

INSPECTION REPORT

GOSFORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Newcastle Upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle Upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108523

Head teacher: Mr H Robinson

Lead inspector: B A Jones

Dates of inspection: 13th - 17th October 2003

Inspection number: 259126

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Year 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their middle schools after Year 8. Students 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. Students in Years 9 to 11 follow courses and programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for of all ages at school. Years 9 to 11 are described as the main school where a distinction is drawn between students in these years and those in the sixth form.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science, called Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). 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 students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

Terms used in describing judgements accord to the following scale:

A - very high (excellent); A - well above average (very good); B – above average (good); C – average (satisfactory); D – below average (unsatisfactory); E – well below average (poor); E* - very low (very poor).*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1587
School address:	Knightsbridge Great North Road Gosforth Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Postcode:	NE3 2JH
Telephone number:	0191 2851000
Fax number:	0191 2132068
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor M Goodfellow
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school with 1587 students on roll. There are 780 boys and 807 girls. The school has a large sixth form, comprising 486 students. Students are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, but overall average in terms of socio-economic status. On entry to Year 9, there are slightly more higher-attaining students than usual, but overall the intake is broadly average. There are 20 students whose mother tongue is not English and are at an early stage of learning English, and seven asylum-seekers. Around 17 per cent of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Thirteen per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is broadly average. Some 12 per cent of students have special educational needs, mainly moderate learning difficulties, which is below average, and 1.8 per cent have statements of special needs, which is average. The school has a specialist unit to provide for students who are visually impaired. Last year, some 43 students joined the school and 89 left, other than at the ages of 13 or 16. The school is now larger than at the time of the previous inspection, and the sixth form is significantly larger. The intake is now more characteristic of a comprehensive school. The accommodation has been significantly improved and expanded, and this led to severe disruption over the three-year building programme.

The school has specialist Language School status. It has been awarded the Investor in People award, (2001), Beacon School status (2001) and Training School status (2003).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Registered inspector	
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector	
4926	T. Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics.
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	History. Vocational education. Business education.
1819	R. Crowther	Team inspector	Economics. Sociology.
11508	C. Griffin	Team inspector	English. Drama.
4676	M. Griffiths	Team inspector	Students with visual impairment.
16548	D. Gwinnett	Team inspector	Music.
20287	D. Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages. French (Sixth form). Provision for students with English as an additional language.
23246	J. Mitchell	Team inspector	Chemistry.
15678	J. Radford	Team inspector	Religious education. Citizenship. Provision for students with special educational needs.
21803	L. Ramsey	Team inspector	Health and social care.
10894	P. Reynolds	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT).
2079	T. Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology.
31192	J. Stewart.	Team inspector	Physical education.
8090	F. Turns	Team inspector	Art and design.
31255	D. Williamson	Team inspector	Science.
33015	R. Winter	Team inspector	Geography.

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	12
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	18
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	28
THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED UNIT	31
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	33
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	82

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school and it provides good value for money. The school is led and managed well and teaching and learning are good. As a result, students are achieving well and attaining standards that are above average in Years 9 and 11. Students in the sixth form achieve well and standards are above average and rising. The sixth form provision is cost effective.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English are well above average and students achieve very well. Their GCSE results in English literature in 2002 were significantly above average.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well across a wide range of subjects. The school's highest attainers achieve very well because they are very well provided for.
- The Student Support Base is very effective and plays a large part in ensuring good achievement among different groups of students, such as those with English as an additional language.
- There are excellent opportunities to support learning outside the school day and participation rates are high in a wide range of activities.
- The pastoral system supports students effectively, and makes a good contribution to their very good behaviour and relationships.
- The governing body is very effective, particularly in ensuring good resources for learning and very good staffing and accommodation, apart from indoor facilities for physical education, which are very poor.
- In 2002, results in GCSE music were well below average and current provision for music is unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is too rigid to meet fully the needs and aspirations of all students.
- Reports to parents do not contain enough detail on how students can improve their work.

The school has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in March 1998. Standards and the quality of education have been maintained at a time when there have been significant changes to the school and its population. The school has responded effectively to the issues in the previous report. There are still issues to be resolved relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students and religious education in the sixth form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

Similar schools are those with similar percentages of students eligible for free school meals. This measure is used because prior attainment measures do not accurately portray the school's relative performance.

Students' achievement is good. Standards of work seen of students in Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also above average. Standards are above average in the sixth form. Students achieve well through Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs and those for

whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Gifted and talented students achieve very well because they are very well provided for in classes and in terms of extra-curricular provision. There are no significant differences in the levels of achievement between boys and girls. Standards in music are below average and students do not achieve as well as they should because the teaching they receive is unsatisfactory.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students' attitudes to the school are very good and their behaviour is very good. Attendance is satisfactory and students are punctual to their lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. The quality of teaching is good in the main school and in the sixth form. Learning is good because the quality of teaching is good across most subjects and in all years, and there is a good proportion of teaching that is excellent. The quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory overall, but in Years 10 and 11 the current structure does not provide sufficient breadth and balance of opportunities to meet the needs of all students. Pastoral care in the school is very good and procedures are in place to ensure that individuals are supported very well. Close attention is given to the care and welfare of students in general and the school ensures a safe and secure environment. Students in the main school and in the sixth form receive good personal and educational guidance so that they take courses that best meet their individual needs and aspirations. Students taking GCSE and post-16 examinations have realistic and challenging targets to help monitor their progress. The school has satisfactory links with parents to enable parents to support their children's education. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges and strong links with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good and the school is managed well. The new head teacher is providing good leadership and has effectively communicated a vision that emphasises the importance of academic and personal achievement. Senior staff support him very effectively and the school is managed well. Key staff are effective in pursuing continued improvement. The governing body is very effective and is in a good position to hold the school to account for the standards and quality produced. They have a very good understanding of the school's work. Apart from ensuring a daily act of collective worship and the provision of religious education in the sixth form, they are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities and ensuring that school policies are applied. Overall their many significant strengths outweigh these weaknesses and their contribution overall is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are satisfied with the school, but a significant number feel they are not well informed about standards and their children's progress. Parents find the school approachable and any concerns or complaints are resolved effectively and sensitively. Students express positive views and feel that their views and concerns are listened to and acted upon.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the teaching in music in order to raise standards;
- undertake further modifications to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that the needs and aspirations of all students are fully met;
- improve the accommodation for indoor physical education, which is currently a barrier to further improvement in the subject;
- ensure that reports to parents contain enough detail on how students can improve their work.

Sixth form

- improve attendance and ensure satisfactory arrangements for the daily registration of sixth form students;
- modify the current arrangements to ensure that students have greater continuity in support from their form tutors as they move from Year 12 to Year 13;

and, to meet statutory requirements, the school needs to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and religious education for sixth form students.

THE SIXTH FORM AT GOSFORTH HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is **good** and its cost-effectiveness is good.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. In 2002, overall results, including all courses in GCE, AVCE, A and AS levels, were broadly average. Currently, standards are rising and students are achieving well. In the courses inspected, standards are above average overall. The courses offered meet students' aspirations and successfully enable them to fulfil their ambitions on leaving school. The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant amount that is very good. The students' attitudes are very good. Students state that they enjoy their life in the sixth form. They contribute positively to the life of the school.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and students' achievement are good because there is a high degree of specialist teaching by staff who are enthusiastic about their subjects.
- Students receive very good careers and educational advice and targets are used effectively to help them keep track of how well they are progressing.
- A good range of enrichment activities enhances and extends the already wide range of subjects in the curriculum.
- Accommodation is very good and courses are well resourced and staffed.
- Attendance is below average and interrupts the continuity of learning of too many students.
- The form tutor system does not give enough continuity of support to students as they progress from Year 12 to Year 13.
- The daily registration of sixth form students at school is unsatisfactory and gives rise to health and safety concerns.

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
Mathematics	Mathematics good. Very good leadership is ensuring that students are achieving well because of the good teaching they receive.
Science	Biology very good. Very good teaching is helping students to achieve very well and attain well above average standards. Chemistry satisfactory. Standards are currently above average and students are achieving satisfactorily. Provision in physics is good in the lesson sampled as students receive good specialist teaching.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Two design and technology lessons were sampled, one AS level and one A2 level. Standards were in line with course requirements and students are achieving well. The quality of teaching is good.
Business	Business studies good. Standards are average, but students achieve well from lower than average starting points. The teaching and learning are good. Economics good. Good specialist teaching is helping students attain average standards and achieve well in relation to their starting points.
ICT	ICT very good. Good specialist teaching is ensuring that students achieve well and attain above average standards. Students on GNVQ courses receive good teaching and achieve well.

Health and social care	Health and social care, GNVQ intermediate good, AVCE satisfactory. Intermediate students achieve well in response to good teaching to attain average standards from a starting point below average. AVCE students receive satisfactory teaching and attain average standards. Their achievement is satisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art very good. Teaching is very good. Students achieve very well in relation to their starting points and are attaining above average standards. One drama lesson was sampled and standards here were above average, with students achieving well in response to very good teaching. In music , two part-lessons were observed. Students in both were achieving satisfactorily.
Humanities	Geography good. Good teaching and learning and above average standards. Good achievement by students. Sociology good. Experienced specialists provide good teaching. Students learn and achieve well. Standards are average. Religious studies very good. Students achieve very well, producing above average standards in response to very good teaching.
English, languages and communication	English literature very good. Achievement is very good. The teachers' high level of expertise and engaging, challenging methods motivate the students to achieve very well and attain above average standards. French satisfactory. Standards are currently average and students are 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 school reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school takes good care of the welfare, health and safety of students, but sixth form registration procedures are unsatisfactory. The personal and educational guidance and support of students are good. The advice and guidance given for higher education, training and employment are comprehensive. The very good relationships with subject teachers and tutors are very supportive and helpful.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The team of teachers maintain the high expectations of the students with regard to their personal development and their studies. The sixth form is very popular, continues to grow and is very successful in ensuring that students complete their courses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Processes for seeking the views of students in the sixth form, both informally and formally through the student council, are effective. Students feel that their views are listened to with respect and frequently acted upon. Students are positive about what the school provides and say that they like the choice of courses, which suit their abilities and career plans. They find that teachers are accessible and helpful and students feel they are taught well and respected by teachers. They feel that teachers have expert specialist knowledge in their subjects, the school is well run and students say that they enjoy the sixth form. The dislikes featuring in the students' responses on the questionnaire used were not substantiated by the inspection team in subsequent interviews with students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Levels of attainment on entry are broadly average, but there are slightly more higher-attaining students in the current entry. In Years 9 and 11, standards are above average in nearly all subjects, which reflects students' good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Year 9, students achieve very well in ICT, and well in English, mathematics and science. Students achieve well in nearly all other subjects.
- In Year 11, students achieve very well in English and well in most other subjects.
- Students' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour are important reasons for their good achievement.
- Students learn and achieve well because of their positive response to the good teaching they receive.
- Standards are below average in music and students do not achieve as well as they should.
- Standards are below average in design and technology, but students achieve well when account is taken of their starting points.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, reflecting students' good achievement. Standards are above average in ICT, geography, history, art and design, and religious education. In modern languages, physical education and citizenship standards are average. In design and technology and music, standards are below average. In the main, both standards and students' achievement reflect the quality of teaching received. However, in physical education and modern languages, where standards are average, the teaching is good, but students start at a lower level of attainment and are achieving well. Similarly, in design and technology students achieve well from lower starting points. Only in music, where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, are students not achieving as well as they should.
2. In Year 11, standards are well above average in English, and above average in most other subjects. Standards are average in science, citizenship, design and technology and modern languages. In music, standards are below average. By Year 11, students achieve very well in English, and well in the majority of other subjects. In science, citizenship and modern languages, students are achieving at a satisfactory level. Only in music are students not achieving as well as they should. The school has devised effective strategies to tackle some underachievement that has been present and showed in the GCSE results in 2002. The greatest improvement stems directly from the completion of building work that was very extensive and very disruptive. The senior management team (also) identified areas of weaker achievement and took successful action to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, standards have improved in art and design and in drama a significant improvement has taken place. There is still work to do in music, where standards have not improved sufficiently. Students make good progress in the development of their literacy and mathematical skills and attain above average standards.
3. The school has been very successful in ensuring that different groups within the school are identified and have their particular needs and aspirations met. The Student Support Base is particularly effective in this respect. It typifies the approach taken to include all students in the life and work of the school, and do all that is possible to help them achieve as well as they can. Students with early stage English are carefully assessed on entry and each term

subsequently. Consequently, these students make very good progress and achieve very well. They help themselves by bringing determined and positive attitudes to their studies. The excellent facilities and comfortable, welcoming atmosphere of the Student Support Base, shared also by other students, provide a further incentive for high achievement. All these factors combine to ensure that, when they come to their GCSE examinations, these students achieve to their capacity. In the GCSE examinations of 2003, for example, the five students who had entered the school originally with very little English gained an average of seven A* to C grades, including in English itself. Other students with English as an additional language, including some asylum seekers, are very well integrated into the life of the school and achieve as well as other students of similar age and prior attainment. The school's analysis of examination results shows that these students achieve at GCSE as well as others.

4. Gifted and talented students are identified carefully and have a very well-planned and structured programme that is very effective in challenging and stretching them to do their best. The very good provision encourages them to flourish and they achieve very well. Students with special educational needs usually attain the standards that their teachers expect of them, and sometimes do better than expected. Their progress matches the good progress of other students. Students do especially well in English where they express themselves with clarity and confidence in written work. In most subjects, teachers ensure that work is suitably adapted for these students and this practice helps them to achieve well.
5. Compared to the girls, boys do less well and, while the difference is not significantly different to that found nationally, much has been done and continues to be done to raise boys' achievement further. There is some interesting work being undertaken to raise boys' standards. Teachers often seat students by alphabetical order to ensure a spread of ability within pairs and groups. A good example of this was seen in a mixed ability English lesson. Here the teacher ensured that when students worked in groups, there were students in each group of higher and lower attainment and a mix of boys and girls. The strategy was successful in helping the lower attainers while ensuring that the higher attainers were stretched by having them complete more challenging aspects within the work set.
6. The senior management team has been successful in identifying and tackling underachievement. Students' progress is tracked over time and possible underachievement is addressed promptly, usually through mentoring, based on good quality information about students' performance. Where individual students require particular help, they receive it because the school has good pastoral systems in place to guide and advise students and provide help where it is needed, supplementing the work of the Student Support Base. Assessment of students' performance, with the setting of precise targets for achievement in Years 9 and 11 and including statutory target setting, is very good. It makes good use of recognised data handling computer programs. This information is used well to challenge teachers to improve standards further. However, reports to parents need greater detail on how students can improve further so that parents too are centrally involved in the drive to raise standards. Setting arrangements in the core subjects of mathematics and science allow learning at higher levels and at a faster pace. In mixed ability groups, for example in English, extension work allows students to do more and undertake more challenging work.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (36.1)	33.3. (33.3)
mathematics	36.6 (36.1)	35.3 (34.7)
science	35.1 (34.2)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 318 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	51.0 (53.5)	49.9 (46.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92.2 (91.0)	90.9 (90.4)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best 8 subjects)	39.0 (40.3)	39.8 (38.7)

There were 339 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. National results for 2003 were not available at the time of the inspection.

7. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Results overall were above average and students made good progress and achieved well.
8. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. When account is taken of the starting points of this group of students they achieved satisfactorily. At the last inspection, results were reported to be just above average. The school has since expanded and included a greater proportion of students who are of a lower attaining profile than at the time of the last inspection. In 2002, there was some underachievement among a minority of students, particularly in art and design, drama and music. Students are still not achieving the standards they should in music, but the standards seen in the inspection in the other two subjects are above average and students achieve well, due to effective management by the school's leadership team. The trend in results has matched the trend in improvement nationally.

Sixth Form:

In Year 13, standards in the courses inspected are above average overall and students achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in biology and in art and design. They are above average in English, mathematics, chemistry, geography, religious education and information technology.
- Students achieve very well in English, biology and art and design, and they achieve well in most other subjects.
- The large majority of students have very good attitudes and they learn well because of their positive response to the good teaching they receive.
- The unsatisfactory attendance of a minority of students interrupts the continuity of their studies.

Commentary

9. Standards are above average and students achieve well. The courses offered in this large sixth form meet students' aspirations and successfully enable them to fulfil their ambitions on leaving the school. The range of courses is growing to better meet the needs of both higher and lower attaining students. The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching. As a result, students learn effectively. Students' attitudes are very good and they add much to the life of the school and enjoy their sixth form experience.
10. In the courses focused upon in the inspection, students achieve very well in English, religious education, biology and art and design. They attain standards that are above average in English and religious education and well above average in the other two subjects. This reflects a rise in standards since GCE A-level results of 2002. Achievement is good in mathematics, geography and ICT, where standards are above average. In chemistry, standards are above average and

students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. In French, sociology and health and social care, achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. In business studies and economics, students attain average standards, but achieve well when account is taken of their starting points. In all subjects inspected, standards are higher than results in 2002, except in English literature, where above average standards have been maintained. This reflects the good use of data, instigated by the senior management team, which has led to realistic and challenging targets being used to help students maintain good progress through their courses.

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	97.6 [157] (90.4)	94.8 (80)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	36.2 [157] (36.3)	39.4 (25)
Average point score per student**	231.2 [157] (201.9)	263.3 (n/a)

*There were 157 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. **APS calculated using the UCAS point scoring system.*

- In 2002, overall results in terms of average points score per candidate and including courses in GCE, VCE, A and AS levels, were average when compared to all maintained schools. Students achieved satisfactorily across a broad spectrum of subjects and courses. In the specific Year 13 GCE A-level courses that were inspected, results were also broadly average.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to work and their relationships with each other and with staff are very good. Behaviour is very good and exclusions are low. Attendance and punctuality in the main school are satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is in line with national averages. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attitudes are very good. Students are well motivated and keen to learn.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Exclusions are low.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good. Students respect each other's values and beliefs and listen well to each other.
- There is a very good degree of racial harmony.
- Students enjoy the wide range of activities on offer and exercise responsibility with maturity.

