

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **THE PIGGOTT SCHOOL**

Wargrave

LEA area: Wokingham

Unique reference number: 110079

Headteacher: Dr K Atton

Lead inspector: Dr Pauline Buzzing OBE

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd January 2004

Inspection number: 259129

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

### **Terms used in this report**

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

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1079
School address:	Twyford Road Reading Berkshire
Postcode:	RG10 8DS
Telephone number:	0118 9402357
Fax number:	0118 9404892
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Godfrey Edwards
Date of previous inspection:	27 April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Piggott School is a medium sized, Voluntary Controlled Church of England school for pupils aged 11 to 18, situated between the villages of Wargrave and Twyford on the north-eastern edge of Reading. Most of the 1079 pupils, including the 182 sixth form students, come from the school's semi-rural catchment area. Numbers at this mixed comprehensive school are growing, with an additional form of pupils entering Year 7 in September 2003. Numbers attending the school from beyond the immediate area are increasing; about a third travel a considerable distance to school. The pupils are from a variety of social and economic backgrounds and circumstances, although the socio-economic characteristics of the area served by the school compare favourably with the national situation. Pupils from the full range of attainment attend the school, and standards on entry are average overall. This profile has not changed significantly since the previous inspection. Some 137 of the school's pupils are identified on its register of special educational need, the majority for speech and language difficulties; this is lower than the proportion identified nationally. Some 23 pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The 5.6 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are of white British heritage; some 14 per cent of pupils are from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose mother tongue is believed not to be English (3.4 per cent) is a little higher than in most schools, but none is at an early stage of acquiring the language. There are a small number of pupils from traveller families, and a few refugee pupils. The school is a specialist language college, and has also achieved the Investors in People award. Most pupils stay in education at the end of Year 11 and most sixth form students go on to further or higher education. Few pupils join or leave the school other than in the normal years. The school has recently had difficulty in recruiting staff for some subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and science.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15849	P Buzzing	Lead inspector	
11575	C Fish	Lay inspector	
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English 11-18, drama 16-18
27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics, English as an additional language
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science 11-16, chemistry 16-18
18854	M. Macgregor	Team inspector	Art and design 11-18
11618	B Handley	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-18
32178	J Shears	Team inspector	Geography 11-18
10859	L Bappa	Team inspector	Citizenship 11-16, history 11-16, religious education 11-16
22491	L Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) 11-16
21975	A King	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages 11-16, French 11-18
31705	J Mason	Team inspector	Music, 11-16
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Physical education 11-18
3174	J Powell	Team inspector	Business education 14-18
1224	G Todd	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA  
Herringston Barn  
Herringston  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT2 9PU

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>10</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>53</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The effectiveness of the school is good.** The pupils achieve well because of good provision for their academic education. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Academic performance in tests and examinations is well above the national average.
- Pupils of all backgrounds and ethnic groups achieve well, and their performance is better in work seen than would be expected when they join the school.
- Teaching and learning are good, with examples of very good practice in most subjects.
- The school is well led; there is good leadership in breadth and depth.
- The school's status as a specialist language college is well reflected in its work, including that with the wider community.
- The school misses some opportunities for the pupils' personal development.
- Teachers have to spend a disproportionate amount of time countering the negative attitudes of a small minority of pupils.
- Good support and guidance are provided for pupils and students.
- Inadequate accommodation limits achievement in several subjects.
- Links with parents and with the community are good.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not playing a full part in supporting learning in all subjects of the curriculum.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have risen, teaching is better and leadership has been strengthened at all levels. Monitoring and assessment procedures are now good. The key issues raised in 1998 have mainly been tackled appropriately.

### 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	C	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.** The school's test and examination results in Years 9 and 11 are well above average. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Achievement throughout the main school is good, including in English, mathematics and science. In the sixth form, standards are now above average and achievement is good.

**The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, are satisfactory.** Behaviour is good overall; attendance is satisfactory. Attitudes are judged as satisfactory overall: the attitudes of the vast majority of pupils are good, but those of a significant minority of pupils are negative.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. Teaching and learning are good** at all levels, and teachers have good subject knowledge and expectations.

The curriculum is satisfactory, its strengths reflecting the school's status as a specialist language college. However, ICT is not playing a full part in supporting learning in all subjects of the curriculum, and achievement in several subjects is limited by the accommodation. Care, guidance, and welfare arrangements are good, as are the partnerships with parents and the wider community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** Governance and leadership are good; management is satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils are pleased with the school, although they are concerned about the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils. Inspectors observed good behaviour during the week of the inspection, but they agree that the attitudes of a significant minority of pupils give cause for concern.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Create more opportunities for the personal development of the pupils, including:
  - ensuring greater involvement of the pupils in setting their own targets and developing their own individual education plans;
  - providing pupils with opportunities to take more responsibility for their own learning;
  - extending the role that pupils play as active participants in the school community.
- Improve the quality of accommodation, particularly for art and design, but also in design and technology, physical education and music, in order to raise achievement and provision.
- Building on the good start made, develop further the work in ICT in all subjects of the curriculum.

The above points apply also to the sixth form and, in addition:

- Improve the quality of accommodation for sixth form study, teaching and learning.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE PIGGOTT SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and it gives good cost effectiveness. This is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Achievement is good overall for students from all backgrounds, and standards are now above average. Teaching and learning are good, as is leadership of the sixth form. Management is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average overall. They are very high in art and design, and well above average in English, French and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good, leading to good learning.
- Although the curriculum for the sixth form is satisfactory overall, there is only limited provision for the more independent styles of learning of vocational programmes.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good, and the value added by individuals in each subject is monitored carefully and used to modify future provision.
- The accommodation provided for the sixth form limits achievement in some subjects.

### 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	<b>Very good</b> in <b>English</b> , where very good, enthusiastic teaching and excellent course provision lead to very high examination grades. <b>Very good</b> in <b>French</b> because skilful teaching provides the students with the linguistic tools to speak and write with confidence.
Mathematics	<b>Good</b> . The teachers' good subject knowledge and the productive relationships they have with the students enhance learning. Teachers give their time freely out of lessons to help those students who have difficulties.
Science	<b>Good</b> in <b>chemistry</b> , because of consistently good teaching and the way the students concentrate well. These factors lead to good achievement. Physics was sampled: standards are average and teaching satisfactory.
Humanities	<b>Good</b> in <b>geography</b> , where the students achieve well as a result of good teaching that encourages thinking skills and develops analysis and evaluative skills. History was sampled; standards are average and teaching satisfactory. In psychology, which was also sampled, standards are above average and teaching is good.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Excellent</b> in <b>art and design</b> , where outstanding leadership, management and specialist teaching lead to exceptionally high standards in examinations. <b>Good</b> in <b>theatre studies</b> , where good leadership, management and assessment are used well to raise standards.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Good</b> in <b>physical education</b> , where there is good teaching, and expectations of students are high.
Business	<b>Good</b> . Assessment is used well, and teaching is good. Economics was sampled: standards are high and the teaching was excellent.

*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 provision of advice, guidance and support to students is good. The students receive good advice about their choice of course, and post-school options. Assessment is used well to track their achievement.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Leadership in the sixth form is good overall.** Management is satisfactory. The recent review of sixth form provision has identified appropriate priorities for development. Individual students are carefully monitored and information on value added is used to plan further.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are positive about the sixth form on the whole, but they have criticisms about the inadequacies of their accommodation, and inspectors judge that these criticisms are justified. The students also express a willingness to be more involved in the life of the school, and regret that their energies are not harnessed to do so.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Pupils enter the school with average standards overall, which rise to above average by Year 9, and well above average overall by Year 11. Achievement is good at all levels. Standards in English, mathematics and science are rising in Years 7 to 9, and the average GCSE points score has risen markedly in 2003. In the sixth form, standards at entry are now average, and good achievement means that students are reaching above average standards by the end of sixth form courses.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were the best for five years and were well above the results of schools, nationally.
- The school's average point scores in the GCSE examinations have risen faster than the national trend since 2001.
- Pupils achieve well, overall, throughout the school.
- Achievement in some subjects is limited by shortcomings in accommodation.

#### **Commentary**

##### ***Main school results***

1. When the pupils enter the school, their standards are judged as broadly average. In the core subjects, the national tests they have taken at the end of Year 6 indicate above average standards, but in the foundation subjects, standards vary because of the very large number of primary schools from which the school draws and the widely varying experiences the pupils have had. Each year group has the full range of attainment with slightly fewer higher attaining pupils than might be expected because of the existence of grammar schools in the neighbouring education authorities.
2. The overall trend in the Year 9 test results is rising at a similar rate to the national trend. Results in English, mathematics and science all rose in 2003, and were the best for five years for boys and girls separately, and for pupils overall. Average point scores are well above the national average in all three subjects. In comparison to similar schools, results are average in English and science and above average in mathematics.
3. At the higher levels, results are, again, well above the national average, but average compared to similar schools in science, above average in English and well above average in mathematics. Although the standards reached by boys were of particular concern at the time of the previous inspection, over the three years from 2001, boys' performance has been above the national median in English and science, and well above it in mathematics. Girls have continued to do even better, and their performance is well above the national median in all three subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (34.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	38.3 (38.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36.1 (34.2)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 171 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- In other subjects, the teachers' own assessments of performance at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show variations from subject to subject.

**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	67 (67)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.6 (40.2)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 169 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- The trend of GCSE results at the end of Year 11 has been rising at a similar rate to that seen nationally, but starting from a higher point. In 2003, the pupils did much better in their average point score than would be expected from their Year 9 test results in 2001. In the 2003 examination, the average point score is now well above average, The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade G or better is also well above average compared to schools nationally, but average compared to similar schools. The school's challenging targets were met.
- The 2003 GCSE results in subjects were very high in art and design, significantly above average in business studies, science, English, English literature, mathematics and German. Results in other subjects were above average, except for the girls' ICT results, which were below average. Pupils tended to do significantly better in art and design, business studies and German than in the other subjects that they took. Their results were less good in science, drama, English literature, ICT, mathematics and physical education. Analysis shows that there are no evident variations of results by ethnicity.

