

INSPECTION REPORT

BEECHEN CLIFF SCHOOL

Alexandra Park, Bath

LEA area: Bath and North East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109332

Headteacher: Mr R Ludlow

Lead inspector: Tim Royle

Dates of inspection: 26 – 30 January 2004

Inspection number: 259128

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Male (mixed in the sixth form)
Number on roll:	996
School address:	Alexandra Park Bath
Postcode:	BA2 4RE
Telephone number:	01225 480466
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C J Oldham
Date of previous inspection:	2 March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Beechen Cliff School is a foundation comprehensive school for boys aged 11-18, situated on the southern side of the City of Bath. Female students are admitted into the sixth form. Pupils and students are drawn from the city and surrounding area. The socio-economic background from which the pupils are drawn is above average. While a high proportion of pupils are from professional and educated families, there is a small proportion of pupils from needy and educationally less advantaged backgrounds. The number of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is low. There are currently 996 pupils on roll, with 202 in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Standards on entry are above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below average, with 47 pupils having identified needs, covering learning difficulties of many kinds and including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, dyslexia and autism. Fifteen pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Pupils are almost all white British with a very small number who are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are 11 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school received an Investor in Student Careers award in 2003. The school is a Technology College and has Beacon Status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1610	Tim Royle	Lead inspector	
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
32589	Avi Becker	Team inspector	Mathematics
20832	Mohindar Galowalia	Team inspector	Science
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
17156	Edward Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History
15407	Muriel Harrison	Team inspector	Geography
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design, special educational needs
31850	David Nevens	Team inspector	Music, citizenship
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Beechen Cliff is a sound school with many good features. Overall, pupils are achieving well. The head is charismatic and there are many strong teachers, but there are weaknesses in underlying management systems, and as a result there is variability between subjects. In some subjects pupils are not getting the opportunity to study all they should, even though in many subjects they do very well. Value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' learning and achievement are good in Years 10 to 13 because they are taught well.
- Teaching is consistently good across Years 7 to 11 in science, information and communication technology (ICT), French, art and design, music, physical education, religious education and business studies.
- The school has a very positive ethos which has a strong impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Strategic management, including school improvement planning, self-review and the use of performance data to monitor pupils' progress, is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for ICT in lessons and across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and pupils are not achieving well enough in this subject.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good, and their sense of responsibility is well developed.
- Extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities are very good.
- The partnership with parents and links with the community are strong.

At the time of the last inspection in 1998 there were seven key issues, of which only three have been resolved; improvement since then is unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	B	n/a	

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

Achievement is good overall; Standards in Year 9 are above average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and achievement is good. In the sixth form standards are above average, higher in some subjects, and achievement is good. During the inspection, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work indicated above average standards overall. Though results in a significant number of GCSE courses show very good achievement, as indicated by the A against similar schools in the above table, the inspection judgements also take standards in courses that do not lead to a GCSE into account, and other data on pupils' progress. As a result the judgements are slightly lower. In English, achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and good in science.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities are good overall. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to their achievements. Behaviour is good and most pupils demonstrate considerate behaviour towards others.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education** provided by the school is **satisfactory**.

Teaching is good overall. The teaching seen on the inspection varied from excellent to unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, teaching and learning are good. Teachers' command of their subjects is good and they have high expectations of pupils. Homework is used well to reinforce learning, however, lesson planning is too variable. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work are unsatisfactory, and, partly as a result, monitoring of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

Curricular provision is unsatisfactory and fails to meet statutory requirements. It has not improved since the previous inspection. However, enrichment opportunities are very good. Monitoring of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. Links with parents are good. There are strong links with the community and with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has drawn together a strong and committed senior team but their work is hampered by a lack of time to undertake a strategic role, and insufficient delegation of responsibilities. Insufficient attention has been given to strategic matters. Governors are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. Their involvement in strategic planning and monitoring is developing, but needs to be informed by sufficient knowledge of school performance and the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and his staff, but they need to develop the balance of support and challenge more robustly. Several statutory requirements are not met and four of the seven key issues from the last inspection have not been resolved.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents, pupils and students feel the school promotes high standards and that teaching is good. A small minority of parents are concerned about the behaviour of pupils and about bullying; the evidence gathered in the inspection did not support this view.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the strategic management of the school by establishing a clear framework for whole school improvement planning linked to a rigorous system of self-evaluation;
- Improve procedures for monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning through a systematic review of the use of performance data, action planning and target setting, in both the main school and the sixth form;
- Improve provision for teaching and learning in ICT in Years 7 to 11;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure full curricular provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11, and ICT and citizenship in Years 7 to 11;
- Comply with information requirements in relation to the content of the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents;
- Improve the arrangements made for providing a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT BEECHEN CLIFF SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is providing a **sound** education for its students, and it has improved since the last inspection in 1998. Standards have improved in recent years. Given their prior attainment at GCSE, students' achievements are good as result of good teaching. There is a clear sense of direction, and leadership and management are satisfactory. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good overall with very good practice in design and technology, history and art and design.
- Students in the sixth form demonstrate very mature attitudes in their work and behaviour.
- Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of provision are not secure enough.
- The curriculum provides a very good range of subjects and benefits strongly from the link with its partner institution.
- Relationships are very good amongst the students and between staff and students.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English. Satisfactory. Above average A-level results and satisfactory achievement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. French. Good. Standards are above average and teaching and learning are good, supported by excellent opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom.
Mathematics	Mathematics. Good. Good teaching leads to good achievement. Current standards are above average.
Science	Biology. Good. Effective teaching leads to good learning and achievement. Standards are above average.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	ICT. Good. Students' learning is well supported by good teaching. Achievement of students on the AS course is unsatisfactory.
Humanities	History. Very good. Excellent learning supported by very good and excellent teaching results in very good achievement.
Physical Education	Physical education. Satisfactory. Given that no students had studied GCSE physical education prior to joining the sixth form and therefore their knowledge and understanding of the theory part of the course were limited, achievement is satisfactory.
Technology	Design and technology. Very Good. Teaching and learning are of a high quality leading to good progress and achievement.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design. Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is consistently of a very high standard.
Business	Business studies. Satisfactory. Standards improved in 2003 on the below average results of the previous year but are below average in Year 13 and in the applied GCSE course.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very

good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of personal support and guidance that students receive is satisfactory. Tutors know their students well and are sensitive to their needs. However, students have limited opportunities to be involved in decisions about the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is a clear commitment to inclusion, the promotion of equality and concern to meet the needs of individual students. The curriculum is sufficiently flexible to respond to individual students' requirements and benefits greatly from the link with the partner institution. As in the main school, some aspects of management are unsatisfactory. These include development planning, monitoring and self-review, but in the sixth form this is having less impact because the overall curriculum is better.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and consider that the teaching challenges them to achieve their best. They particularly appreciate the helpfulness of the teachers and the choice of courses. They consider that they are treated fairly and with respect. Their views are welcomed and often acted on. Students value highly the advice they receive on access to higher education opportunities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

In almost all subjects, standards of work seen during the inspection are above average at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. Overall, pupils' achievements are good in Years 7 to 11, although there is variation across subjects. Achievement is good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in A-level design and technology, history and art and design.
- National test and examination results are at least above average in almost all subjects.
- Pupils' achievements in a number of subjects are good, particularly during Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in ICT are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11.

Commentary

1. Year 9 results in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well above the national average in 2001 and 2002. In 2003, results in English were above average whilst science and mathematics were well above average. The proportion achieving the national standard of Level 5 were above the national average in English and well above average in mathematics and science; in mathematics and science the proportion achieving at least the higher Level 6 was also well above average. In English it was average.
2. In 2002, an 'added value' measure was produced which measured the progress of actual pupils of the school between Years 7 and 9 against national averages. On this measure the progress of the pupils at this school was above average when compared to all schools and average when compared to similar schools. These measures are borne out by inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of their achievement in lessons. Pupils' books and practical work show satisfactory achievement over time.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (35.6)	32.1 (33.3)
Mathematics	40.0 (38.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	38.6 (37.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 149 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. GCSE results have been fairly static over time. The added value measure of achievement shows that pupils' achievement in 2003 between Years 9 and 11 was average. Improvement in the school's average point score per pupil is in line with the national trend. Results in 2003 in English, mathematics and science were above national averages. Results in 2003 were also at least above average in all other subjects.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	64 (67)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.2 (39.5)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 143 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards are at least above average in almost all subjects across the school. In Years 7 to 11, standards are well above average in modern foreign languages and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above average in English, geography and art and design. Standards in ICT are below average in Years 7 to 11.
- Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils' achievement varies between and within subjects and is good overall. For example, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in English for Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11, it is good in science in Years 7 to 9, but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils with English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9, but well in Years 10 and 11, as do their peers. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) also show satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 except in a minority of cases where they lack support, or where lessons are not planned to meet their needs, when achievement by these pupils is unsatisfactory. They achieve well in Years 10 to 11. All pupils on the SEN database take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11; in 2003 all pupils with SEN gained five or more passes at grades A*-G. The school's procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils are not clear and insufficient evidence was seen to make a judgement on the achievement of such pupils.
- From the scrutiny of pupils' written and other work, and from observing lessons, pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. In English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography, physical education, religious education and business education pupils' achievement is good. In art and design pupils' achievement is very good. In all these subjects, pupils' work shows increasing depth, analysis and attention to detail and achievement is promoted by teachers' emphasis on developing skills, enhanced among these older pupils by the increasing development of independence and self-reliance. In ICT, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, because the curriculum is not fully covered.
- Across the school pupils' language and literacy skills are developed well in a range of subjects. Most have explicit statements in place showing how these skills are to be developed in the subject. Mathematical skills are also developing well. Very limited progress has been made with regard to ICT, where pupils' competence across Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

- In 2002, the latest year for which there are national comparative results, students' performance in AS and A-level examinations was above average. Boys' performance was above the average for boys, while girls' results were well above average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	49.6	39.4
Average point score per student	273.5 (216.3)	263.3

There were 88 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

10. In 2003 98 per cent of entries gained A-E grades at A2. As in the previous year, girls performed better than boys. In almost all subjects, students gained at least a pass grade. Students in art and design, biology, chemistry, physics, design and technology, French, geography, government and politics, history, mathematics, religious studies and Spanish achieved well, and in almost all subjects, students achieved as expected or better. Students did less well in computing and biology at AS level where over half of the entries were ungraded. With the exception of AS computing and biology, students mostly achieved the grades that were predicted for them. Numbers taking the courses were in some cases too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made. Students gained a high proportion of higher grades at AS level in art and design, photography, design and technology, government and politics, history, mathematics, physics, and psychology. Results in other subjects were more mixed.
11. The school prides itself on open access to the sixth form and has adopted an inclusive policy towards taking students onto courses. It adopts a flexible approach and although the entry criteria require that potential A-level students should have a good pass grade at GCSE, a number of students are admitted with minimum requirements. The school's very effective link with a neighbouring girls' school increases and enhances access for students in both schools.
12. Inspectors judge the achievements of most students in the current sixth form to be good. In design and technology, history and art and design, achievement is very good as a consequence of increasingly effective teaching, which offers high levels of challenge and independent learning. Retention rates through courses are good with the large majority of students successfully completing their courses.
13. Not all subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection. Of subjects that were, students' achievements, given their attainment at GCSE, are at least satisfactory, and are good in biology, French, mathematics and physical education. They were judged to be very good in design and technology, history and art and design. Standards in most of the subjects inspected in detail were at least above average for this stage in the course, apart from computing where they were average, and physical education and business education where they were below average. In subjects sampled some good work was seen in German, Spanish, geography, chemistry and physics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes of pupils towards their learning are good, particularly in the sixth form where they are very good. Pupils' behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall and their relationships are very good. Levels of attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils enable them to make good progress because they are well motivated and eager to learn. Students in the sixth form demonstrate very mature attitudes in their work and behaviour.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very strong and contributes well to their sense of responsibility and self-esteem.

- Not enough is done to enable pupils to appreciate the rich variety of cultures and traditions that exist in a multi-cultural society.
- Relationships are very good and create a positive learning environment.
- Opportunities for students to undertake roles of responsibility are limited in the sixth form. The procedures to register sixth form students and monitor their attendance are not effective.