Commentary

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Exclusions, although higher than in the previous report, are still low and incidents of racism rare. Boys are more often excluded than girls and there are few repeated exclusions. Staff expectations of good behaviour are high and students respond very well to this. They are involved in making their own classroom rules that are based on respect for the rights and views of others. Discipline is used fairly and consistently. Students are honest and trustworthy and respect both the school's and each other's property. Relationships across the school are very good and students' collaboration enhances learning. Students are considerate and take good care of those who are visually impaired. They support well those for whom English is in an early stage of development. There is a high awareness of bullying and the need to treat others with respect that is promoted in lessons and in personal, social and health education in particular. The 'Support a Friend' initiative, whereby students in Year 11 support vulnerable students in Year 9, has been very

effective in helping students settle in school. Staff deal promptly with all reported cases of bullying and this results in a happy, harmonious learning atmosphere.

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	78	2
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	7	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	0

13. Students of all ages and abilities learn well as a result of their very good attitudes. They are well motivated and strive to achieve their best. Teachers encourage them to voice their opinions and the respect shown for their views increases confidence and encourages them to become mature and thoughtful learners. Students are keen to accept community responsibilities, such as mentoring younger students, standing for the school council and supporting fund raising activities. Participation in extra-curricular activities is high. Students represent the school well on day and residential visits outside of school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.1	School data	0.6
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

14. Attendance is satisfactory and unauthorised absence is broadly in line with national figures. Students enjoy coming to school where they feel safe and secure and follow courses suited to their needs and interests. The school has effective systems to monitor and promote good attendance. Recently introduced strategies, such as calls to parents on the first day of absence, have significantly improved attendance in 2002/3 to 92.6 per cent compared with 91.8 per cent in 2001/2. The school ensures that parents are aware of the need for good attendance. The poor attendance of a small number of students adversely affects overall attendance. Extended holidays taken by a small number of Asian students have a negative impact on their achievement. Students arrive punctually at the start of the day and for lessons.
15. The development of students' spiritual awareness is good. Work within subjects, especially English, religious education, art and history, provides students with valuable opportunities for reflective thought and the development of spiritual and moral awareness. The teaching of citizenship also makes a significant contribution, but there is, as yet, insufficient formal planning for its inclusion in subjects' schemes of work. The moral development of students is very good. Students have a very good sense of right and wrong and well developed moral values. The school has clear aims and values embracing, honesty, trust, reliability, respect for others, care for weaker members of society and kindness towards other people. These values are communicated effectively through the daily interactions between staff and students, where teachers' high expectations of student behaviour are reinforced in lessons and through school routines. Assemblies often contain a moral content and emphasise the concept of conscience, and moral issues are explored within many subjects. The social development of students is good. Social and personal skills are explicitly developed in many lessons, particularly in those

subjects where group work and discussion are a strong feature. Students are provided with many opportunities to develop social skills and awareness within the school's personal, health and social education programme and physical education. The extensive extra-curricular programmes give further opportunities to enhance social development in a range of contexts including a school council. Students' cultural development is good. The school provides a range of opportunities both within and after lessons that make a significant contribution to students' cultural development, including developing an appreciation for living in a multi-cultural society. Subjects such as English, art and religious education teach students to appreciate the richness and diversity of the cultures of others.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good. Students are very well motivated and have a mature approach to their work, in response to teachers' high expectations. Attendance is below average and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes.
- Students like the courses available and are keen to make the most of the opportunities.
- Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good.
- Students contribute very well to the school and wider community.
- Attendance in lessons is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

16. Students' very good attitudes and behaviour contribute very positively to their learning. Students' views about their sixth form education are positive. They have a mature approach to work and are very well motivated. They take increasing responsibility for themselves and their own learning. Students of different ethnic backgrounds, sex and ability get on very well together. The very good relationships between students and with their teachers are supportive and the good collaborative work aids progress. The vast majority complete their chosen courses. These very good attitudes enable them to continue their learning in adult life. Students are usually punctual but attendance in lessons is unsatisfactory and hinders progress. The school has rightly identified attendance as a priority for improvement. In the past, students have only registered during lessons, but the recent introduction of formal registration for Year 12 and telephone calls on the first day of absence has significantly improved attendance this term. The very good attitudes shown by students in school runs counter to their below average attendance. The school's senior team has noted this and has already made significant improvements in students' attendance this term.
17. Students have very positive views of the school and their teachers. They make a significant contribution to the life of the school by acting as role models and through community service. They organise many successful charitable events that are supported by the rest of the school. Students gain a good understanding of citizenship and democracy through the student council and have contributed to the design of the sixth form facilities in the new building. Students' participation in opportunities to extend their learning via day and residential visits out of school and in extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Overall, the school makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. About a third of Year 12 students do work experience, much of this self-organised. Students develop a good degree of independence and are becoming mature and responsible adults. They are very well prepared for life as citizens in modern society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching in Years 9 to 11 and the sixth form is good and leads to good learning. The quality of assessment of students' work is good, but marking of work is not consistent in quality within and across subjects. Where it is most effective students are left in no doubt how to improve their work, but in some cases work is not marked sufficiently. The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities across Years 9 to 13, but the structure of the 14 to 16 curriculum is too rigid and does not provide sufficient breadth and balance of opportunities to meet the needs of all students. Staffing is very good and resources are good. Accommodation is very good, with the exception of indoor physical education facilities. Most parents are very satisfied with the school because their children are happy in a safe and secure environment, which promotes confidence and independence.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning. The quality of assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good across most subjects and in all years, and a good proportion of teaching is excellent.
- Teaching is mainly undertaken by subject specialists and they show a very good understanding of their subject and an enthusiasm for teaching it, which encourages good learning.
- Students learn well because their behaviour is very good in lessons.
- Assessment is used well to inform realistic and challenging targets for students.
- Not all heads of department monitor teaching rigorously enough to identify and spread some of the best classroom practice.
- In contrast to some excellent teaching in modern languages, there is some that is unsatisfactory.
- The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in music.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 147 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (6%)	39 (27%)	67 (46%)	26 (17%)	6 (4%)	0	0

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

18. The school uses approaches that are recommended in national strategies effectively to raise the quality of teaching. In English, for example, there is a high level of consistency in approach that students respond to very positively. They appreciate the common structure in lessons and they concentrate very well, secure in what is required of them in order to learn effectively. The impact is clearly seen in the positive attitudes of students across subjects to their learning. Teachers generally maintain high expectations regarding the quality of students' responses in lessons and their behaviour, to reinforce good learning. The work of the teaching and learning working group and the advanced skills teachers has been effective in raising teaching standards. Both parents and students comment favourably on the commitment of teachers and the quality of teaching throughout the school.
19. Where teaching is most effective, it is tied closely to teachers' high expectations. This is seen in some of the very good quality homework that is produced and in lessons where teachers

demanded the best that students could give. Students, whether gifted and talented or lower attaining, respond well to high levels of challenge, as in the example of excellent practice below.

Example of outstanding practice

This exemplifies some excellent practice in the use of a foreign language where previously disaffected and low attaining students made excellent progress in a French lesson.

Referring to five vivid pictures representing different types of holiday and using gesture and body language – and French all the time – the teacher managed to get all students to say: “à la plage”; “à la mer” etc. She then added a key phrase: “Je préfère passer mes vacances...”. This was thoroughly rehearsed and repeated, chorally and individually, so all students were able to say it. Work advanced, coloured cards were added with phrases explaining why students might go to these places, e.g. “J’aime me bronzer au soleil”. These again were thoroughly rehearsed, and linked with the first phrase: “Je préfère passer mes vacances à la plage ... j’aime me bronzer au soleil”. Realising something was missing, a student asked – duly playing into the teacher’s hands: “Miss, what’s “because” in French?” PARCE QUE replied the teacher. In pairs, students linked the two bits together and, by the end of the lesson, most were able to speak more than one of these sentences in acceptably pronounced French, along the lines of: “Je préfère passer mes vacances à la montagne parce que j’aime faire du vélo tous terrains (VTT)”. Excellent achievement in one lesson.

20. A key to many of the most successful lessons lay in the relationships that teachers encouraged among their students, as well as the very good relationships they enjoy with their students. As a result, students are trusted to co-operate and this allows teachers to give individual help, secure in the knowledge that other students will get on with their work independently. In the best lessons, the willing co-operation of students is used to promote lively debate and productive pair and small-group work.
21. Teachers manage their classes well. They use question and answers effectively, not only to consolidate work, but to encourage other students to take on answers and extend them or comment on them, often leading to very good learning. They use time targets to stimulate and maintain good pace to lessons and again issue challenges for students to meet.
22. Teachers plan well and in effective lessons share the aims with students so that progress in learning can be measured and celebrated to give a sense of achievement. On occasions this was seen to work very effectively to ensure that gifted and talented students worked to their capacity.
23. Assessment is used effectively. As a result, teachers know the capabilities of their students. Questions are posed to not only to make students think, but to check how well students have assimilated and learned new work. Such questions often relate to homework to reinforce its importance. The senior management team has noted parents’ dissatisfaction with the inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework. As a result, a whole-school policy is being put into place and the more effective use of planners to link with parents is being closely monitored. The very good working atmosphere and the relationships between students allowed the best to be made from these lessons.
24. Where teaching is less successful and in the unsatisfactory lessons seen, planning that did not meet the needs of all students in the class slowed students’ progress. As a result, too often the pace of the lesson slackened, and students were bored and inattentive. All of the unsatisfactory teaching was seen in mathematics, modern languages and music. In the first two of these, excellent teaching was also seen and the range reflects the need to monitor more closely the quality of teaching to ensure a greater consistency within these departments.
25. The teaching of literacy skills is no more than satisfactory because of a lack of consistently good practice. The systematic teaching of higher order reading skills is the most neglected aspect of literacy. Provision for literacy in music is unsatisfactory. Currently, the overall arrangements for the whole school co-ordination of literacy are not sufficiently clear and

formalised. Competency in mathematics across the curriculum in general is above average. Numeracy skills are used satisfactorily in other subjects, and when given the opportunity, students apply the skills learned in mathematics lessons. There is currently insufficient co-ordinated development of the use of key mathematical skills in different subjects and no designated numeracy specialist appointed to oversee and support the development of numeracy across the school. This is impeding progress in developing numeracy skills.

26. The highest attainers and those students identified as gifted and talented receive very good provision and teaching. The school identifies students with particular gifts and talents and the information is shared with all teachers who provide appropriately challenging work and learning opportunities to enable these students to move forward at a pace suited to their intellectual capacity.
27. Students with special educational needs usually learn well and achieve in line with their peers. This is because most teachers are successful in matching their teaching styles and learning materials to students' requirements. This is especially true of some of the small group lessons where the high expectations of work and behaviour and the very good relationships between teachers and students have a very positive impact on students' learning. Support staff provide very good help to individual students, as they work very closely with subject teachers and ensure that students know what they need to do to make good progress. Students' individual learning plans give clear information on targets for improvement, but do not provide sufficiently for the monitoring of progress towards these targets. Students benefit greatly from the friendly informal atmosphere of the Student Support Base where staff are readily available for advice and help.
28. A small number of students, including asylum seekers, are at an early stage of learning English. These students are supported and taught very well by the English as an Additional Language department. Staff are quick to assess their needs and to draw up individual programmes for them, involving support in lessons and English teaching on a one-to-one basis or in very small groups. The quality of this teaching is good and students learn well as a result. As these students move up the school, staff continue to take an interest in them and to track their progress, working closely with other teachers to ensure that they achieve to their capacity.
29. The school has improved its teaching further since the previous inspection, and there is now a higher proportion of good and better teaching. The work undertaken by the head teacher, governors and senior staff to develop performance management in the school is having a positive impact. However, in some departments, there is a lack of more formal and rigorous evaluation of teaching quality that is needed to spread the very good practice that exists and eradicate any unsatisfactory teaching.

The quality of assessment of students' work

Assessment of students' performance, with the setting of precise targets for achievement in Years 9 and 11 and including statutory target setting, is very good. Information is used well to challenge teachers to improve standards further. The attainment of different groups of students, for example those with English as an additional language, is analysed to identify potential weaknesses and action taken as a result. Designated teachers monitor individual students' performances to detect and tackle underachievement, although this is a recent initiative and its impact has yet to be fully realised. Marking of students' work is variable within and across subjects. Where it is most effective students are left in no doubt how to improve their work, but in some cases work is not marked sufficiently. Assessment and its use to help students improve is at least satisfactory in all subjects except music, where it is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and poor in Year 9.

Sixth Form

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 76 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	26 (34%)	38 (50%)	11 (15%)	0	1 (1%)	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.

Teaching overall is good and results in good learning and achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is undertaken by specialists who show a real enthusiasm for their teaching rooted in very good knowledge of their subjects.
- Teaching is very good in biology and art and design, resulting in very good learning and standards that are well above average.
- Teachers encourage very good relationships among their students, which help to ensure a very good learning atmosphere in lessons.
- Higher attaining students are challenged and achieve very well.
- Some students are not taught to develop enough responsibility and their below average attendance detracts from their learning.

Commentary

30. Because teachers have a very good command of their subjects and the requirements of examinations, they prepare their students well, ensuring their success in passing their examinations and progressing to higher education, training or employment. In vocational subjects too, students are served well by teaching that is demanding and based upon good levels of experience and depth of subject knowledge. Students themselves feel that teaching is challenging and demanding and they respect their teachers' expertise and subject knowledge.
31. The most successful teachers inspire students with their enthusiasm, encourage them to greater independence, trust them to research topics and foster their maturity. Where teaching is satisfactory, students too often experience a more routine approach and less exciting exposition. The difference in learning is significant. In the latter, the tasks which develop the skills of independent learning are limited as students are fed information rather than stimulated to research for themselves. In the former, lessons are characterised by lively interaction and input from students. In one poor lesson seen, the inappropriate material and teaching methods used led to poor learning. This was very untypical of the teaching seen throughout the inspection.
32. A feature of the teaching of sixth formers is the commitment of the staff. Parents and students comment on their conscientiousness and the hard work they undertake to ensure good levels of success. All students are valued and lower attaining students achieve very well. Similarly, gifted and talented students achieve very well and are appropriately challenged. Students with English as an additional language make good progress as a response to the good teaching they receive, and achieve well. The progress made by male and female students is not significantly different.

The quality of assessment of students' work

Assessment and target setting are very securely established, giving students a clear picture of the minimum grade they are capable of achieving and what grade represents a more challenging but nevertheless realistic target. Where practice is best, for example in English, there is a strong emphasis on assessment objectives so that the students know what they must do to reach a specific grade target. Marking gives guidance on how to improve and is clearly related to examination requirements.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities across Years 9 to 13. The extensive extra-curricular programme is a very strong feature. Staffing is very good and resources are good. Accommodation is very good, with the exception of indoor physical education facilities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been much innovative development of the curriculum that has broadened students' choices.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are extensive, with excellent support for learning outside the school day.
- There is a good programme of personal, social and health education.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is too rigid because of timetable constraints incurred in providing two modern languages to GCSE level for all students.

Commentary

33. The curriculum provided is good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Statutory requirements in ICT and in design and technology have been addressed since the last inspection but not the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The school's designation as a specialist language college has had a significant impact on the curriculum. Additional breadth is provided by personal, social and health education (PSHE) and guidance programmes. In some respects, continuity between main school and sixth form courses is good, with clear links between some courses. However the structure of the 14–16 curriculum does not provide sufficient breadth and balance to meet the needs of all students.
34. The curriculum for Year 9 is broad and balanced, containing all National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education. There is a wide choice of languages that is further enhanced by extra provision before and after school. This extra provision includes very good opportunities for students for whom English is an additional language to study their first language. An innovative development in providing "breakfast Italian" in local feeder schools has been further developed so that Italian is now offered within the school curriculum. The time allocation to music in Year 9 is less than guidelines recommend, and this has an adverse effect on standards. The school has effectively adopted and adapted the Key Stage 3 Strategy and there is a very good whole school approach to developing a wide range of teaching and learning styles. New learning styles have been adopted, with momentum and leadership provided by the school's own teaching and learning team.
35. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a core of English, mathematics and science, together with religious education and physical education. The school's requirement for all students to follow two full GCSE courses in modern languages limits the flexibility in its provision, making the curriculum too rigid. The current model does not provide appropriate choice for all students. Work-related learning is at an early stage of development, with a co-ordinator recently appointed. Courses are in place for small numbers of students in both Years 10 and 11 and include opportunities for off-site experience. These courses do not yet provide clear and coherent pathways for identified students. Some vocational courses are available within

the options structure and these link well with sixth form courses. The curriculum is carefully monitored by the school's governing body and by the senior management team. The need to review provision, especially in Years 10 and 11, has been identified as a priority.