**Main school work inspected**

- In work seen, standards at entry are broadly average. The standards at the end of Year 9 are above average overall, indicating good achievement. They are below average in ICT, where standards have suffered as a result of staffing difficulties in the past. In English and mathematics, standards are well above average; in modern languages, geography, music and citizenship, standards are average, and they are above average in all other subjects.
- In work seen, standards are well above average and achievement is good for the end of Year 11, reflecting the most recent examination results, and these steadily rising standards are because of the school's focus on raising attainment. Standards remain below average in ICT because of earlier gaps in provision for these pupils. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 in English, mathematics and business studies, very high in art and design, and above average in all other subjects apart from the core programme in physical education, where standards are average.
- The pupils who have special educational needs achieve well, given their standards on entry to the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator monitors their progress carefully, but there are a small, yet significant, number of pupils with behaviour difficulties who are affecting the learning of others. The school analyses the results by the background of its pupils, and has evidence to show that those who do not have English as their mother tongue achieve in line with their peers. This was confirmed by the inspection.
- Standards of literacy in the main school are above average: the school's provision for literacy is good, and ensures that the good linguistic skills with which pupils enter the school are well used and developed to support their learning across the curriculum. Standards of mathematics

across the curriculum are average and provision is satisfactory. There has not been the strong drive to implement mathematical skills that literacy has received. Standards in ICT across the curriculum are below average because of major problems in staffing the subject over a number of years.

## Sixth form

### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.8 (94.5)	91.6 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	27.0 (28.8)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	212.3 (232.8)	263.3 (n/a)

*There were 56 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

11. The 2003 results are below average overall, having slipped from average figures in 2002. The 2003 results are those of a year group of students whose entry standards to the sixth form were below average; lower than the current Year 12 or Year 13.
12. Standards in work seen are better than the recent results indicate: achievement is good and standards are above average overall, although there is considerable variation between subjects. Standards are very high in art and design; well above average in English, French and mathematics, above average in chemistry and geography, average in business studies and physical education, and below average in theatre studies. This last is largely because of some gaps in coverage of the course in the past.
13. Given the students' starting points, achievement is very good in art and design, English and French, good in mathematics, chemistry and geography and satisfactory in theatre studies, physical education and business studies. Where achievement is very good, it is often because teachers teach with enthusiasm, sharing their love of the subject with the students. They offer challenging, individual support in art and design, and give the students time to express their own ideas and opinions in French, so that they develop into confident, independent learners. In English, there is first rate support for coursework.
14. In a few cases in some subjects, achievement is limited because, although students know the level at which they are working, they are unsure of the steps to take to improve. Accommodation problems limit achievement in physical education and even, to some extent, in art and design. Resources, particularly ICT, are not used wholly effectively in some subjects to support achievement in the sixth form.
15. Students in the sixth form who have special educational needs achieve well and make good progress towards the targets set.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are satisfactory overall. Attendance is satisfactory. The pupils' and students' attitudes are satisfactory, and their behaviour is good overall. Their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to their school, but a significant minority of pupils have negative attitudes to learning, so that attitudes are judged as satisfactory overall. Behaviour is good.

- The pupils and students are not as involved as much as they should be in the life and work of the school.
- Older students sometimes help support younger pupils.
- The level of unauthorised absences is low.
- There is insufficient whole-school monitoring of some aspects of personal development to ensure that they are threaded through the life of the school.
- Pupils are provided with good opportunities to appreciate their own cultures and those of others.

## **Commentary**

### ***Main school***

16. Most pupils have good attitudes towards their education, improving as they mature. The pupils are attentive and respectful in assemblies and they move around the school in a generally sensible way. Most pupils get on well with each other and are able to work well with others or on their own. The pupils find this a good school to be at, and many of them enrich and extend their all-round personal development through a good range of cultural and extra-curricular activities the school organises outside lesson time. Sporting activities are particularly well supported and valued. Some departments have an open door policy that enables the pupils to use their facilities outside lessons, and this they appreciate.
17. However, attitudes are judged as satisfactory overall because the attitudes to learning of a small, but significant, minority of pupils within lessons are variable. In some cases, this relates to the different expectations set by departments. The best attitudes were seen in art and design, where the pupils are totally caught up and involved in their learning because the department clearly sets out what it expects of them and insists on their striving to reach these expectations. Conversely, in some other subjects, a few pupils are sometimes silly, and lack concentration. In other cases, a few pupils take advantage of new or inexperienced staff; the same pupils with a more established teacher seem less determined to be disruptive and behave satisfactorily.
18. These unsatisfactory attitudes on the part of a small minority have an impact on behaviour. During the inspection, the pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school was good. However, the pupils and their parents made it very clear that they are concerned about the behaviour of the few. Inspectors saw some pupils who were not positive about their work and who set out deliberately to disrupt their own and others' learning. Teachers work very hard to challenge this behaviour and to make sure that other pupils continue to learn, but this absorbs the teachers' energy, and demands great patience and understanding on the part of the majority of pupils.
19. Those pupils who have specific identified difficulties with their behaviour are well supported through various systems tailored to their individual needs. Exclusions are used only as a last resort in extreme cases, and there are suitable induction programmes to help the pupils involved back into school.

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	894	39	5
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	27	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	26	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	16	2	0
Black or Black British – African	11	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	7	0
No ethnic group recorded	44	0	0

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

20. The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory overall. That for cultural development is good. Although pupils are provided with a satisfactory range of opportunities to develop personally, there is insufficient monitoring of these areas to ensure that they are threaded through the general life of the school as well as in all curriculum areas. For example, the school provides a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and pupils are taught, in assemblies and in some subjects of the curriculum, such as religious education and art and design, to be reflective, to think beyond the material world and to understand what drives human beings. However, opportunities are sometimes missed because teachers do not always understand what is meant by spiritual development and, therefore, do not place sufficient emphasis on it. Although the denominational nature of the school is apparent in such activities as assemblies and in religious education, it is not a particularly strong element of the ethos of the school. In discussions with pupils, for example, a few did not seem to know that they are attending a Church of England school.
21. The pupils and students take part in extensive charity work throughout the school. Some is carried out through subjects, such as the cake sales in food technology, the Christmas boxes in religious education, or charity work in the third world via the Language College. Other initiatives are co-ordinated through the pastoral team, and substantial sums are raised each year. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop awareness and understanding of a range of cultural traditions represented in Britain, Europe and in the wider world. The school has strong links, for example, with a school in China. Similar links are developing with schools in several other areas of the world. Pupils have recently emailed stories to children in Latvia, for example. In religious education, pupils gain a very good understanding of what it means to live in a multi-faith and multicultural society.

22. Most pupils are willing to take on responsibilities; the Year 11 pupils requested some responsibility around the school and now effectively monitor the canteen and other areas during lunchtimes. However, there are few other opportunities for the pupils to take on more of a role in ensuring that the school runs smoothly, efficiently and effectively. There are examples of older pupils helping the younger ones, but they are fewer than in most schools, and this leaves them feeling that they are not involved sufficiently in the life and work of the school. There is a school council that has been instrumental in organising a review of the school uniform and the continual monitoring of the toilets. However, the pupils are not involved, for example, in how to tackle the low-level chattering and irritating behaviour that goes on in some lessons. They are rightly aggrieved if a teacher holds the whole class responsible for the actions of a small minority of pupils because they feel helpless to do anything about it. Overall they are not sufficiently consulted, or are they given the opportunity and responsibility to try to resolve issues for themselves within the school's framework.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2002/ 2003**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8%	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.*

23. The school has successfully reduced the level of unauthorised absence through concerted efforts, well supported by the educational welfare service. The school now knows the reason for most absences because parents are providing that information. There are, however, a number of requests for extended holidays that impinge negatively upon the education of the pupils involved.

**Sixth Form**

24. Attendance is good. Figures show that the level of unauthorised absence is low and the course completion rates are high with most students staying on to complete the full two-year courses on offer. The students realise that attendance is fundamental to achieving good grades and respond correspondingly. As in the main school, the students say this is a good place to be.
25. The attitudes displayed by the students to their learning are good. Mostly they want to do well and put in the required effort and attention. However, there are occasions, usually in vocational courses where, for example, a lack of motivation to put in the effort to complete homework tasks means that what is accomplished in the lesson is not as much as it should be. Outside lessons, the students complain of a lack of activities in which to become involved. Although many students enjoy working with younger pupils, and are willing to do so, they feel that these opportunities are limited and there are some of which they are not aware. Some students take on and enjoy the role of mentor to younger pupils who need help to catch up in subjects such as English, but most are not aware that there is a 'bully-buddy' scheme in place. When talking to inspectors many students displayed a lively interest and willingness that is not being made use of by the school.
26. Students in the sixth form are provided with similar opportunities for personal development and enrichment to those of younger pupils.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education the school provides is good overall. Most teaching is good. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Pupils receive a quality of care, guidance and support that is good. Work with parents is good, and that with the wider community and partner schools is also good.

## Teaching and learning

The good teaching in the school leads to good learning. Assessment arrangements are also good across the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is done by subject specialists who plan carefully and have good expectations of the pupils' learning.
- There are examples of good teaching in every subject, and one lesson in four is very good or excellent.
- Assessment information is used effectively to help pupils and students to achieve well.
- In a few lessons, a small number of pupils do not learn as well as they should because of their negative attitudes.

### Commentary

27. Good teaching raises the pupils' standards from broadly average, when they enter the school, to well above average by the end of Year 11. Teaching in art and design and in business studies is very good, in science and ICT it is satisfactory overall, but in all other subjects, it is good, with examples of good teaching in every subject. No judgement could be made on teaching in citizenship, since there was no direct teaching in the subject during the week of the inspection. Teachers work hard to produce interesting lessons, using their very good knowledge of the subjects they teach to challenge the pupils' thinking so that they learn well.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 162 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (3.1%)	39 (24.1%)	82 (50.6%)	30 (18.5%)	6 (3.7%)	0	0

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

28. One lesson in four was very good or excellent. Examples of very good teaching were seen in every subject observed, with the exception of ICT. These lively, challenging lessons displayed very good relationships between teacher and pupils, and careful planning to meet the pupils' learning needs. Teachers built confidence in pupils, so that mutual respect was evident, there were elements of independence in the learning, and teachers used a very good range of strategies to handle behaviour and maintain the pupils' interest. Five excellent lessons were observed; one each in business studies, modern languages and economics, and two lessons in art and design. Inspirational teaching and first-rate attention to the needs of pupils and students resulted in high standards, very secure knowledge and understanding, and excellent learning.

