focus on practical GCSE lessons where teachers' coaching is good and pupils learn well, but more consistency is needed in the use of basic skills in theory lessons and on marking and grading by teachers for improvement and guidance for pupils. Further links between practical and theoretical elements would improve pupils' understanding. Systems are in place for checking pupils' achievement, but in practice these are not sufficiently well linked to examination marks for pupils to check their progress and measure improvement.

107. Learning is good overall, although irregular attendance affects the continuity of work in some lessons where time has to be spent bringing pupils up to date. Pupils have good attitudes in lessons, especially boys, and particularly where the teaching is strong. The good range of extra-curricular activities and team games enhances opportunities for learning.

Leadership and management

108. Leadership is good. The curriculum meets the needs of different groups of pupils. There are a variety of activities available, for example, dance is well liked by pupils and the course is

designed to motivate pupils well. The organisation of the department is satisfactory but greater consistency of expectations and monitoring of standards and achievement would benefit pupils. The accommodation is good and used well; the gym is now used for dance and pupils do not have a fully equipped gymnasium to work in for gymnastics; the floor surface of the new sports hall is not as good for floor work as that of the gymnasium. Resources are good and GCSE pupils have access to ICT; pupils are assisted by use of a video camera, which is especially useful in helping pupils to analyse and improve their practical performance.

109. Overall the improvement since the previous inspection has been good. New accommodation offers more opportunities to pupils. The report database is now more extensive for better reporting to parents.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business and Communication Studies

Provision in business and communication studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good because of the high standards set by teachers.
- Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Good use is made of ICT.
- Gifted and talented pupils are identified and suitably challenged.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	n/a	Average
Achievement	n/a	Good
Teaching and learning	n/a	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

Examination Results

110. This is a new course and there are no results available this year.

Standards and achievement

111. Standards of work seen are average. ICT is used well in the study of communication and by pupils using presentation software to support a presentation about their own company. Achievement is good. Pupils have very good attitudes and behaviour whilst studying in this area because teachers have high expectations.

Teaching and learning

112. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. This creates a positive working environment in which the expertise of the teacher is used well in the support of pupils. Teachers also support pupils well through the marking of work. Gifted and talented

pupils are recognised and suitably challenged. There is a well-planned curriculum in place for this course of study.

Leadership and management

113. Leadership and management are good. The course is well designed to meet pupils' needs and teaching is well organised.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The youth council election system enables pupils to experience active politics.
- Links with local police and the judicial system support pupils' understanding of the topic of crime and punishment.
- Citizenship lessons ensure that the content of the syllabus is delivered.
- A team of teachers teach citizenship enabling them to build up their knowledge and expertise.
- Pupils are not yet building up a record of their achievements in citizenship.
- There is no identification of pupils' contributions towards active citizenship within or outside school.
- Citizenship across the curriculum is not evaluated or included into a cohesive course.

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

Standards and achievement

114. Standards of understanding and activity in citizenship for pupils in the main school are average. Pupils discuss contemporary issues, such as the problem of discrimination, and they are challenged to consider individual cases in order to recognise the effects of a variety of types of prejudice. Through video presentation they listen to the opinions of those who may suffer from it and higher attaining pupils challenge their own assumptions. During the lessons on crime and punishment, the contribution of the police and justices enables pupils to review the system and consider their own beliefs and values. Pupils learn about the rights of a child and then consider cases of ill treatment of children. They reflect on the rights that are abused. Pupils have created very good posters, using ICT, which show their understanding of the issues. Pupils understand the British parliamentary system, and the formal election of three pupils as representative of the Gateshead Youth Parliament, enables them to put what they learn into practice. Pupils are interested in the topics they study and work steadily in lessons. The lessons are directed towards the whole group, however, and, as a result, some pupils find the work very

straightforward and they are able to complete tasks with little effort or thought. Pupils have few other opportunities for practical citizenship or leadership positions within the school. When they have the opportunity to work together they organise themselves well and accept delegated responsibility. Pupils who are members of the school council demonstrate very good leadership and represent their peers well.

Teaching and learning

115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers involve pupils actively in lessons and select resources that are relevant to their lives. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values. In the best lessons, pupils collaborate and organise themselves with minimal direction from teachers. In some lessons progress is slowed because they are dominated by over-long teachers' explanations and questions posed require little real consideration. Pupils' responses become brief and lessons lack enquiry and challenge. Work is marked well, but there is no system to monitor pupils' progress as citizens, and no opportunity for them to evaluate their own understanding and contribution to the group. Pupils are collecting evidence of their work, but recording is undeveloped. Although they identify aspects of citizenship that are taught in lessons, they do not consider the full range of skills and understanding that support their development as citizens. Homework is not used to enable pupils to develop their ideas or research greater depth of information leading to better understanding.