36. Enrichment of the curriculum is also prioritised within the school development plan. A thorough review of activities was carried out for the last school year. The school monitors the participation of different groups closely and knows that rates are high overall. A very wide range of activities is provided at the end of the day on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week. The variety of activities is striking. Both creative arts and sport are prominent within the enrichment programme. There has been a wide variety of visits abroad in recent years to Europe and beyond. The study support programme is excellent and includes all Year 10 students attending tuition in the use of the school's intranet. There is a very good emphasis on developing students' independent study skills, encouraging them to find websites that suit their particular needs. The programme has a high level of staffing including the school's progression coach who also provides specific support for sixth form students. In addition there are many opportunities for study support in curriculum areas.
37. Students with special educational needs are well provided for, through very good classroom and small group support. The school successfully promotes an alternative practical curriculum for older students, with appropriate accreditation. Gifted and talented students enjoy very good provision. As well as external visits, for example to universities, students are very well catered for in the school by an extensive range of additions to the normal curriculum. The school has been very effective in ensuring that lesson planning takes account of the needs of these students and they are challenged by the teaching they receive. The school ensures that students with English as an additional language receive their full entitlement to the curriculum. The welfare of this group of students and their academic progress are very well catered for. They are also encouraged to take a GCSE in their mother tongue to add to their qualifications.
38. PSHE is taught well by a team of specialist teachers. It includes sex and relationships education, drug education, citizenship and careers and contributes positively to students' personal development. It makes a valuable contribution to building students' confidence and respect for themselves and others. An appropriate input is made by outside agencies and visiting speakers such as Connexions, Streetwise and the school nurse. PSHE is well supported by the guidance programme delivered by form tutors who know students well. Day-to-day management is well organised.
39. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good. The level of subject qualification is also very good. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting teaching of the curriculum. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Accommodation is very good overall. It is well maintained, clean and used effectively. The specialist rooms for art, ICT, modern foreign languages and design and technology are excellent. Display space is well used to celebrate student achievements and the new first floor gallery exhibits high quality artwork produced by the students. The disturbance caused by the lack of soundproofing in the small teaching rooms in the Student Support Base hinders students' learning. The provision for physical education is very poor, especially the indoor facilities, and this is impacting adversely on the standards of work achieved by the students. Resources are very good, with particular strengths in ICT resources.

Sixth Form

Sixth form provision is very good, and provides a very extensive range of courses for students. The high staying on rate into the sixth form, the entry of students from other schools and the successful rate of entry into higher education confirm the appropriateness and effectiveness of the provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an outstanding range of GCE AS and A level courses on offer and the opportunities for combining different courses are very good.
- Choices are enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities and by the provision of courses at different levels.
- Some aspects of vocational provision are limited at foundation level.

Commentary

40. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good in the sixth form. The choice of courses at GCE AS and Advanced level is outstanding. Vocational course provision is very limited at foundation level. The range of intermediate courses offered is better. There are good opportunities for progression between courses. The tutorial programme provides good support and monitors students' progress well. Support and advice for entry into higher education is very good. It includes addressing appropriate responses to the needs of gifted and talented students and those who have no family tradition of entry into higher education. Significantly, the great majority of AS students stay on to complete full advanced levels in their chosen subjects. The proportion of students going on to higher education is high, with three quarters of Year 13 students in 2003 gaining places. A similar proportion of students from Year 11 chose to stay on into the sixth form this year. Statutory requirements regarding the provision of religious education for all students are not fully met and there is no daily act of collective worship.
41. The range of AS and A level courses includes all "traditional" subject areas plus many others that together provide students with a very wide choice. There are, for example, choices within each of the traditional areas of English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and humanities. In addition there is a very wide choice of other courses including law, accounting, psychology, sociology and photography. Students gain from the many permutations of courses available in this large sixth form, both during and after the school day. Choice is widened by the provision of some vocational courses at advanced and intermediate level. There are good opportunities for progression between some courses in Years 10 and 11 and these courses. However, the lack of flexibility in the 14-16 curriculum is a limiting factor on progression overall. Within the sixth form there are many opportunities for progression from an extensive programme of AS courses through to the completion of A2. In addition some students have gone on from GNVQ foundation to intermediate level and some students have taken up AS and AVCE courses. The AVCE course structure allows further flexibility with a choice between single and double award. The school monitors its provision closely and is aware of the need to further develop off-site experience as part of its vocational provision. An AS physical education course has been added this year to meet identified needs, demonstrating the awareness of the senior management team to the need for continued appraisal of sixth form provision.
42. Students' curriculum experiences are broadened in Year 12 where all students on advanced courses take either general studies or ICT. Students choosing intermediate courses follow a broad and balanced key skills programme. There are very good opportunities for students to review and discuss their own progress on courses. The tutorial programme includes individual counselling sessions between tutor and student and the school's progression coach works with students to monitor and support applications for higher education.
43. Many students broaden their experiences through participation in the school's extensive extra-curricular programme. In addition, many participate in the wider life of the school. Students support younger students in activities including homework club and science. Some students who are potential teachers themselves visit other schools for "taster" experiences. The extensive programme of visits supports examination course requirements very well. Students have good opportunities to participate in visits abroad, for example for both study and work experience.

44. The different groups of students are catered for very effectively. Students with special educational needs are offered appropriate courses and achieve well. The highest attainers and students identified as gifted and talented are challenged well by their study programmes and they achieve very well. A high proportion of gifted and talented students stay on in the sixth form, which is a good indication of their satisfaction to date. They make transitions quickly and meet the challenge of AS and A level with confidence. Students express satisfaction with the courses provided and they find both the level of work and the increased volume challenging. Students with English as an additional language are fully integrated into the life and work of the sixth form and achieve as well as their peers. The accommodation for sixth form students is very good. Resources are very good and the courses are staffed by specialist teachers who provide a very good match to the requirements of the curriculum on offer.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of students' welfare health and safety. Staff provide good support, advice and guidance based on monitoring, which has a positive impact on achievement. The school ensures the involvement of students in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships that exist between tutors and students are very supportive.
- Induction arrangements for new students are very good.
- The Student Support Base provides excellent support for groups of students.
- Very good advice and guidance prepare students very well for life in the sixth form and after leaving school.
- Students' views are respected.

Commentary

45. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues and students' welfare, health and safety are very good. Risk assessments are thorough and good heed is paid to students' safety in lessons and on visits out of school. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and specific to the school, with clearly outlined responsibilities. Internet service provision is safe and secure.
46. Pastoral procedures are very good and support individuals' needs very well. There is always an adult in school that students can turn to for help and guidance. Induction arrangements of students are aided by very good relationships with middle schools. Integration is well organised and students settle very well into school. Vulnerable new students have good support from selected Year 11 students through the 'Support a Friend' initiative and all new students are confident in approaching these identified students for support. Form tutors and learning plan managers establish very good relationships with their students to promote personal, social and academic development. Support for targeted students from learning mentors, funded by Excellence in Cities, has a positive impact on academic performance.
47. Students with special educational needs receive very good care and support. The revised Code of Practice has been implemented efficiently and the quality of classroom support is very good. The positive relationships built up between support staff and students make an important contribution to students' general well-being. Subject teachers are generally well aware of the nature of students' particular needs, and their comprehensive reports give clear assessments of students' strengths and weaknesses for annual reviews of progress. The Student Support Base is one of the strengths of the school. It provides very effectively for the welfare of individual students, especially those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The school's investment in setting up and equipping the Student Support Base as a pastoral and teaching resource and an incentive for achievement is a shining example of the very good way in which the school cares for the welfare of all its students.

48. Personal, social and health education and guidance increases students' confidence and self-assurance, guides them through school choices and prepares them very well for life in the sixth form or after school. Advice on option choice in Year 9 is sound. Work experience in Year 10 is well organised, successful and helps students understand the world of work. The sixth form prospectus is comprehensive and useful. Very good and impartial careers advice is given with the support of the Connexions service. The very good links with other schools and universities ensure smooth transition to, through and from the school. Students can offer their views on school issues effectively through the students' council. Students feel that most teachers listen to them and welcome their ideas and comments.

Sixth form

The personal and educational guidance and support given to students is good. The very good relationships with subject teachers and tutors are very supportive and helpful. Students are pleased with the support and guidance they receive. Students know that their opinions are sought and valued. There are health and safety concerns that arise from unsatisfactory procedures for the daily registration of students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students find teachers very approachable and supportive.
- Students receive very good advice and guidance that prepares them very well for life in the sixth form.
- Guidance for careers and future courses is very good.
- Students' views are respected. Processes for seeking the views of students in the sixth form are effective.
- The form tutor system does not give continuity of support to the majority of students as they progress from Year 12 to Year 13.
- Registration procedures are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

49. The school takes good care of the welfare, health and safety of students and most procedures are in common with the main school. Sixth form registration procedures are unsatisfactory and the school has no record of how many students are on site at any one time of the day, which is hazardous in the event of an emergency evacuation.
50. Year 11 students receive very good advice regarding entry to the sixth form. The interview process ensures that students are on the right course and there is sufficient flexibility in the system for students to change course at the start of Year 12 if necessary. Post-16 students have very good relationships with their tutors and regular one-to-one support to ensure they are making good progress both personally and academically. Interviews with sixth formers indicated that students are confident that they have easy access to a teacher should they need particular help or advice. However the change of tutor for many students in Year 13 has made it difficult to provide accurate and supportive references for university applications early in the term. The school has made good efforts to overcome this problem through good liaison between staff. Students receive comprehensive and useful advice on further and higher education, training and employment. Students in Year 12 are encouraged to do work experience and many organise their own, but the majority of students undertake no formal work experience to help them with career choices.
51. The majority of students follow a course of general studies where they are encouraged to debate moral and ethical issues. This contributes very positively to personal development. Processes for seeking the views of students in the sixth form both informally and formally through the student council are effective. These views are listened to with respect and

frequently acted upon, for example, sixth formers have been influential in the design of sixth form facilities in the new building. Students are confident and self-assured by the time they leave the school and are well prepared for adult life. They are positive about what the school provides and say that they like: the choice of courses, which suit their abilities and career plans; teachers are accessible and helpful and students feel they are taught well and respected by teachers; teachers have an expert specialist knowledge in their subjects; the school is well run and students enjoy the sixth form.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has satisfactory links with parents and very good links with the community, other schools and universities. Links with middle schools have improved since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents like the induction arrangements for students in Year 9, which help them settle well.
- The format for students' annual reports is good, but they contain insufficient subject-specific detail on how students can improve their work.
- Parents have good involvement in the work of the school.
- Links with the community are very strong and enhance learning across the curriculum.
- The local community makes very good use of school facilities for adult education courses, especially in languages.
- The school has very good links with other local schools and with universities.
- Shared educational welfare support and learning mentors provide good continuity of support from middle schools to the high school.

Commentary

52. The school has satisfactory links with parents to enable them to support students' education. The school is popular and oversubscribed. Many parents expressed satisfaction at the induction arrangements in Year 9. Good information is provided to parents in the prospectus and parents' handbook. Occasional letters and newsletters are informative. Form tutors regularly check the students' diaries, which have recently been improved and are becoming better used for communicating with parents. A significant number of parents feel they are not well informed about standards and progress. Parents' attendance at review days is very good and most parents find these useful, while others are confused by the role of the learning plan manager as opposed to the tutor. Less than half the parents attend consultation evenings with individual subject teachers. The format of annual reports is good, but comments are inconsistent and the majority contain insufficient subject specific detail on how students can improve. Parents find the school approachable and any concerns or complaints are resolved effectively and sensitively.
53. Parents support their children's learning well at home and in school. The Parent Teachers and Friends Association makes a valuable contribution to the financial and social life of the school as well as the personal development of students through their involvement in the association's events. Parents are formally consulted on issues such as the change to the school day and the learning mentors and their views taken into consideration. Parents of students with special educational needs are pleased with the progress their children make. Their observations on their children's academic and personal development make an important contribution to the formal reviews of progress.
54. The school's strong links the local and wider community enhance students' learning and personal development. The school's very good links with the middle and first schools within the pyramid of local schools significantly enhance support and guidance for the personal development of students. Well-organised transition arrangements and good transfer of information ensure that students settle well in Year 9. Links with colleges are sufficient to

support work-related learning. There are good links with a school in Haiti through the Senegal project and with a school in Bordeaux for exchange visits to improve language skills. Through its Beacon status and advanced skills teachers, the school works with other schools in the local and wider community to improve teaching skills and students' learning. Management arrangements for linked provision are good. The school makes an excellent contribution to the initial training of teachers from local universities.

Sixth Form

The school has very good links with the community and universities. Students' views are canvassed and respected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the format is good, annual reports are not consistent in their quality and many do not contain sufficient subject specific detail on how students can improve their work.
- Well-developed links with the local community make a good contribution to students' learning across the curriculum and especially in geography and languages.
- The very good links with universities raise students' aspirations.
- Students feel their views and concerns are listened to and acted upon.

Commentary

55. An appropriate cycle of reports and consultations keeps parents suitably informed of students' progress. The format of reports is good but the quality of comments is variable and in some subjects, too little subject-specific information is given on how students can improve their work.
56. The school has very good links with the local and wider community that enrich learning and extra-curricular provision offered to sixth form students. The strong links with business and the community support the community service and work experience that all students are encouraged to do during the sixth form. There are very good links with schools in other countries to enhance the learning of foreign languages. Strong links with a range of universities are used successfully to raise students' aspirations and inspire them to achieve well. In spite of the very good use of school facilities by the local community for adult learning, there is no community integration in sixth form courses.
57. Subject teachers, tutors and the student council canvass the views of sixth form students effectively. Students feel their views and concerns are listened to and acted upon. They had substantial involvement in the design of sixth form facilities in the new building.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership provided by the new head teacher and the senior management team is good. The school is managed well. The governing body give very good leadership in most aspects of their work. However, there are statutory breaches in the provision of a daily act of collective worship and the lack of religious education in the sixth form. This makes their contribution overall satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new head teacher has made a strong impact in creating a vision for the development and further improvement of the school.
- The governing body makes a very positive contribution to the decisions that are taken that help to shape the vision and direction of the school.
- The contribution made by senior staff to both the leadership and the management of the school is good.

- There are good systems and strategies in place for the self-evaluation of the school's work.

Commentary

58. The good leadership provided by the head teacher and key staff has a positive impact on the standards and achievement in most areas of the school's work. The head teacher was appointed in September 2003. His good leadership holds the confidence of the staff, governing body, parents and students. He communicates his vision persuasively, successfully emphasizing the fundamental importance of academic and personal achievement. Key staff share this vision and are ready to plan innovations in the curriculum for older students and take on a greater autonomy to initiate other planned reforms to further improve standards and achievement. The school has changed significantly since the previous inspection. The socio-economic profile of the school is now more comprehensive and reflects the wider community it serves. This is seen very clearly in the sixth form. The governors took a clear decision to broaden the base of attainment in the sixth form in the year following the last inspection. The school as a whole and the sixth form are now larger and have a wider spectrum of ability. The accommodation has improved significantly, but at the cost of severe disruption for three years while building work took place. The leadership has managed these fundamental changes effectively and maintained standards whilst doing so to ensure satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
59. The governing body plays a crucial role; they are capable and resourceful, sharing the new head teacher's passion for improving standards. They share a wider vision of a school as a hub of its community and bring excellent financial and managerial enterprise to bear in supporting the realization of this vision. The new building results from the governors' vision and skill, and further major new building developments are planned. Governors have successfully integrated the best of the old traditions with a clear vision for the future in order to inaugurate further developments and expansion. The combined efforts of the governors and staff have resulted in a school that is a popular choice for parents who recognise its increasingly high aspirations. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they are in a very good position to hold the school to account for the standards and quality of education it produces. Their overall contribution is satisfactory because of the statutory breaches that still exist relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship and lack of religious education in the sixth form.
60. The head teacher and key staff encourage others to be critically reflective about their work in an honest and accurate way. Examination data is effectively analysed to identify areas of weakness and discrepancies in provision. Heads of department are held to account and expected to review the pace and structure of teaching and the curriculum to ensure continued improvements. This approach, together with the successful delegation of responsibilities, fosters the capability of staff, helping to develop their leadership potential. Leaders provide good role models for other staff and students, who are proud of their association with the school .

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5440208
Total expenditure	5562736
Expenditure per pupil	3538

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	26310
Balance carried forward to the next	-96218

61. Financial planning is very good and the principles of sound management closely underpin the school's financial arrangements, for example in the way it consults and compares to gain best value in spending. Specific funds are devolved appropriately and used effectively for their

intended purposes. There is sound planning in place to reduce the small deficit in the next year. The school gives good value for money.

62. The school is managed well. Good systems and strategies are in place to guide progress to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives and assess their impact on raising standards. An emphasis on inclusivity and equality of opportunity is a central feature of school planning. The curriculum is responsive to the particular needs of students with special educational needs and there is very good provision for higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, and for students with English as an additional language. The Student Support Base is managed very well. The successful setting up of the learning support unit has had a significant impact on the behaviour and attendance of individual students.
63. Strategic development planning provides a clear rationale for improvements, although the longer-term vision is not as successfully articulated in the school's plans. Importantly, development planning focuses primarily on improving standards with clearly expressed methods for doing this. Crucial to this is the monitoring of teaching and learning, with a recent focus on the particular needs of gifted and talented students. A staff teaching and learning team, with a very good contribution by advanced skills teachers, lead and develop initiatives in all departments and endorse new developments that will further impact on standards. These include greater emphasis on the use of homework, better celebration of success and a review of the school day to ensure that its structure is most appropriate to develop the quality of teaching and learning.
64. The school has taken a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are very good. These are now fully implemented and are having an increasing impact on raising the standards of teaching and learning. There are effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Priority is given to training needs associated with the school development plan and those identified as a result of individual teachers' performance management reviews. Evaluation and feedback systems are used effectively to ensure the school receives best value from the courses attended by its teachers. The induction of staff new to the school is very good and newly qualified teachers in particular receive a very good programme of mentoring, support and guidance, as well as meetings on a wide range of relevant whole school topics. The school is an excellent provider for initial teacher training.