Commentary

- Parents are particularly pleased by the way pupils are encouraged to become mature and responsible. Where teaching is good, pupils are highly motivated, listen attentively and respond well. When lessons are undemanding and not interesting some pupils lose concentration and become passive or bored.
- In the pre-inspection questionnaires 70 per cent of the pupils felt that many pupils do not behave well. This was not borne out during the inspection, where the behaviour of most pupils was good both in lessons and around the school. The school has an appropriate focus on promoting good behaviour and supporting those individuals who find difficulties in this area. In the majority of lessons pupils can learn without being disturbed by others. Pupils are well aware of the reward system and feel it motivates them to do well.
- The school applies exclusions as a part of its behaviour management system. Although the level of short fixed-term exclusions has increased since the last inspection the number of permanent exclusions has halved. The procedures are effective as the number of pupils re-offending is small. There are few incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour and when incidents do occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Overall, pupils and parents do not feel that bullying or racism is a problem in the school.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White - British	912	85	4
White - Irish	2	0	0
White – any other white background	25	1	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	3	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	8	0	0

17. There are good opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils, and opportunities exist in religious education and other subjects to enhance this feature of personal development. Pupils have a respect for the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. They reflect on issues of belief and form judgments that enable them to develop insights. This is especially the case in art and design and music. They are well aware of right and wrong actions, have a very clear knowledge of what is expected of them and respond very well. Their knowledge and awareness are reflected well in their actions, which express concern for others in the community. They also show a concern for those less fortunate than themselves through regular fund-raising events for charities.
18. Pupils are keen to be involved in a range of activities, and they relate very well to adults and their peers. Pupils work well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in paired work, group work and general discussion. Pupils are self-confident and are developing well as responsible members of the community. They respond well to the opportunities presented to take responsibility and contribute to activities around school. This includes acting as 'buddies' for younger pupils, becoming reading partners, librarians, running the weather station or undertaking reception duties. The year representatives undertake their responsibilities conscientiously and spoke of some of the improvements they had helped to instigate. Pupils are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. However, their cultural development does not extend sufficiently to developing an awareness and appreciation of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. The lack of coordination of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, along with citizenship, across the school does not provide opportunities for a planned approach to this aspect of pupils' personal development.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.3	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

19. Overall, attendance is satisfactory and is in line with the national average. Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive punctually in the mornings. However, the ongoing road repairs in Bath have resulted in increased levels of lateness since the beginning of the year.

Sixth form

20. Students value the very good relationships fostered in the sixth form. They feel they are treated like adults and this encourages them to act accordingly. They have very mature attitudes to learning and this promotes a good level of debate and a productive working environment. The behaviour of students in the sixth form is very good. Students value and respect others, and generally feel they get on well together. The girls feel well integrated into the school.
21. Sixth form students develop into confident and independent young people and act as good role models to other pupils. Apart from a few significant positions such as the head boy/girl and team captains, opportunities for students to undertake roles of responsibility on a regular basis in the school are underdeveloped. Students who volunteer as prefects help out on open days but no longer help out in the dining room at lunch times. The student council mainly runs social events to raise funds for the student common room.
22. The procedures to register students and monitor their attendance are not effective. Students are not always arriving in time for morning registration or are leaving early before the afternoon one. Although there are systems in place for students to sign in and out this is not taking place

regularly nor is it effectively monitored, which means that staff do not always know who is on site.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. There are strengths in teaching and in links with parents and the community. However, assessment and the curriculum have unsatisfactory features.

Teaching and learning

Overall teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Learning follows the same pattern. As at the last inspection, assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11. It is satisfactory in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' command of their subjects is good and they have high expectations of pupils.
- High standards of pupils' behaviour are insisted on and achieved.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.
- Pupils apply themselves well and their acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding is good.
- Teachers' planning of lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is of variable quality and pupils' skills of independent learning are underdeveloped.
- The use of assessment to plan the next steps in learning is underdeveloped.
- Teachers do not use ICT consistently well to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

23. Since the last inspection in 1998, the quality of teaching has declined slightly. There is a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching. The school has implemented a programme of performance management of which a key feature is monitoring of teaching, followed by feedback to teachers. This process has not yet enabled those identified as having weaknesses to receive further training and support. Although there has been some sharing of good practice in teaching this has not been promoted sufficiently within departments and across the school, for example through positive strategies including regular meetings at which effective practice is shared. Here leadership and management within the school have made insufficient impact.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 152 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	29 (19%)	66 (43%)	52 (34%)	3 (2%)	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.

24. The best teaching was observed in science, ICT, modern foreign languages, history, art and design, music, physical education, religious education and business education. It was good overall in most of these subjects, and very good in art and design. In Years 10 and 11, teaching was also good in English, design and technology and geography. Where teaching was of a high quality, there was a clear impact on learning. Pupils arrive at lessons ready to work, knowing that teachers will have consistently high expectations of their behaviour and application to the tasks in hand. A good example of high quality teaching in history, for Year 9 pupils, involved understanding the nature of World War II by handling artefacts. This generated some very good discussion and a powerful stimulus for understanding the nature of war.

25. Where weaker teaching was observed, the planning of lessons was in some cases the cause. On occasions pupils ended the lesson unclear as to what they should have learned, often because a closing plenary session did not take place due to lack of time or because it was not planned for. On other occasions, the tasks set did not fully challenge both the most and least able pupils. In the very small number of lessons where weaknesses were serious enough for the teaching to be judged unsatisfactory, the work planned did not match the abilities of the pupils, resulting in a lack of interest by a significant minority. Across the school, ICT is not used consistently well to support teaching and learning.
26. The school's provision for assessment remains unsatisfactory and this was a key issue for improvement during the previous inspection. A co-ordinator for assessment has now been appointed and there has been some good, recent progress in developing a whole school policy. However, procedures to collect assessment data systematically and to monitor the achievements of pupils effectively are not yet in place. There is good practice in several departments, for example science and modern foreign languages, although the freedom given to departments to establish their own procedures has led to inconsistencies in the overall system and the information provided for pupils lacks consistency and clarity. For example, the school currently uses a range of data for assessment to set target grades for pupils following examination courses, but the use of this information varies between departments. As a result the use of assessment to respond to pupils' individual needs is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils are not yet fully involved in dialogue and negotiation with teachers when target grades are set. For pupils with special educational needs, the assessment and monitoring procedures to track their progress are very good.
27. The quality of marking and assessment in subjects is satisfactory overall but also varies considerably between departments. There are examples of good practice where teachers mark work regularly, although in some areas teachers do not provide sufficient detail to record what pupils have done well and how they can improve. Examples of good and very good marking were seen in art and design, geography, design and technology and business studies. When marking is good or very good, it is well directed towards examination criteria and pupils are informed on how to improve. Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is unsatisfactory in the school as a whole although in some areas, for example in science, it is developing well. Where it is good, teachers mark in a positive way and there is a good balance of comments of praise and how to improve.
28. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans are clear and offer useful strategies to teachers, pupils and parents. However, not all teachers use them to full effect by adapting their teaching methods and providing the appropriate level of work for the pupils. Teaching assistants give very good support to the pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, whom they target in lessons. Pupils who are withdrawn for basic literacy and numeracy support are taught well and make good progress, using the adapted worksheets available.
29. Pupils who learn English as an additional language receive specialist support from a specially appointed teacher working with special educational needs department staff. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for an intensive course of teaching and return to lessons when they can understand and cope with the work. It is concentrated, for the most part, on one day, and the pupils are tired and less enthusiastic by the end of the afternoon. Good teaching manages to counter this so that pupils make good learning.
30. Where heads of department have identified pupils who are gifted and talented, they monitor their achievements and set appropriately high standards for them.

Sixth form

31. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. This is confirmed by the students themselves, who consider that the teaching is both challenging and demanding. In the

subjects inspected in detail, teaching was judged very good in design and technology, history, and art and design. It was judged good in mathematics, biology, computing, French and physical education.

32. A strong characteristic of much of the teaching is the teachers' subject knowledge. This enables teachers to approach the syllabus confidently, pose and answer questions that challenge the students' thinking, and plan lessons and schemes of work that successfully build on prior attainment in a meaningful and relevant way. In the best lessons, teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and these qualities are significant in developing students' intellectual curiosity alongside a depth of understanding. In an excellent Year 12 history lesson, students demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the failures of the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848 and a sound understanding of the causes of the Franco-Prussian War. They engaged in very animated and thoughtful discussion, based on historical evidence. The teacher's very confident skills enabled students to participate with outstanding enthusiasm and commitment, developing their own skills in a challenging environment. The confident approach of teachers to their subject at this level is a key factor in students' good achievement. The commitment and hard work of staff is another important factor.
33. A range of varied activities and a good blend of direct teacher input and collaborative working and independent learning ensure that students remain committed to their studies throughout lessons. Students respond very positively to this approach. Although some lack confidence in their learning, most adopt a very positive and mature attitude to their studies. They are keen to do well and succeed to the best of their ability. This enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on the progress they make. Many teachers adopt good strategies to promote students' independent learning and perseverance in solving problems and overcoming difficulties themselves. As a result, their contributions in such lessons are thoughtful and often original. Not all teachers are as effective in promoting these skills and at times are over-prescriptive in their approach, not allowing the students to pursue their own thinking and ideas.
34. In discussion with the students themselves, it was clear that they have a mature and sensible view of what makes for effective teaching. They reported that teachers are always prepared to give them additional support when needed. They are clear about how well they are doing and in most cases confident about how to improve.
35. Students' learning skills are good. Most students take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. In work that is undertaken independently of the teachers, students' skills in self-study and research are good.
36. Teachers make use of national data from GCSE results to set targets for individual students. Students are aware of their examination targets. There is good practice in art and design, science and design and technology, where teachers monitor ongoing progress well and ensure students work closely to their target grades. Most departments provide students with assessment criteria relevant to their examination courses. Marking is usually thorough and this provides helpful information for students on how to improve their work.

The curriculum

Though there are strengths in the quality and range of the curriculum, overall provision is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not fully met for citizenship and ICT in Years 7 to 11 and religious education in Years 10 and 11. This has a detrimental effect on the standards pupils achieve. The curriculum is good in the sixth form. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curricular provision in modern foreign languages is very good with four languages offered in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for enrichment and provision of extra-curricular activities are very good and extend pupils' and students' learning experiences. Participation is good.
- A number of statutory requirements are not met. These are: provision for citizenship and ICT in Years 7 to 11 and religious education in Years 10 and 11, and requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum.
- Accommodation for the sixth form is not adequate.

Commentary

37. The overall quality of curricular provision is unsatisfactory and has not improved since the previous inspection. Statutory requirements for religious education, ICT and collective worship not met at the time of the previous inspection have still to be addressed. However, the provision for design and technology now meets statutory requirements and pupils follow a good range of courses including food and textiles. The newly introduced citizenship curriculum has not been successfully implemented in the school and statutory requirements are not met. Aspects of the Key Stage 3 strategy have been embraced in the core subjects as well as in ICT, modern languages and technology. There has been, however, no evaluation of the outcomes of these initiatives. Curricular provision is particularly strong in modern languages and results in good achievement. Provision is good in mathematics, science, art and design, geography and design and technology, where pupils have an access to a wide range of courses and activities. Provision for alternative and vocational education is satisfactory and the school has plans to extend it in the future. The academically focused curriculum is sufficiently well planned to provide continuity across ages 14 to 19.
38. The newly introduced national citizenship curriculum has not been successfully implemented in the school and statutory requirements are not met. Planning for citizenship is unsatisfactory. There is no scheme of work, no curriculum leadership and the subject is simply 'attached' to the personal, social and health education programme which, though ambitious and wide-ranging, contains too much content for the curricular time allocated.
39. Support for learning outside the school day is good and the quality of enrichment activities is very good. There is a broad range of activities throughout the school year for both main school and sixth form including outdoor and adventure visits to Wales, visits abroad and many activities and clubs within the school at lunchtimes, after school, and at the weekend. Participation in sport, particularly in competitive extra-curricular sport, is very good, though there are fewer opportunities for general recreational participation. Forty-three per cent of pupils and forty-five per cent of sixth formers have represented the school in inter-school competitive fixtures. Instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities contribute considerably to music provision and to the school's record of participation in the arts. This also provides good 'PR' for the school. The wide range of other clubs and activities are very well supported by pupils and students throughout the year.
40. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. There is a range of provision from small group specialist teaching for pupils with literacy difficulties, to specific help with spelling, reading and homework and additional support in class. Good contact is maintained with specialist agencies. There is very good provision for the small number of younger pupils who experience basic literacy and numeracy barriers to their learning. Some are withdrawn in small groups for short intensive independent learning programmes, others are offered early morning booster reading sessions or paired reading sessions with Year 11 pupils in tutorial time.