### Main school

29. Teachers plan well-structured lessons, engaging the interest of all but a very few pupils. As a result, most pupils focus on their work, responding well to the activities their teachers plan. Pupils develop good learning habits, applying themselves, working well, individually and collaboratively, developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. This is the main reason for their good achievement.
30. The vast majority of teachers insist on high standards of behaviour, and they have to make strenuous efforts with a small minority of pupils who lack concentration, a few of whom are very difficult. As a result, teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time managing these pupils. Teachers do well to ensure that disruption to others is minimised. When a lesson is of very high quality in any subject, particularly in art and design or physical education, pupils are

engaged in what they are doing, and all apply themselves well. However, where the learning needs of the whole group are not fully met, or where there has been a high turnover of teachers, where a teacher may be inexperienced or new, or where there is anything in the lesson that is less than of the highest standard, there are pupils who will switch off and encourage others to do so as well.

31. In six lessons, teaching was judged unsatisfactory; two in ICT and in science, and one in each of mathematics and modern languages. All were in Years 9 and 10; four in lower sets. In all cases, the behaviour of a few pupils resulted in teachers' time being taken up in dealing with individuals, and having limited strategies to deal with the very difficult situations with which the teachers were presented. In some cases, the work was not well matched to the needs of all members of the group, especially the lower attainers, who lacked confidence and needed constant encouragement, reassurance and supervision. In others, lack of practical work, or uninteresting tasks resulted in an unsatisfactory climate for learning, and the flow of the lesson was often interrupted by reminders about behaviour.
32. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants have clearly identified roles and areas of responsibility; they provide good support for individuals and groups, and liaise effectively with the teachers. Pupils who do not have English as their mother tongue, and minority ethnic pupils are well taught alongside their peers, so that they learn well.
33. Developments in assessment since the last inspection have improved teaching quality and strengthened achievement, so that provision is now good. All subjects have satisfactory policies, and many are good. Teachers apply them effectively. While there is a whole-school policy, the freedom given to departments to develop their own has led to some inconsistencies and parents find this confusing. The school makes use of a range of data for assessment planning, ensuring that effective monitoring takes place and good value is added. Progress is being made towards a central database and more efficient record keeping.
34. The use of assessment to respond to individual needs is good. Teachers are aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Well-planned assessment is often linked to regular testing, which helps pupils understand how well they are achieving. Marking is usually thorough, regular and consistent and in Years 10 and 11, well directed towards examination criteria. National Curriculum Levels are used in Years 7 to 9, although not as yet with total consistency. Target setting is an emerging feature of assessment, being strong in Years 10 and 11, where all pupils are aware of their target GCSE grades. Pupils' learning would be enhanced if the target grades were based on more dialogue and negotiation rather than teacher direction. For pupils with special educational needs, the identification and assessment procedures are good.
35. Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is satisfactory. In marking, teachers are positive and make widespread use of praise, but need to express more clearly to pupils what they need to do to improve. In the best practice, as in English and business studies, pupils are involved in assessing their own work, followed by a dialogue with the teacher. Work is then accurately annotated and pupils understand what they need to do. In most subjects the National Curriculum descriptors are displayed and, as with design and technology and modern foreign languages, they are linked to specific projects or pieces of work to raise pupils' understanding of the course demands and how they can succeed. Subjects such as art and design and English make good use of exemplar material so pupils have a clear understanding of national standards.

### **Sixth form**

36. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is good in mathematics, chemistry, geography, theatre studies, physical education and business studies. It is very good in English and French and excellent in art and design. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and of examination requirements. They provide a wide range of challenging activities for the students and establish very good relationships so that there is often good, collaborative learning. In the very good lessons, students carry out a lot of thinking for

themselves, and regular monitoring of individual work by staff means that students make very good achievement. In a minority of cases, although students know the level at which they are working, they are unsure what to do to improve as a result of insufficient oral and written feedback.

37. Sixth form assessment practices and procedures are good. Teachers make use of national data from GCSE outcomes to inform thinking and set targets, but students are not closely involved in this process. They are aware of their examination targets, which are monitored on a half-termly basis and form the focus of subject and tutor discussions. Short-term learning goals are set and students are encouraged to review their own progress. Good practice in subjects such as art and design, has ongoing monitoring based on regular student-teacher dialogue. All departments provide students with assessment criteria relevant to their examinations and several offer good exemplary material so that the students are fully aware of the grade requirements. Marking of work is thorough. Past question papers are regularly used to improve technique and teachers provide valuable annotated comments to help students prepare effectively. In business studies and English, students are involved in assessing their own work; an effective strategy for developing their understanding of what is needed for them to improve. Results of assessment are used in most subjects to target work for students.

### **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Enrichment is good, but whilst learning resources are satisfactory overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory, and limits achievement in some areas. The provision of staffing is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum reflects the school's status as a specialist language college, giving an international dimension to its work.
- There is a good range of well-attended extra-curricular activities.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, and limits learning in several subjects.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Main school***

38. The curriculum in the main school is satisfactory overall. Unlike the position at the previous inspection, it now meets statutory requirements. The working week remains shorter than in most schools, and this contributes to some pinch points in provision. In Years 7 to 9, the balance between most subjects is broadly typical of national patterns. In keeping with the school's language college status, more time than average is given to modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9. This has a positive effect on standards in the subject, as well as promoting, successfully, the international dimension. However, the time available for citizenship and ICT in Years 8 and 9, at only one lesson per fortnight, is too little to maintain adequate momentum in the subjects. For the most part, the grouping arrangements are appropriate, for example, with setting by prior attainment in English, mathematics, science, and in modern languages. However, some groupings produce a marked imbalance of the sexes, for example, in music, art and design, and design and technology.
39. In Years 10 and 11, all required subjects are taught, and the balance of time for most subjects is average, although that allocated for core physical education, along with problems of facilities, limits what can be done. Plans are well in hand to provide suitable courses in citizenship later in the year. Overall, the arrangements for personal and social education are good. A small group of lower attaining pupils attend a college-based course for part of the week; timetabling problems at the college have reduced the effectiveness of this programme. Otherwise, the curriculum at this level is relatively narrowly focused on GCSE courses. The school has made relatively little use so far of the growing flexibility in the curriculum from Year

10 onwards. Plans are in hand to introduce an applied GCSE course, in business, later in the year. Overall, the school's plans for a widened range of provision across the 14 to 19 stage, although satisfactory overall, are less well advanced than in many schools.

40. The school's development as a language college is having a significant impact on the curriculum. The school regards it as important that the international dimension permeates much of what it does beyond the modern languages department, and that new developments can benefit pupils as they work in their tutor groups or in other departments. In this it has been successful over a short period of time. Under the very good leadership of the head of the language college, many departments have become involved in some way in projects planned into the scheme of work, and designed to offer an international dimension in learning.
41. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. In most subjects, the curriculum is adapted effectively to meet the pupils' special educational needs. However, in a few subjects, for example, science and geography, further work is needed to make the curriculum more accessible for lower attaining pupils. The work for the small number of pupils who are withdrawn is well structured and effective in helping them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. A very successful initiative of particular note is the Reading Challenge, which is helping pupils to become fluent readers. Arrangements for gifted and talented pupils are satisfactory. The school has identified the pupils likely to benefit from greater challenge, but so far, implementation is at an early stage. The small number of pupils who do not have English as their mother tongue are well provided for within the special educational needs department. The pupils go on to achieve in a similar manner to their peers.
42. For the most part, the whole curriculum is accessible to all pupils, but the lack of suitable facilities for wheelchair users means that, in spite of the school's efforts, they cannot take a full part in the food aspects of design and technology, since the first-floor teaching room is inaccessible.
43. The school's provision for enrichment is good. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, and these are well attended by the pupils. Participation in the arts, and in sporting activities is good; the school's teams do well in competitions. The language college dimension is seen in the good, and growing, range of activities that involve partnerships with schools in other countries. Closer to home, budget restrictions have reduced opportunities for curricular visits in the recent past. For example, in 2003, the work experience programme was restricted to half-term as an economy measure; unsurprisingly, relatively few pupils took part. Overall, however, the school's arrangements for preparing pupils for the next stage of their learning are satisfactory.
44. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Although many issues raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed, the impact of improvements has been limited due to the substantial increase in pupil numbers. The refurbished science accommodation is now good overall and additional practice rooms have been created in the music block, but problems with heating and soundproofing remain. Only in modern languages, due to major restructuring, associated with the move to language college status, has there been unqualified improvement, and the accommodation is now very good. Overcrowding has led to substantial problems, despite the best efforts of staff to overcome them. Due to space restrictions, the art and design department is unable to offer printmaking, photography, three-dimensional or computer art, and the small ceramics room limits the opportunities to develop this discipline, too. In one workshop for design and technology, teaching styles and lesson content are limited by lack of space, and lack of space constrains the delivery of the graphics curriculum.
45. In geography, the use of a foyer area as a classroom is not conducive to good learning and in physical education, despite good fields and indoor facilities, the outdoor hard surface is unsafe for netball and tennis. The accommodation is unsatisfactory for wheelchair users, too. Doors are too heavy for some of the pupils, there has already been one accident for this reason, automatic doors do not always work and a ramp to the quadrangle has gravel on it, making it

impossible to negotiate. There is restricted access to the art and design and food curricula, as wheelchair-users are unable to enter the classrooms.

46. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. Resource provision in modern foreign languages is outstanding, significantly enhanced by two dedicated ICT rooms. Resources are good in English, science, design and technology and special educational needs. They are satisfactory elsewhere, apart from music where they are unsatisfactory because of insufficient instruments and ICT access. Although the school has more computers than most schools, their deployment restricts opportunities to use them in art and design, and geography. The library is accommodated in a very large room, but the number of books is below recommended levels for a school of this size.
47. The school has good numbers of suitably qualified teachers. Very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection in the staffing of religious education, where there are now two specialist teachers, and of information and communication technology, which is now well staffed.
48. There are satisfactory numbers of technical, administrative and learning support staff who make an important contribution to the standards and quality achieved by the school. The school has enough learning assistants to support the pupils with special educational needs. In three areas where there were not enough technicians at the time of the last inspection, art and design, design and technology, and information and communication technology, there has been good improvement, and the provision of technician support is now satisfactory overall.

### **Sixth form**

49. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. A suitable range of AS and A-level courses is available, and the flexible option arrangements mean that almost all students are able to study their first choice of programmes. For students planning to enter higher education, the range meets their needs appropriately. There is only limited provision for the more independent styles of learning of vocational programmes. The school offers a 12-unit AVCE in business, equivalent to two A-levels, and also a one-year Intermediate GNVQ in business, equivalent to four GCSEs. The effectiveness of both vocational programmes is reduced because the groups are combined for some lessons in Year 12. Overall, the development of a coherent 14 to 19 curriculum lags behind many other schools.
50. There is no programme to develop the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT for all students. Whilst most students can use basic ICT tools, the weaknesses in ICT in the main school in recent years mean that they are not gaining maximum benefit from the use of computers in their learning. In some cases, the students' numeracy skills are also in need of further support.
51. There is a satisfactory programme of enrichment, although the students are right to feel that they could play a greater part in the work of the school and the wider community. Some opportunities are provided for students to help younger pupils, but these rarely extend beyond Year 12.
52. The accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory overall; some areas are poor. Some of the smaller seminar rooms are particularly cramped and ill-equipped for sixth form work, whilst the facilities for private study are inadequate for the number of students at the school. Most of the main school accommodation issues impact on sixth form subject provision too. For example, the range of options within the art and design specifications is limited and advanced listening in music is seriously impaired by ambient sounds from other classes and lessons. Staffing is good and resources are satisfactory.

## Care, guidance and support

The practices and procedures to ensure the care and welfare of the pupils and students are good. Good support and guidance are provided for the pupils and students. There are satisfactory arrangements to take the views of the pupils and students into account.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective systems are in place to ensure that child protection and accidents are handled well.
- A number of health and safety issues have been identified; the school is aware of these.
- There are good assessment procedures in place to track the pupils' and students' progress and personal development.
- The school council is an effective way of gauging the pupils' and the students' views, but the whole process of involvement is not extensive enough.

### Commentary

#### *Main school*

53. The school's child protection procedures are fully operational and used well. Accidents and illness are well handled because there are a number of trained staff in school. Those pupils with specific or potentially urgent medical requirements are identified clearly so that prompt action can be taken, if necessary. However, there are concerns about some aspects of health and safety within the school, mostly relating to the accommodation, and of which the school is aware. Concerns also exist around the health and safety of the pupils in wheelchairs, who sometimes experience difficulties with doors and hazards, such as door kerbs, that impede ease of movement around the school and hinder the independence of the pupils involved.
54. The pupils are well known to the staff who are kept up to date with any concerns or problems through weekly briefing sessions. Teachers use the good assessment systems in place to help the pupils to improve their work. However, the pupils themselves are not as involved as they should be in this and so the targets set and suggestions for improvement are sometimes seen as remote by the pupils and so are not as effective as they might be in many subjects. Pupils are involved more in the setting of personal targets, and often show, through their identification, the good understanding they have of their own strengths and weaknesses. Parents are notified where there are concerns about progress in any area, and also where there has been particular success.
55. Pupils new to the school at the start of Year 7 settle into the school well because there are good induction programmes. For many pupils these start as early as Year 5 with visits to the school for language days. In some primary schools, teachers from the language department give lessons from Year 3 onwards. In addition to spending a day in school prior to starting in September, the pupils are asked to complete a booklet during the summer before they arrive. This focuses on a number of subjects and provides a good starting point for work in September.
56. The school council has been more active in the last year than previously in taking account of the pupils' views. However, although the pupils are kept informed of issues raised and what happens, for example, through the chairperson from Year 13 speaking in assemblies, the whole process of consulting with and involving the pupils in the work of the school, although broadly satisfactory, is underdeveloped.

#### *Sixth form*

57. The same care, including vigilance over child protection, is taken of students in the sixth form. The school, rightly, fully includes students in wheelchairs, but their ability to be totally

independent is hindered by the same problems identified in the main school. Whilst fellow students are always ready to help, independence is not fostered as well as it could be.

58. Good systems of assessment and regular discussions with the students help them to progress in their work. They evaluate their own performance in a number of areas, such as attendance, participation and effort, and this helps them to identify and focus on where they need to improve. Regular meetings with their form and subject tutors ensure that problems are identified and targets agreed. The students say that support from teachers is generally forthcoming and helpful. Help with decisions about and applications for higher education is supportive, although a number of the students, despite being encouraged, are dismissive of Oxbridge because they considered it too posh or too hard.
59. The school does not seek the views of the students enough, so that, despite their willingness to be involved and to do more for the school as a whole, many feel thwarted.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents are good, as are those with the wider community, and with other schools and colleges.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The parents receive good quality information on how their children are doing.
- The school follows up on any concerns raised by parents, particularly about their children's work.
- Partnership with the local community is very good.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Main school***

60. Although a small number of parents feel they do not receive sufficient information about how their children are getting on, the annual reports they receive are of good quality. They give a good summary of where their children are, their strengths and areas for improvement, both in the work they do and how they approach it and life in school generally. This annual report is well supplemented in the autumn term with an interim report. Queries raised by the parents after these reports, from the well-attended parents' evenings or from subject teachers, alert the school to a need to investigate and monitor what is going on and to report back to parents if necessary. The school goes to considerable efforts to contact any parents who do not attend the parents' evening and tries to involve as many as possible in this process. The general information available to parents is clear and concise, including, for example, information on courses leading to external examinations at the end of Years 11, 12 and 13. A regular newsletter is produced in school, with details of events, activities and reminders when needed, and regular contributions from students.
61. The school works satisfactorily with the parents of pupils who have special educational needs and makes every effort to ensure that they are kept informed about the progress their children are making. They are appropriately involved in the review of individual education plans and annual reviews of statements.
62. The school has the confidence of all the communities it serves. The impact of the language college status on the school and its community has been significant and the school has made very good progress towards the targets set in its development plan. The shared partnership and reciprocal activities have enhanced learning for students and members of the local community creating a sense of purpose and engendering pride. The teaching of French is well established in the local primary schools and there are enthusiastic requests for even more. Piggott staff teach in these schools and provide training for the primary school teachers so that 80 per cent of Year 7 now arrive with some modern foreign language skills. Postgraduate

students at Reading University use the school as a resource base and gain from the primary school programme. There are good links with other local secondary schools where shared foreign exchanges offer opportunities to other students, while master classes improve A-Level results in the area. The school has supported others in short-term recruitment difficulties and provided training so that Spanish can be taught to GCSE in a local secondary school for the first time. This work has been enhanced by the very good links with the Spanish Embassy.

63. Partnership with the local community is good, with some very good features. The school offers a broad -adult education programme, enabling art and design, ICT and language skills to be gained. Language courses are accredited and with new programmes, such as the introduction of Japanese, are very successful. The local free newspaper is used to promote the international ethos, which now permeates much of the school's life, and means that the head of the language college is in regular contact with the community via the paper. Links with the business community are in their infancy, but translation work is appreciated and a local resource centre is planned. Governors offer active support, while the leadership of the community development plan is very good and based on enthusiasm, energy and a real commitment to the benefits of an international ethos for all. This strong vision, supported by the high work rate of the staff, has ensured that the school is ahead of its expected progress as a specialist school.

### ***Sixth Form***

64. Good leadership and management ensure that the good information provided for the parents of pupils in the main school extends into the sixth form. Links with the community are good: evening classes are initiated in response to demand from sixth form students and the local community, such as a stimulating course in Japanese taught by specialist teachers assisted by native speakers, or tuition for the European driving licence.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance and leadership are good. Management is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The governors play a good part in supporting the school, planning its work, and holding it to account. All statutory requirements are now met.
- Leadership is good in depth and breadth, and reflects the specialist nature of the school well.
- Although policies give clear guidance on what is expected, their implementation is sometimes too variable.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Main school***

65. The governing body is well organised, with committees led by members who have relevant experience. All statutory requirements are met. The governors play a proper part in setting the development priorities for the school; committees scrutinise and challenge development and other plans before they are approved. Governors are supportive of senior staff, but they also challenge ideas to ensure that they are properly thought through and are relevant to needs.
66. Many of the governors find it difficult to visit the school during the working day because of their own commitments elsewhere. However, they keep themselves well briefed on how well the school is doing. All governors are linked to departments, and their curriculum committee always invites individuals to discuss particular aspects of the school's work with governors. As a result, governors have a clear, and independent, picture of the strengths and weaknesses

facing the school, noting ICT, accommodation and teacher recruitment as the areas of focus at present.