Leadership and management of the sixth form

65. The leadership of the sixth form is good. The clarity of whole school planning is reflected in the sixth form development planning, which highlights the need to monitor students' satisfaction so that progression and achievement are assured. This clear vision is shared by staff working in the sixth form. It also communicates itself to students in the sixth form, who are proud to embrace its values of academic success and personal responsibility. The increasing popularity of the sixth form and high retention rates indicate the success of the provision. The clarity of vision and high aspirations of staff are resulting in above average standards in most subjects and students are prepared well for studies at higher education level or in subsequent work. Plans to extend the vocational curriculum will provide more successfully for the whole attainment range and further improve the inclusive atmosphere that already successfully reflects the surrounding communities.
66. The sixth form provision is managed well. Daily routines, apart from registration, are effective. The provision is cost-effective. The leadership uses a commercial package to demonstrate that the value added to sixth form education has been satisfactory in recent years. The work of the sixth form is monitored by the senior team and governors and evaluated carefully to ensure that curriculum developments are effective in meeting the needs of students and raising achievement. As a result, standards are above average in the work seen and students are prepared well for the next stage after they leave school. The success of the work of the management team is reflected in the high rate of retention to the sixth form and in the sixth

form. The work of the teachers who act to encourage students to stay into the sixth form and progress to higher education is particularly effective and appreciated by the student body. The tutor system is very effective in providing a caring ethos. This was positively commented upon by students, who appreciate the concern for their whole well-being. As a result, students feel appreciated and supported in their academic and personal endeavours. However the current arrangements that lead to many Year 12 students being placed with a different tutor when they move to Year 13 are unsatisfactory.

67. Leaders provide good role models for staff and students. They are committed, personable and hard working. They are willing to embrace change and encourage open, unpretentious dealings with students. This encourages a sense of shared loyalty.

THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED UNIT

The school makes very good separate provision for students who are visually impaired.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The unit can cater for a wide range of visual disability.
- Specialist teachers and support assistants provide very good support for students.
- There is high quality specialist technology to support students' learning.
- All staff are braillists and can produce adapted and modified materials for students.
- A good inclusion philosophy ensures that students who are visually impaired have full access to the curriculum.
- Students from the unit are well supported by the majority of their peers.
- Opportunities for working closer with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator have not yet been fully explored.

Commentary

68. There are at present 13 students accessing this well-established provision, which is an integral part of the school. Students are fully included into the mainstream setting. The visually impaired base contains an excellent range of resources and specialist equipment to support students' learning. A full time clerical assistant is employed to transcribe text into braille so that students can access the curriculum. Due to a very good inclusion philosophy within the school, students are able to access a normal curriculum. The school works closely with the resource centre to provide the support and resources needed for visually impaired students to achieve in a mainstream curriculum. They are very well accepted in the mainstream school. Their determination to succeed can be a positive example to sighted students, who are very supportive of them.
69. Most mainstream teachers cope well with visually impaired students within their class. In some lessons support is not required and students are totally independent. Good direction and preparation enables good learning to take place under the guidance of the teacher and support assistant. Students often make better progress than might be expected in relation to their needs. This is due to teachers and a support assistant reinforcing and supporting them effectively. For example, in a music lesson the acute hearing of a visually impaired student enabled him to identify minor changes in the layers and patterns of minimalist music as well, if not better than most of the students in the group. Visually impaired students are encouraged to take an active role in lessons. Most class teachers are sensitive to the particular need of visually impaired students. They encourage independent thinking and involvement in class discussions. Liaison between support staff and class teachers is generally very good, enabling appropriate resources to be prepared beforehand. Occasionally, lessons are unproductive due to students having insufficient encouragement to contribute to what is going on.

70. The teacher in charge of the unit provides very good leadership and management. He has successfully maintained the high quality provision identified at the last inspection. He has a clear vision of what should be provided for visually impaired students, not least of which is to give them independence to cope in a sighted world. There are good systems in place to ensure that both staff and students are an integral part of this school. Resources are very well managed and all students have access to the Internet through a specialist voice output system.

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 provision in English is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	Very good
Management	Very good	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in recent Year 9 tests have been consistently well above average and results in GCSE English literature are significantly above average.
- Teaching is challenging, imaginative and motivating, so helping all students to achieve well. However, opportunities for reflection on learning aims are not always taken.
- Assessment is very good, but many students know too little about the criteria for their target grade and levels.
- Very good leadership, management and teamwork have established a notable consistency of provision despite the large numbers of teachers, some of whom are relatively recent appointments.
- The methods of learning and the topical issues explored make a strong contribution to the students' personal development.

Commentary

Examination results

71. In the 2003 end of Year 9 national tests, results were well above average. In the 2002 GCSE English examination, overall standards as indicated by the average grade were in line with the national average and as expected. However, the proportion at grades A*-C was above average and higher than would have been expected. The proportion of boys at these grades was higher than in most schools. In 2003, the proportion at grades A*-C increased. In 2002 GCSE English literature, the proportion at the higher grades was significantly above the national average with the boys again performing well. The proportion at A*-C fell slightly in 2003 but overall students achieved well in GCSE literature, especially since more students sit the examination than in most schools.

Standards and achievement

72. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Although only in the school for five weeks, the students' achievement is already good because of very good provision. They are laying firm foundations to replicate the well above average standards achieved by recent Year 9 students, especially through their improved extended writing. In Year 11, standards are well above

average. By sustaining such high standards, these students have achieved very well. Analysis of course work suggests that almost seven out of ten students are working at grade C standards or better. Hardly any are at the very lowest grades. Throughout Years 9 to 11 students speak confidently and listen well in whole class discussions, group and pair work. Secure skimming and scanning skills were observed when Year 9 students quickly analysed publicity information to find material to match their target audiences. In Year 11, a few are producing outstanding analytical assignments on literary, nonfictional and media texts. The creative writing of the best is very powerful because of precise vocabulary and a well-structured narrative. In Years 9 and 11 these high attaining students write with the very highest standards of accuracy. Assignment titles in Year 11 are challenging, encouraging the strongest students to show flair. In both Years 9 and 11 the few students not reaching the expected standards have flaws in their technical accuracy and expression. Students with special educational needs encompass a wide range of need and abilities with some securing above average standards and higher. They make very good progress as a result of the department's very inclusive approach to learning. However, in the past, some have not been entered for Year 9 national tests, despite subsequent very high entry rates two years later at GCSE.

Teaching and learning

73. Overall the impact and quality of teaching and learning are very good, enabling students to achieve very well. Lessons are driven by a powerful combination of the teachers' specialist knowledge and high aspirations combined with the students' very good attitudes and often excellent behaviour. The outcomes of the lessons seen were never less than good and frequently very good. Despite staff changes, teachers have quickly established a consistency of strong practice in the mixed ability groups. Each lesson's clear objectives allied to a busy and varied programme of tasks result in the students working very hard. Lessons comprise a rapid sequence of imaginative and motivating activities. There are no significant weaknesses, although students' learning is, on occasion, not secured enough through short spells of reflective discussions and writing which would consolidate key learning points. Skilled class management is a telling strength, enhancing the students' application and productivity. Teachers also have high expectations regarding independent learning, providing students with the necessary insights but leaving it very much to them to decide how to use them. Marking is good, although not many students are sure of what criteria they need to fulfil to reach their targets. The subject makes a good contribution to ICT skills and a satisfactory contribution to numeracy skills. Contribution to the students' personal development is very good because lessons give them the chance to explore important and relevant spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management are very good. The consistency of good practice confirms their effectiveness, especially at a time of changing staff. Expectations are high, the department's principles are clear and all teachers conform to them. Regular monitoring evaluates and develops teaching and learning standards most effectively. There is very good team collaboration on curriculum development and peer monitoring which helps to develop teaching and learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

75. Standards of literacy are above average. Speaking and listening skills are particularly strong. The confident expression frequently observed in English was apparent in other subjects. Most students read fluently and with good expression. In English, Year 9 students responded well to the challenge of skimming and scanning large chunks of material to find information that would suit their reading purpose. This systematic approach to developing reading skills was not consistently apparent in other subjects. Writing skills are above average. In English, students in Year 11 write at well above average levels. As with reading, subject teachers' expectations regarding extended writing are inconsistent. And literacy skills across all subjects are not as

high as those seen in English. Opportunities for discussion and for the application of technical vocabulary are frequent. Some carefully structured work led to well above average responses in science and history. The systematic development of higher order reading skills is the most neglected aspect of literacy. In some subjects there is good provision for writing, for example in geography and religious education, but in others, such as mathematics, presentation skills are not as good as they should be because of under-expectation. Provision for literacy in music is unsatisfactory. The management of whole school literacy is currently not as clear and formalised as it needs to be, despite detailed plans for the future. There is neither a co-ordinator nor an accepted scheme of evaluation. The school has not yet offered to new teachers the good training undergone by longer-standing, often expert teachers.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages (French, Spanish, German) is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching, some of it excellent, ensures that students learn well.
- Higher-attaining students in accelerated groups, as well as those of lower attainment, achieve particularly well at GCSE French.
- The work of the department makes a very strong contribution to students' cultural development and international understanding.
- The department's very good use of its excellent accommodation and ICT resources enhances students' learning.
- The department does not systematically check the quality of teaching to ensure that best practice is more evenly spread.
- Most students do not have enough exposure to Spanish or German to reach the standards that they do in French.

Commentary

Examination results

76. In 2002, GCSE French results at grades A* to C were similar to the national average. Almost all students in Year 11 were awarded a GCSE grade and the highest attainers gained more top grades than the national average. This represents good achievement. In Spanish and German, results in the full course at GCSE were well above average. Girls did better than boys by a wider margin than nationally.

Standards and achievement

77. Standards in Year 9 are in line with the national average in French. In Spanish and German standards are also average overall, although higher-attaining students make a strong start in both languages. In view of their prior attainment and the fact that almost everyone in Year 9 is

learning two foreign languages, students are achieving well. At all ages, students have above average listening skills because their teachers speak the language fluently in the classroom. By Year 11 standards in French are also in line with the average. Students speak and pronounce the language well in lessons where teachers give them plenty of practice. Higher attaining students in Year 10 on the successful “fast-track” course to GCSE write well in the foreign language. Those of lower attainment and with learning needs also achieve well because they are in smaller groups where the pace of working suits them.

Teaching and learning

78. Teaching in all three languages is good overall. Students learn well because of this. They further help themselves by their positive attitudes and good behaviour. Some of the teaching is excellent and in such cases students learn much faster than expected. In one outstanding lesson, for example, students of lower attainment, most of them boys, very quickly learnt how to say what they like doing on holiday. Teaching throughout the lesson was in French and yet students understood precisely what they had to do. Teachers are all very competent linguists and generally use the language well in lessons. They also make very good use of the department’s excellent ICT facilities. Most lessons are very well structured to give students plenty of practice in the new items of language they have learnt in productive activities such as pair-work. In contrast, however, students learn much less in the minority of lessons which do not allow students to rehearse new language actively. Such lessons are not planned imaginatively and involve the teacher in far too much talking so students are passive, and sometimes bored and restless. In most cases in such lessons teachers do not insist enough that students use the language for basic classroom routines.

Leadership and management

79. The three individual language departments are well led and efficiently managed. However, the language college currently lacks settled leadership which can pursue certain important common objectives such as ensuring that high quality teaching is more evenly spread by means of observing lessons. Language college status has allowed the school to create a strong team of well-qualified teachers and support staff who work harmoniously together. Foreign language assistants contribute greatly to students’ speaking skills. Excellent accommodation and abundant up-to-date resources are used very well and enhance students’ learning. A fourth European language, Italian, is taught very successfully to students who wish to continue it beyond the middle school where it is first introduced. Ongoing links with schools in Haiti and Senegal, together with many trips and exchanges to European countries, complete the picture of a thriving department which plays a significant part in broadening students’ cultural horizons. The modern foreign languages department has made improvements since the previous inspection and is now well placed to continue getting even better.

MATHEMATICS

No lessons could be seen of the extension activity leading to GCSE statistics for students in Year 10 with high mathematical attainment, due to timetable restraints. When this was offered previously to Year 10 students as an after-school voluntary activity they achieved very well and, of the 20 students who chose to complete the course over the two terms of study, all attained grades A* to C.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	Very good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching is good overall and leads to good achievement.
- Behaviour and attitudes in lessons are very good, so no time is wasted.
- ICT is used very well to support learning.
- There is a clear vision for the development of provision to improve standards further and changes to ensure consistency of policy and practice are being managed well.
- Although there is some very good practice, marking is not used consistently to identify students' problems and help them improve.
- Mental arithmetic skills of older students are not high enough and impede their learning.

Commentary

Examination results

80. For students in Year 9, national test results in 2003 were above average. Year 9 results in 2003 show a marked improvement in the numbers of students attaining the nationally expected standard and also those attaining higher standards. GCSE results were also above average in 2002, although a below average number of students attained the two highest grades. Early indications are that although the numbers of students attaining A* to C grades did not improve in 2003, more students attained A* and A grades and all students gained A* to E. Overall standards are improving.

Standards and achievement

81. Students enter school with a range of mathematical skills, but overall average standards. Mental arithmetic skills are below those expected on entry and remain below average since the teaching of mental calculation strategies at the beginning of lessons is inconsistent. Nevertheless by the end of Year 9, students have a broad range of knowledge and understanding and standards in number, algebra, shape and space and data handling are above average. Achievement is good. Above average standards are maintained in Years 10 and 11. Due to the breadth of work that is covered this represents good achievement. In a minority of classes students are allowed to produce untidy work, do not develop good mathematical communication skills or are inaccurate when working with diagrams or graphs.

Teaching and learning

82. Teaching is good overall. In over half of the lessons seen, teaching was very good or excellent. Where provision is least effective, work is not marked or assessed carefully enough to diagnose students' misunderstandings and compensate for this in further activities. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and manage classes well. This leads to very good behaviour and students concentrate well, so little time is lost in lessons. Students with special

educational needs and with English as an additional language are well supported and as a result their achievements are good. In most lessons teachers demonstrate good subject expertise and plan and prepare activities well so that the students work carefully through the different stages needed to understand each topic. ICT is used very well by teachers to help them demonstrate clearly and concisely and by students to develop and reinforce skills and understanding. This is a major improvement since the previous inspection.

Leadership and management

83. The leadership of the department is very good. The recently appointed subject manager and those with areas of responsibility have a very good vision of development, to improve teaching, standards and achievement. Much has been accomplished very quickly, although there has been insufficient time for the recent initiatives to have their full impact on standards. There is a clear recognition, obvious in the work done recently, of the need to develop greater consistency of practice in, for example, setting homework, assessment, record keeping and marking. Much has been done to help long established teachers use the most recent national guidelines to improve students' mental arithmetic skills, develop their strategies for calculation and help them learn and use mathematical vocabulary correctly. The agreed policies have not yet been fully adopted by all teachers. Improvement since the previous inspection, particularly recent improvement, is good. Standards have been at least maintained since the previous inspection and there have been significant recent improvements.

Mathematics across the curriculum

84. Competency in mathematics across the curriculum in general is above average. Numeracy skills are used satisfactorily in other subjects, and on frequent occasions students are able to apply the skills learned in mathematics lessons. For example, in geography students present data in different ways accurately and neatly. Teachers of other subjects have undertaken training in the past and work has been done to look at the skills required or used in each subject. There is currently no ongoing co-ordinated development of the use of key mathematical skills in different subjects and no designated numeracy specialist appointed to oversee and support the development of the use of numeracy across the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 9 is good and leads to good learning.
- Relationships between students and between students and teachers are good fostering a co-operative working atmosphere.
- The behaviour of the students in the laboratory is very good and helps to ensure a safe working environment.

- Good support for teaching provided by the technical staff ensures that lessons proceed efficiently with little loss of time.
- The accommodation is very good and helps to ensure a pleasant working environment for lessons.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 lacks the clear targeting of some of the lower and middle ability classes that is characteristic of the good teaching in Year 9.

Commentary

Examination results

85. For students in Year 9, national test results in 2003 were well above average. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations for both boys and girls were average. Results were broadly in line with the trend of improvement nationally.

Standards and achievement

86. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is above average. This represents good achievement overall, as the attainment on entry was broadly average. The attainment of higher attaining students is well above average. Students in Year 9 demonstrated good knowledge of cloning and showed good awareness of the danger of false reporting in the local press. Within the department there is a good emphasis on practical work. Students work efficiently and co-operatively in the laboratory. In Year 11, standards are average and these students achieve to a satisfactory level. Higher attaining students had good knowledge of rates of reaction and produced consistent results in a series of investigations. A lower attaining group of students were less secure in their knowledge of burning fuels and had difficulty understanding the process of oxidation.

Teaching and learning

87. The quality of teaching in Year 9 is good. Teachers demonstrate their knowledge, planning ability and enthusiasm to motivate their students. Clear objectives and precise instructions, together with the use of interactive whiteboards ensure good progress during lessons. Students with special educational needs, with English as an additional language, as well as those who are gifted and talented make good progress. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Some of the positive features seen in Year 9, including good teaching to target the needs of all abilities, are not as evident in Years 10 and 11. Teaching within some of the average and lower attaining groups relies on the use of worksheets, which do not provide the necessary stimulation. However, the results of the high attaining students in scientific investigations are evidence of their good achievement. Examples of excellent support for students with visual impairment were observed in practical lessons. Students with English as an additional language receive good support. A strong feature that runs throughout the department is the positive relationship between students, and between students and staff. These attitudes and behaviour have a good impact on teaching and learning, and are reflected in the students' very good punctuality and attendance. A valuable contribution to teaching and learning was the efficient support within the laboratories given by the department's technical staff.