41. The school does not keep a register of pupils who are identified as gifted and talented and there is no member of staff assigned to co-ordinate the provision for them. However, some departments, notably music, physical education, science and art and design, have identified those with gifts or talents in their department, and are able to challenge and stretch them effectively, to ensure that they achieve to the level of their potential.
42. Overall, staffing is good throughout the school. There are sufficient numbers of teachers and they have a range of expertise that covers the curriculum. The match of support staff to the curriculum is good. Class sizes vary from very small numbers in the sixth form to large numbers in some main school top sets. However, the large size in these classes does not hold back the pupils' progress. There are no difficulties recruiting staff.
43. Overall resources for learning are satisfactory and match the requirements of the curriculum in most subjects. In geography, ICT, design technology and religious education resources are good and include good access to computers to extend and support learning. In other subjects resources are satisfactory. Access to ICT is inadequate in modern languages, music, business education and English. In business education resources are unsatisfactory overall, in addition to the problems with ICT, and text books are out-dated.
44. Accommodation is satisfactory. The main building and some of the temporary classrooms are in need of refurbishment, but overall accommodation meets requirements to deliver the curriculum.
45. Lack of funding has restricted major improvements to the accommodation although areas identified as a key issue in the last inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed. Where teaching rooms are grouped together such as in science, religious education, design technology and ICT, they offer good facilities for learning. In some subjects rooms are very small for class sizes or they are spread across the school, restricting departmental activities. The proposed sale of land has identified areas of accommodation that will benefit, including the sixth form and sporting facilities.

Sixth form

46. Curricular provision in the sixth form is good. Opportunities to study a wide range of AS and A-level courses are greatly broadened by the close links the school has with a nearby partner institution. Provision in modern languages is particularly strong with many opportunities for extending learning, including work placements abroad. A good range of opportunities is also available in mathematics, technology, history, art and design and physical education. Provision is made for religious education and this complies with statutory requirements. Very good enrichment opportunities extend students' learning; for example, the one year general studies programme in Year 12 and timetabled physical education provision in both Years 12 and 13. In addition, there are many extra-curricular opportunities both in the United Kingdom and abroad. Careers advice, guidance and support for students' further education or work are very good.
47. Vocational provision in the sixth form is limited and there are no advanced courses. A small group of lower attaining students follow an applied GCSE business studies course while developing their ICT skills and retaking English and mathematics at GCSE. Some of the students have special educational needs and they benefit from the quality of support available.
48. Overall resources for learning are satisfactory and match the requirements of the curriculum. Resources are good in design and technology, geography, ICT and religious education. The sixth form accommodation is unsatisfactory with insufficient social and self-study space. Insufficient rooms for the numbers of students involved present a barrier to expansion.

Care, guidance and support

There are satisfactory arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety. However, support advice and guidance based on monitoring is unsatisfactory. Pupils' involvement in the school's work and development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is not enough liaison between the pastoral and academic departments to ensure good support and guidance for pupils.
- Pupils receive good careers guidance as they move through the school to enable them to make well-informed choices.
- Sixth form students value the good rapport established with their teachers, and receive clear support and guidance to assist them with their university applications.
- Students and pupils are not actively consulted enough about the development of their school.

Commentary

49. Pupils have generally positive views about the school and the care, support and guidance they receive. The induction processes to the school and support for new pupils are very well structured and developed, enabling them to settle into school quickly. This level of care is continued with information readily available to help pupils make important decisions as they progress through the school. Support for pupils' academic and personal development, however, is compromised by the lack of communication between the pastoral and academic departments. Form tutors are not being informed of pupils' targets from the different departments. This means that until the end-of-term reports there is no mechanism to provide form tutors with an overview of pupils' progress to enable them to monitor and support them more effectively. This was raised as an issue in the previous inspection report and still has not been addressed. Despite significant time restrictions, the pastoral system delivered through form tutors, heads of year and the year offices provides a sense of stability and ensures pupils have members of staff they can turn to if needed.
50. Specialist advice and additional support are provided through learning mentors and a counsellor, but this is limited to targeted individuals who are referred on for extra support. This supports those who are having personal difficulties or may be falling behind by helping to raise their confidence and self-esteem. Where individual targets are set in subjects and shared with pupils, this is helping them to be aware of how they are doing. However, in the pre-inspection questionnaire over twenty-five per cent of pupils felt that their work was not assessed sufficiently to enable them to improve. Careers advice is well structured and pupils take advantage of the resources in the careers library and support from the Connexions advisers. This prepares pupils very well for further stages of education or work. Pupils appreciate the quality of this provision. Year 11 pupils go on work placement for one week and this is well planned though not all participate. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. Health and safety procedures are securely in place with risk assessments regularly undertaken. The governors take their responsibilities for health and safety issues conscientiously.
51. Fifty per cent of pupils like the school and think it treats them fairly and with respect, and most feel that there is an adult that knows them whom they can go to if they have a problem. Sixty-four per cent of pupils feel they are consulted and that the school is interested in their views. The year and school council representatives meet periodically to discuss day-to-day issues.

Sixth form

52. Students receive satisfactory support and guidance in the sixth form. Students are happy at school and generally have positive views about provision. Those joining from other schools, especially the girls, feel the teachers and other students make them very welcome. Students

are very satisfied with the courses on offer, both in school as well as the alternative study facilities available at Hayesfield School. They spoke about the way they are helped and encouraged to work and study independently, yet teachers are always there if they have a problem or encounter difficulties with their work. They value the good rapport established with their teachers and feel they are regularly consulted and listened to. The school works hard to ensure that a high proportion of its Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form. Retention rates on courses are good with most students completing the courses that they started.

53. Students applying for university receive intensive help with their applications. However, forty-one per cent of students feel that they are not given well-informed advice from school or careers advisers on what they should do after they leave school. The team judged that students are encouraged to be independent and make use of the plentiful advice available. The school has an adviser for higher education issues, a comprehensive library with information relating to universities and gap year projects. There are also opportunities for those not pursuing further study to see a Connexions adviser before they make their final decisions.
54. Sixty per cent of students feel that their opinions are welcomed and that their views are valued. The head boy and girl have been consulted about such matters as the distribution of funds raised by parents and invited to meet the governors. However, overall, students are not empowered or given a substantive voice by involving them in significant decision-making processes of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnerships with parents and partner institutions are good. The links forged with both the local and wider community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school continues to receive the assistance of a strong, supportive parent body.
- Community links both in this country and abroad are very good.
- The good links with partner institutions helps to provide additional facilities to promote pupils' educational progress and facilitate wider curriculum opportunities.
- Good links with universities enables a smooth transition to higher education.
- The reports to parents provide a statement of progress but are not seen to be very helpful.

Commentary

55. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction about the work of the school. They feel it provides a very good education for pupils and they find the staff very approachable. The parents' positive views about the school are reflected in the fact that they are eager for their children to attend and it is over-subscribed. The school's close liaison with parents provides many opportunities for them to support and become involved in their son's education. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning and their levels of achievement. Good home/school links are maintained with the tutorial staff, and parents are contacted both when there are problems and if their child has done well. Parents are regularly advised about the progress of their child through consultation and review meetings, and regular progress reports are circulated. The annual reports to parents are satisfactory. They provide a brief picture of what has been covered and the pupils' current situation, but do not indicate targets for the coming year. However, some teachers are sharing this information with parents at the consultation meetings.
56. Parents are very supportive of the school. Meetings and events are well attended and there is a thriving parent teacher association, which runs a number of social and fund-raising events each year to provide resources for the extra-curricular activities. Parents are pleased that their views are valued and that they have been consulted on issues such as the proposed sale of land or the refurbishment of some accommodation in the school.

57. Links with the local community are very good. Local businesses provide valuable support for the school as part of the careers programme, through involvement in the 'industry day' or by offering work placement opportunities. The school has good links with local universities and the feeder primary schools as well as sporting links with other secondary schools. Effective links fostered with Bath College has enabled an alternative vocational curriculum possibility for a small number of older boys. Good links with schools in Ghana and Morocco have given those pupils who are fortunate enough to visit valuable experiences of the wider world community.

Sixth form

58. The school continues to foster good partnerships with parents and the local community. Parents are very happy with the sixth form provision for students. They value the regularity of communication with staff and the fact that they are kept suitably informed if there are any problems or concerns.

59. There are strong links with Bath Chamber of Commerce. Sixth-formers gain experience of the business community by attending their bi-monthly lunches. The good links established with Hayesfield School have expanded curriculum possibilities and enabled pupils to pursue additional courses that are not available at Beecham Cliff School. There are well-established programmes of visits and links with universities that help pupils identify and progress onto the next step in their career development and facilitate students' smooth transition to higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership is satisfactory and management is unsatisfactory. The work of the governors is good. However, governance overall is unsatisfactory because of non-compliance with a number of statutory requirements. These are: curriculum provision for ICT, religious education and citizenship; a lack of provision of a daily act of collective worship; and omissions from the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is a highly visible leader and has built a strong senior team, but its effectiveness is undermined by weaknesses in management.
- Teamwork across departments and year groups is well developed across the school, based on good relationships among staff and with pupils.
- The school's contribution to initial teacher training through its initial teacher training partnership is effective.
- Arrangements for school improvement planning are unsatisfactory, as are the school's procedures for self-evaluation.
- Statutory requirements are not met in a number of areas including curricular provision.

Commentary

60. The leadership of the headteacher is charismatic and he is a powerful and effective advocate for the school. However, insufficient attention has been given to strategic matters. The headteacher has drawn together a strong and committed senior team with the potential to take the school forward. However, the senior team does not work effectively because it is hampered by insufficient time to undertake a strategic role, and, on the management side, insufficient delegation of responsibilities to enable team members to develop their knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently.

61. The school has made an effective commitment to educational inclusion by adopting a thoughtful, intelligent and caring approach, in which pupils' personal circumstances are

respected. Planning for inclusion is good and the school has developed effective links with external agencies, for example, the local further education college, to ensure that individual pupils are well supported and integrated whatever their needs. The role of heads of year is very clear and they manage their work effectively.

62. Leadership is effective in most subjects with significant strengths in modern foreign languages, science, design and technology, and art and design. However, there is no appointed leader for citizenship or business education. Leadership of special educational needs in the school is very good and the special educational needs co-ordinator has worked hard to improve provision since her appointment. A strong sense of purpose, along with energy and enthusiasm, has ensured the building of an effective team of committed teachers and teaching assistants.
63. The quality of management across the school is inconsistent. Systematic procedures for the monitoring and review of all aspects of the school's work are unsatisfactory and not yet embedded in practice. Performance management has been introduced effectively, but links with the school's procedures for development planning and professional development lack clarity. Departmental self-reviews are inconsistent across subjects. There are, however, examples of very good practice, for example in science, where self-review is carried out with rigour and action is taken when underperformance is identified. The use of assessment data by heads of department to review the work of their teams and where appropriate make changes to the curriculum is variable. Department management is very good in modern foreign languages and science, good in design and technology, ICT, art and design, and religious education. Management systems for special educational needs are clear. Management is unsatisfactory in business education and citizenship, but this is not at the moment affecting the quality of teaching in the former.
64. The management of the curriculum by the senior team is unsatisfactory. Overall, the curriculum is supported by good staffing provision, which ensures a high degree of specialist teaching across subjects but there is insufficient flexibility in the use of staffing to meet the growing demands of the curriculum. For example, arrangements for the leadership and management of business education and citizenship are poor. However, the school makes good use of additional funding from its specialist technology status to provide enhanced curriculum opportunities and raise standards.
65. That teaching remains good is due in part to the quality of individuals, but the lack of whole school systems means that the school cannot ensure it. The role of heads of year is very clear and they manage their work effectively. Procedures for monitoring the pupils' academic performance coupled with their personal development are underdeveloped. The use of assessment data by heads of department to review the work of their teams and where appropriate make changes to the curriculum is variable.
66. The process for school development planning is unsatisfactory. Whole school priorities for improvement, converting strategic decisions into action, are not evident and there is no clear evidence of department and aspect planning linking to whole school needs. Each department prepares an annual management plan for the area of their responsibility. The plans are inconsistent and do not represent a common framework reflecting a careful analysis of need. In some subjects, areas identified for development were completed some time ago. Overall, the improvement planning process is not clearly focused and does not provide a sufficiently rigorous framework for improving standards.
67. The school manages its roles as a technology college effectively and the impact of specialist status has improved learning opportunities for pupils and students within the school and across partner schools. In addition, becoming a technology college has acted as a catalyst for higher quality provision across the curriculum. The school is in its final year of Beacon Status and this year resources have been used to influence initial teacher training and disseminate good practice to other schools.