67. The governors have appropriate policies in place to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as possible, irrespective of their background. These policies are reviewed regularly; the policy to ensure race equality is being reviewed at present, for example, and racial harmony in the school is good. In some respects, the implementation of these policies is frustrated by matters largely beyond the governors' control, such as accommodation and the problems of recruiting ICT teachers in an area where ICT skills are in great demand in business and commerce.
68. Good leadership is provided by the headteacher, the other members of the senior team, and the middle managers in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work. The headteacher has been skilful in setting the broad strategic direction for the school to develop as a specialist language college, and also in maintaining a clear focus on inclusion, standards and good achievement. Leadership in modern languages is very good: excellent in terms of reflecting the developing international character of the school. Curriculum leadership is also excellent in art and design, resulting in work of high standard against almost impossible odds of unsuitable accommodation. Leadership is very good in English, history, business studies and in design and technology. Many of the senior and middle managers are relatively new to their posts, and thus the impact of their work has yet to be felt in full, for example, in ICT, where there has been considerable staff turnover in recent years.
69. The school development plan has improved since the previous inspection, and targets are well linked to those of subject areas. However, targets are still sometimes too often about inputs rather than what the pupils and students will gain from the proposals. In most respects, the school's own self-evaluation matched the inspection in identifying the areas for further development. The impact of the school's accommodation problems has been identified clearly, and a phased plan for improvement has been drawn up. This plan combines significant new construction with less costly reorganisation of use of the site
70. The management of the school is satisfactory overall. Improvement has been good in the school's setting up and operation of effective systems for monitoring and evaluating its work, so that there are thorough systems in place to monitor the work of subject and other teams, with a rolling programme of departmental reviews. The school has the required policies in place, but some flexibility that is allowed, such as in assessment practices, is not helpful, and there are minor variations in the way behaviour strategies are applied, with some teachers not using the full range of approaches. The school has a clear picture of its strengths, through a programme of classroom observations, work scrutinies and departmental reviews. The school's self-evaluation carried out showed that the school had mainly identified the same issues as the inspection.
71. Management of the special educational needs provision is good. The co-ordinator is hard working and has the full confidence of the governors and staff. The Code of Practice is being implemented well, but the facilities and access for disabled pupils are unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs are fully met. The money received by the school for special educational needs is being well spent.
72. The implementation of the school's policies on equality and inclusion is satisfactory overall, but is not always fully reflected in practice. The lack of lifts means that pupils in wheelchairs cannot gain full access to specialist teaching facilities, and sometimes, barriers such as gravelled ramps or newly-installed fire doors that even adults find hard to open, thwart mobility.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,998,819
Total expenditure	2,980,822
Expenditure per pupil	2,854.23

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	30,165
Balance carried forward to the next	48,162

73. The school's financial management is good. Funds are carefully matched to educational priorities, and the principles of best value are implemented well. The fact that governors and senior staff have a very clear picture of these priorities means that when funding is squeezed, as in the recent past, projects that are crucial to educational success are still implemented wherever possible. Major barriers to the school's work are the state of much of the accommodation, and also the problems of recruiting and retaining suitable staff to deliver the curriculum. The school has been flexible in enhancing pay and allowances in order to attract, and keep, the right person for the job. All too often, however, costly advertisements yield no applicants. The above average spending on staff, together with the squeeze on income, reduces the ability to spend on areas such as accommodation enhancements or learning resources.

**Sixth form**

74. Governors pay appropriate attention to the development of the sixth form, and ensure that statutory requirements are met. Overall, the leadership of the sixth form is good, with a proper attention to the needs of individual students. For example, the value added by individuals in each subject is monitored carefully and used to modify future provision. The development plan for the sixth form sets out appropriate priorities. Leadership in the subject areas is good overall, with very good leadership in modern languages.
75. The management of the sixth form is satisfactory, with suitable arrangements to monitor the work of tutors; the monitoring of academic subjects remains the responsibility of heads of department. The school has recently carried out a detailed review of the sixth form as part of its rolling programme of self-evaluation. The findings are appropriate and are reflected in this report.
76. The sixth form receives sufficient funding to cover its costs; income and expenditure are balanced, helped by additional funds that reflect the success in retaining students. The sixth form accommodation is a major barrier to improvement. Much is cramped and of inadequate quality for work at this level; there is too little space for private study or ICT support for the sixth form.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head of department's very good and visionary leadership has formed a very effective team with a strong sense of shared purpose.
- Results in 2003 were well above average.
- Current standards are well above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Expectations are high and lessons are very well planned.
- Management is good, but needs to ensure full implementation of best practice.
- Some aspects of approaches to writing in Years 7 to 9 require improvement.

##### **Commentary**

77. On entry the pupils' overall standards tend to be above average. In 2003 the results of Year 9 pupils in national tests were well above average, boosted by more than half the pupils achieving at least the higher Level 6. The 2003 GCSE English and English literature results were both well above average and significantly better than expected, given the pupils' earlier results. Boys' results, in particular, were significantly better than boys' results nationally.
78. In work seen, standards in both the current Years 9 and 11 were well above average, matching the previous year's results. The pupils' achievement is good. Many Year 11 pupils consolidate their earlier good progress with a significant number making even further improvement. In Year 9 most pupils write with the expected levels of accuracy and organisation. More than half reach the higher levels because of the impact of their vocabulary and their detailed response to texts. Pupils in a middle set discussed the dagger scene from 'Macbeth' with fluency, understanding and interest. Secure accuracy and organisation typify the writing of the majority of Year 11 pupils. The highest attainers analyse a range of texts in great detail, frequently commenting with insight on the impact of an author's use of language. In both Years 9 and 11 some pupils make too many errors in accuracy and expression and so do not reach the expected level. However, some lower attainers in Year 11 have produced grade C coursework as a result of their own hard work and very good teacher support. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because teachers have high expectations and adapt material well to meet the pupils' needs. Pupils from ethnic minorities achieve well and are well represented in higher teaching sets. Standards in numeracy and ICT are average.
79. The overall standard of teaching and learning is good. Some lessons are very good. The teachers' very good command of their subject and of examination requirements help pupils make good progress in the skills of extended essay writing, especially in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 there is good coverage of basic skills; redrafted writing is good, but these younger pupils require a more painstaking approach to their initial attempts at writing and more opportunities for extended writing. Pupils apply themselves well in lessons because teachers' very good planning results in a wide range of teaching and learning methods. The influence of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is evident in many lessons. As a result, pupils are always clear about how to do tasks because teaching methods prepare them so explicitly. Lessons have good pace and a sense of purpose because of the good use of learning objectives. Overall, assessment is good; some innovatory procedures are very good and ensure pupils know

precisely how to improve. However, these procedures are not fully embedded in the work of all teachers.

80. The department's improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results are higher and teaching is better. A significant reason is the dynamic and very good leadership of the head of department. She has formed a very good team that shares her aspirations for the department and the pupils. The process of restructuring a core curriculum has engendered a strong and effective sense of common purpose. Many texts contribute well to preparing the pupils for life in a multicultural society. The department is well managed, but there is a need to focus on the consistent application of the most effective initiatives.

### **Drama 11-16**

81. Drama was also sampled. GCSE drama results in 2003 were broadly average; an improvement on the below average results in 2002. Standards of performance were below average during a Year 11 lesson. Although achievement was satisfactory during the lesson, over time pupils have not made as much progress as they should have. The teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher, new to the group, has identified the shortcomings in the pupils' work. Planning and guidance were well matched to their needs. As a result, most pupils are beginning to respond to the challenge of the subject with increased maturity and thoughtfulness.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

82. Pupils join the school with above average standards in speaking, reading and writing in English. This shows that they have the potential to do well in expressing themselves effectively across the curriculum, but limited experiences and coverage of some of the foundation subjects is variable, so that their vocabulary and other aspects of literacy are not uniformly above average in all subjects. Good achievement is evident throughout Years 7 to 9 so that standards are above average by the end of Year 9, and the achievement continues to be good to the end of Year 11. Across subjects, inspectors judged the overall provision made for the development of literacy to be good. The school's literacy co-ordinator has ensured that a wide range of issues has been addressed through the school's curriculum group.
83. There remains, however, a small group of pupils whose basic literacy skills are weak, resulting in elementary errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation so that, when they come to record what they know, understand or can do, their written work does not do justice to their knowledge and understanding.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and the pupils achieve highly.
- GCSE results are well above average, although the pupils did not do so well in French in 2003.
- There is much very good or excellent teaching, with a high degree of challenge.
- The quality of leadership and management is of a high order.
- The department has continued to improve since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

84. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average in both French and German; not enough candidates took Spanish to allow national comparisons. Pupils tend to do as well in French and Spanish as they do in their other subjects; in German they do better. Results have improved since the last inspection. The boys' results in French, however, have not risen as

steadily as the girls', and although they do well in comparison with boys nationally, the trend over the last four years shows a slight decline. In 2003, German results were again well above average; French results fell significantly, largely due to changes in the GCSE examination that year.

85. Standards in work seen during the inspection are average by the end of Year 9, which represents good achievement, given the pupils' standards on entry to the school. By the end of Year 9, the pupils listen, speak and read the foreign language with increasing confidence. They write simply and largely accurately in French, German or Spanish, and there are very good examples of more extended writing amongst higher and middle attainers. Pupils with special educational needs achieve highly because they are well supported and challenged. The pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11, and by the end of Year 11 their standards are above average. The standards of the lowest attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, who are studying for entry-level certification in languages, represent satisfactory levels of achievement given their linguistic attainment at the start of the course.
86. Teaching and learning in modern foreign languages are good throughout the main school. There is a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching that sets very high expectations, promoting very effective learning. The teachers are highly competent in their languages, and most use the foreign language consistently so that the pupils develop good accents. Nearly all lessons, and homework, are characterised by a high degree of challenge so that the pupils work hard and make real progress in understanding, speaking and writing the language. All but a very small minority of lessons are very well planned, using a range of effective teaching methods that engage the pupils well. Most pupils have very good attitudes to learning languages, although there are rare lessons where behaviour is unsatisfactory, and pupils make unsatisfactory progress because they do not work hard enough. Aspects of literacy are well taught, and the pupils have frequent, regular opportunities to improve their information and communication technology skills. The teachers use assessment well to monitor the pupils' progress and to set realistic targets to help them to improve.
87. The department is very well managed under excellent leadership, dedicated to ensuring the highest standards and achievement. There is clear educational direction for the work of the department and for its wider role across the school now that it has language college status. This positive ethos extends to the pupils, and is a significant factor in the high standards of work and behaviour. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results, in the national tests and in GCSE examinations, are well above national averages.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to support pupils in preparing well for their examinations.
- Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with their pupils and give their time freely outside lessons to support those who have difficulties.
- In too many lessons, there is insufficient account taken of the spread of ability to cater specifically for individual needs.
- The provision for ICT within the department is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

88. In the 2003 national tests in mathematics for pupils at the end of Year 9, results were well above national averages and above similar schools based on the pupils' prior attainment in the Year 6 national tests. In the 2003 GCSE examination in mathematics, results were well above national averages and well above similar schools based on the pupils' prior attainment in the

Year 9 national tests. However, pupils do not do as well in mathematics as in their other subjects. Results have risen in line with national trends and there is no difference between the performance of girls and that of boys.