Leadership and management

116. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has devised a clear scheme of work that covers the factual content of the syllabus. Citizenship lessons have been introduced and a designated team of teachers is developing their expertise. Citizenship rooms provide a good area to display information and enhance learning. There are few opportunities for pupils to participate in the organisation of the school or to take responsibility. Work undertaken outside the designated citizenship lessons is not yet included or evaluated as part of a cohesive programme. As a result, some very good opportunities are missed.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	6	83.3	92.0	33.3	29.9	30.0	35.7
Geography	9	44.4	88.3	0.0	36.4	13.3	36.3
History	6	100.0	91.8	50.0	37.2	45.0	37.8
Information Technology	6	100.0	78.2	16.7	20.6	33.3	28.5
Other Social Studies	12	41.7	83.2	0.0	32.5	11.7	33.6

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	6	100.0	96.4	0.0	32.8	53.3	76.5
Chemistry	5	100.0	94.0	60.0	45.9	92.0	81.1
Communication Studies	8	100.0	98.3	75.0	36.8	100.0	81.1
English Language	13	100.0	98.3	15.4	36.5	76.9	80.1
English Literature	7	100.0	98.5	57.1	43.7	88.6	84.3
History	9	100.0	97.1	44.4	41.0	84.4	81.2
Information Technology	14	100.0	89.1	7.1	22.4	58.6	64.1
Mathematics	8	100.0	93.3	12.5	52.2	67.5	84.7
Other Social Studies	10	100.0	94.3	10.0	38.9	58.0	77.7
Physics	6	100.0	92.8	33.3	42.8	76.7	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and **English literature** and **Italian** were the focus subjects. **French** and **German** were sampled. Sampled lessons in French and German showed that teachers make very good use of a wide range of resources in very well planned lessons. As a result, students achieve very well.

English

Provision in English language is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they communicate this effectively so that students are well prepared for their coursework and examinations.
- Teachers choose methods that are suited to the needs of this older age group so that students are encouraged to become independent learners.
- Leadership and management are good and results are improving.
- Students need to be made aware of a wider range of research materials and techniques.
- Assessment procedures need to be more consistently applied so that students are clear on what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

117. Results in A-level examinations in 2002 were average. This shows a trend of improvement since the first group of students took their examinations in 2001 when results were below the national average. This demonstrates good achievement given the levels that the students had attained on entry to the sixth form.

Standards and achievement

118. Current Year 13 students are reaching average standards in work seen, representing good achievement in relation to their GCSE performance.

Teaching and Learning

119. Teaching and learning are good overall. The reasons for this are that the teachers have good subject knowledge and they are extremely enthusiastic. Lessons are carefully planned and the time is used effectively. As a result, the students respond equally positively. They enjoy the lessons and discuss the issues with interest. Where appropriate, the tasks are linked to the interests of young adults and draw on aspects of their local culture, which increases interest. In addition, these tasks are suitably challenging for students of this age group and the teachers generally take care to ensure that sufficient demand is put on the students by expecting them to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers are aware of the need to support the less confident students, but, occasionally, this can result in giving them so much information and help that it reduces the necessity for them to work things out for themselves. Students collaborate with ease. They take constructive criticism from each other and listen to each other with respect. They remain involved and focused over long periods of time and this reflects both the high demands that are made of them and the very positive relationships that they have with their teachers. Further opportunities for learning are provided by the activities that take place out of school. Students can attend lectures at the local universities and facilities such as nurseries and the law courts are used to study language in action. Such opportunities are very effective in broadening students' understanding, challenging them by hearing other experts speak and so preparing them well for their coursework and examinations. As some of the modules are

completed independently, the ability to research well is an important feature of this course. Many of the students rely just on the Internet and do not explore other sources of information such as books and journals. Because of this their work does not always reflect a wide range of sources and they are not yet confident in adapting what they have found to suit their needs. Teachers give a great deal of help to students on an individual basis, especially when they are carrying out extended assignments such as the language investigations. Students appreciate this support, but they are uncertain as to what action they need to take to achieve a higher grade. They are not familiar with the assessment criteria and so cannot link these to specific aspects of their own writing. They are, therefore, unclear as to how they can improve.