68. Governors are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. Their involvement in strategic planning and monitoring is developing but needs to be informed by sufficient knowledge of school performance and the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The committee structure is well conceived and provides a good framework for carrying out the work of the governing body. Several governors visit the school regularly and their contributions are effective. Governors' management of school finances is very good and good use is made of financial data to make informed judgements and decisions. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and his staff, but they need to develop the balance of support and challenge more robustly. A number of statutory requirements are not met: provision for ICT in Years 7 to 11, citizenship in Years 7 to 11, religious education in Years 10 and 11, and information requirements for the school prospectus and the annual report for parents. Arrangements for collective worship are not fully met, because the accommodation does not allow the school pupils to meet together in one place. Smaller acts of corporate worship are held, but not for every pupil every day.
69. The financial affairs of the school are managed and controlled very well. An experienced finance officer has an assured grasp of financial procedures and budget planning. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. The school has an appropriate financial surplus. Principles of best value are applied effectively and resources are well targeted. Departments are informed of their financial situation on a monthly basis. Funding for the sixth form is identified but there is no separate cost centre arrangement to handle the financial accounts of this provision. Governors are kept fully informed of the financial situation of the school.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,737,734
Total expenditure	2,721,643
Expenditure per pupil	3,516

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	53,299
Balance carried forward to the next	69,391

Sixth form

70. Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. There is a clear, inclusive rationale for the sixth form curriculum. Although a number of courses run with small numbers of students, which means that the sixth form provision is only just cost effective, the educational rationale is clear. The school offers a wide range of courses and adopts a flexible response to the needs of individual students. The joint provision with a neighbouring girls' school is a highly successful innovation which enables students from both institutions to benefit from greater flexibility in choosing combinations of courses for study. Governors are involved in the overall educational direction of the sixth form. The sixth form is well placed to sustain and build on its successes.
71. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory overall and is the responsibility of the head of sixth form, who brings a committed approach to his role. Provision is carefully matched to demand. Performance data is used to set targets and monitor students' progress but arrangements are underdeveloped. As in the main school, the monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching need to be more robust and include appropriate opportunities for teachers to share best practice. Arrangements for the management of business education are poor.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a gradual improvement in standards for Year 11 because of good teaching and focused planning.
- Standards are well above average in Years 10 and 11 and above average in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching and learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11 result in good achievement.
- Higher and lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve as well as they should because work is not always matched to their needs.
- Pupils do not have enough access to ICT and therefore opportunities to improve writing are reduced.
- Assessment is inconsistent and pupils are not sure how to improve.

Commentary

72. On entry to the school, the standard of pupils' work is above average. Results in Year 9 national tests in 2003 were above average and GCSE results were well above average. GCSE results in English literature were well above average. The trend over the last three years has been one of gradual improvement for Year 11. Standards of work seen confirmed these standards. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, achievement is good because teaching and planning concentrate on their interests and learning needs. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily overall. Middle attaining pupils achieve the best because lower and higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and not monitored rigorously. These pupils make insufficient progress in Year 9 because of work that is not matched closely enough to their needs. Achievement is good for Year 11 pupils because they are well taught and work is appropriately matched to their needs.
73. Pupils speak confidently and enthusiastically to each other and relish the opportunity to discuss work. Some pupils are less confident when speaking to the class. Listening skills are well developed and pupils generally pay careful attention to the speaker. All pupils can read texts accurately, and most explore deeper levels of meaning. Writing standards are slightly lower than those in reading, and a minority of pupils has weaknesses in accuracy and organisation. By Year 11, pupils analyse text and make sophisticated inferences, particularly in literature. The spelling of lower attaining pupils is weak.
74. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from very good to unsatisfactory and is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is balanced, thought out and adapted to pupils' needs in the majority of lessons. The good and very good lessons are characterised by enthusiasm, variety and pupil involvement. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, the pupils were enthused and challenged by work on war poetry to write and speak evocatively. Similarly, in Year 9, challenging, enthusiastic and focused teaching on Henry V led to good learning. In contrast, work that was not matched to pupils' needs and weaknesses in classroom management led to unsatisfactory teaching and learning. However, lesson planning in Years 7 to 9 is beginning to incorporate strategies for individual pupils so that their needs may be met.
75. While the work of the majority of pupils is marked in good detail, some marking consists of over-enthusiastic praise, with no guidance on how to improve. Partly as a result of this, a minority of pupils think they are doing much better than they are. Homework is set consistently

and extends learning. In some lessons, teachers make effective use of ICT, but this is not consistent because access is limited. Consequently, opportunities to improve writing are missed. Accommodation is cramped, reduces group work and is unattractive, which does not create a good environment for learning.

76. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory overall. Steps to improve achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9 have been helped this year by more systematic planning and targeting of individual pupils. Two different whole school targets for attainment by the end of Year 9 in 2003 caused confusion. The head of department has prioritised end of Year 9 achievement and, with senior management support, indications are that strategies to improve achievement will start to take effect. Assessment and improved accommodation are priorities for the department. New schemes of work and teaching and learning initiatives are also beginning to take effect. There is good co-operation between teachers and a commitment to improve. There is a lack of resources in ICT and this hampers the department's desire to improve writing.
77. Improvement since the last inspection is variable. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have been maintained and achievement, teaching and learning have improved in Years 10 and 11. However, achievement is lower for Year 9 pupils, ICT is still insufficient for pupils' needs and assessment and group work is still a concern. Overall improvement is satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

78. Pupils' literacy skills are above average. Over time, pupils achieve satisfactorily because writing skills were lower than those in reading and speaking and listening when they entered the school. An emphasis on improving literacy is a feature of the learning in most subjects but is not consistent. Management of improving basic skills has not been a major priority and the school is now committed to raising awareness in order to improve standards. The catch-up programme for pupils at Level 3 in English when they enter the school raises the standards of pupils quickly and effectively. When subjects take the teaching of basic literacy skills seriously so do the pupils. Through the use of writing frames, glossaries and study aids, pupils gradually make improvements to their spelling, reading and writing skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
79. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary. In modern foreign languages, science, English and art and design pupils use technical language to good effect. Standards in essay writing are good in English and writing skills are developed well for pupils with special educational needs. Monitoring is inconsistent and so some departments are not aware of how pupils are performing. The library supports all subjects by stocking specialised texts and multi-media materials. The English department has dictionaries available in each classroom; key words are displayed prominently in most subject classrooms to familiarise pupils with specialist vocabulary. The provision of dictionaries in all subjects would further enhance learning. Carefully controlled Internet access allows pupils to research topics in detail but access is limited.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, standards are well above average and improving.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good and enable pupils to achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good and teachers work together as a very effective team.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning, and behaviour is good.
- Assessment procedures are good but assessment information is not always used effectively to plan for the progress of groups of differing ability in lessons in Years 7 to 9.

- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills outside lessons.
- The use of ICT to support and extend learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

80. Standards attained by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average and pupils' achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good. Speaking, writing and listening are well developed. Pupils are confident in expressing their ideas in writing, participating in dialogues, and in responding to questioning and instructions given in the language they are learning. They are less confident in responding spontaneously and in using the languages to find out information for themselves. Pupils have a very good understanding of grammar rules and apply them successfully. All pupils display a good range of language and structures in all four languages. Higher and average attaining pupils write at length and are able to manipulate the languages to describe events in the past, present and future and express their opinions. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs adapt set phrases successfully to communicate in speech and writing and write short accounts mainly in the present tense. They are less confident in speaking and depend upon guidance and written notes to express ideas. Higher attaining pupils rapidly increase their range of language in Years 10 and 11 and compare and contrast ideas and opinions successfully using a variety of devices in their writing. This represents very good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. In Italian, standards achieved in Year 9 are above average. In lessons pupils make satisfactory progress but this has been slowed because of staffing difficulties in the past.
81. In 2003 the proportion of candidates achieving A*-C grades in GCSE examinations was above average in French, well above average in German and very high in Spanish. The proportion of pupils entered for languages examinations was high compared to national figures. In German all candidates achieved E grades and above and in Spanish all achieved D grades and above. Pupils do better in Spanish than they do in other subjects and in French and German they do broadly as well as they do in other subjects. There has been a significant improvement in standards achieved in German and Spanish and an improving trend in French since the last report. In teacher assessments in 2003, standards were well above average.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have an excellent command of the languages they teach and usually use the language being learned extensively and very effectively in lessons. Pupils have the benefit of excellent role models and as a result their listening and speaking skills are very well developed. Teachers often use very effective checking strategies to ensure all pupils have understood more complex language and higher attaining pupils are effectively challenged to interpret for others. Activities are well planned and sequenced, enabling pupils to build effectively on what has gone before. Presentations are clear so that pupils rapidly understand and use new language themselves and increase in confidence in doing so when given the opportunity to practise informally. They make the best progress when given the opportunity to use the language to find out and give information. When teacher-led activities dominate however, such opportunities decrease and pupils lose concentration. Pupils display enjoyment in games and songs and consolidate learning very effectively during these activities, for example, in a Year 7 French lesson pupils were confident in talking about their school day as a result of participating in a song and because of very effective questioning which enabled them to respond in detail. In Years 10 and 11, teachers make very good use of assessment to involve pupils in self-evaluation and guide them in how to improve, for example in German and Spanish, pupils use their knowledge of examination requirements to examine oral presentations effectively, increase their range of language and improve their writing. However this is as yet not developed in Years 7 to 9. In a Year 10 German lesson, ICT was used very effectively to enable pupils to access appropriate support and to work through reading and writing activities at their own pace and at an appropriate level, although, as yet, this is not fully developed across the department. Marking is regular but does not always give adequate guidance about how to improve.
83. Leadership of the subjects is very good. The head of department has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate action has been taken to improve standards and

develop teaching and learning strategies. The head of department's style of management has resulted in a very effective team with a regular exchange of ideas and a high level of consistency. The department provides very good opportunities for language learning and excellent opportunities for pupils to extend their learning outside the classroom. Improvement since the last inspection is very good; there has been a significant improvement in standards as well as in the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures have been developed and the use of assessment improved in Years 10 and 11. The development of the use of ICT to extend and support learning has been hampered because teachers have yet to receive training in this.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management of mathematics is good.
- Standards are well above national averages.
- There has been considerable improvement in the use of ICT in developing mathematical learning.
- There are good relationships between pupils and teachers, leading to good attitudes to learning.
- There is a need to introduce more differentiation of work, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and to use more varied teaching styles.
- Further development of pupil tracking is required to monitor pupils' progress effectively.

Commentary

84. Results and standards of work seen in Year 9 are well above average. In 2003 the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above and the percentage reaching Level 6 or above were both well above national averages. The trend in the average point score for tests at the end of Year 9 has also been well above national figures for the last four years. Value added data that measures the progress pupils have made from Year 7 to Year 9 indicates a slightly better than average rate of progress when compared to similar schools. The work seen in lessons and in pupils' books in Years 7 to 9 across a wide range of ability indicates satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9.
85. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 are well above national averages and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In 2003 the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to C was 14 points above the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A* and A was also above national figures. There has been a slight downward trend in the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the last four years and not enough is being done to halt it. The two top sets in Year 10 are entered early for Statistics GCSE and achieve very good results that are well above average. In 2003, 95 per cent of pupils entered for Statistics GCSE achieved A*-C grades.
86. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is good and most are very keen to make progress and develop their skills in mathematics. In Years 7 to 9, many pupils are developing good skills in algebra, handling data and calculating areas of compound shapes. Lower attaining pupils are consolidating their number work and using algebra to solve simpler equations.
87. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and are able communicate enthusiasm for their subject. Lesson planning is good but does not always take account of the full range of ability within classes. There are occasions, particularly in Year 7 to Year 9, when pupils are given work that is too easy and does not extend their learning as much as it could. Teaching approaches are mainly traditional and rely too much on teacher exposition. Pupils would benefit

from and enjoy more opportunities for practical and investigative work within lessons. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection and a number of lessons were seen in which pupils were confidently using spreadsheets to develop their understanding of graphs and statistical functions.