Leadership and management

88. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has already shown good leadership qualities since his recent appointment this term and has a clear vision for the improvement of teaching and learning. The teaching team demonstrates a pleasant working relationship and a determination to meet the needs of all their students. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection; the use of ICT is now a very strong feature. A rich

and stimulating environment for learning is provided in spacious laboratories, which have attractive displays of students' work, key words and scientific information.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	Very good
Management	Very good	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and has a very positive impact on students' achievements.
- The course for students in their first year at the school is very good.
- The students' very good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning contribute greatly to their achievements.
- The support for students with special educational needs is very good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The resources and accommodation are excellent.
- The improvement since the last inspection has transformed the quality of provision in ICT.
- Students' experiences and progress in ICT gained in subjects across the curriculum are not co-ordinated and monitored.

Commentary

Examination results

89. Students were entered for GCSE examinations for the first time in 2003. The results of those students taking the short course were well below average. The results in the full award course were above average.

Standards and achievement

90. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Students' abilities when they arrive at the school are broadly average and they make rapid progress. They become confident users of the school's computer network and gain the skills to operate within and across complex software applications. They modify spreadsheets to make flow charts to monitor progress in project planning and can apply this to a project of their own design. Their work shows very good understanding of word processing and presentation programs and ways in which research from the Internet can be integrated in to reports they produce. Students' achievement in Year 9 is very good. Standards seen in the GNVQ and GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 are above average. The standard of students who do not follow examination courses is average. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is good. Building on their earlier experiences, students make good progress in ICT lessons. They complete the assignments and coursework to a good standard that is likely to achieve success in examinations. Students are able to carry out challenging work applying the more advanced features of word processing and relational database

programs. In a Year 11 class students demonstrated this when mail-merging data into a plant-labelling system they had designed for use in a market garden.

Teaching and learning

91. Teaching and learning are very good. They are the key contribution to high standards and achievement. Enthusiastic teachers relate very well to their students and have high expectations that are met in lessons. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, plan and prepare lessons well and use very good classroom management skills to provide interesting and stimulating lessons that have a clear structure and a good pace. Students' very good behaviour and their positive attitudes to their work complement the teaching and further enhance achievement. Teachers have great expertise when using the school's networked computers and, as a result, are able to analyse problems the students are experiencing and clear up misconceptions speedily and effectively. Teachers' skills and experience are very well matched to the demands of the examinations courses in Years 10 and 11. Assignments and projects are designed well to cover course content in an interesting and stimulating programme and teachers mark these carefully ensuring that they give the students a clear indication of the standards they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. Working closely with the school's student support services, teachers anticipate the needs of students with English as an additional language and of students with special educational needs well. They take care in their planning and the resources they use, ensuring that these students can learn effectively and make good progress. Teachers do not display enough students' work or other resources to provide a further stimulus for learning.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership is very good. A clear vision for ICT has been implemented in a short space of time. A very effective and dedicated team of teachers and technicians has been established. They work hard to ensure that the school's excellent resources and accommodation are used to maximum benefit. Management is very good. Clear strategies for improvement have been followed. A new curriculum for Year 9 and Years 10 to 11 has been introduced. There are systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching, assessment procedures are moderated and data is collected and analysed to set targets for future performance.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good. In most subjects students apply and develop their ICT skills. The National Strategy for Key Stage 3 and the New Opportunities Fund for training in ICT have been carefully adopted to develop the skills of all teachers. Students with special educational needs have good access to a range of computer programs that emphasise the development of literacy and numeracy skills. ICT is now used to improve teaching and learning in the way teachers present their subject or in the resources they produce. Students are expected to use computers to complete homework and coursework. In addition to using computers during lessons students are given excellent access to them at other times. The learning resources centre and other computer rooms are used extensively during lunchtime and after school. The school's arrangements to make computers available for students' independent use are very good. The lack of co-ordination and monitoring of the progress and achievements of those students not following examination courses in ICT is a weakness. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Leadership and management are very good; sufficient additional well-qualified, enthusiastic staff have been appointed; new schemes of work are in place for Years 9 to 11; the accommodation and resources for ICT are now excellent. The highly competent technical support team ensures that a reliable network operates consistently; very robust systems afford excellent protection when students use the Internet; teachers throughout the school use ICT and standards of attainment and achievement have risen. The school is well placed to tackle the remaining issue of co-ordinating the development of ICT skills across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The provision in geography is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	Good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and all students achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
- Good, well organised teaching is resulting in good learning.
- Leadership and management are good and some aspects are very good.
- There are inconsistencies in the marking and follow-up of students' work.

Commentary

Examination results

2002 GCSE results were below average and in 2003 were average.

Standards and achievement

94. Students achieve well in lessons irrespective of individual capabilities and circumstances. Students at the early stages of English language acquisition achieve in line with other students when they get in-class support. Students effectively use a variety of resources such as worksheets, textbooks, maps, atlases and the Internet to research and collate data. Most students achieve well in lessons. On occasions, teachers do not plan formally for the full ability range to help students with low attainment, those with specific learning difficulties or those at an early stage of English language acquisition. When there is no in-class support, they are disadvantaged because they are set the same tasks as those with higher attainment. This has an adverse impact on their learning.

Teaching and learning

95. Teachers' experience, enthusiasm and good planning have resulted in effective learning. Teachers set challenging tasks using well prepared and appropriate resources. This results in a high quality of responses from students both orally in lessons and in written assignments. Teachers are quick to identify students who need extra support in their lessons and give help appropriately. They are imaginative in their styles of teaching which results in students thinking hard. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher set a task where students constructively criticised and marked coursework done by students in previous years. They did this successfully and this enabled them to improve the quality of their own coursework. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students are very positive about the help they receive from teachers. Teachers organise more field trips, which helps to bring geography alive and helps students to attain higher standards. Teachers make very good use of computers at all levels to

help students produce high quality coursework and for research. Teachers display students' work very effectively in the classrooms. It is of a high quality and this encourages all students to use computer skills proficiently. Homework tasks are clearly explained and done well by students. Some teachers make much more detailed comments than others on written work and where this is done students can identify their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are not sufficiently insistent on students completing their work despite the teacher's comment to do so. Marking style across groups is not standardised and students are uncertain what grades stand for. Gifted and talented students have good access to different provision such as a change to a more suitable GCSE syllabus and access to a fast track group to accelerate their learning, which suits their higher levels of attainment.

Leadership and management

96. The head of department has initiated changes which have resulted in improved levels of attainment such as the change to a more suitable GCSE syllabus, the introduction of a fast track group and concentrating on raising more D grades to C.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	Good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All groups of students achieve well because of the good teaching.
- Separate provision gives additional scope to gifted and talented students.
- The wide range of resources enhances learning opportunities.
- Learning through ICT is restricted by limited applications in the schemes of work.
- Some teaching lacks challenge because good practice is not shared.

Commentary

Examination results

97. In 2002 GCSE results were above average for grades A*-C with girls' results better than boys'. Girls' A*-G results were average and boys' were above average. Girls' and boys' results were below average at A* but well above average at grade A. In 2003 girls' results at A*-C were better and boys' were significantly better. A*-G results and A*-A results were both similar to the previous year. In the school's first set of "fast track" results 90% of a higher attaining group gained grades A*-A.

Standards and achievement

98. Work seen was above average by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. Literacy skills develop well in Year 9 with lower attainers as well as higher attainers clearly structuring their

extended writing about slavery, and with higher attainers showing good evaluation skills in assessing whether one person's experience was typical. Students develop good skills in comparing and assessing the reliability of sources. They identify changes over time although they are less confident at the start of a new topic in drawing conclusions and summarising the features of such changes. They displayed good thinking skills in work on a local mine disaster. Students sequence events and justify their choice of long term and short term causes. Evaluation skills again develop well in Years 10 and 11, with higher attainers able to analyse and synthesise information from a wide range of sources. Students draw perceptive conclusions from visual images although sometimes pay insufficient attention to text. There are weaknesses in essay technique with lower attainers not linking their writing clearly to the question. Overall, students achieve well throughout Years 9 to 11.

Teaching and learning

99. Teaching is good overall. There is some very good and some excellent teaching. In lessons seen teaching in Year 9 was not of the same quality as that in Years 10 and 11. In some Year 9 lessons there was an over-emphasis on completing activities and a lack of challenge in discussion. This was also the case in some of the teaching of older students. However, in the majority of lessons class discussion is well managed and challenging. In the best teaching methods develop students' thinking skills very well. Innovative group activities result in very good challenge with the teaching of "fast track" groups particularly well matched to needs. Teaching overall is very effective in involving all groups of students, which produces very good attitudes and motivation. Written work is typically challenging. Assessment procedures are thorough, incorporating National Curriculum levels and examination requirements. They are applied well in Years 10 and 11 but less so in Year 9 in terms of advising students how to improve.

Leadership and management

100. Good leadership has had a positive impact on a subject that is popular at both GCSE and in the sixth form. There is a strong focus in the department on developing teaching and learning. Innovative approaches are used to good effect. Resources have been developed very well and curriculum experiences for students enriched by a variety of trips and visits. There is some very good collaboration between staff but this does not extend sufficiently to the sharing of effective practice. There are still not sufficient planned opportunities for using ICT, which was an issue at the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	Good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because they are well motivated, and teaching and learning are good.

- Homework is used well to reinforce learning, and students receive good advice on how to improve their work.
- Resources are used well to promote learning.
- There is too much teacher direction in lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- Learning materials are not always well matched to the needs of lower attaining students.

Commentary

Examination results

101. Examination outcomes at GCSE in 2002 did not reflect the usual pattern of strong results. Influencing factors included a complete changeover of staff in the department, the absence of the head of department, and very poor mobile accommodation adjacent to the school building site. However, in 2003 results improved significantly, with 81 per cent of students gaining grades A*-C, and a substantial percentage of boys and girls attained the higher grades of A*-B.

Standards and achievement

102. The attainment of most students in Year 9 is above average. Because of constraints on curriculum time in Years 10 and 11, students begin the GCSE short course in religious studies in their first year in the school. Students generally have positive attitudes, and respond well to the demands of the examination syllabus. For example, in class discussions most students show a clear understanding of religious terms such as “theist” and “agnostic”, and they identify loopholes in some of the arguments for and against the existence of God. However, several of the lower attaining students find this part of the examination syllabus very challenging. Some of the learning materials have been adapted to meet their needs, but the different stages in the arguments are not yet presented in the requisite small steps which would enable these students to gain a secure understanding of the concepts. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Boys and girls of all levels of competence generally achieve well. Those students who do not opt for the final examination can gain a certificate of achievement from the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education on completion of a final independent piece of research. Students’ good achievement is due to mature attitudes, which enable coverage of the syllabus by the end of Year 10, followed by thorough revision of earlier work. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson on creation theories. Students remembered correctly the names of the people associated with particular theories, and were able to explain how Darwin’s theory of evolution could be interpreted as supporting or disproving the “design” theory.

Teaching and learning

103. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A strong feature of the most effective lessons is teachers’ good command of the subject, together with the challenge to students to give of their best. Effective use of homework, together with good methods of assessment also have a positive impact on students’ achievement, as was clearly evident in teachers’ painstaking marking of students’ work, and their very helpful suggestions for improvement. Careful attention is paid to improving students’ standards of literacy, and students are encouraged to use ICT resources for independent research. A relative weakness is that there is too much teacher direction, as seen in lessons in Years 10 and 11, where students did not have enough active involvement.

Leadership and management

104. The leadership of the subject is good. The post of head of department has recently become a joint one, with effective division of responsibility. Within the present teaching team there is an enthusiasm for the subject that manifests itself in good collaboration. Good management has led to working arrangements that ensure consistency of approach in the sharing of classes. The department has rightly identified the use of time in Year 11 as an area for development,

and is now exploring ways of making the revision programme more innovative and challenging to students. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through the organisation of charitable events and in discussions on what constitutes fair trade between rich and poor nations. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Overall standards at GCSE have risen in recent years, despite the dip in the 2002 examinations. Resources have improved, especially in ICT, and now have a positive impact on students' learning.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	Good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching leads to students making good progress.
- Students' achievement is aided by very good behaviour and positive attitudes in class.
- Leadership and management are dedicated to improving student achievement.
- The excellent accommodation and facilities support good teaching and learning.
- Design skills are not as well developed as practical making skills.
- Teaching and learning are not formally monitored.

Commentary

Examination Results

105. At the end of Year 9, students attain below average results in teacher assessments. In 2002, students gained above average results in the GCSE systems and control examination. There were also short course GCSE results in food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles but there is no national comparative data available. These students achieved well.

Standards and achievement

106. In the work seen in Year 9, a similar level of attainment is evident as the students achieve well and make good progress from a well below average starting point. Making and constructional skills are more highly developed than design and graphical communication skills. Higher attaining students have a very secure grasp of subject knowledge and vocabulary. The achievements of the girls are at a slightly higher level than those of boys at this stage. The nature of the projects undertaken allows all students to be successful at a range of levels including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Numeracy and literacy skills are stressed and developed in designing and making activities, and appropriate use is made of ICT. The Year 11 work seen during the inspection confirmed that the average standards achieved in recent examinations were being maintained and rising

on the food and graphic products courses. The standards achieved by the girls continue to be higher than the boys on most GCSE courses. The girls' design and graphical skills are generally better developed than those of the boys. The girls' work usually has a greater depth of research and more rigorous analysis of it when developing their designs. The strength of the boys' work continues to be in their practical making skills. Very good behaviour, concentration and positive attitudes to the subject, typical of all students, add to the effect of the good teaching in supporting good progress and achievement in all years.

Teaching and learning

107. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating projects that strongly engage the attention of their students. Students of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because they are challenged by the tasks presented to them. The teachers use a range of appropriate methods to engage their students with the learning, and explanations, questioning and demonstrations are particularly effective in developing students' subject knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers give high levels of individual support and well-informed feedback, which encourages the students to value their efforts and raises their level of motivation. The teachers have clear objectives for their lessons but they do not always share these with the students or review the progress made at the end. Also there was a loss of pace in the learning in a few lessons where the teachers did not set time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks.

Leadership and management

108. The department is well managed and the staff team is committed to further raising the levels of achievement of the students. Effective use is made of data to monitor achievement and set individual targets for the students. The staff are well qualified and experienced teachers who are deployed to their specialist strengths. However, there are no formal procedures in place for the regular monitoring of teaching and learning across the department. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection in the standards attained by students and the recent refurbishment of the accommodation has provided excellent facilities to support the delivery of the curriculum.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and Design

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

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	Very good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very high level of individuality in students' work.
- The teaching and learning in all years is very good.

- The achievement of all students is very good.
- The leadership of the department is very good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject and behaviour in lessons are very good.
- Accommodation is excellent.
- Opportunities for students to experience three-dimensional work are limited.
- Girls outperform boys significantly in Year 9 teacher assessments.

Commentary

Examination results

109. The percentage of students achieving Level 5 in Year 9 is improving but is still below the national average. Over the last few years girls have outperformed boys significantly, particularly the percentage achieving Levels 6 and 7. Over the last few years, results in GCSE examinations have been around the national average. There was a significant dip however in 2002 when results fell significantly during a period of considerable disruption due to construction work, unsatisfactory accommodation and staffing instability. Results in 2003 rose significantly with over 80 percent of students achieving a grade A*- C. Girls generally outperform boys at GCSE but the gap is no greater than experienced nationally.

Standards and achievement

110. Work produced by Year 9 students suggests that standards are improving and that current work is above the national average. Standards on entry vary considerably but as a result of a particular emphasis on careful skill development, the achievement of all Year 9 students is very good. By the end of Year 9 they have an understanding of line, tone, colour and texture and have developed a good repertoire of basic artistic skills using a range of two-dimensional media. Current Year 10 and 11 work confirms a continual improvement in standards, which are now above the national average. This improvement has coincided with improved accommodation and resources to meet the growing numbers of students opting for the subject. Two-dimensional work is strong, particularly drawing and painting skills and the use of tone and colour. Work by students of all ability becomes increasingly more individualistic with very high levels of personal expression seen, particularly in finished paintings. All students make good use of ICT for research and making art.

Teaching and learning

111. The quality of teaching is very good. All teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and are confident in demonstrating their artistic skill to the whole class. Lessons are well planned, have structure and variety of activity. Work is appropriate for all abilities. Whole class teaching and clear demonstrations of technique mixed with individual support enables students with specific educational needs and gifted and talented students to achieve their maximum potential. There is a clear emphasis placed on the systematic development of basic artistic skill. This allows students to successfully realise their own personal ideas, which are well developed in sketchbooks. Resources are well prepared. Teachers have very high expectations and students respond very positively to the teaching, clearly enjoying the subject. As a result the achievement of all students is very good. Homework booklets are used very effectively to encourage students to produce preparatory work for the next lesson. Students carry out appropriate research and have a good art vocabulary. Opportunities to discuss their work in lessons are limited.

Leadership and management

112. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a strong, robust philosophy and an ethos based on the personal development of all students through artistic expression. The department benefits from being part of a creative arts faculty that provides a personal link with senior

management. The department is open and democratic and there is good teamwork, sharing of expertise and resources within the whole faculty. Management of the department is good. Schemes of work are thorough with clear policies and rationale covering all aspects of provision. Assessment requirements are made clear to students, enabling them to evaluate their own work and set targets for improvement. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored. However the curriculum currently offered in all years has a bias towards two-dimensional work. Efforts need to be made to narrow the gap between the achievement of boys and girls particularly as reflected in National Curriculum assessments in Year 9. Students benefit from regular visits to galleries both locally and further abroad. Visiting artists and projects involving outside bodies enrich the curriculum and provide stimulating work, particularly for gifted and talented students. There is good liaison and joint projects with middle schools. Improvement since the last inspection is good. However the time constraint of the single period remains a barrier to further development such as increased three-dimensional work.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New accommodation and improved resources are beginning to have a positive impact on the morale of staff and students.
- Good use of computers is having a positive impact on students' composition work.
- The overall unsatisfactory quality of teaching fails to engage students' wholehearted commitment and results in underachievement in Years 9 and 11.
- The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory because not enough imagination or planning goes into providing an exciting musical diet for students.
- The lack of time for music in Year 9 limits students' achievements.