Leadership and Management

120. Leadership and management are good. One of the teachers who introduced the course in 1999 is still teaching it and, therefore, has an overview and is able to keep track of the quality of the provision so monitoring is good. The teachers are well matched to the demands of the course. Care has been taken to build up a bank of resources so the materials used to support students' learning are always up to date. The programme of out of school activities has been carefully thought through so that all students, including the able and talented, are fully stretched. These factors explain the improvement in the results. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

121. Most subjects and courses contribute well to development of students' skills. Opportunities for discussion and debate are frequent in English, performance studies and art and design. Key language and concepts are taught well, for example, when mathematics students developed greater understanding of 'expectation' and 'variance'. More could be done to encourage contributions from more reticent students who find it difficult to initiate discussion or make voluntary spoken contributions; for example, in biology. Written work is usually managed competently and marked well so that students can improve. As a result, students have skills in language and literacy sufficient for them to reach average standards overall in their chosen subjects.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently effective in helping students to achieve well.
- The subject is led and managed well so that improvement has been good.
- Students appreciate the support they receive and benefit from it.
- Some Year 12 students (particularly males) are not yet sufficiently involved in lessons.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

122. Results in English literature have improved since 1998 and were above average in 2002. Provisional results for 2003 were lower and likely to be average overall. In relation to students' prior attainment, achievement has been good. Most students complete the full two years of their course and all have obtained at least a pass grade in the subject in recent years.

Standards and achievement

123. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 13 are average overall. Most students had GCSE grades in English that were lower than usual for this level of study; to have reached these standards now represents good achievement. In lessons they achieve well because of the encouragement they receive to work independently, the many opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding and to participate in analytical discussion of their set texts. For example, all show knowledge of characters and how these inter-relate in a book like Margaret Atwood's 'Alias Grace', higher attainers also recognise its ambiguities and explain well the possibility of several interpretations. Their achievement is supported over time by helpful background and reference material kept in well-organised work folders. They have frequent writing practise and their work is well prepared and carefully referenced. Teachers' marking makes clear whether students have met the necessary criteria for success and how they can improve. As a result, all demonstrate understanding of context, themes and characters. Higher attaining students write fluently, analytically and with pleasing involvement in their studies. Year 12 students are at an early stage of their AS course and some (particularly males) are still reticent about taking a full part in class discussion and group activities. Nevertheless, the gains they have made in knowledge and understanding of Tennessee William's 'A Streetcar Named Desire' show that achievement is good in relation to their previous performance at GCSE.

Teaching and learning

124. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to help students to learn. They use questioning well to prompt an oral response and test out students' understanding. The attentive and concentrated involvement of Year 13 students in a discussion of Marlowe's 'Dr. Faustus' was testament to the effectiveness of this approach. Teachers provide suitable models or examples so that students know how to tackle their assignments. Students know why they achieve well - because "teachers are supportive, give us confidence, make demands on us and encourage us to work independently". These comments were borne out by classroom observations where effective teaching combined with strong relationships created a good learning partnership between students and teachers.

Leadership and management

125. The course is led well, with a clear focus on the development of students as individuals. Students themselves recognise that the course has already changed the way they think, in particular in being more critically aware and more able to judge the quality of what they read. Management is also good, with teachers matched well to the different aspects of the course. Improvement has been good because the quality of teaching (praised in the previous inspection report) has been maintained, achievement is good and the course continues to attract students who benefit from the range of reading and reference they acquire.

ITALIAN

Provision in Italian is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use is made of a wide range of resources.

- Lessons are very well planned.
- Students achieve very well.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

126. Results are consistently above average at A level. In recent years, all students have gained grades in the A-C range.

Standards and achievement

127. Standards are above average in work seen and achievement is very good. At the end of the A-level course, students are confident speakers and listeners. They can express their opinions clearly and accurately, and justify them. They make more marked progress in Year 13, having developed good learning skills in Year 12. Students take pleasure in their work. They are able to write at length using a variety of structures and idioms to enhance their work.

Teaching and learning

128. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge well to enthuse students. Excellent use is made of the facilities in the City Learning Centre where there are regular viewings of films that are used as a stimulus to learning. There is also a carefully planned programme of individual video comprehension work that enhances students' understanding. Homework is well used to extend learning. Students make very good use of the range of material available so that they have good, all round knowledge of Italy, its people and its customs. The very good use the teachers make of Italian in the classroom supports students' learning well.