88. The quality of leadership and management of the department is good. The recently established team is committed to ensuring that standards are maintained and that the downward trend in the GCSE results is quickly halted and reversed. The head of department is developing an effective team where all members are valued, supported, and are clear about their responsibilities. All pupils are assessed every half term and their results monitored; and the department is working on improving its pupil tracking systems so that the progress of all pupils is monitored carefully against their entry levels to the school. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. However, standards in Years 10 and 11 have declined.

Mathematics across the curriculum

89. Pupils' competence in using mathematics in other subjects is good overall. Pupils are able to use their mathematical skills to draw pie charts, use and read a range of graphs and calculate, for example, population density in geography. In science they are confident in using numerical techniques and algebra to calculate quantities and solve related problems. Where mathematical competencies are needed in other subjects, pupils have good skills to be able to undertake such work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching is good across the department and leads to good learning.
- Lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not achieve as well as they should.
- Use of ICT as a teaching tool is underdeveloped.

Commentary

90. In work seen, pupils reach well above average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. Their achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, Year 9 test results were well above average and contributed to an improving trend. Results in GCSE examinations are well above average. Analysis of the school's data shows that whilst the average and the higher attaining pupils make significant gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding, the lower attaining pupils do not progress as much as they should. This is partly due to variation in the quality of teaching and also the lack of motivation that the present course provides. In this respect, the department plans to introduce a course for the next academic year that is more appealing to these pupils. Average point scores over recent years indicate an upward trend in pupils' performance. The department's own analysis by subject indicates that below average attaining pupils do not do as well in chemistry modules as they do in biology and physics modules.
91. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, with many very good features. Teachers have strengths in most aspects of teaching. In a very well taught Year 9 lesson for lower attaining pupils, very effective use of a variety of methods led to good gains in knowledge and understanding of sedimentary rocks. A lower attaining Year 11 group achieved well in developing understanding of critical angles and total internal reflection. They understood how this knowledge has been applied for making endoscopes and in telecommunications. The good

teaching is characterised by productive structure and pace, very effective demonstration, use of illustration, enthusiastic discussion and very good assessment. Learning is less effective when activities do not match pupils' needs and available information is not used effectively for planning. Occasionally, weak classroom management and unchallenging tasks lead to less successful learning. In one lesson, very effective use of a data projector and high expectations combined with enthusiasm enhanced pupils' understanding of how an electric motor works. However, the use of ICT as a teaching tool, especially to help pupils understand complex mechanisms, is not developed enough for the teaching of science. Support for the very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language is satisfactory. Support for pupils who have special educational needs is good and they usually make good progress.

92. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has introduced several significant changes including effective monitoring of teaching and learning, rigorous application of assessment procedures, target setting, tracking and reviewing. All these are having a positive impact on achievement, for example, performance of Year 9 pupils has improved from 2.7 points above the national average in 2001 to 5 points above the national average in 2003. The introduction of modular science in Year 10 and 11 has improved pupils' average point scores from 4.09 in 2001 to 5.04 in 2003. Use of value added data is not as well developed as other aspects of assessment. There is thorough understanding of what needs to be done to improve further, for example, the introduction of applied science for the lower attaining pupils. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in specialist ICT lessons are good.
- The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and pupils gain insufficient experience.
- The school does not ensure that progress of all pupils in ICT is reported to parents.
- The overall achievement of pupils is unsatisfactory and the profile of the subject in the school needs to be raised.
- Good resources and accommodation provide good conditions for learning.
- Pupils show very good attitudes to the subject.

Commentary

93. This is an improving department, but provision and achievement are not yet satisfactory because many of the areas for improvement require major curriculum and timetable changes to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills in ICT. There are too few opportunities for pupils to consolidate and apply their ICT skills in other subjects. In Year 8, pupils cover only a small percentage of the national strategy for ICT as a result of the limited number of lessons they have. Year 9 pupils and those in Years 10 and 11 who are not doing ICT at examination level make insufficient progress in developing skills in ICT.
94. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with above average standards in ICT and maintain this level in the specialist ICT lessons they have in the school. However, in Year 8 their lesson time is reduced and as a result, they do not cover sufficient work, leading to below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement. Year 9 pupils do not have timetabled specialist ICT lessons and do not gain sufficient opportunities to develop their ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum. This results in unsatisfactory achievement. It leaves important gaps in pupils' knowledge, for example, pupils in Year 9 do not gain sufficient experience of applying formulae when using spreadsheets. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 developed basic skills in desktop publishing,

computer-aided design and control technology, and using specialist software to present information to an audience. They used digital cameras and scanners as well as the Internet to research information. Spreadsheets and databases are used successfully, but the depth and breadth of pupils' knowledge of these is much more limited than in most schools.

95. Results in GNVQ examinations are below average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils increase their range of skills and depth of knowledge rapidly and are now working more closely to the examination marking criteria to complete their coursework. However, the number of lessons timetabled for the GNVQ intermediate course is below the average seen nationally and this results in below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement. During the inspection, only very limited evidence of core provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 was available to enable judgements on pupils' standards and achievement to be made.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, within the ICT lessons that do take place. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and provide a good range of planned tasks to actively involve pupils in their learning. Assessment at the end of Year 9 is carried out by non-specialist teachers. The overall results are unreliable because there is not enough emphasis on assessing the ICT elements of the work. The ICT department has started to extend opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and teachers see this as an area for further development. In Years 10 and 11, the work is structured well to enable pupils to follow the guidelines of the examination mark scheme. This enables pupils to gain better marks for each section of the work. Teachers encourage co-operation in lessons and this leads to very good relationships and attitudes.
97. The leadership and management of the department overall are satisfactory. There is good management within the specialist ICT department. However, the school's arrangements for ICT fail to provide sufficient learning opportunities for pupils to maintain the high standards they have when they enter the school. The progress of pupils who do not do ICT as an examination subject is not reported to parents. The head of department has worked well to improve the standard of planning within the department and the school has invested well to increase the level of computer resources. The ratio of pupils to computers is now closer to the national average. Additional funding committed by the school to purchase further laptop computers means the school is on course to meet the national target. The ICT technician provides very good support and makes a very positive contribution in providing an efficient network system. Specialist teachers work as a team and are committed to improving the overall provision and raising standards in ICT. The improved accommodation and resources are having a good impact on learning. However, systems for marking, assessment and target setting are underdeveloped and the department is now focusing on improving this area of its work. There is a clear vision for improvement in the department and there has been a significant increase in the quality of resources and planning. However, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because of the lack of coverage of the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. Overall, the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is considerable variation of use in other subjects, although there are positive developments in some areas. Very good use of ICT was seen in modern foreign languages and design and technology. Good use of ICT is made in science, religious education, business studies and special educational needs. Unsatisfactory use of ICT remains in music, history, mathematics, English and physical education. In subjects where the application of ICT is good or very good, pupils use computers well to research information, and use desktop publishing and specialist presentation software. In addition, they use sensors to record data and process information using spreadsheets to produce graphs and charts in their science lessons. Pupils gain very good experience of the more specialist skills of control technology, and computer-aided design and manufacturing in design and technology. The school now needs to secure the application of ICT in the subjects where there is unsatisfactory use in order to meet statutory requirements.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Fieldwork provision and the planning for pupils' independent learning are very good.
- Pupils exercise good responsibility in measuring and recording weather station data which is widely used within the community.
- Marking and assessment procedures are good but pupils' progress is not measured objectively against attainment levels.
- ICT provision is inadequate for the teaching of geographical skills.

Commentary

99. On entry to the school, pupils have above average attainment although their knowledge of geographical skills is variable. In work seen, students attain above average standards at the end of Year 9 and well above average standards at the end of Year 11. Their achievement in relation to their attainment on entry is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Results in GCSE examinations are well above average. By the end of Year 9, map, graph and diagram skills vary from very good to satisfactory but for lower ability pupils, literacy needs to improve. All pupils have good numeracy skills but written analysis is less good for lower attaining pupils. By the end of Year 11 higher ability pupils write very good essays and coursework is of a high quality with cross-referenced explanations, excellent graph analysis and detailed conclusions. Lower attainers use fewer graph skills, data is presented but analyses and conclusions are brief. There are too few opportunities for the use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.
100. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory overall. Most lessons are well planned and classroom management varies from satisfactory to good. In the best lessons activities are varied and resources well used. As a result lesson pace is maintained and pupils are stimulated to learn. In a very good Year 10 lesson on development, pupils read out definitions, discussed them in pairs and then responded very well to a teacher-led discussion with very good oral responses. A video clip stimulated more understanding and finally very good detailed written work was produced by the pupils. In satisfactory lessons, teacher explanations may be too long, pupils' responses too brief and some pupils lose concentration because they are not sufficiently stimulated. Lower attaining pupils do not always complete their work and need to have a clearer understanding of what is expected from them. Marking is good and supports pupils' learning.
101. Leadership is good and has promoted a commitment to high standards from all the teachers. Overall, management is satisfactory. Planning is good, for example through provision of opportunities for independent learning through enquiry and fieldwork, and provision for evaluation, but more rigour is needed in the monitoring of teaching and some teaching procedures. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching is now satisfactory instead of mostly good. However, development planning now includes provision for evaluation.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average by Year 11 as a result of good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- The head of department provides clear vision and direction for development.
- A comprehensive assessment strategy is not yet fully in place and pupils are not fully informed of their progress.
- There are too few opportunities to use ICT.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards their learning.

Commentary

102. Standards are above average by Year 9 and well above average by Year 11. Standards improve as pupils move through the school. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average and the pupils achieved higher than their target grades. This was a marked improvement on previous years.
103. By Year 9 pupils develop a sound range of historical skills including the understanding of chronology and the significance of primary and secondary sources. The interpretation of contemporary cartoons and the use of artefacts are strengths in the department. By Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the impact and success of the American policy of containment in the 1960s. Most pupils have good oral skills which are developed through effective question and answer activities; however, some are less strong in developing their written ideas. Currently there are few opportunities in lessons to use ICT, and this has the effect of slowing the development of pupils' independent research and investigative skills.
104. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of learning follows the same pattern. There is a wide range from unsatisfactory, in one lesson, to very good. In the most effective lessons there is very good teacher knowledge and enthusiasm that is shared with the pupils. Much of the learning is group and activity centred with challenging pace and highly effective contributions from the teachers. In these lessons, the majority taught in the department, pupils are enthusiastic and have positive attitudes to their learning and as a result achieve well. In less successful lessons there is evidence of weak planning, teacher dominated discussions, mundane learning activities with limited intellectual challenge with many pupils passive and unenthusiastic. At present the opportunities for the sharing of the good practice are limited and there is currently no planned programme for the regular monitoring of teaching and learning. Homework is set regularly, however not all teachers in the department follow the agreed mark scheme. Some pupils are not given clear enough guidance and support for improving their work and many do not make the link between their marks and the new skills needed to improve their learning.
105. Overall, leadership is good. The head of department provides clear vision and direction to the department and has introduced some important developments. These include an emphasis on developing extended writing in Years 8 and 9 which has begun to strengthen and widen learning strategies. Management is satisfactory. The department development plan carefully reflects the current school aims, however overall it does not provide a clear pathway for further improvement. Records are maintained carefully but there is limited analysis and evaluation. Departmental meetings are held regularly but are not minuted. Assessment is improving but is not yet effective in providing strong support and guidance to all pupils. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Achievement has improved, especially in Years 10 and 11, but the teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 have not yet improved substantially.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is good and contributes well to pupils' achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good and this ensures that pupils are provided with a rich curriculum in the time allocated to the subject.
- Not enough curriculum time is given in Years 10 and 11 for the general course in order to provide worthwhile study and fulfil statutory requirements.