Commentary

Examination results

113. Standards in the 2002 GCSE were well below average, as they were in 2001. Standards in 2003 improved, but were still below average.

Standards and achievement

114. Standards in lessons seen were below average in Years 9 and 11. Standards are below average in Year 9 because the time allowed for music is well below average and because some lacklustre teaching limits students' enthusiasm for the subject. Standards in Year 11 are slightly better because more time is given to the subject but attainment is still below average. Students' achievements are unsatisfactory in Years 9 and 11, where too many higher attaining students are not sufficiently well challenged. The quality of singing in the school choir is good,

with students holding independent parts with confidence. Other extra-curricular activities are not well attended. This is partly because the timing of the school day limits attendance by sixth formers, but also because some students throughout the school choose not to attend. There is no noticeable difference between the achievements of boys and girls or between those from different ethnic groups.

Teaching and learning

115. The quality of teaching and learning is overall unsatisfactory, although lessons vary from unsatisfactory to very good. In good and very good lessons, animated teaching promotes a lively working atmosphere. In one Year 11 lesson, the teacher's high expectations and purposeful elaboration of minimalist composition drew imaginative responses with good achievement. In a less successful Year 9 lesson, the teacher was well organised, but did not hold all the students' interest because the pace was too leisurely. Some students went off task and their compositions lacked conviction or imagination. Teachers identify students with special educational needs and those who are higher attainers, but do not always provide different levels of challenge for the full range. In one Year 10 lesson, for instance, some capable instrumentalists underachieved because they were given composition work that was too easy. In contrast, a Year 10 group responded well to quick-fire questions and a variety of well-pitched activities that caught their interest. Most written work in students' folders remains unmarked and so they are unsure how to improve their work. Opportunities to promote students' literacy skills are sometimes lost as there is insufficient planning. Students' computer skills are successfully developed through the effective use of composition software. Visiting instrumental teachers provide skilful support to individuals and to performance groups.

Leadership and management

116. The leadership and management of the department is unsatisfactory because there is a lack of the ingenuity and resourcefulness needed to provide interesting lessons. There is insufficient monitoring or corrective action to ensure students achieve in line with their capability. Despite some good action planning that has improved students' achievement in Years 10 and 11, the issues from the last inspection have not been satisfactorily resolved; there is insufficient formal assessment of students' work in Year 9 and this, combined with weak teaching, contributes to a lack of enthusiasm that limits students' progress.

Drama

117. GCSE results in 2002 were below average both in terms of grades A*-C and the average grade obtained. In 2003 results improved significantly to a level in line with the usual national average. This reflects good achievement, given that the students tend to enter the school with below average standards and are still below average at the start of their GCSE course. Although teaching and learning during Year 9 are good in the lessons that take place once every ten days, there is not enough time to ensure that all students manage to acquire appropriate levels of drama skills and knowledge.
118. Lessons were observed in Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11. In Year 9, achievement was good but it required very good teaching and support to attain that. In Year 10, standards were below average with regard to the students' knowledge and understanding of drama strategies. However, their application of strategies, once they had revised them, was secure, as were other features of their work such as characterisation, gesture and movement. Although their practical awareness of the impact of staging and blocking was less secure, overall standards of performance were average. Achievement was good. In a Year 11 lesson, standards were below average with some students' lack of confidence undermining standards.
119. Teaching in the lessons was at least good and well matched to the students' needs, especially in terms of consolidating knowledge about techniques. The pace was moderate but appropriate. The issues explored and responsible group work lead to drama making a good

contribution to the students' personal development and to their awareness of citizenship issues. Facilities are very good and there is good extra-curricular provision. More explicit use could be made of assessment methods to accelerate learning right from the start of Year 9.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	Good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and, consequently, students make good progress, acquire new skills and achieve well.
- Standards in Year 10 GCSE are above average.
- Leadership and management are both good and provide the subject with a clear vision for improvement.
- Students display very good attitudes and behaviour as a result of good teaching, interest in the activities and very good relationships.
- Accommodation is very poor and has a negative impact on standards.

Commentary

Examination results

120. The percentage of students who achieved an A* - C grade in the 2002 GCSE examinations was below the national average. However, students achieved the school's targets, based on data about the group's prior attainment. All students achieved an A* - G grade. Teacher assessments for students at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were just below the national average but improved in 2003.

Standards and achievement

121. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are in line with those expected nationally. This represents good achievement as students enter the school with varied experiences. By the end of Year 11, students make good progress and achieve standards that are above average. Standards in soccer and netball in Year 10 are above average and well above average among talented students who represent school and city teams or play with the local professional club's soccer academy. Standards in Year 10 GCSE theory lessons are above average and students have good knowledge of the development of skills in sport.

Teaching and learning

122. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good overall with a third of lessons being very good. Students display very good attitudes and behaviour as a result of good teaching, interest in the activities and very good relationships. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge

to ensure that all students acquire new skills and apply them in game-related activities. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, good structure and progressive activities which keep students interested, on task and trying very hard. Teaching is very good in soccer because teachers have infectious enthusiasm and very good knowledge, ensuring that students acquire good turning skills and knowledge of advanced tactics and principles of play. Students are given insufficient opportunity to work independently and to evaluate their own performance and that of others. Teaching in GCSE theory lessons is very good because the teacher links theory to practice. Imaginative use of simple tasks enables students to gain good knowledge of the development of skills and strategies to enable others to acquire them.

Leadership and management

123. Leadership and management of the department are both good. There is a clear vision for future development and a focus on raising standards and improving the curriculum, including the use of ICT. GCSE physical education has not been offered to all year groups in recent years but the intention is to make this a regular course. Accommodation is very poor. The sports shed has no heating, a leaking roof, uneven floor and poor acoustics. This has a negative effect on standards because lessons have to be transferred to classrooms when the weather is poor. Also, many lessons are too short for games to be taught effectively in the time. Standards of teaching and students' attitudes and behaviour have improved since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	Good
Management	Good	Good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because they enjoy the different activities that the school provides for them.
- Good leadership and management have had a positive impact on the development of the subject.
- Teaching and learning are good where the subject is taught in the guidance lessons.
- Subject lessons do not make firm connections with citizenship.
- Assessment is still at an early stage.
- There is not yet a permanent head of the subject.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

124. Citizenship is provided in all years as part of a programme in the guidance lessons, which are taught by tutors. There was no opportunity during the inspection to observe the teaching of citizenship in Year 9 because the tutors had not yet reached the subject in their programme this term. However, evidence was gained from subject documentation, discussion with students and staff and examination of Year 9 work from last year. This showed that standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. When Year 9 students discussed the theme of citizenship it was obvious that they had a clear understanding of what makes a good citizen, and they could give examples of responsibilities, such as membership of the school council, which they could take on in school life. Students were keen to show what they knew and had obviously brought a considerable amount of knowledge and understanding with them from their previous schools. Written work from last year showed that higher attaining students could produce a mature self-assessment of their progress to date, with realistic plans for the future. Standards in Year 11 are also in line with national expectations. Students are confident in expressing their knowledge of how the law affects young people, and they put forward thoughtful suggestions for improving their own environment. They also have an informed understanding of major global problems. Written work shows that students record their knowledge and thoughts effectively in a variety of ways, ranging from individual worksheet responses and personal viewpoints to group presentations using spider diagrams and imaginative interpretations of prejudice in drama.
125. The strongest area in the provision for citizenship is the active participation of students of all ages in school and community-based activities. This enables them to show responsible attitudes to themselves and others. For instance, they become members of the school council, raise considerable amounts of money for a range of charities, both local and national, and take part enthusiastically in competitions and sports activities. Assemblies contribute to students' understanding of citizenship, through presentations from staff and students on matters of social concern, such as attitudes towards mental health problems. There is also a good programme of visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum. Least secure is the contribution to the knowledge and understanding of citizenship by subjects across the curriculum. Programmes of study in the majority of subjects identify where aspects of citizenship might be delivered. However, there are gaps in the provision in design and technology, and most departments are at an early stage in detailed planning. There is good provision in English, where students learn how opinion is formed and expressed through the media, and in modern foreign languages through participation in the Haiti and Senegal links. Students also demonstrate personal and group responsibility in small group work, as observed during lessons in ICT and history.

Teaching and learning

126. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. It is good in the guidance lessons because of well-planned activities, which involve students in discussions and group tasks. Students of all levels of competence achieve well and speak of their enjoyment of the opportunities they have to discuss subjects that interest them, such as the rights and responsibilities of teenage citizens. Teaching is satisfactory in the subjects of the curriculum. The reason that standards are not higher in this area is that teachers do not make students clearly aware of the connection with citizenship in the work of the lesson, and students do not make the link themselves.

Leadership and management

127. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject is good. The leadership has successfully overseen the introduction of the National Curriculum for citizenship. Some assessment procedures are in place, but assessment and reporting has been identified as an area for further development, together with the need for a permanent head of the subject. The other key priority is to improve the teaching of citizenship in the different subjects of the curriculum.

OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Lessons were sampled in GCSE courses that form part of the school's vocational provision.

Business studies

128. Two lessons were seen, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. Teaching and learning were good in both lessons. There was a wide range of ability within the Year 10 group including a number of students with special needs. Teaching was effective and students achieved well because methods used were well matched to needs. Students were well prepared for a challenging homework task involving designing a questionnaire for a chosen product. Classwork involved selecting the "best" questions from a given choice and justifying choices made. The teachers' good knowledge of the group resulted in appropriate support being given to individuals including "helpsheets". Time was well used throughout and a variety of tasks including a starter activity and a quiz to finish kept students motivated and engaged. In a challenging Year 11 lesson students were again motivated by a variety of tasks, again including a starter activity and quiz. Work was well matched to examination requirements with students learning different methods of "break-even" analysis. The teaching was sensitive to the difficulty of the topic in a group with a wide range of ability. Students were taught different methods with an emphasis on building confidence by finding the "easiest" method.

Child development

129. One Year 10 lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were good. Methods used dealt effectively with the sensitive topic of puberty. Learning about changes during puberty was good because of the combination of appropriate technical terminology with everyday language, and because of an emphasis on moral as well as factual aspects. The pace was slow and deliberate with a purpose, with questions well used to assess previous knowledge. A sensitive approach and good subject knowledge resulted in good learning, with students growing in confidence as the lesson progressed.

Leisure and tourism

130. One Year 11 lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were very good. The lesson was clearly linked to a previous visit to a leisure centre. Questions were used very well in class discussion so that students understood that the needs of different groups of customers, including those who did not speak English, is an essential consideration when developing a leisure and tourism facility. Students' motivation and interest were very good. They helped each other and worked very well to produce their own advertising and promotional material for the centre previously visited.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 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.

*GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	15	93.3	74.2	46.7	34.3	38.7	31.3
Biology	12	91.7	81.6	16.7	33.2	26.7	33.2
Physics	6	100.0	82.0	0	36.2	30.0	34.3
Other sciences	9	100.0	83.4	33.3	32.3	37.8	33.4
Information technology	15	60.0	78.2	0	20.6	16.7	28.5
Art and design	8	62.5	90.0	12.5	42.7	20.0	38.9
Geography	10	100.0	88.3	40.0	36.4	39.0	36.3
Sociology	7	100.0	83.7	0	33.6	25.7	33.8
Other social studies	6	83.3	83.2	16.7	32.5	26.7	33.6
English language	9	100.0	92.0	22.2	29.9	35.6	35.7
French	9	100.0	85.4	44.4	35.2	40.0	34.9
Spanish	5	80.0	87.5	20.0	36.1	34.0	35.9

*The data given in this table show only results that were aggregated and do not reflect an accurate picture of the AS results. For example, art is shown as having eight entries, when in fact there were 31. This position is similar in other subjects.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	18	94.4	93.3	44.4	52.2	80.0	84.7
Chemistry	26	96.2	94.0	38.5	45.9	79.2	81.1
Biology	33	100.0	91.6	39.4	36.3	80.0	74.1
Physics	14	100.0	92.8	21.4	42.8	70.0	78.6
Design and technology	6	100.0	95.3	16.7	35.5	66.7	76.5
Information technology	7	100.0	89.1	14.3	22.4	57.1	64.1
Economics	6	100.0	96.2	16.7	45.8	60.0	83.1
Art and design	9	100.0	96.1	44.4	48.7	93.3	85.1
Drama	13	100.0	98.1	30.8	41.5	87.7	82.9
Geography	25	100.0	97.1	40.0	40.5	83.2	80.9
History	29	100.0	97.1	51.7	41.0	89.0	81.2
Religious studies	7	100.0	96.3	57.1	44.0	91.4	82.2
Sociology	19	100.0	95.4	36.8	39.6	74.7	79.1
Other social studies	47	100.0	94.3	36.2	38.9	77.9	77.7
English language	57	100.0	98.3	29.8	36.5	77.2	80.1
English literature	24	100.0	98.5	45.8	43.7	89.2	84.3
French	11	100.0	96.2	36.4	46.1	78.2	83.0
Spanish	8	87.5	96.2	25.0	47.3	57.5	83.6
General studies	6	83.3	90.1	50.0	29.1	76.7	69.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for the inspection was English literature and French.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students' achievement is very good because of very good teaching and learning and their very good attitudes.
- The teachers' very good subject expertise, teamwork and lesson planning result in learning methods that are busy, focused and motivating.
- During lessons, students display well above average knowledge and understanding but a minority do not always reflect these standards in their written work.

Commentary

Examination results

131. In 2002 the A2 English literature examination results were above the national average. The proportion at grades A-B was broadly average. There was no significant difference between male and female students' results. In 2003 the average grade fell slightly although the proportion at grades A-B remained the same as 2002. The school does not aggregate AS results so national comparisons for 2002 are not available. Provisional module results for 2003 show an average grade that is usually associated with above average results.

Standards and achievement

132. Current standards in Year 13 are above average with more than one third of the students working at the higher grades and very few at the lower. Achievement is very good. The department operates a very inclusive policy. Consequently the students' range of attainments at the start of the course is wider than in most schools. Nevertheless, analysis of progress and of results confirms that students across the ability range do very well. Students whose capability indicates they should achieve the highest grades do so: students with lower prior attainment have achieved provisional AS grades that are higher than expected. The written work of higher attaining students clearly demonstrates the reasons for their success. They produce detailed analyses of texts showing good understanding of how language and form shape meaning; their register is constantly evaluative; their use and comments on quotations are perceptive; they challenge conventional interpretations of texts cogently; their command of written English is strong and accurate. During lessons the spoken contributions of students at middle and lower grades revealed insights and understanding associated with better grades. They made perceptive comments on the values underpinning Owen's "Spring Offensive". They were secure when discussing alternative interpretations of Marlowe's "Edward II" and

clearly explained contrasting and paradoxical extracts from “The Great Gatsby”. Flaws in their writing currently prevent them from reflecting this understanding in assignment and examination work, although their redrafted course work is of a better standard. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Only five weeks into the course the students are adapting well to the new demands of post-16 English study, responding positively – and appreciatively - to the carefully “stepped” work planned by their teacher. The literature course is popular and the rate of completion high. Students from ethnic minorities are well represented and achieve as well as other students.

Teaching and learning

133. The quality of the teaching and learning is very good. Teachers clearly have very strong subject expertise in terms of knowledge of texts, literary issues and examination requirements. This certainly prepares the students well. Expectations and challenge are high and students work independently, in groups and pairs. The pace and sense of purpose in lessons are strong because of very good planning. Activities change and are closely linked to objectives. Probing closing summary sessions help to consolidate learning. The teachers’ use of methods that appeal to different learning styles results in very good interest and concentration. Assessment is very good, but currently Year 12 students do not receive information about target grades soon enough. However, a very strong and effective emphasis on the importance of assessment objectives is emerging, and students recognise how helpful this is. The students’ behaviour is excellent and their attitudes very good. Some appropriately explicit teaching on the development of writing skills was observed and other features of this approach should be further explored to improve the examination writing skills of middle and lower attaining students. Some students also suggested it would be helpful to have more opportunity to read and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of model essay answers.

Leadership and management

134. The provision is very well led and managed. There is a strong blend of experienced and new teachers and genuine collaboration between the well-qualified teachers that leads to innovations in schemes of work and in styles of learning. The teachers’ enthusiastic but hard working approach is a fine example for the students. Since the previous inspection new curriculum arrangements have been firmly embedded, despite changes of staff, so improvement has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

135. The students’ communication skills are above average across their subjects. Strengths were observed in biology where the quality of note taking and other research skill was well above average. Good support for the compilation of portfolio work takes place in business education. Speaking and listening were the strongest areas of communication. Inspectors usually found the students to be confident and articulate, although this is less apparent in French where some diffidence undermines standards. Writing skills are above average. The provision for the development of communication skills is satisfactory rather than good because there is too much variation between subjects. For example, despite speaking and listening generally being a strength, in art teachers do not encourage students to apply these skills in group discussions. However, the support for reading and writing in art is effective.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well motivated and have mature attitudes to their work.
- Students' spoken French benefits greatly from frequent contact with foreign language assistants and a period of work experience in France.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic enough to ensure evenness of quality.
- Listening and reading texts are insufficiently exploited for their language content.