Leadership and management

129. The head of Italian provides very clear vision and direction. Courses are well planned and teachers co-ordinate their work well. This is a very effective department.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good attitudes result in them achieving well.
- Leadership and management are good so that the department's resources are deployed effectively.
- Good marking and assessment support students' progress well.
- Computers are not used sufficiently to support students' learning.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

130. In 2002, GCE A-level examination results were well below average. Results in 2003 showed a significant improvement. This represents good achievement in relation to students' attainment at the start of the course.

Standards and achievement

131. In Year 13, students are making good progress in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. AS-level results confirm this. Overall, standards are average and students' achievement is good. Some students began the course with modest GCSE results and, as a result, about half did not complete the Year 12 AS modules successfully.

Teaching and learning

132. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers show very good subject knowledge in their questioning and in the way they develop students' learning. Lessons are carefully planned and teachers provide a variety of approaches to help students to learn. However, computers are not used sufficiently to support students' learning. Students show very positive attitudes to their work; they make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing. As a result, students' learning is good. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work is good and supports students' learning well. As a result, students know how well they are doing and what they must do to ensure that they meet the examination criteria.

Leadership and management

133. The department is led and managed well; teachers are deployed well so that their specialist knowledge can be utilised effectively. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection; the number of students who choose the subject is much higher.

Mathematics across the curriculum

134. Use of mathematics and the level of skills shown by students are generally satisfactory across almost all subjects. For example, in geography students' mathematical skills are average; they are able to tabulate results, draw graphs and apply statistical techniques when analysing results. A GNVQ key skills course in numeracy is provided for some students not following an AS-level course in mathematics. Standards for these students are below average.

SCIENCE

Biology was the focus of the inspection. Sampled lessons in **physics** revealed above average standards and good achievement as a result of good teaching. In a **chemistry** lesson students were achieving satisfactorily and reaching average standards.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in lessons and over time, and reach standards that are above average.
- The quality of teaching is always good or better. Teachers' knowledge is very good and expectations are high.
- Students respond to the teachers' enthusiastic approach and have a desire to succeed. They are, however, reluctant to initiate discussion.
- The department is well managed. Teachers work well together and are committed to raising attainment.
- Assessment is good, but the work in students' files is not monitored on a regular basis.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

135. The unconfirmed results of the 2003 A-level examinations were lower than those of the previous year. Results have been above average over the past three years. Students generally attain grades that are equal to, or exceed, predictions based on their previous attainment and achievement is good. The numbers of students entering the examination has been small.

Standards and achievement

136. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are above average. Students in Year 12 have settled down well to their sixth form studies and a large amount of material has been covered since the beginning of the year. Higher attaining students, for example, have a very good understanding of the structure of polypeptides. Lower attaining students have a sound knowledge of the topic, but their understanding of the different types of link between amino acids is less secure. Year 13 students demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the topics they have been taught. They have a good understanding of genetics, which they can relate to variation in animals and plants. Higher attaining students can apply statistical tests to the results of their experimental work with a high level of confidence. Students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

Teaching and learning

137. The quality of teaching and learning in both years is always good or better. Students are well motivated and have a desire to learn. They respond well when questioned directly, but are reluctant to initiate discussion or challenge concepts. Students use ICT effectively, for example, to demonstrate their findings to other students. Lessons are very well prepared with clear objectives. A variety of activities keep students challenged and expectations are high. In a well-prepared Year 12 lesson homework was returned with pertinent comments coupled with praise and humour. Students responded well to questions posed by the teacher on the nature of amino acids and the formation of dipeptides. Students then displayed very good research skills making notes on the formation of polypeptides. Students at all levels of attainment made good progress. Homework and set exercises are marked using comments that inform students of their progress and give them guidance on improvement. However, teachers do not often monitor students' files to check for errors and offer advice on presentation. The department keeps good records of each student's attainment and progress.

Leadership and management

138. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Students in both years are taught by three different teachers, but carefully designed schemes of work and frequent informal meetings enable them to work together effectively. There is a commitment to raising standards. The department has responded positively to the general comments about sixth form provision in the previous report and improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students gain above average standards because of the good teaching.
- Students' work is well monitored and they are well guided using examination criteria so that they achieve well.
- The school has above the number of computers normally found in a school this size, so that students are developing a greater independence in their use.
- Students know what has to be achieved because good use is made of displays and ICT systems to show students' exemplary work.
- Approaches to project content, including testing plans, user guides and general evaluation work, should be improved so that students not reaching higher grades can do so.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

139. A-level results for girls in 2002 were average and boys were below average. In 2003 results were in line with those of 2002. There is a good retention rate for ICT courses.