Commentary

106. The small amount of time given to the general course prevents the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 engaging in worthwhile study. The requirements of the local education authority agreed syllabus are not met. However, provision in Years 7 to 9 and in the examination courses in Years 10 and 11 is good.
107. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well above average in relation to the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Achievement is good, and there are many very good examples of pupils developing well their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. They are able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences, for example, in one lesson pupils were enthusiastic in exploring images in Buddhist teaching and reflecting on their own feelings and attitudes. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work enable pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. Pupils' spiritual and moral awareness is very strong. They demonstrate a deep respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other.
108. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average with 75 per cent of pupils achieving A*-C grades. For pupils following the GCSE course, standards in Years 10 and 11 in the work seen are also well above average. Pupils' achievement is good and they progress well in extending their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. Their skills of investigation and interpretation are very well developed. During the inspection, only very limited evidence of core provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 was available to enable judgements on pupils' standards and achievement to be made.
109. Teaching and learning are good. The teacher's use of discussion and questioning enables pupils to express their opinions and form clear judgments about religious and moral issues. The teachers' very good knowledge of the subject enables pupils to make very good progress in the GCSE course. Homework is well used to allow pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, and these are very effective in contributing to good pupil achievement. The assessment procedures provide a clear basis for assessing what pupils know and understand and pupils are clear from the detailed comments in their books about what they need to do to improve.
110. Curriculum leadership is good, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She has been very successful in developing a strong team approach, and is very well supported by two other teachers, one of whom is a specialist. The monitoring of the work of teachers and pupils is well developed. The subject is managed well and this is reflected in the quality of religious education provided for the pupils.
111. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained, as has the quality of teaching and learning. These have had a good impact on pupils' achievement and progress. However, the lack of curriculum time for most pupils in Years 10 and 11 has still not been properly addressed and, as a result, improvement has been unsatisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good and supports pupils well in their learning.
- Accommodation is organised well to support teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management of the department are effective.
- ICT is used well for both designing and making in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient opportunities for designing.

Commentary

112. In teacher assessments, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national averages for design and technology. In lessons seen during the inspection and through the scrutiny of pupils' work, standards for the current Years 7 to 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils gain a good breadth of experience using a wide range of practical skills and materials but there is less emphasis on aspects relating to design based activities. The level of technological challenge is good.
113. GCSE results in 2003 for food and graphics were well above the national averages. For systems and control the results were similar to national averages but for resistant materials they were below average. In the majority of lessons, the standards of work are above average and achievement is good because of the pace and challenge set by teachers. By Year 11 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of materials, research and design development. Folios are good and generally of a high standard. The very good use of computer-aided design and manufacture is raising standards.
114. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan lessons very well. Where lessons are good or better teachers have a good rapport with pupils, share lesson objectives and set high expectations for the completion of work. Very good lessons are demanding and challenging. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are well motivated. Homework is used well to reinforce and support learning. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are known to teachers and they ensure progress is made in their learning.
115. The leadership of the department is very good with a clear ethos and high expectations of work and behaviour. The management of the department is good and there are well-planned schemes of work and policies in place. The head of department monitors teaching and some good practice is shared across the department to raise standards. A common assessment system is becoming established well in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11; it is thorough and provides good information to pupils on their progress and actions for improvement. The department has identified key development issues to raise standards. In Year 9, an annual two-day industry event extends the experience and learning of pupils to gain a first hand understanding of the world of work.
116. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection. The National Curriculum is now being covered in Years 7 to 9, although there is still a weakness in covering aspects of design. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 11. Accommodation is now good. Management is good and this has had an impact on planning and organisation, although roles and job descriptions within the department are still unclear.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

The provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 lead to very good achievement.
- Examination results are significantly above national averages.
- Pupils respond to the high expectations that teachers have of their behaviour and achievement.
- Very good leadership has ensured significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Very good, well presented examples of pupils' paintings, drawings and prints are displayed throughout the school.
- Resources to support the creative use of ICT are limited.
- Opportunities for pupils to work in three dimensions are underdeveloped.

Commentary

117. On entry to the school, pupils' understanding and skills in art are average. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average, representing good achievement. In Years 7 to 9, the work seen on display, in lessons and in pupils' sketchbooks is above average. In Years 10 and 11, observation in lessons and through scrutiny of pupils' work reveal high standards, representing very good achievement. GCSE examination results in 2003 were high, contributing to an improving trend.

118. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Characteristics of the best teaching include excellent subject knowledge which, coupled with a confident and enthusiastic approach, enables pupils to become independent learners able to achieve very well as they progress through the school. Fine art is taught well and forms an important aspect of every termly project. Pupils show commitment to their work, rising to the challenge of the projects set and showing pride in the very good research and development of ideas, recorded in their sketchbooks. Pupils' exploration of colour, tone and texture is particularly strong, evident from work produced in printmaking. Opportunities to explore ideas in three dimensions are limited by the unsatisfactory resources for ceramics and large scale modelling. The lack of a technician inhibits further development in this area. Photography is taught very well but there are insufficient resources for digital imaging and manipulation. Sketchbooks show a very good support for the development of literacy through well-annotated research. All staff share a commitment and determination to challenge pupils and enable them to achieve very high standards.

119. Leadership by the head of department is very good and together with the effort and commitment of his team, this has enabled good improvement since the last inspection. The department has raised additional funding to bring innovations to the department, for example the 'garden gallery' where pupils can work outside in an attractive open area. Monitoring of the work of the department is good and includes observation of teaching and learning. There are excellent displays of pupils' work in many areas of the school including the library, staff offices, corridors and circulation areas, providing valuable opportunities for pupils to appreciate the creativity of their peers and others.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is raising the profile of the subject through an improved scheme of work, a wide range of instrumental lessons and high quality extra-curricular activities.
- The best aspects of teaching and learning, including a consistent assessment system, promote good achievement by Year 9.
- GCSE results are above average and the numbers of pupils opting for music in Year 10 is increasing.
- Pupils do not have any opportunities to develop subject specific ICT skills.
- Accommodation, although marginally improved since the previous inspection, is disappointing and hinders effective subject co-ordination, which in turn impacts negatively on teaching and learning.

Commentary

120. Pupils' attainment on entry is average. In teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2003, numbers gaining Level 5 or above were well above average. In the work seen during the inspection, standards attained by the current Year 9 are above average, representing good achievement.
121. GCSE results are normally above average, although numbers of entries have been small until recently. Standards by Year 11 are above average. Achievement is satisfactory. Numbers opting for music are increasing and the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, most of whom play an instrument well, have the potential to gain high grades.
122. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others due to the careful setting of work which matches their capabilities. They are also supported well by their teachers and fellow pupils, although teachers are increasingly stretched in classes of more than 30 pupils. Although talented pupils are known by teachers and there are many opportunities for them to extend their abilities in extra-curricular activities, they are not provided with a systemic development programme within lessons.
123. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers set high expectations, maintain a rapid pace and, through probing questions, develop pupils' independence and reasoning. A good and varied range of tasks is provided which stimulate pupils' interest and ensures their concentration. Teaching and learning are similarly good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are more independent and have good opportunities to use their instrumental skills in group activities, which provide greater resources for all. However, the lack of facilities and training in subject specific ICT, reported at the previous inspection, persists and restricts pupils' development especially in composing and individual research. This is why achievement is only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Overall, pupils show positive responses to learning and are attentive, enthusiastic and committed to the achievement of high standards. A revised assessment system, which links school grades to National Curriculum levels, records pupils' practical work and provides satisfactory opportunities for pupil and peer evaluation.
124. A large number of pupils benefit from high quality and well-organised instrumental lessons. They are able to develop their interests and aptitudes in a good range of extra-curricular ensembles, which are coached at a professional level. These offer exciting opportunities for performance, both in and outside the school and on tours abroad. Pupils' enthusiasm, commitment and hard work in rehearsals and performances are impressive. Although music has gained a slightly larger second music room, which is used for rehearsals, accommodation remains disappointing, disjointed, shabby and uninspiring. This has a detrimental effect on pupils' learning.
125. The good leadership of the recently appointed head of department means that provision has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection. The profile and focus of the subject are better. A revised scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 integrates effectively practical skills of performing and composing with underpinning knowledge and understanding, including music notation, technical language and multicultural influences. Management at this stage is

satisfactory, as there are several areas for development, including subject policies, monitoring of teaching and learning, the evaluation of how well pupils achieve and additional resources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and learning results in good progress for all pupils in the common course.
- In relation to their capabilities and standards on entry, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils result in a positive atmosphere in lessons.
- Pupils do not have formal timetabled opportunities to follow the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and not all have equal curriculum time in Years 8 and 9.
- Competitive extra-curricular opportunities are very good but provision for the full range of capabilities is limited because of a lack of depth of activities.

Commentary

126. Standards in Year 9 are average for all groups of pupils. The majority of pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities and their below average attainment on entry. By Year 9, in basketball, most pass accurately in small-sided games and apply the pivot effectively when receiving. Many have not yet mastered the techniques for accurate lay-up shooting. In orienteering, pupils can use six-figure grid references confidently to plot points on a route card and understand the safety issues involved in the activity.
127. Standards in the Year 11 compulsory course are average for all groups of pupils. The majority of pupils have continued to build on the skills and techniques learned in Years 7 to 9. Higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Achievement, which is satisfactory, is lower than in Years 7 to 9, because the school does not offer formal timetabled provision for GCSE physical education. In badminton, most pupils have secure individual skills and techniques, and are developing well their use of net and underarm clear strokes. Higher attainers use a range of shots that make their opponents move, but the lack of footwork and appropriate stance means that some of the lower attainers are relying too much on overhead strokes. In hockey, a significant minority of pupils display above average standards. They are very competent in using reverse stick, drag-back, accurate passing and shooting as well as good quality movement off the ball. However, some pupils are still not looking up sufficiently well, which means the accuracy of their passing is not so good. The use of width in small-sided games is somewhat variable.
128. Small groups of pupils have volunteered to follow the GCSE course in their own time. Year 11 pupils are developing well their knowledge and understanding of the principles of analysis and evaluation of performance.
129. Overall, teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught and there is a consistent approach towards standards of behaviour. Teaching is similarly good in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching includes structured opportunities for pupils to be involved in peer evaluation and coaching which deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. However, non-participants are not as fully involved as they could be and they are not being fully prepared for when they take part in the next lesson. The good quality teaching is typified by pace, purpose, progression and challenge. In a Year 11 badminton and hockey lessons, for example, well planned and structured activities ensured pupils were all actively involved and improving their skills and techniques well. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and they know what is expected of them, however, support for literacy could be more effective through, for example, more focus on key terminology. Pupils'

attitudes and behaviour are good, as are teacher-pupil working relationships. This enhances the quality of learning and promotes a good atmosphere in lessons. Teachers circulate well in lessons and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes pupils aware of their capabilities. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were not effective. This has been recognised by the department and new, more focused procedures have now been put in place. In Years 7 to 11, there is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning.

130. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New leadership of the department is developing well and there is a clear sense of purpose and a focus on improving standards as well as provision. Though there is some sharing of good practice within the department there are no formal opportunities for the evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning, particularly of non-specialist staff who help teach the games programme. New schemes of work are being developed to ensure the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met. The quality of department improvement planning is not as effective as it could be because of the lack of a quality and structure of whole school development planning. Competitive extra-curricular opportunities are very good. As result of the dedication and commitment of staff, many of who are from other departments, twenty-six individuals have achieved representative honours at county level in a range of sports and six at regional level. Junior and senior teams are current county cross-country champions, the under-14 squad are county association football champions and the junior rugby union squad are current county champions. However, the lack of depth of extra-curricular provision, for example, there are few recreational clubs, means that the full range of pupils is not catered for. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business and communication systems

Provision in business and communication systems is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards were above the national average in 2002 and 2003 and they are currently above average in Year 11 GCSE classes.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils' ability to work independently is an area of strength.
- There is no head of department and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- The department is under-resourced and does not have appropriate accommodation.