Commentary

Examination results

136. Results at GCE A-level were below the national average in 2002, and, with the same number of students entered, were broadly similar in 2003. AS results in 2003 were not as good as they had been in 2002 when they were above average. Five students did not continue the course to A-level.

Standards and achievement

137. Standards among students in the current Years 12 and 13 are average for the stage they have reached in the French course. They are achieving satisfactorily. In Year 12, students listen particularly well, understanding and responding appropriately to their teachers' very good French. Typical of students at this early stage of the AS course, however, many of them still have large gaps in their knowledge of French grammar and their range of vocabulary and idiom is very limited. Their capacity to speak French beyond the prescribed utterances of GCSE is growing, and the higher attaining students manage quite complex sentences to discuss relationships and emotions. In Year 13, students' spoken French is much better and reflects the productive contact they have had with foreign language assistants. Most of them, too, have spent a good period of work experience in Bordeaux which has strengthened their confidence. Their written work still lacks a good grasp of French idiom although most of them have a firmer understanding of more advanced grammar.

Teaching and learning

138. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory, although some lessons are taught well and as a result students learn more quickly. In the large majority of lessons, teachers use French consistently and at native speed so that students improve in their understanding. The best teaching goes beyond this and also gives students themselves plenty of opportunities to speak and practise the new language they have learnt. This happened in a very good Year 12 lesson where students were learning about marriage in the French style. Through subtle, open-ended questioning that grew more searching and complex, the teacher elicited increasingly elaborate answers. Learning was seamless and progress very swift. New

technology is very well used in some lessons for presenting language or illustrating a lecture. Marking of students' work is both thorough and helpful. In some cases, however, teaching relies too heavily on the teachers themselves and students are too passive. Promising texts, both for reading and listening, are treated too superficially and not properly exploited for the new language they offer. Students are given a list of words without practising them in different contexts. In such cases students, who are keen to learn and very attentive, learn receptively but without fully assimilating the new vocabulary.

Leadership and management

139. Both the leadership and the management of French are satisfactory. Communication between staff who teach the same groups is very good and avoids duplication. Students benefit from the excellent facilities offered by the language college and have ample opportunity to use ICT for research. Students speak highly of the course and appreciate the quality of teaching they receive. As with the main school, however, there is currently no settled leadership to enable the department to make the necessary improvements in teaching through monitoring and observation.

MATHEMATICS

Students with very high attainment at GCSE have the opportunity to take an additional AS or full A-level qualification in Further Mathematics. Two lessons, one in each of Year 12 and 13 were sampled and teaching was good. Numbers are small so no comparison can be made with national data, but students achieve well and provisional results for 2003 show that all students gained an A, B or C grade. In addition key mathematical skills are taught to those with lower attainment, and students are given the opportunity to improve their GCSE grade if they wish. The focus for the inspection was mathematics.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average because teaching is good and students achieve well as a result.
- The subject is popular and students have confidence in their teachers.
- Behaviour and attitudes are very good, so students work well in lessons and complete homework tasks.
- Very good leadership is leading to a more flexible curriculum that meets individual needs.
- Mental arithmetic skills are not good enough and impede learning through activities involving mental calculation.

Commentary

Examination results

140. For students in Year 12 AS results in 2002 were well above average. GCE A-level results were average. Provisional results for 2003 show that there has been a vast improvement in results in Year 13 with all students gaining A to E and nearly 70 per cent gaining A and B grades, which is well above the usual average. Students select this course because of their previous success and enjoyment of mathematics in Year 11, and their confidence in the teachers to help them achieve well. This means that relatively few do not complete the course once they have started it.

Standards and achievement

141. Students start the AS and A-level courses with average standards. Achievement is good and equally good in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. This leads to standards of attainment in Year 13 that are above those of similar courses. The expectation that almost all students will achieve at least one grade higher than their target grade based on GCSE results is realistic. In Year 12, students are already attaining above average standards. On occasions, for example when working with surds and indices, students are not able to work quickly, as their mental arithmetic skills are not good enough. They do not easily spot strategies that make it possible to work without a calculator. Students with English as an additional language achieve equally as well as others in their classes as they are given additional help to understand the vocabulary used.

Teaching and learning

142. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics lessons are equally well taught. Teachers have good subject knowledge in all the topics and are able to impart this to students clearly and concisely. The pace of lessons is well matched to the students' needs so that they can follow explanations. Teachers make very good use of resources such as overhead projectors, computers and graphics calculators, teaching the necessary ICT skills to support learning. They prepare their work carefully so that the students are set a good example. Students are required to take notes and thus develop good study skills. Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour, attention and participation. Students respond well and behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good so no time is lost in lessons.

Leadership and management

143. Both the leadership and management of the subject are very good. Responsibilities are shared to make best use of teachers' expertise. The recently appointed subject manager, together with those with areas of responsibility, has a very good vision for the subject's development and ways to raise standards and provide a more flexible curriculum. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, as there is a rising trend in standards attained, despite an uncharacteristic drop in A-level results in 2002.

Mathematics across the curriculum

144. Due to the above average standards attained by students in Year 11 and their understanding of the work covered, they have no difficulties applying these skills in other subjects in Years 12 and 13. This is particularly evident in business studies, where some accountancy skills that are notoriously difficult are particularly well understood and demonstrated. Those with lower attainment are given additional lessons in key mathematical skills to support learning in other subjects. This is a new development, led by a recently appointed teacher with much

experience and specialist expertise. Competency in mathematics across the curriculum in general is above average.

SCIENCE

ICT forms an integral part of the course.

The focus for the inspection was biology and chemistry. One Year 12 physics lesson was seen where teaching and learning were good and standards were in line with expectations.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and result in students achieving very well and attaining well above average standards.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and ensure positive attitudes and a good working atmosphere in lessons.
- Students behave very responsibly so that lessons are conducted safely and the very good accommodation is used to best effect.
- Support by the technical staff for teaching is very good and helps lessons run efficiently with little time lost.

Commentary

Examination results

145. Results in the AS examination in 2002 were above the national average. Results at A2 level were well above the national average. In 2003, results were higher.

Standards and achievement

146. Year 13 students achieve very well and attain well above average standards. For example, they demonstrated their skill and knowledge in identifying stages I and II in the process of meiosis, when viewing prepared slides during a practical laboratory lesson. Similarly, under strict examination conditions, AS students demonstrated their practical high levels of ability in successfully preparing and staining onion root tips. As a result, they were able to view stages of mitosis under the microscope. Student files are well organised and are useful revision aids.

Teaching and learning

147. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 is very good. Lessons are well planned and taught with enthusiasm and humour. The lessons engage and challenge students, and contain a good mixture of theory and practical work. Teachers use effectively their knowledge, planning ability and enthusiasm to motivate their students. Clear objectives and precise instructions encourage good progress during lessons. A very positive feature that runs throughout the department is the very good relationship between students, and between students and staff. Students' very good attitudes and their very good behaviour make a positive impact on teaching and learning, and are reflected in the students' good attendance. Students' assignments are marked carefully and constructively. The quality of the support information is an outstanding feature of the students' files and include, for example, subject specifications, details of modules with specimen question papers, glossaries of terms, planned revision sheets, and notes on study skills. Students state that they find these a great help in their learning. A further impact on teaching and learning is the efficient support within the laboratories given by the department's technical staff.

Leadership and management

148. The department is very well led and managed. Teaching is supported in practical lessons by a highly efficient and well-qualified technical team. The laboratories are spacious and well designed, and organised to stimulate effective learning.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' expert subject knowledge gives good support to learning.
- Students make a good contribution to their own learning through their positive attitudes and good relations with teachers.
- ICT is used effectively in teaching and is very helpful in enhancing students' learning.
- Accommodation is very good and provides an attractive environment for learning.
- The monitoring of teaching lacks the focus needed to develop teaching and raise achievement further.
- Teaching methods and schemes of work do not cater sufficiently for the progressively widening range of attainment of students enrolling on the course.

Commentary

Examination results

149. Results in the 2002 GCE A-level examinations were average. Results in 2003 were not markedly different. In both these years, students who started the course with high GCSE

scores mainly achieved or exceeded their targets but some, starting from a lower base, did not. Overall, these results represent satisfactory achievement.

Standards and achievement

150. Standards of work seen are average in Year 12. Standards seen in Year 13 are above average and confirm the standards shown in the previous year's AS examination results. In both years, students' achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining students in Year 13 apply above average understanding to such challenging topics as the use of nuclear magnetic resonance spectrograms in determining complex structures and can discuss articulately the production of benzene derivatives. They keep good records of their work and organise it well, often re-drafting notes they have made and adding corrections to assessed work. Students with lower attainment have more difficulty in retaining concepts and need more support in lessons. The majority of students in Year 12, at this early stage of the course, acquire secure practical skills in, for example, volumetric analysis. Confident students quickly grasp the concept of the mole and, using sound numeracy skills, can determine empirical formulae. Numbers in Year 12 have risen in recent years but a significant number find difficulty in managing the transition from GCSE to sixth form work and, last summer, approximately half did not continue with chemistry into Year 13.

Teaching and learning

151. Teaching is satisfactory and is resulting in satisfactory learning. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and students gain confidence from this and learn well when it is used effectively. Persistent questioning, constantly referring students back to fundamental principles, challenges them to revise misconceptions. In a Year 13 lesson on the production of benzylamine, students were constantly reminded of the importance of grasping the principles of oxidation and reduction in developing understanding of complex reactions. ICT is being used effectively to aid learning. The well-prepared use of an electronic whiteboard allows students to focus on developing understanding. Students quickly learned titration skills in a Year 12 lesson in which they learned to work quickly and accurately. This good use of time enabled the teacher to assess who might need help. Learning is less secure when teachers do not review progress at the end of a lesson or when a single activity, led by the teacher, goes on for too long with insufficient involvement of some students. Students make a good contribution to their own learning due to their positive attitude and good relations with their teachers, but opportunities for them to learn independently through topics they research themselves are limited.

Leadership and management

152. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work well together and there is much good practice in sharing ideas in the use of ICT in teaching and learning. Good records are maintained, students are set challenging targets and their progress towards them is monitored. Some positive changes in the curriculum, particularly in experimental chemistry, have come about from analysis of examination results. Procedures exist for the monitoring of teaching but these are informal and lack the precision needed to identify areas for developing teaching and so to raise achievement. Schemes of work adequately cover the syllabus, but give limited guidance on catering for the changing profile of students starting the course and the consequently widening variety of learning styles needed. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The wider range of attainment on entry to the course has caused some decline in results since the last inspection; the use of ICT has improved and the recently refurbished accommodation now provides a very attractive teaching and learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and ensure that this is kept up to date.
- The very good leadership and management ensure optimum use of the excellent resources.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students enable a very good working atmosphere in lessons.
- There is a good range of ICT options available to meet students' needs.
- The school's arrangements to enable students to visit local organisations where ICT is used enhance and extend their experience.
- The quality of some students' coursework adversely affects their results.
- Some students do not have a structured programme to develop their ICT skills.

Commentary

Examination results

153. In the 2002 GCE AS and A2 levels, results were below average. In the 2003 examinations A2 level results improved and were close to the national average. A small number of students entered for the Level 3 Key Skills qualification. Their results were above average with one student gaining a Level 4 award.

Standards and achievement

154. In the work seen in Years 12 and 13, standards are above average. Achievement is good. Students have good skills in a wide range of computer applications and they apply these in their assignments. Ongoing assessments indicate that they are on course to succeed in their respective courses. Year 13 students understand the principles of assembly languages and object oriented languages and can use these to solve specific problems. They know how computer systems must be developed to solve problems found in complex organisations and visit local companies to study this first hand. Students on the AVCE course use spreadsheets to model profit and loss scenarios. They can format cells to carry out appropriate calculations and modify their characteristics to minimise the potential for operator error when inputting data. The analysis of recent results has identified weak coursework as a cause of low grades and strategies and resources are being developed to tackle this.

Teaching and learning

155. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Much of it is very good. The teachers have very good, up-to-date knowledge of their subject and transmit their enthusiasm to the students. They are skilled at predicting aspects that are likely to be misunderstood. They select a range of resources, plan lessons well and teach difficult concepts well. They make good use of questioning to check understanding. Teachers ensure very good coverage of examination syllabuses and give students very full advice on the work they submit for assessment and how

it can be improved. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. Very good relationships between students and with their teachers ensure a positive working atmosphere in lessons. Collaborative work is very effective. During individual computer work teachers make productive interventions, discussing work with students and consolidating their understanding with challenging questions or suggesting further possibilities for study. This is a good response to recently identified weak course work and needs to be developed further. Unacceptable levels of absence of a significant minority of students result in their missing essential work. This puts an unnecessary burden on teachers and diverts resources from other students as a consequence.

Leadership and management

156. Very good leadership and management underpin the ICT provision in the sixth form. The head of department promotes a very supportive and effective collegiate approach amongst the staff to ensure that the varying specialist knowledge is shared and made available to students in all of the courses taught. Improvements have led to the range of courses offered meeting the needs of students of differing abilities and aspirations. Improvements since the last inspection are very good.

ICT across the curriculum

157. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is good. All students except those opting for AS level general studies follow a taught programme. They have good opportunities for the development and application of ICT across the subjects they study. For students not following an ICT course a voluntary programme is available in the school's "Seven Up" programme. Take-up is good and all students reach a good level of personal competence in the use of ICT for their studies and as a preparation the next steps in their personal development.

ICT Key Skills

158. All students following Intermediate GNVQ courses take a Level 2 Key Skills course. Students have not yet been entered for examinations but students currently following the course are working towards merit level and achieving well. Standards are a little above average. The quality of teaching is good and ensures that students complete assignments which prepare them well for end-of-unit assessments. Relevant resources are provided and these ensure that work in ICT relates closely to the GNVQ options taken. This useful contextualisation promotes understanding and is motivating for the students who enjoy their work and see its relevance for their future studies or careers.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was geography, sociology and religious studies.

One Year 13 history lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were very good and students are achieving well. They displayed excellent attitudes in a very challenging lesson as they planned and prepared an essay on the French monarchy, following independent study.

Geography

The provision in geography is **good**.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high, and helped by very good attitudes, students achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
- Expert, imaginative and well organised teaching results in good learning.
- There are inconsistencies in the marking and follow up of students' work.
- Leadership and management are good and some aspects are very good.

Commentary

Examination results

159. GCE A-level results were average in 2002 and remained so in 2003, but with a higher proportion of A grades. At AS level, standards are in line with the national average and improving with a higher proportion of A and B grades.

Standards and achievement

160. In both Year 12 and Year 13, students across the ability range achieve well. They develop above average understanding through constructive group discussion and using materials that are well prepared. They can cope well with complex tasks using a variety of resources. They can use geographical terms appropriately. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on population movements in rural environments, students successfully distinguished between the social, economic and environmental effects of migration. Year 13 students too, are achieving well, but in a lesson on meteorology, were not secure with the interpretation of weather maps, despite having covered the work previously. However, their file work demonstrates better understanding and good levels of achievement, and this was reinforced in their good understanding of the concept of and issues surrounding over-population.

Teaching and learning

161. Teachers' good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and good planning result in effective learning. They are imaginative in their styles of teaching which results in students thinking hard. Expectations are high. For example, teaching in one lesson posed challenging questions, which enabled students to successfully question the validity of simple urban models. Oral responses from students are limited only when they are not confident with the subject matter. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students are very positive about the help they receive from teachers. Whether students are working individually, in pairs or in small groups, the teachers question students as they work, which constantly checks their understanding and reinforces learning. In a Year 12 lesson, a student with specific learning difficulties received extra help with his written work which he was then able to complete well. Teachers make very good use of computers to help students produce high quality coursework and for research. Teachers mark work regularly and conscientiously. Comments written on

students' work encourage them to ask for further help if they have not fully understood it. Teachers willingly give their time for extra help. Some teachers' comments are not informative which makes it difficult for students to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Leadership and management

162. The department is well led and managed. The head of department ensures that each teacher is able to use their subject expertise to the full and maintains a healthy degree of teamwork and collaboration. This results in innovations in teaching and learning styles to the benefit of all sixth form students. The head of department successfully secured extra funding which was needed for post-16 resources to cater for students with varying abilities.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject stimulates a very positive approach to learning among students.
- Teaching strategies to develop both knowledge and skills are effective in ensuring good learning.
- Teachers are effective in their planning for large and diverse student groups.
- The regular monitoring of student performance against their individual targets is not fully established.
- Students' files are not checked frequently enough for accuracy to confirm their usefulness for revision purposes.

Commentary

Examination results

163. In 2002, results were just below average. The unconfirmed results for 2003 show a rise in standards with a higher proportion of A and B grades and the majority of candidates performing above their predicted grade.

Standards and achievement

164. Standards in work seen are broadly average. This reflects good achievement when account is taken of the group's starting point. Oral and written work in both Years 12 and 13 is in line with or above the standard predicted for them at this stage of the course. The higher attaining students display good knowledge of the main writers they study and the concepts these writers have developed. Students can apply this knowledge and understanding effectively to their work in class. For example, in Year 13 students could design a project to produce a deprivation

index following a revision of Beveridge's approach to poverty. In Year 12, knowledge was applied to the design of a hypothetical society and the application of definitions and policies on education within it; this in order to begin to understand the sorts of issues that sociology addresses. Year 13 written work ranges from B to E grade with the better work laid out exceptionally clearly. The early work in Year 12, mainly in the form of notes and short answers, at its best is neat, well ordered and shows evidence of students beginning to think about the information and apply it systematically to tasks set. In a minority of cases, although the work is generally complete, it is lacking in length and depth. There are uncorrected spelling and other errors, which adversely affect the usefulness of notes for revision purposes.