Standards and achievement

140. Standards seen for students following the A-level course are above average. This represents good achievement when students' average ICT capability at the end of Year 11 is considered. Students are well motivated and have well developed independence in the use of the computer in a range of problem solving situations. These include the management and development of web sites and also graphical, spreadsheet, data handling and presenting information solutions. Students not achieving higher grades need to improve their approach to project content including testing plans, user guides and general evaluation work.

141. A GNVQ intermediate course is offered to pupils who did not follow a course of study in Years 10 and 11 or for those who did not gain a grade C or above. Students on this course are making satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning

142. Teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from competent teachers who are very keen to maximise the potential of the ICT resources for the benefit of their students. Good use is made of displays and ICT systems to show exemplar work. Teachers monitor students' progress very well and indicate clearly what students need to do to improve further. Students use examination criteria with the teachers to help them to know how well they are performing. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good; they work with a high degree of independence and can communicate clearly.

Leadership and management

143. The subject is led and managed well. Students are guided and supported effectively and are becoming increasingly independent in computer use. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

HUMANITIES

History was the focus of the inspection. A sampled **geography** lesson provided evidence of good teaching and learning.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well supported enabling them to develop their examination technique.
- Teachers' good subject expertise supports students' understanding.
- Students do not take a sufficiently active role in their lessons so that they are over-dependent on their teachers.
- Students do not use a range of recording and writing methods so that they do not make the best use of information.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

144. Examination results at A level were above average in 2002; girls' results were well above the national average. This was an exceptional year and provisional results in 2003 were much lower. Results at AS level were above average in 2002. Results in 2003 were lower. Most students chose to continue their studies into A level. Students' achievements were satisfactory in 2003, but very good in 2002.

Standards and achievement

145. Standards in work seen for students in Year 13 are below average, but this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' standards when they began the course. Standards in the current Year 12 are higher. Students are developing a sound overview of the periods studied. They have a secure understanding of the reasoning behind appeasement, for example, and recognise the validity of the different arguments. They recognise the variety of factors that lead to events and can make personal judgements about their relative importance. They select and extract information from source material confidently and present clear responses to written questions. They are beginning to analyse their work and to recognise the need to support statements with evidence and authority. Students are well motivated and apply themselves conscientiously. Students make notes and prepare well for lessons, but they have limited understanding of the different methods of displaying information, which would make it more useful to them. They are more comfortable undertaking written responses than oral, and reluctant to challenge or enquire, trusting that their teachers will provide all they need to know. Their attitude to study is good and they arrive at lessons prepared to work.

Teaching and learning

146. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers provide clear direction and prepare students well for their examinations. Secure subject knowledge enables them to give clear expositions and respond to questions directly. The very good relationship between teachers and students is developing their confidence and students trust their direction. Students are encouraged to respond through questioning and teachers receive their responses positively, ensuring further development through the use of supplementary questions. Students are encouraged to review their work, but they are not confident in their presentations and there is insufficient active learning to build up their confidence and allow them to learn from each other. Students receive good advice about their work through teachers' marking, but the use of self-assessment is underdeveloped. Students have good access to computers and teachers encourage them to use them to widen their understanding of different views of history.

Leadership and management

147. Leadership and management are good. Teachers meet regularly and students feel well supported. Results are analysed, but there is no monitoring of lessons to encourage the development of learning techniques. Good use is made of the CLC to encourage independent research, but the library is inadequate for study or investigation. It does not contain the books that the students require. The A-level course has been successfully reintroduced and numbers following the AS course are rising. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subjects of the inspection were art and design and performance studies.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have made a very good start to this new course.
- Teaching and learning are good and achievement is improving quickly.
- Attitudes are very good and students appreciate the school's response to their requests to provide this course.
- Students enjoy their work very much indeed and do large volumes of work outside lessons.
- The standard of students' critical analysis in journals does not yet match the standard of their practical work, which is above average for most.
- The department lacks sufficient access to ICT so students cannot pursue these aspects of learning in lessons.

Commentary

	Year 12
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	n/a

148. The school responded very positively to students' requests for a sixth form course to enable them to progress from their successful textiles studies at GCSE. There are now 11 students in the first year of an AS/A2 course. The group includes some non-GCSE students who are older and are taking AS level only.