Commentary

131. In 2002 and 2003 results at GCSE were above the national average. Standards in Year 11 are better than those seen nationally and this represents good achievement as the subject attracts pupils from a wide range of attainment.
132. Attitudes are good overall and standards are above average because the department has clear expectations about work and behaviour. Pupils in Year 11 work hard in lessons and during the inspection they responded well to the revision tasks on human resource management planned for them. Computing skills are an essential part of the course and pupils clearly progress well as many have below average skills at the beginning of Year 10. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and this is an area of strength.
133. The good quality of teaching and learning ensures that by Year 11 all pupils have a secure grasp of the basics of the course and that the majority of them have the skills and knowledge to reach the higher grades at GCSE. The highest attaining pupils can explain how skills shortages can affect businesses and all understand the importance of training. Written work shows that pupils have a sound understanding of relevant environmental and equal opportunities

legislation; in this context the subject makes a valuable contribution to citizenship. Assessment is thorough, work is carefully marked and pupils also assess their own strengths and weaknesses.

134. The department's limited resources are used well. At present, business studies does not have a designated classroom or its own computer resources and there are inadequate supplies of textbooks. However, pupils' learning during the inspection was greatly enhanced by the very effective use of computer-projected presentations.
135. The good quality of teaching and learning are a result of the dedication and expertise of the teaching staff. This ensures that day-to-day management of the department is effective. However there is no head of department in post and therefore many key elements of management, for example monitoring and review, are not in place. As a consequence, both leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject was not reported on in the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

PSHE was sampled. No evidence for citizenship was available during the inspection to make judgements on pupils' standards and achievement, or on the quality of teaching and learning.

136. The school has identified in its citizenship policy many opportunities for pupils to choose to develop citizenship skills, knowledge and understanding through a wide range of voluntary, community and global initiatives. All pupils gain some understanding of the democratic process through their participation in elections for year and school councils. However, there is no scheme of work setting out clearly how citizenship programmes of study are delivered and which ensures entitlement for all pupils in Years 7 to 11. Overall, pupils are unaware of citizenship in the curriculum. There is no co-ordinator for the subject. The school is failing to meet statutory requirements.
137. The school provides a satisfactory programme in PSHE. The scheme of work includes relevant aspects of health, sex and relationships, drugs, careers, the environment and preparation and debriefing for work experience. There is good use of visiting specialists from the community. Topics are linked to tutor periods and assemblies. Lessons for Years 7 to 9 take place at the end of the day during tutor periods but, with time taken for assemblies, this allocation is often inadequate for the proper development of topics. In Years 10 and 11 additional designated time means that more varied activities and better subject development can take place. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but as the co-ordinator is also a form tutor, she cannot monitor, evaluate and review the subject. At present, therefore, most of the disadvantages in provision reported at the previous inspection remain.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 10 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	6	100	81.6	16.7	33.2	35	33.2
Business Studies	7	100	89.1	42.9	31.7	35.7	35.4
Chemistry	8	100	84.8	25	36.9	31.3	35.2
Economics	5	100	86.2	0	41.5	36	37
French	8	100	85.4	12.5	35.2	30	34.9
Design and Technology	5	100	89.2	20	32	30	35.7
German	5	80	87.6	20	34.7	34	35.6
Information Technology	8	75	78.2	0	20.6	22.5	28.5
Mathematics	10	70	74.2	20	34.3	29	31.3
Other Social Studies	15	93.3	83.2	26.7	32.5	32.7	33.6

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	12	100	96.1	83.3	48.7	108.3	85.1
Biology	18	100	91.6	61.1	36.3	93.3	74.1
Business Studies	12	100	96.4	16.7	32.8	70	76.5
Chemistry	7	100	94	57.1	45.9	88.6	81.1
Economics	7	100	96.2	14.3	45.8	62.9	83.1
English Literature	23	100	98.5	69.6	43.7	97.4	84.3
French	8	100	96.2	50	46.1	97.5	83
Design and Technology	11	100	95.3	45.5	35.5	81.8	76.5
Geography	30	100	97.1	43.3	40.5	82.7	80.9
History	24	100	97.1	54.2	41	90	81.2
Information Technology	14	100	89.1	28.6	22.4	74.3	64.1
Mathematics	16	100	93.3	62.5	52.2	90	84.7
Other Social Studies	26	100	94.3	57.7	38.9	90	77.7
Physics	10	100	92.8	60	42.8	94	78.6
Religious Studies	10	100	96.3	30	44	82	82.2

Spanish	5	100	96.2	20	47.3	80	83.6
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ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in detail and Spanish and German were sampled. In both Spanish and German standards are above average and students achieved well in the lessons seen as a result of good teaching and learning.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are motivated well and a large amount of work is completed.
- High expectations create an undergraduate atmosphere and an intellectual response from the students.
- The good leadership of the subject provides a clear vision for staff and students that reflects the school's aims.
- Some lessons are not as challenging or as well paced as the good lessons.
- Students are not given enough opportunity to be involved in their learning.

Commentary

138. English literature is offered at AS and A level. The retention rate is very good. Results in the 2003 GCE level English Literature examinations were above the national average. Results in AS examinations continue the trend of above average attainment.
139. In the work seen during the inspection students' attainment is above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement because their attainment was above average when they joined the sixth form. All students have a good knowledge and understanding of their work and enjoy the subject. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion and only falter when the teacher takes over the discussion and there is insufficient time for reflection. Students make valid and cogent observations and use sophisticated technical vocabulary in their writing. Extended writing is a strong feature of the students' work and their independent research skills are generally well developed. They read widely and choose challenging texts. Students make sophisticated inferences from texts and sustain detailed textual analysis. Some students make good use of ICT to aid the presentation of their work. Facilities are limited, however, and therefore cannot be used by all the students.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the good lessons there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy their work with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. In a good Year 12 lesson studying 'Persuasion', students spoke confidently and accurately, placing the characters in an historical setting and developed their thinking to examine the role of women in an historical and social context. High expectations created an undergraduate atmosphere and an intellectual response from the students. In a satisfactory lesson students learnt less because they were not as involved in the lesson and there was not as much variety.
141. The department makes satisfactory use of assessment data for curriculum planning. The study of historical and multi-cultural texts deepens students' understanding of literature and life. They offer spiritual and moral insights that are mature and thoughtful. Sensitive planning of lessons ensures that students are given the opportunity to air their views in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Good relationships are evident and students respond positively to their teacher and each other.
142. Leadership of the department is good, providing a clear vision for staff and students, and creating the conditions to enable further improvement to be made. Management is satisfactory. Teachers are mutually supportive and respect each other and the students. Teachers share

the preparation of schemes of work, which encourages equality for the students, and the development of staff. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory; standards and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 13; students display a high level of fluency.
- Teaching and learning are good and enable students to achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good and teachers work very well as a team.
- There are excellent opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the classroom.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Opportunities for students to develop skills in responding are limited.

Commentary

143. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above average. This represents good achievement in relation to prior attainment. The majority of students have a very good understanding of grammar, apply it successfully to express their ideas and display a high level of fluency. At the beginning of Year 12 standards are average but students make rapid progress during Year 12 and Year 13. Writing is usually accurate but is sometimes limited in detail and in length. There is little evidence of students writing at length to present an argument or for debate. In A level examinations in 2002 students achieved as they should. There were too few candidates to allow reliable statistical comparisons with national data to be made.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use it effectively to conduct lessons exclusively in French. Students have the benefit of excellent role models and as a result their speaking and listening skills are very well developed. Activities and resources are appropriate and well sequenced, enabling students to increase their range of language and develop their skills effectively. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students made good progress in developing reading skills through pair work activities. Effective questioning from the teacher enabled all students to summarise the text successfully. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and adapted appropriately to meet students' needs. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, when it became clear that students were having difficulty understanding a text about the changing role of women in society, the teacher adapted the lesson effectively, through a series of activities, to enable students to identify the main points and to use the language learned in a lively debate by the end of the lesson. Effective pair work activities and a plenary in a Year 12 lesson enabled students' own experience of French schools to be used to good effect to extend all students' understanding of the French education system. Students do encounter some difficulty in expressing their views when they do not know the exact vocabulary required to do so; they would benefit by being given more opportunities to practise with coping with this and with dealing with opposing views to their own. Lower attaining students do not always have adequate support to join confidently in debate and discussion because key structures are not always identified or practised enough beforehand.
145. Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They appreciate the excellent subject knowledge of their teachers and the teachers' willingness to give extra help. They appreciate the excellent opportunities they have to improve their fluency and knowledge of France through intensive tuition and work placements in France. However, they would appreciate more information about how they are getting on and how to improve.

146. The subject is very well led and managed. There is a high level of consistency across the subject and teachers work very well together to provide a broad and well co-ordinated curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good for students on all courses.
- Examination results are good and above national averages.
- The development of independent learning skills has improved since the last inspection.
- Students would benefit from more modelling of real life situations in mechanics lessons.

Commentary

147. Results in A-level mathematics over the last four years have been consistently higher than the national average, reflecting the good teaching and learning that students experience in the sixth form. Notable features have been the high proportion of A and B grades and the 100 per cent pass rate in most years. A small number of female students join the sixth form from other schools, and their results are also above average. During the inspection, the standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders was above average, reflecting the good quality of teaching that students are experiencing. Current standards in Year 13 are above average and achievement is good.

148. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to communicate a sense of pride and confidence to the students. They plan their lessons well, keep up a good pace and provide high levels of challenge. Students work well in all lessons and enjoy the challenges of mastering high-level mathematical techniques. They are able to express their ideas clearly, both in oral responses and written work. They are confident in using algebra, for example, when developing skills in partial fractions, and are able to differentiate and integrate a range of trigonometric functions when developing their skills in integrating by parts.

149. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and all suitably qualified teachers are given the opportunity to teach A level. Teaching is monitored to ensure consistency and develop teaching skills. Students are informed regularly how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, as the development of independent learning skills has improved but students sometimes find the problems they are confronted with in mechanics too abstract. They would benefit from more modelling of examples taken from real life situations in mechanics lessons to which they could then apply their mathematical skills to model what was happening.

SCIENCE

The main focus of inspection was biology. Physics and chemistry were sampled.

150. In **physics** in 2002, Year 13 results were well above the national average. The students' average point scores in 2003 are similar to the national average for 2002. In the sampled lesson, very good teaching led to rapid progress. The starter activity was very effective and tested the students' understanding of what they had learnt in the previous lesson, for example, drawing a graph of current against voltage and explaining what it showed. High challenge, rapid pace, very effective use of resources, assessment and thorough discussion resulted in very productive learning.

151. In **chemistry** in 2002, Year 13 results were above the national average. Their average point scores for 2003 are similar to the national average for 2002. In the lesson sampled, the students made good gains in knowledge and understanding of relative reactivity of chlorine, bromine and iodine as a result of effective teaching.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment of learning is very well established.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Effective teaching leads to good learning and achievement.
- ICT is used little as a teaching tool.

Commentary

152. In 2002, A-level results were well above the national average. Female students did particularly well, attaining very high standards. Male students attained above average standards. A-level standards in 2003 were comparable. The school has maintained above average to well above average standards over recent years. Year 12 results for 2002 were well above the national average. Year 12 results for 2003 were below the average for 2002. According to the school, this is due to lower standards of attainment on entry to the course. Currently, standards in Year 12 are broadly average, and in Year 13 they are above average. Overall, achievement is good.

153. Overall, teaching is good and enables students to develop well their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to effectively plan, prepare, and deliver lessons using a variety of methods. Assessment is a very strong feature of everyday teaching. Most teaching provides good challenge and supports independent learning, leading to good achievement. Effective starter activities, assessment of previous learning and linking this to new learning are common strengths of teaching. In one lesson, provision of several live or fresh specimens improved students' grasp of adaptive features that help plants to grow in 'dry' habitats. Very effective use of models led to good understanding of how thickness of the lens in the eye is controlled to focus image on the retina. A highly interactive activity resulted in good learning of factors that affect action of enzymes as well as promoting speaking and listening skills. Use of ICT as a teaching tool, especially to explain complex mechanisms, is not developed as well as it should be. Occasionally, quantitative work does not progress as well as it should as it is not preceded with qualitative work.