Teaching and learning

165. Teaching and learning are good. The successful emphasis in Year 12 lessons is on communicating the ethos and purpose of the subject and creating excitement about its application to a range of situations in society. Challenging and wide-ranging tasks are used, which require both the application of research skills by teachers as well as their knowledge of the subject and good awareness of the students' lack of experience of the subject. Students respond with application and enthusiasm and work particularly well in small groups. Experienced teachers create a good work environment with their lesson structure and their attention to student support. Groups are large and in Year 12 are still receiving new students up to half term in the first term. Some of these are Year 13 students seeking an additional AS subject. The management and monitoring of groups is therefore complex and one issue that arises is the lack of regular monitoring of student performance against their individual targets, which is not fully established. Numbers continuing the subject to A2 level, a group of 21, responded well to written and video stimuli in exploring the concept of relative poverty. Most are able to reach decisions about the definition of poverty and its implications, to a standard consistent with a middle grade of pass at A level.

Leadership and management

166. The subject is led and managed well. Two experienced teachers share the teaching of the subject as well as undertaking other sixth form teaching and organising duties. The subject area is reviewed formally and regularly and issues that arise form the basis of useful discussion with senior managers to ensure a clear direction in the development of sociology. The level and standard of resources, both within the base room and centrally, are good. The use of external resources is less well developed, although staff ensure students attend a national subject conference.

Religious studies

Provision in religious studies is **very good**.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an excellent match of teachers to the curriculum.

- The quality of the teaching is very good and secures very good learning.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject and achieve very well.
- Students benefit from an enrichment programme of a very high standard.

Commentary

Examination results

167. Results in the GCE A2 examinations in 2002 were above average for the small number of students taking the course. There were no entries at AS level.

Standards and achievement

168. In Year 13, standards are above average. Students have a detailed knowledge of Buddhism and a good grasp of the significance of the associated religious terminology. This is because teachers have an excellent command of the subject and challenge their students to think creatively, and also to apply their theoretical knowledge to modern circumstances. Students rise successfully to the challenge, as was evident in an imagined dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the Pope. Written in a lively style, it captured the difference between the two cultures, and showed a very clear understanding of Buddhist teaching and its relationship to the Christian faith. Students have mature attitudes to their work. They are well versed in using the Internet for research, and they organise themselves efficiently in group tasks in lessons, so that everyone takes part, and responses are produced promptly. Students achieve very well throughout the course.

Teaching and learning

169. The quality of teaching is very good and secures very good learning. There are no weaknesses in the teaching. Students benefit greatly from being taught by different teachers. This ensures that they can take advantage of a range of teaching styles and approaches to the subject. Teachers help their students, through a critical appraisal of their work, to write essays that are well structured, and contain carefully reasoned arguments backed up with relevant quotations. Relationships are very good and students enjoy their lessons. Most of the students who continue to A level go on to take degrees in religious studies or philosophy at university.

Leadership and management

170. Leadership and management are very good. Under the new arrangements for sharing the headship of department, the sixth form curriculum is the responsibility of the former head of department who is well experienced in organising the work. The three sixth form teachers are all specialists and work well as a team. A strength of the provision is the excellent enrichment programme. It enables students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of different aspects of the religious life through visiting, for example, an enclosed order of nuns, a Tibetan monastery in Scotland, and a local Buddhist monastery. Students are also able to keep in touch with contemporary Buddhist thinking because of the good links with a local university, and the opportunities to attend lectures given by the Dalai Lama.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Two design and technology lessons were observed, one AS level and one A2 level. Standards were in line with course requirements and students were achieving well. The quality of teaching was good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus for the inspection was art and design. A drama lesson in Year 13 was also sampled. Teaching and learning were very good and standards were above average. The students' achievement during the lesson was very good, matching their longer-term achievement since starting the course. Two lessons on music were seen in the 6th form, one each in Year 12 and 13. The quality of teaching and learning was not formally graded as only a small amount of time was spent in each lesson. The single student in the Year 13 lesson was reaching above average standards and the standards in Year 12 were average. In both lessons, students had positive attitudes, which contributed to their overall satisfactory achievement. Observation of two AS and A2 textiles lesson took place. The standard of teaching was very good. Standards of students' work are above average and better than the recent AS results. One AS photography lesson was observed. The standard of teaching was good. Examination results are above average. Students' work seen in Year 12 was of average standard. The subject is well managed and led.

Art and design

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

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning are very good and result in very good achievement by all students.
- The leadership of the department is very good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent.
- Accommodation is excellent.
- A smaller proportion than usual of male students study art.

Commentary

Examination results

171. The numbers opting to study GCE AS art are small compared to the national average. The percentage of students achieving an A or B grade is consistently just above national average. Girls significantly outperform boys. Results in 2003 confirm this improvement in standards. Similarly numbers of students taking GCE A2-level art have been small with very few male students opting for the subject. Almost half of the students achieved a grade A in 2002, which is well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

172. Standards of work seen match and confirm these results, in that much work is of a high standard. Work seen shows that standards are improving and are currently above the national average. This coincides with a significant rise in the numbers of students opting to study art in the sixth form. Finished paintings show an exceptional level of personal expression and

individuality and powerful subject content. The standard of figure drawing is excellent. Students have the artistic ability to realise their ideas utilising a wide range of style, scale and media. Specific skills are developed in order that students can realise their own ideas. Students are aware of their own standards and set personal targets for improvement to meet examination criteria. Students make regular use of ICT for both research and developing images. Sketchbooks are used very effectively for experimentation and preparatory work.

Teaching and learning

173. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and examination requirements. They frequently demonstrate high personal artistic skill to illustrate technique. Individual support characterises much of the teaching, which involves sensitive tutorial skills where students are regarded as fellow artists. This helps create a stimulating, safe and supportive studio environment. Teachers have very high expectations of students, who respond very positively to the teaching, clearly enjoying the subject. As a result, the achievement of all students is very good. Teachers engender excellent attitudes to the subject in their students. As a result, students show total commitment and self-motivation, and use lesson time very productively. They have maturity and confidence as artists and are keen to explore new ideas and experiment in order to realise personal ideas. They carry out logical and thorough research, draw inspiration and develop new techniques by studying a wide range of relevant artists. Although students can talk about their work with confidence using a good art vocabulary, opportunities to discuss and evaluate their work with other students are too limited.

Leadership and management

174. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear departmental philosophy, which is centred on personal expression and individuality. There is good teamwork and sharing of expertise and resources. Teaching is regularly and effectively monitored. Management of the department is good. Regularly updated documentation and schemes of work are clear and thorough. Areas for improvement have been identified and clear development plans incorporate both school and subject priorities. Progress since the last inspection has been good with many of the issues identified successfully addressed. New accommodation, built in consultation with staff, is excellent. The classrooms are spacious and filled with light. Modern gallery space is a unique feature of the accommodation. Students benefit from regular visits to galleries both in the locality and further abroad. Visiting artists and projects involving outside bodies enrich the curriculum.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Two separate courses are offered in this subject, one at GNVQ intermediate level, and one at AVCE level.

Provision in health and social care at GNVQ Intermediate level is **good**.

Aspect	Intermediate Award
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive.
- New arrangements for the leadership of the subject and the teachers' shared commitment to raising standards have resulted in an improvement in students' achievement and a rise in standards.
- Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour ensure a good learning atmosphere in lessons.
- The use of data and assessment to predict potential, set individual targets and ensure all students achieve as well as they should is not well enough exploited.
- Improved resources, linked to care work in real life situations, are needed to enable students to apply care values more effectively to their studies.

Commentary

Examination Results

175. There were no examinations taken in 2002 and no national data for comparison in 2003, when 75 percent of students achieved a pass grade.

Standards and Achievement

176. The work seen in lessons and in the files of the current students is broadly average. This represents good achievement as they enter the course with levels of attainment that are below average. Students can select and use a range of research material in their study of the main job roles in care. They use information and draw on their own experience as they identify the skills and qualities of an early years teacher, and express their own views on the impact of these on the development young children. They were able to give a very clear oral account of the areas of work presented in their portfolios. Higher attaining students, in writing up their case study observations, show increasing understanding of the effects of economic factors on health and personal development and are developing skills in drawing conclusions and responding to issues. However, they are less skilled in evaluating their practice in communicating with clients and work experience is not as well developed.

Teaching and Learning

177. Students learn well. They make good progress in lessons, taking pride in their work. This results from teaching that is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they plan well and they provide regular opportunities for students to contribute, thus enhancing learning and encouraging independence among students. As a result students are interested and attentive, and generally work productively. In some units, assignments are clearly outlined and teachers provide students with clear criteria, enabling them to achieve higher levels and give feed back on what needs to be done to improve. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across the department. The teaching encourages a mature approach to work; students have very good attitudes and are very positive towards the subject. They feel well supported by the teachers, and over time they gain confidence.

Leadership and Management

178. The leadership and management of the course are good, resulting in good teaching and learning in the subject. The newly appointed co-ordinator provides strong leadership, with a clear vision of the department's aims. All staff work together as a team with a commitment to build on what has already been achieved, and improve students' learning and personal development. However, the use of data and assessment to predict potential, set individual targets and ensure all students achieve as well as they should is underdeveloped. Resources are satisfactory, but the development of closer links with real life situations of care work is needed to enable students to apply care values more effectively to their studies.

Provision in health and social care at AVCE level is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	AVCE Award
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and lessons are well planned, enabling students to acquire sound skills, knowledge and understanding.
- New arrangements for the department leadership and teachers' commitment to improving standards are having a positive impact on students' achievement.
- The positive behaviour and attitudes of students are leading to good learning and better examination results in the higher grades at AVCE level.
- A wider range of teaching and learning strategies allied to a more consistent use of assessment is needed so that there is a greater challenge to students.
- Improved resources are needed to enable students to apply care values more effectively to their studies.

Commentary

Examination Results

179. Results in AVCE Awards in 2002 were above national average grades. Similarly, in 2003, 91 per cent of students who entered for the double award and 80 per cent who entered for the single award achieved a pass grade.

Standards and Achievement

180. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. This represents satisfactory achievement for this group of students when account is taken of their starting points on joining the course. Students interpret data accurately, explain trends and draw conclusions when examining for example the changes in family structure and the effect of "women at work" on family life, or health related factors with regard to the provision of services. They know how to communicate effectively and are learning to reflect on the different communication skills they use in their interaction with clients. Higher attaining students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding, and are able to make recommendations for improvement. Most students were able to give a very clear oral account of the areas of work presented in their portfolios. However, their skills in critical analysis and evaluation of their practice, although satisfactory, need developing. Students' work is well organised and presented and many make good use of ICT.

Teaching and Learning

181. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. There are some good features, for example, teachers manage students well and their high expectations of behaviour create positive attitudes in students. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic

about the subject, resulting in students appreciating the significance of care provision. Students make sound progress because lessons are well planned; they have a clear structure, with specific learning objectives, so students know what to do and how to do it. However, some students would benefit from a wider range of teaching and learning strategies to challenge and extend learning, and maintain motivation. Marking and assessment of assignments are inconsistent across units. Students are not always given constructive feedback and clear targets to enable them to improve. Teachers make insufficient checks on students' learning and do not always summarise lessons to ascertain what has been learnt.

Leadership and Management

182. Leadership and management of the course are both satisfactory. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator has made a good start in assessing the needs and priorities for development and has a clear vision of the department's aims. Teachers have a strong commitment to raising standards and there are areas of good practice within the department, which need to be shared more widely. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and for tracking the progress of students, are in the process of being developed and implemented. As yet, they are not being used consistently in all units and by all teachers to set targets for improvement for the subject and for students. Resources are satisfactory but the development of closer links with real life situations of care work would enable students to apply care values more effectively to their studies.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies and economics.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good across the broad range of courses provided.
- Assessment is very good and students know what is required in order to improve further.
- The good range of staff expertise and experience enhances learning.
- Self-evaluation is developing well and improving the provision made.
- Results show that students have recently under-performed in examined units.
- GNVQ students are not always sufficiently motivated and challenged.
- A lack of ICT facilities limits curriculum planning.

Commentary

Examination results

183. AVCE results in 2002 were average. In 2003 results were better for both male and female students in terms of both overall pass rates and the proportions achieving the highest grades. In 2002 the pass rate at GNVQ intermediate level was low from a large entry, a number of whom had left before completing the course. In 2003 there was a significantly higher pass rate from a smaller entry. In 2003 the first results for GNVQ foundation were from just three students, with two gaining a merit and one not completing the course.

Standards and achievement

184. In work seen in AVCE, standards are average with students achieving well in relation to their starting points. Although students are at an early stage in their study of examined units, standards in the work seen, comprising finance and business law, are average. GNVQ students also achieve well. The two successful foundation students from last year have started the intermediate course, and one former intermediate student is now following the AVCE double award, showing good achievement. Other former intermediate students have gone on to AS courses in other subjects. On all courses, research and investigation skills develop well because of good guidance given on the completing of assignments. As a result, ICT and independent learning skills also develop well. Literacy skills develop well because students are constantly challenged to combine information from a variety of sources. Applying textbook information, including theory to real life case studies, is weak in all but the higher attainers.

Teaching and learning

185. Teaching is good. There is some very good teaching on both AVCE and GNVQ courses. Students' learning is enhanced by very good assessment procedures. Students know what they have to achieve in terms of grade requirements. Learning is enhanced by visits that lead to better quality of writing because students have seen organisations at first hand, which brings the theory to life for them. Literacy skills are taught well so that students systematically build good breadth and depth into their portfolio assignments. Results show that students of a wide range of ability achieve very well in portfolio work. This work provides students with very good opportunities to develop ICT skills. Complex areas such as business law and finance are taught well, with a "small steps" approach building confidence and enhancing learning, but on occasion teaching does not provide sufficient motivation and challenge.

Leadership and management

186. The department offers a good range of increasingly popular business studies courses as well as a variety of other courses. There is a very strong collaborative approach. This is a cohesive team despite recent staff changes, including a new head of department. Priorities have been identified and acted upon with, for example, strategies in place to tackle students' recent under-performance in examined units. Some staff have industrial experience and this enhances the quality of provision. Recent policy initiatives emphasise sharing good practice, monitoring students' progress and involving students more through self-evaluation. Curriculum planning is limited by a lack of computers in the department.

Economics

Provision in economics is **good**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Authoritative teaching delivered by enthusiastic teachers has led to improving results.
- Imaginative teaching methods help students to maintain interest and achieve well, particularly in Year 12.
- The marking of work does not link clearly enough with students' targets to help them take their work forward.
- There is a need for early and systematic use of target grades and closer monitoring of files to increase students' awareness of their progress.

Commentary

Examination results

187. The small group in Year 13 in 2002 achieved a 100 per cent pass rate but a well below average proportion achieved A-B grades, and results overall were well below average. GCE AS results were also below average in 2002. The overall pass rate in the unvalidated results for 2003 showed a marked rise in results and improved individual performance in relation to their target grades.

Standards and achievement

188. The work seen is, in the main, systematic, well structured and forms a good basis for revision. Overall the achievement of students is good in relation to their starting points and in line with current predicted grades. For example, students showed an accurate grasp of the characteristics of product differentiation and all of the group were able to provide accurate answers in a lesson where a journal article was analysed. Standards in oral and written work in Year 13 are broadly average. Year 12 students, on a different syllabus, demonstrate above average standards in knowledge and response in tackling both macro and micro topics. They keep careful notes as well as engaging in good quality feedback and discussion. These students are achieving well at this early stage in the course. They reported back clearly and with imagination on factors affecting product demand in a way that showed they had grasped the relevant theory.

Teaching and learning

189. Teaching and learning are good and ensure that students who are mainly new to the subject achieve well in Years 12 and 13. Enthusiastic teachers deliver lessons authoritatively and imaginative exercises are used to introduce and hold the attention of students dealing with such topics as aggregate demand and monopolistic competition. This involved, for example, tasting salad cream as well as researching its changing position in the market (Year 13) and a 'lucky dip' of products, which students (Year 12) then had to discuss in terms of the effect various factors might have on their availability. Lessons proceed at fast pace, but occasionally

too much input by the teacher prevents students from developing their response to questions. Topics are reinforced well by the use of handouts and journal articles and by homework. However, there is a minority of incomplete work and no evidence that answers have been inserted or inaccuracies in notes corrected, which detracts from students' quality of learning. The attitude of students is positive throughout and they work hard and effectively both individually and in groups. The standard of teaching, particularly in Year 12, has led to a good standard of student learning, consistent with their performance on entry to the course. The system of feedback on students' performance, both for individual pieces of work and in reports, makes it clear which areas of students' work need improvement but it is not linked sufficiently to individual improvement targets. Target grade setting does not occur until the first progress review in the middle of the autumn term and the use of data on students' prior attainment has not, this year, been used effectively enough in target setting.

Leadership and management

190. Leadership and management are good. The subject is organised within the business and vocational education department. Staff, including the head of department, are relatively new to the teaching of the subject in this school, but their teaching is good and they are able to draw effectively upon relevant industrial and commercial experience. They have recently reviewed teaching methods, shared good practice with colleagues, changed the syllabus and set up a system of student review of progress to supplement the school system. Attention is also being given to the process by which students choose the subject to ensure the choice is appropriate to their aptitudes and needs. Resources available to the subject are good. There is scope for development of further external links and the use of business games to extend learning. Although subject numbers are relatively small, there has been no contact with community education to explore the possibility of linked provision.

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	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	4
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	2	2
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the head teacher		3
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).