Standards and achievement

149. Standards in work seen are average overall. In relation to students' standards at the start of the course, achievement is good at this early stage. Students show good skills in textiles work, which is often of an above average standard. Their weaker areas relate to shortcomings lower in the school, where they did not learn core skills such as drawing and painting well enough for their sketchbooks to match these high standards. The lack of A* levels amongst current students was because these supporting elements were weaker, and because written critique

was not sufficiently sharp. These are still areas that need strengthening in order to make AS-level work better. Practical work is good, with very interesting, imaginative techniques being explored during lessons. Students are just beginning to understand the need for personal, individualistic responses to the start-points given, and are enthusiastic to explore ideas. Students are already making good progress because their attitudes are extremely positive. They speak with enormous enjoyment and pleasure about their work in the department. They do not regard it as work because they are so keen on what they do. They are willing to undertake large volumes of work outside lessons for the same reasons and this is partly why they are doing so well.

Teaching and learning

150. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teacher's one-to-one discussions with individuals are very well matched to the needs of each student. Critical, highly focused oral assessment gives each student a very clear idea about alternative ways to proceed. With abler and more experienced students, the teacher mostly challenges students themselves to resolve dilemmas and suggest ways forward. Support for those with less experience in textiles is very good, covering lower level needs such as sewing machine operations, very effectively. With this variety of methodology, each individual is enabled to learn very quickly so independent working is very good. The group enjoys very good relationships with each other and with the teacher, so lessons happen in a highly purposeful, mutually supportive atmosphere of enjoyment and satisfaction. Students are keen to meet the high expectations posed by a very good subject specialist.
151. The new course represents a very good progression route from students' studies in Year 11 and is well managed by the new head of department. Assessment and marking are helpful and regular, so students know what to do to improve. They make use of ICT facilities elsewhere in the school, but the department needs computers and other hardware and software, to give students proper access in lessons.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

PERFORMANCE STUDIES

Overall the quality of provision in performance studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; students learn very well as a result and show very good achievement in relation to their different starting points.
- The subject is led and managed very well; students, therefore, obtain the maximum benefit from teachers' expertise and the wide range of opportunities for development.

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Progress since previous inspection	Very good
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Examination results

152. Results over the last three years have been above average. In any one of these years more than half the students have obtained the highest grades (A/B). This proportion rose to 80 per cent in provisional results for 2003. In relation to students' prior attainment, achievement has been very good, particularly for those who began the course without prior experience of related GCSE courses.

Standards and achievement

153. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above average. Students achieve very well because of the very good opportunities provided to extend their knowledge and understanding and to develop their performance skills. A strong feature of students' achievement is the way they are helped to face up to and meet the challenges of demanding work. Students may in one lesson be analysing and choosing different 'sound samples' using sophisticated computer software, in another practising and evaluating different interpretations of Wycherley's 'The Country Wife' or in another be putting together their own original performance project combining individual's respective skills (often very well developed) in music, dance and drama. As a result, they all encounter and appreciate the difficulties of an area that may not be a strength of their own, learn to help and rely on each other and gain in trust and confidence of their own and others' capabilities. Their achievements are secured by constant critical evaluation of their own and others' work. Year 12 students at an early stage of their AS course are achieving very well also – already making better progress than might be expected in their understanding of what might be going on 'between the lines' of a drama text and of the line drawn between drama and 'real life'. They are showing a mature, reflective, respectful, but also critical approach to each other's performance work.

Teaching and learning

154. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teachers' expertise and their ability to convey knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject inspire students' interest and help them to learn rapidly. Teachers use challenging, but enjoyable and interesting activities conducted at a rapid pace to stimulate and involve all the students. They combine these very effectively with periods when the students are expected to develop their own learning and the teachers' role is one of guide and facilitator. Students know how well they are doing because of teachers' clear reports on their written assignments and constructive, but rigorous, comments on their work in lessons. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent because of students' confidence in teachers' expertise and continuing support.

Leadership and management

155. The course is led and managed very well because the teaching team has a common purpose of developing the students' skills to the best of their capability and teachers are expertly matched to the different elements of the course. Students themselves recognise that they make considerable progress. They value highly their increased confidence and understand much better the hard work and skill that lies behind any performance of quality. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

Business studies was sampled. Good teaching is enabling students to achieve well.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