154. Leadership and management of biology are good. The biologists work together as an effective team providing very effective role models. Assessment is highly developed. However, more work is needed to produce value added data for comparison and to enhance achievement. A change of syllabus to meet needs of students more effectively has improved students' performance. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' learning is well supported by good teaching.
- Students increase their range of ICT skills well given that the majority who enter the course have not studied ICT at examination level in Year 11.

- The achievement of students following the AS course who do not continue to take the A-level is not high enough; the course is unsuitable for these students, who have only limited experience in ICT.
- Very good relationships provide very good conditions for learning.

Commentary

155. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 13 are broadly average. In 2003 the percentage of students achieving A or B grades was above average, although the percentage who failed to gain a pass grade was slightly higher than average. The AS-level results in 2003 remain well below average and this is largely due to the fact that the students have not studied ICT for GCSE or GNVQ level prior to starting the courses in the Year 12. This means that teachers have to cover the basics as well as more advanced skills. As a result, the course has been challenging for both the students and teachers. Despite this, those students who continue into Year 13 are achieving well over the two-year course.
156. Although over the two-year course students reach average standards, those in Year 12 have to work exceptionally hard to acquire the foundation of skills and knowledge required to pass the AS-level course. They enter Year 12 with below average skills as the majority of students have only limited experience in the subject. There is particular emphasis on learning to use the specialist software before they can attempt the necessary coursework and this puts enormous constraints on the time available to complete the coursework. In Year 13, however, students are familiar with a wide range of software and are able to show application of this in a variety of challenging tasks. The curriculum for A level is well planned and structured to meet the coursework criteria. Students have good knowledge of using databases, which they master largely during Year 12, and they are competent at applying these skills to their examination coursework tasks.
157. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are well planned and teachers are well organised. They have very good knowledge of the subject. As a result students benefit from the very structured and specific guidance and support which is well matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers set clear objectives in lessons to guide students with their work. Teachers cover the knowledge in depth and explain the information well. Students are given good individual support, as seen in a Year 13 lesson where the teacher discussed specific points for development with individuals, which helped to consolidate students' own plans of their coursework. However, there is a need to monitor the progress of coursework assignments more rigorously in order to ensure all students are on target for completion. The majority of students develop good skills in numeracy through work on spreadsheets and gain sufficient understanding of the concepts. Their literacy skills are good and students complete work to an appropriate level as required for the examination. They benefit from teachers' guidance and use of ICT to increase the quality and presentation of their final coursework. Teachers establish very good relationships with the students, and create a very good learning ethos in which there is mutual respect.
158. Management of the subject is good. The A-level course is now well established and it has become very popular amongst students. There is a need however, to review the prior ICT experience of students when they start the course and also review the suitability of the course for some pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected in detail, while geography was sampled.

Results in **geography** in 2002 were above average. The quality of teaching and learning seen was good and achievement was good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results indicate very good achievement.
- Some excellent learning is supported by some excellent teaching.
- Assessment is improving but is yet to inform all students fully of their progress.
- Very positive student attitudes are supporting the increasing popularity of history.

Commentary

159. A-level results in 2002 were well above average and indicated very good achievement. The 2003 results were even better with 73 per cent securing an A or B grade. Standards have improved strongly in the last two years. The majority of students secured an A or B grade in the 2003 AS examinations. History secured the largest number of A grades at both AS and A2 levels in 2003. History is one of the most popular subjects and numbers are growing rapidly. Retention is very good.
160. Standards are currently above average in Year 13 and achievement is very good. In Year 12 students demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the failures of the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848 and a sound understanding of the causes of the Franco-Prussian War. Year 13 students successfully analysed the intricacies of a nineteenth century contemporary cartoon relating to the 1832 Reform Act.
161. Teaching and learning are very good, with some excellent aspects. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and strong relationships with the students. As a result, students are very positive about the subject and work hard to improve their standards. Learning in one particular lesson was highly effective because the learning objectives were fully shared and understood and the highly participative group methods encouraged a very high level of debate which developed excellent understanding. The use of original source material is most effective. The process of learning is rigorous with good pace in the majority of lessons and student commitment is very high.
162. There is very good academic leadership and the head of department is a very good role model and an excellent teacher. The current resources for A level are insufficient to develop fully a comprehensive range of wider reading materials. The department has very high expectations of students, leading to improving standards and growing popularity of the subject. However, although assessment is improving, students are not always fully informed about how to improve. Individual targets are set but they do not always indicate the necessary historical skills to reach the next level of understanding. A high proportion of those completing their A2 course continue their study of history at university. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of teaching and learning is leading to very good progress and achievement.
- Very good leadership and effective management have created the conditions for very good achievement.

Commentary

163. There are well-established courses at AS and A level with a focus on resistant materials and graphics. Results in 2003 were above average for both AS and A-level courses. Standards are improving and, in work seen during the inspection, are now very good. At AS and A level the quality of teaching and learning is very good and leads to the very good progress and achievement of the students. The quality of design work is of a high standard in graphical presentation, research and design development. There is extensive use of ICT in all aspects of the work and this contributes to the high quality of coursework folders. A course in AS food technology has started this year. Achievement is very good.
164. Characteristics of the very good teaching include excellent planning, high expectations, brisk pace and a high degree of challenge. Students demonstrate very good research skills evident from visits, surveys and use of the internet. In a Year 12 food technology lesson, students showed good knowledge of food products, nutrition, food preparation and testing. A high level of ICT skills was used to maximum effect for presentation and data analysis. Assessment is thorough, providing clear feedback to students and setting relevant targets for improvement.
165. Leadership is very good. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for development and improvement which impacts well on students' achievement. Management is good and has benefited department organisation. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good, with significant improvement in the quality of accommodation, use and application of ICT and improved standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was inspected in detail, while music was sampled.

Results in **music** in 2003 were average and the quality of teaching and learning seen on the inspection was satisfactory. Achievement was also satisfactory.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently very good and often excellent teaching leads to very good achievements from students.
- Students' skills as independent learners are developed well.
- The very good leadership of the department promotes and celebrates high standards.
- The very positive attitudes of students and their excellent behaviour ensure that lessons are very productive, creative and enjoyable.
- There is no separate sixth form studio provision, so that students do not have the opportunity to work independently in their own time.
- There is no art and design technician, which creates difficulties in provision for ceramics and three-dimensional work.

Commentary

166. Standards in the department are high. The proportion of students gaining A and B grades in A level examinations in 2003 was above national averages and particularly high in the A2 examination. Standards are maintained through the very good and often excellent teaching and the positive commitment and excellent behaviour of students in the working environment of the classroom. Students have been encouraged to develop as independent learners through their time at the school and are able to pursue their own lines of research and development in the

sixth form. Some individually outstanding pieces of work were seen during the inspection and it is no surprise that a very high proportion of students go on to foundation art and design, photography or architecture courses at the local college or universities.

167. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject areas and are able to challenge students very effectively in pursuit of their research. Excellent relationships are encouraged and the atmosphere for learning is creative, productive and enjoyable, leading to individually interesting and exciting work. Students are expected to present their work to the class from time to time, which has the effect of boosting their self-confidence and sharpening their critical thinking and expressive skills. They benefit from life drawing classes and photographic sessions at local studios. A small number of female students join the sixth form from other schools and add to the critical challenge of the curriculum from their own perspective.
168. Leadership is very good, the head of department leads his team very effectively and staff work together very well to raise standards. Management is good, the department has been through a difficult period of staff changes, but is now settled with a committed and well-qualified team. There is no separate sixth form studio area and students are unable to continue with their work in their private study time, although they make full use of out of school time. Fine art is a strength of the curriculum, supporting both photography and painting and drawing. The work of students is celebrated in well-presented displays around the school. There are few opportunities to develop three-dimensional work, because of the lack of resources and technical support. Storage facilities are inadequate, in particular for large-scale two- and three-dimensional work. The use of ICT as a creative tool is little developed at present, because of the lack of hardware and software resources, although staff are trained and familiar with the field of digital imaging. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in both AS and A-level courses have declined and are below national averages in terms of higher-grade passes.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and contributes to the students' positive attitudes toward the course and provision in general.
- Students' practical standards are above average in their chosen activities and some students represent the country at international level.
- Excellent provision for both recreational and competitive fixtures in both Years 12 and 13 enriches students' learning.

Commentary

169. Results in the AS and A-level examinations have declined recently and are below national averages, particularly in terms of higher-grade passes. It is not possible to comment on students' achievement because the school does not have data to show any value added performance by students.
170. Standards in Year 13 are below average, particularly in the theory course. However, achievement is good in relation to students' capabilities and their attainment on entry to the course. None had studied GCSE prior to joining the sixth form and therefore their knowledge and understanding of the theory part of the course were limited. Students are developing their knowledge and understanding of the history of sport well. In the lesson observed this was as a result of the lively approach of the teacher, who involved the group in inventing their own games

and rules. This enabled them to actively consider the changing nature of rules development over time. Standards in Year 12 are average, half of the group having studied GCSE physical education prior to joining the school. Practical standards are above average in students' chosen activities. The excellent extra-curricular competitive opportunities and timetabled recreational sessions provide suitable opportunities for students to continue to develop further their practical competencies.

171. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and are enthusiastic in their approach. Pace, purpose, progression, challenge and the engagement of students in learning ensure progress is made. Practical activities are used well to reinforce theory, for example, in Year 12 anatomy and Year 13 exercise physiology lessons. As one student commented, this helps ensure they remember what they learned in the lesson. The use of ICT supports students' learning well and effective questioning by teachers successfully engages them in discussion. Students' attitudes are positive and the variety of planned activities in lessons builds upon this well. Relevant homework is set and extends students' learning. Some good quality marking ensures students know what to do to improve but not all students' work is always checked.
172. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department has ensured that the department has a clear sense of purpose and a focus on addressing the recent decline in standards. Overall, curricular provision is excellent and the subject provides very well for students' personal development. Students comment very favourably on the quality of support and guidance teachers provide for them beyond lesson times. The subject was not commented upon at the previous inspection.

BUSINESS

Business studies at AS and A2 and the applied GCSE course in Year 12 were inspected fully and economics was sampled.

The one **economics** lesson observed was satisfactory. Students underachieved in the AS examinations in 2003 and standards were below the national average. Teaching is now the sole responsibility of a newly qualified teacher who has limited access to resources and is not supported by a head of department or a faculty structure.

Business studies

Overall, provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in 2003 improved on the below average A2 results of the previous year.
- There is no head of department. Management is unsatisfactory and leadership is poor.
- Standards are below the national averages in both Year 13 and in the applied GCSE course.
- Students have good attitudes to their work and achievement is satisfactory overall.

Commentary

173. At A2 in 2002 students achieved lower results than in other schools but performance improved in 2003. Results at AS in 2003 were below average. Standards in the present Year 13 are below average. Some students have retaken papers in order to improve their grades. Results at GNVQ intermediate level were sound in that all but one of the students reached a pass standard. Attainment in the one-year applied GCSE, which has replaced the GNVQ, is well below the national average. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to results in previous tests or examinations. There is no difference in achievement between male and female students.

174. In all lessons observed there was a good focus on business theory and practice and written work shows that students can work independently and that they use case studies well. Students on the applied course may progress to the AS course. Most teaching at AS and A2 challenges the highest attaining students and supports those who find the subject more difficult. Students who have special educational needs progress well on the new GCSE course because of the quality of care and guidance.
175. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Individual teachers are experienced and have very good subject knowledge. The range of teaching and learning activities is sometimes limited because computers are not available in some of the classrooms used. Good use is made of visiting speakers to inform applied GCSE students about a variety of issues including health and safety at work. Students in Year 12 know about recruitment, appraisal and performance management. In the most effective lessons questioning is very challenging and case studies, for example on the car industry, are used very well but sometimes the pace is too slow and students too passive. In Year 13 students made very good gains in learning about business expansion because of really effective use of case studies and information from the Internet. Assessment data is managed well. Marking is usually detailed, thorough and ensures students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve.
176. The introduction of the new applied GCSE course has been planned appropriately but this has taken place outside the business studies department. There is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities and the level of support and subject mentoring for newly qualified teachers is inadequate. There has been no recent monitoring of results or planned curriculum development. In the absence of a head of department, management is unsatisfactory and leadership poor. The subject was not reported on in the previous inspection.

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

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