89. In work seen, standards in mathematics remain well above national averages by the end of Years 9 and 11. Standards on entry are above national averages so achievement is good in all years, although less marked in Year 7 where too much work repeats that already covered in the primary school. Number work is developed well, especially for lower attaining pupils, but pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are developed inconsistently. Year 9 pupils calculate volumes of composite shapes while higher attaining pupils solve quadratic equations and, by the end of Year 11, pupils use trigonometry with increasing confidence and accuracy.
90. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons start promptly and make good use of a variety of activities in order to engage and quickly involve pupils in the work of the lesson. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and they enjoy productive relationships, which encourage pupils' positive attitudes. Teachers give their time freely outside lesson times to help and support pupils. Homework is regularly set and this builds well upon the work of the lesson. However, there is not enough evidence of catering for the spread of ability in the class and higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Marking is regular, but the quality of feedback on how to improve is inconsistent.
91. Curriculum leadership is good. There is a good team ethos within the department and a clear direction for mathematics. The head of department has a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and the development plan acknowledges these with a timetable for action. However, monitoring is too informal and lacks rigour. Departmental documentation is still being developed.
92. The provision for ICT within the department is satisfactory. The department makes some use of computers, but this provision is underdeveloped and inconsistent. An interactive white board has recently been introduced to the department and this is beginning to make a positive contribution to teaching in areas such as graphical work. The provision for literacy is satisfactory, but inconsistent. Subject specific words are suitably emphasised and displayed in the classroom, but not always referred to in the lesson.
93. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved, but using and applying mathematics as well as the use of ICT require further attention. Teaching has improved and marking is regular, but the quality of feedback is inconsistent. The head of department has a good awareness of the department's strengths and weaknesses, but monitoring and documentation need further development.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

94. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The department has a very detailed numeracy policy and other departments have an assigned mathematics teacher to support their work. Number work is developed well in science, but pupils rely too heavily on calculators where mental arithmetic skills would be more appropriate. Algebraic skills are used in music for pattern spotting and in science with formulae for speed and density. Spatial awareness is used across the curriculum including scale and perspective in art. Graphs are used in history for looking at voting patterns and pupils make good use of their data handling skills to analyse population statistics in geography.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in examinations in both Years 9 and 11 were well above average in 2003.
- The quality of accommodation is good.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is some unsatisfactory practice, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of ICT has increased, but is still insufficient, and inconsistent.

## Commentary

95. The standard of work in science on entry to the school is above average. In 2003, test results in Year 9 improved significantly, and were well above average. The improvement was shown in the increase in pupils gaining the higher grades. These results indicate that achievement is good during Years 7 to 9, and that standards are in line with those of pupils in similar schools. Girls performed better than boys. The GCSE results in Year 11 were also well above average, but with boys' results better than those of the girls. However, pupils' performance in science was generally below that in other subjects. A large proportion of the year group was entered, and pupils' achievements were good when compared with their results when in Year 9.
96. Standards of work seen during the inspection are not as high as in recent examinations, but are still above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. The main reason that standards are lower is that a significant number of pupils develop a rather casual attitude to learning in Years 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, the attitude of pupils with below average standards, including some of those with special educational needs, becomes unsatisfactory. These pupils are mostly, although not exclusively, boys. This attitude has a negative impact on their work, and their results. In very few classes can teachers relax and enjoy their teaching.
97. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11. There are occasional examples of very good teaching, as in a Year 7 lesson on chromatography, but there are also examples of teaching that is barely satisfactory, or even unsatisfactory. Teachers plan the content of lessons thoroughly, and lesson objectives are clear, but less priority is given to devising interesting learning strategies. Too often, there are too many worksheets, too much writing (and even copying), and too little practical and other group work. In these lessons, teaching methods do not encourage pupils to think about their work and, therefore, they become involved in off-task chatter. The use of ICT has improved, but is not fully developed, and not all pupils have the same access. Part of the reason is a lack of laptops and projectors, but even the technology that is available is underused. There are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, such as the use of graphs and formulae, and there is a satisfactory use of key words.
98. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a good balance across the attainment targets of the National Curriculum. Good documentation is in place, but there is insufficient delegation to members of the team. There are regular meetings, but insufficient time is devoted to monitoring the work of the department, such as teaching skills, the quality of marking and the accuracy of assessments. Few opportunities are provided for members of the department to learn from and to replicate best practice. The result is inconsistencies in practice, for example, in the use of topic sheets and word lists, the integration of ICT and the development of constructive comments when marking work.
99. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. Standards in recent examinations have improved, but the work seen during the inspection is not of such a high quality. The quality of the accommodation has improved, but some laboratories are often cold, and there is also a shortage of pinboard for display. Less progress has been made in the quality of teaching, resulting in the casual attitude of a significant proportion of pupils. The lack of practical opportunities for pupils restricts their ability to plan and carry out their own investigations.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is now satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum.
- Very good learning resources and accommodation for specialist ICT lessons provide a very good learning environment.
- The majority of pupils show good attitudes to their work.
- The quality of marking, assessment and target setting needs to be improved.
- Overall achievement, especially of girls and lower attaining boys, is not as good as it should be.
- ICT is not sufficiently used to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.

### Commentary

100. This is an improving department, but provision and achievement are not yet satisfactory because many of the areas for improvement are historic and there has been insufficient time for the newly appointed head of department to address all these issues prior to this inspection. Provision remains unsatisfactory as a result of the cumulative effects of the unsatisfactory achievement in earlier years, particularly by girls and lower attaining boys, and there have been, and remain, too few opportunities for pupils to consolidate and apply their ICT skills in other subjects. In Years 8 and 9 pupils cover only a small percentage of the National Strategy for ICT as a result of the limited time for ICT.
101. Pupils now enter the school with average standards in ICT, although standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents unsatisfactory achievement in the subject for the pupils concerned. In specialist ICT lessons, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 develop basic skills in desktop publishing, computer aided design and control technology, using specialist software to present information to an audience, use digital cameras and scanners as well as the Internet to research information. They use spreadsheets and databases successfully, although the depth and breadth of their knowledge are much more limited than in most schools. Pupils following examination courses in Years 10 and 11 are now working more closely to the examination marking criteria to complete their coursework. The majority of pupils respond well in class and show good attitudes to their work.
102. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall, and the best was good. However, learning suffered in previous years as a result of staffing difficulties and this has left gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils in Year 9 are learning to use formulae for the first time when using spreadsheets. Teachers know the subject well, and provide a range of planned tasks that actively involve the pupils. They support pupils on an individual basis in lessons, although the range of strategies they use to meet their individual learning needs, particularly those of girls and lower attaining boys, is too limited. This often results in lack of concentration and disruption from a small minority of boys. The department has made a start in supporting pupils in developing their numeracy and literacy skills, but this work needs extensive further development. In Years 10 and 11, teachers now structure the work more to enable pupils to follow the guidelines of the examination mark scheme, in order to gain better marks for each section of the work. They encourage co-operation in lessons and this leads to positive attitudes.
103. The curriculum leadership of the department is satisfactory. The new head of department has worked well to improve the standard of planning and the school has invested well to increase the computer resources. The ratio of pupils per computer is now more favourable than the national average. The department works well as a team and is committed to improving provision. The improved accommodation and resources are having a good impact on learning. There are improvements also in teaching specialist ICT and the quality of the management

systems within the department. Systems for marking, assessment and target setting are developing, but they still need to be made more effective and consistent across the department. There is a clear vision for improvement in the department and the significant increase in the quality of resources and planning means that improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

104. The use of ICT in all subjects across the curriculum cannot be fully assured. There are examples of good work in individual lessons in several subjects, for example, in modern foreign languages, very good use of ICT was evident in the two dedicated computer suites. Pupils used computers to draft their work, access the Internet, learn vocabulary and structure by means of motivating games, which are also available on the network. There is a language laboratory facility and this is very well used to enhance learning with regular, frequent access for pupils. In business studies, pupils show very good use of ICT. This is reflected in the above average examination grades.
105. Pupils use digital and scanned images, and spellcheck to enhance the quality of their work and presentation of written work for target audiences. Their use of font and business presentation is very good. There is a big improvement in the use of ICT in science. A dedicated suite of 15 computers is well used to integrate ICT into pupils' work. They use a good range of software including multimedia resources. However, there is only one laptop and interactive white board, which is underused. Pupils use spreadsheets and graphs to present work, using sensors to capture data. All pupils use ICT well within their science lessons. Good use in history includes work using interactive websites, for example, to research the work on The Battle of Hastings. Pupils were stimulated by interactive games, which reinforced and enhanced their learning. There was satisfactory use of ICT in design and technology where pupils use ICT to present their work, process data, experience work in control technology and computer aided design and manufacturing. Although there is satisfactory use of ICT in mathematics and art and design, there are many missed opportunities to use ICT in maths, and there is a need to increase the provision of resources in art and design, and in music - to enable pupils to use ICT fully in these subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High attainers achieve high GCSE grades as a result of good teaching.
- Warm, supportive relationships and mutual respect motivate the pupils to learn.
- The tasks set for lower attainers in Years 7, 8 and 9 are too difficult.
- There is little use of ICT to widen strategies for learning.

#### **Commentary**

106. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were above the national average and that has been the trend in recent years. At GCSE results were above the national average in 2003 and have steadily improved in the last three years. Geography results are broadly in line with other subjects, although in 2003, girls did less well.
107. Standards are average when pupils start the school and average by the end of Year 9 representing satisfactory achievement. The pupils have improved their geographical knowledge, especially map and location skills, as well as understanding the impact of physical factors on human activity. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average and

achievement is good, being very good for the higher attainers. The support for extended writing, coursework and exam technique allows them to achieve high grades. Boys and girls perform equally well, while the pupils with special educational needs achieve as expected. Geography contributes to developing literacy skills and assists the pupils with their numeracy through the use of graphs and data. It makes little provision for utilising ICT as a strategy to aid learning.

108. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The pupils benefit from lessons that are teacher led and have a good range of tasks, although some of these are too hard for the lower attainers who have literacy difficulties. The pupils' oral responses are good with thoughtful answers and factual knowledge being offered by higher and middle attainers. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are always good and sometimes very good. The pupils are highly motivated to learn by warm, caring teachers who offer support and good guidance. As a result, GCSE grades continue to improve and the work of high attainers is reflective, detailed and analytical. They have a secure factual base and accurately link cause and effect on issues such as development and regional inequalities to produce good written answers. The pupils' awareness of social, cultural and moral issues is strong and the subject contributes to aspects of citizenship. Marking is thorough and praise with constructive comment is well used. Targets are set for the pupils and the resultant expectation helps achievement. Work on assessment is a feature since the last inspection. The pupils work co-operatively and behaviour is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10 and 11 where maturity and mutual respect are evident.
109. Curriculum leadership and management are both good. The department is well organised, committed and enthusiastic, with a high level of teamwork. Planning is effective and subject knowledge good. There is a consistency of style and approach. The department would gain from more formal monitoring as there is much good practice to share. Accommodation is satisfactory. Resources are adequate, but limited access to computers restricts the development of pupils' skills and the valuable experiences and motivation that they offer. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, but the need to utilise ICT more still remains.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at GCSE have improved significantly because teachers make use of effective strategies to develop pupils' skills.
- The department has made very good improvement since the last inspection when there were many weaknesses.
- Curriculum leadership is very good and provides a clear vision, focused on high standards.
- Lower attaining pupils need a bit more support with some tasks.

## **Commentary**

110. Results in the GCSE examinations were above average in 2002 and 2003. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when standards were well below average.
111. Pupils enter the school with average standards in history. In work seen, these have risen to above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. By the end of Year 9 pupils have developed a broad range of historical skills. The history curriculum places a good emphasis on enabling pupils to make use of a wide range of historical sources – this means that standards in this area rise quickly right from the beginning of Year 7 and eventually provide a good foundation for GCSE work. By the end of Year 11, the growing number of pupils opting to take history at

GCSE achieve above average standards. Standards in writing are similarly above average and most pupils write with increasing confidence. Teachers are beginning to make use of ICT in their lessons and standards in this area are improving.

112. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in all years. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 because teachers lay the foundation for the development of a good range of skills. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good because teaching enables pupils to build on existing skills and learn effectively. Although pupils of all abilities achieve well, there is scope to more effectively structure some tasks to provide lower attaining pupils with a bit more support.
113. Teaching and learning are good overall. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers expect pupils to think and write analytically and then provide them with the tools to do so. Another strength of the teaching is the positive climate for learning created by committed and enthusiastic teachers. As a result, almost all pupils work hard, behave well and show pride in their achievements. Assessment procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are aware of the levels at which they are working and there are useful displays of work marked to each level displayed on history classroom walls.
114. Curriculum leadership is very good with very clear vision and direction. The most notable strength of the department is the way in which every aspect of the curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. At the same time, all teachers, both those new to the school and those who have been here for some time, work as a cohesive team, readily sharing both good practice and concerns. Management of the subject is good. Procedures are clear, non-bureaucratic and supportive.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are enthusiastic and work hard to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. This means that pupils respond with hard work and good behaviour.
- Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Standards are above average by the end of Year 11, despite the fact that the time allocated is less than the recommended levels.
- Marking does not give sufficient guidance on what pupils need to do in order to improve their work.
- Teachers do not always provide sufficient structured guidance to lower attaining pupils.

### **Commentary**

115. Results in the GCSE short course examination were above average in 2002 and 2003.
116. Standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9 because pupils enter the school with average levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. Achievement continues to be good in Years 10 and 11; time allocated to the subject is below recommended levels and this means that pupils must work hard to maintain their above average standards. Lower attaining pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue make broadly similar rates of progress as those of their peers, although teachers do not always provide sufficient structure to their tasks and activities. Writing standards are generally above average. All teachers work very hard to provide good support for literacy so that pupils are able to speak and write with confidence and accuracy.
117. Teaching is good overall. A particular strength of the teaching is the commitment and enthusiasm shown by everyone in the department. Teachers work hard to build pupils' self-

confidence and to create a positive work ethic in the department. This means that pupils generally work hard, behave well and show pride in their work. Teachers are sufficiently knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject and are well supported by the head of department. Marking of pupils' work is regular and supportive – comments, however, do not yet give sufficient guidance on what they need to do in order to improve their work. Although teachers make very good use of a range of resources to enhance the curriculum (during the week of the inspection the department celebrated Chinese New Year with vibrant displays including the wearing of Chinese clothes by all teachers), insufficient use is made of ICT and also of visits to places of religious interest. This is largely a cost issue.

118. Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
119. Curriculum leadership is good. The main constraint in the past has been staffing. There is now a stable team of specialists or experienced teachers and this has already led to improvements. There is a clear vision of how to raise standards and how to improve the subject generally. Management of the subject is good. Procedures are clear, non-bureaucratic and supportive, and improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average.
- The leadership of the department and contribution of colleagues promotes high standards.
- Assessment in the department enables pupils to have a sense of their own progress.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use CAD/CAM.

### **Commentary**

120. Results at GCSE are significantly above the national average. Girls do better than boys in the school, nevertheless, boy's performance is well above that of boys nationally.
121. Standards on entry to the school show a wide range of attainment. This reflects the many different experiences the pupils have had in the subject. Overall, standards on entry are below average. Standards in work seen are average at the end of Year 9 and significantly higher at the end of Year 11, representing good achievement through the school. This is similar to the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' design folders reflect care in presentation and attention to detail, and record genuine development of design ideas. All aspects of the design process are addressed to meet the requirements of the specification, and include some use of CAD/CAM. The department has developed a good assessment strategy for monitoring and recording pupils' achievement. Pupils know their current attainment level, and are set targets they can understand and achieve to make progress.
122. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Lessons are characterised by good planning, clear expectations of pupils, and teachers' sound subject knowledge. Pupils' tasks are often time-related and this ensures a brisk pace. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum offered is wide ranging and provides a sound foundation for GCSE. Pupils develop competence in designing and making skills, and use correct technical language. They use hand tools well, and are equally skilful in planning and making food products as part of a link project with a school in Italy. The curriculum is enriched by participation in the 'designers in schools' project and a 'young chef' competition. Pupils learn from each other and help each other at appropriate

times. At the end of food technology lessons teachers make good use of a plenary session to evaluate the products made by pupils.

123. The department is very well led by the head of department and a supportive team who work effectively to deliver a quality curriculum. There is a clear vision for the future needs of the department in its development plan. There are systems in place to support the delivery of the curriculum, with up-to-date documentation. Materials and resources are well organised and readily available. Teaching areas are small, restrict opportunities for pupils to use the full range of equipment safely and are in need of refurbishment. The department benefits from the support given by the technician and the deployment of support staff. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **excellent**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is excellent curriculum leadership and management of the department.
- Standards are very high by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is very good overall and sets high expectations.
- Attitudes to learning are very good and support high achievement.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and limiting development of the art and design curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

124. Standards overall are high and pupils achieve very well. On entry to the school standards are average and some pupils have relatively limited experience of art and design. They achieve well, broadening their knowledge and skills in painting, drawing, printmaking, textiles and ceramics. Teacher assessment in 2003 indicates above average standards by the end of Year 9. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, standards were far above national expectations. Half of Year 11 took the examination, a much higher proportion than nationally, and almost half achieved an A or A\* grade. Most achieved a C grade or better and all pupils achieved a grade, representing excellent achievement.
125. In work seen, standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Drawing skills are of a high standard. Knowledge of artists and artistic conventions is developed and pupils make imaginative reference to these in their own work and achieve well. They sometimes use computers to develop images, but overall this skill is underused in lessons, due to lack of space and resources. Sensitive individual advice and encouragement in particular help pupils with special educational needs to be fully included in lessons and achieve well. By Year 11, standards are very high as a result of excellent teaching that inspires and challenges pupils and supports high achievement. Pupils refine their skills, developing their independence and the confidence to create imaginative personal work of high quality in painting, drawing and ceramics.
126. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are well planned and matched to the needs of pupils, and this stimulates their interest in art and design. Much of the specialist teaching is excellent, inspiring pupils to achieve very high standards. Regular references are made to the work of artists and cultures and this raises the creative and visual appreciation of the pupils and an understanding of how their own work might be developed. Achievement is recognised and work is regularly discussed and displayed, which raises personal esteem and confidence, and promotes very good attitudes to learning.

127. The head of department provides excellent leadership and management with clarity of vision. The teachers have a range of specialist expertise and work very effectively as a team. The accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory. The popularity and success of art and design has led to overcrowding of specialist accommodation, with younger pupils on occasions working in a corridor. This puts a strain on teachers and pupils alike and restricts the range of work. Developments in printmaking and use of ICT in particular are being hampered by the lack of space. The department shares its teaching expertise through its links with other schools and its excellent standards have been recognised at local and national level. The overall improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## Music

Provision in music in the main school is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A growing number of pupils opt for GCSE and their achievement is good.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils value the subject and learn well.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.
- Good curriculum leadership and management ensure good provision, despite these shortcomings.
- An above average number of pupils take instrumental musical tuition.

### Commentary

128. In 2003 GCSE results in music were broadly above average. However, the group size, while average as a percentage of the year group, makes this statistically insecure. The proportion of pupils now taking the course is above average. Inspection evidence corroborates above average standards. There is a good balance of boys and girls taking the GCSE course.

129. By the end of Year 9, in work seen, standards are average and, given that pupils enter with slightly below average standards and experiences in the subject, all pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Pupils listen well and use technical vocabulary well in evaluating music from a broad stylistic palette. They perform well, in line with their ability and experience. Their composition work is limited; inadequate time and resources for practical work in class hold back standards.

130. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils learn and achieve well. Planning and the management of pupils are very good, leading to pupils having a clear sense of routine and respect for teachers, each other, equipment and the tasks they are set to do. Careful preparation ensures that those with special educational needs are well provided for and effective use of the reward system and instruments motivates younger pupils. Pupils work well together in groups without the need for close supervision, enabling the intervention of teachers to be targeted at supporting pupils on the basis of their individual needs. Exercise books are well used to promote continuity by recording work in lessons, as well as homework and project work. This develops good standards in literacy and numeracy. Teachers have confident subject knowledge. Clear musical demonstration usually ensures that pupils have a clear picture of what is required of them in practical work. Assessment is good, but the way this is used to inform the content of the curriculum, especially in Year 9, is not rigorous enough. Occasionally, teachers' explanations do not present ways for pupils to address the physical and analytical challenges of some practical tasks.

131. Both the curriculum leadership and the management of the subject are good. Staff work well together and in a short time have developed a clear vision and strategy for improvement in standards and opportunity. They have found workable solutions to the constraints posed by the inadequate accommodation and resources. Nonetheless, the very poor soundproofing disrupts almost all listening work. The very limited instrumental stock means that, when classes are

taught concurrently, instruments change class in mid-lesson. While this gives continuity with weekly practical work, much more could be achieved if these sessions could exceed 20 minutes. Moreover, in order to make use of practice rooms to fulfil requirements for making music in groups, classes in the adjacent teaching room are repeatedly interrupted in mid-lesson. Although developments are in hand, the provision for using ICT in the music curriculum is inadequate. This particularly holds back GCSE composition work. An above average proportion of pupils take instrumental and singing lessons, which are of good quality. This enhances GCSE performance and also feeds into the choir, band and orchestra. These, while modest in size, perform well in concert and represent the school in the local community. Overall, despite only partial improvement to the accommodation, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership is good; teachers work well as a team with a strong commitment to improving standards.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good; teachers have very good knowledge and high expectations.
- There is insufficient time allocated in Years 10 and 11, which constrains the breadth and depth of the core physical education programme.
- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- The outdoor hard area is unusable for netball and tennis; this restricts the breadth and depth of the physical education programme.

### **Commentary**

132. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average. This was the second set of results and they were significantly better than the 2002 results. Girls outperform boys. Boys did not do as well as they did in their other subjects. This is an unusual situation, but a consequence of the course recruiting many academic pupils who did not do as well in the practical element of the course.
133. Pupils arrive at school with broadly average standards in physical education. By Year 9 pupils' standards are above average; all pupils of all abilities make good achievement over the first three years at school. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 last year were a little higher than the inspection evidence showed. Pupils show competence in football, dance, basketball and gymnastics. They successfully learn many of the basic skills required for taking part in these activities. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand the purposes of warm up and many show a good level of confidence as they successfully lead a class warm up. Good new street dance routines are rapidly choreographed to include such aspects as body popping, waves and point. These two examples of warm up and dance demonstrate above average standards and that pupils by the end of Year 9 achieve well. Standards in the core physical education programme by the end of Year 11 are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. This is a consequence of insufficient time for the core physical education programme as both standards and achievement are constrained. However, in the large majority of lessons seen, pupils achieved well.
134. Pupils who opt for GCSE in physical education, attain standards that are above average and pupils achieve well. In the core programme Years 10 and 11 pupils start to apply their skills within different games. For instance, in a Year 11 football lesson, pupils used their rapid control and passing skills within a game and made effective use of width and depth. GCSE pupils are well motivated and build successfully on their core physical education programme.

The current standards of Years 10 and 11 GCSE pupils are above average; they are achieving well. This was well exemplified in a Year 10 GCSE lesson where pupils' responses showed good knowledge and understanding of dynamic, static and explosive strength.

135. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable and confident teachers, and this helps the pupils to develop a depth of understanding in the subject. For example, assessing and helping Year 11 pupils to coach basketball shows good knowledge and evaluation. Lesson planning is effective and objectives are usually set and shared with pupils. Lessons show good challenge and high expectations, as seen in a Year 9 dance lesson where pupils produce good quality group dance using levels and canon. Good use is made of technical words. Mathematics is used in scoring and recording fitness work. Computers are used well in pupils' coursework and digital cameras for performance evaluation. A good expectation of behaviour and performance is well reflected in good levels of participation in extra-curricular sport by pupils, standards of dress and behaviour. Teachers adapt methods to suit pupils with special educational needs; this ensures that they achieve as their peers. A bigger focus is now needed on how pupils learn. Assessment is now good and beginning to be used to plan. However, data from the GCSE results now need careful evaluation. Good attitudes, behaviour and teacher/pupil relationships enhance pupils' learning.
136. Although teaching methods are good, in GCSE theory lessons the range of teaching strategies that can be used is limited, as there is no permanent base, and resources have to be carried around the school to a variety of rooms.
137. Overall, curriculum leadership and management of the department are good. Good teamwork, organisation and documentation enable the department to run smoothly. The head of department shows a clear understanding of the direction of development needed, but regular and systematic observation of teaching is needed to share and further develop good practice with a focus on how pupils learn. Accommodation and facilities for physical education are satisfactory, however, inability to use the hard area severely restricts curriculum breadth for activities like netball, hockey and tennis. Greater consistency in GCSE marking and refinement of assessment procedures will enable pupils to be more aware of the progress they are making and support their improvement. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, especially in the development of a GCSE course.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **BUSINESS EDUCATION 11-16**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Assessment - including pupils marking their own work - is a major strength of the subject, so that pupils know clearly what they must do to improve.
- Achievement is very good because teachers plan and deliver work that is well matched to the wide range of needs in a class.
- Coursework is well prepared, and demonstrates the wide-ranging competence of the pupils.
- The lack of a firm home base for the subject means that the often very good resources prepared by teachers cannot be used to best effect.
- Although curriculum leadership is very good, development planning could focus still more on how improvements will affect the pupils.

#### **Commentary**

138. The trend in GCSE results in recent years has been upwards, and at a faster rate than is seen nationally. In 2003, results were well above average and, although girls had out-performed boys in earlier years, the gap had closed by 2003. Since the pupils had a similar academic

profile at the start of the course to that seen nationally, the results represented very good achievement. Overall, pupils tend to get much better results in the subject than in the others that they take; in 2003, they did a whole grade better on average - the largest margin of any subject in the school.

139. In work seen during the inspection, standards are also well above average for the end of Year 11. Achievement remains very good for boys and girls alike. Pupils have a very good understanding of the basic principles of the subject, and most are very quick to extract the key information from case studies. Higher and average attainers are also quick to be able to apply ideas to new situations, or to relate them to other examples. Whilst lower attainers have a generally secure factual base in the subject, they tend to be more limited at collecting and analysing a suitable range of evidence. Higher attainers are starting to develop the essential skills of evaluating the quality of their coursework; an essential feature for the highest grades. Pupils are adept users of ICT, both to carry out research and to present their work; standards are above average. Most coursework benefits from the careful use of text and images. The written work of all but the lowest attainers is good, with careful attention to spelling, grammar and audience. Some of the coursework would not be out of place in reporting business opportunities within a company. In a few cases, the work of lower attainers, particularly boys, is disorganised, and does not persevere with case studies. Standards of numeracy are average; charts and diagrams are used accurately and appropriately to explain what is happening.
140. Teaching and learning are very good overall; some lessons are excellent. Teachers have a very good knowledge of both the subject and the course requirements. Lessons are very well planned, get off to a crisp start, and take account of the often wide range of prior attainment to be found in a class. There is also a good closing session that summarises what has been done. Teachers have very good expectations of work and behaviour; pupils are generally able to work in an orderly atmosphere. The very good relationships between pupils and their teachers underpin the effectiveness of class control; work that challenges all at an appropriate level is the other strand. It takes teaching of great skill to be able to enthuse potentially disaffected lower attainers at the same time as providing demanding work that extends the highest attainers. Teaching uses a wide range of teaching methods, but lessons always start with clear objectives that emphasise what is to be learned by pupils, rather than what the teacher intends to do. Pupils know why they are doing a particular task. A major strength of the subject is the excellent understanding that pupils have of how they can improve. As in other subjects, pupils have clear targets for GCSE performance. Here, their progress is monitored, and discussed with them, at regular intervals. Marking shows clearly what must be done to improve work. Pupils mark their own coursework, using the assessment objectives and criteria of the examining board to do so. Differences between their marks and those of the teacher then form the basis of dialogue on where further emphasis needs to be made.
141. The curriculum leadership of the subject is very good, with a clear focus on achievement for the individual. This is reflected in the department's development plan, although success criteria do not make enough note of what the pupils should gain from improvements. The subject lacks a firm 'home'. Too many lessons are taught in other subject areas; this makes it very hard for teachers to make effective use of their well-prepared learning resources. For example, lessons taught in the library lack the use of even a white board or projector, so that improvisation becomes paramount. There is good access to ICT, which is built into lessons well. Overall, the subject, already strong at the time of the previous inspection, has shown good improvement.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

In this curriculum area, citizenship was sampled.

### **Citizenship**

No provision judgement is made, since no teaching of citizenship was seen during the inspection.

## Commentary

142. The school has a timetabled subject called personal, social development (PSE) for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. This seeks to cover personal, social and health education, careers and National Curriculum citizenship. This is taught to all Year 7 pupils in one lesson every week, and Years 8 and 9 pupils in one lesson every two weeks. Allocation of time, therefore, seriously constrains development of the subject. It is difficult to effectively deliver the three strands of the subject in sufficient depth under the current arrangements. Apart from a timetabled lesson, however, there are also contributions from other subjects of the curriculum and from activities outside normal lessons. Such contributions help to add to pupils' entitlement so that the citizenship curriculum is at least delivered in sufficient breadth. The school is currently planning the introduction of citizenship in Years 10 and 11.
143. No citizenship lessons were seen during the week of the inspection. This is because timetabled lessons during that time focused on personal and social education. It is, therefore, not possible to make judgements on teaching and learning in the subject. A scrutiny of pupils' work, however, shows that standards are broadly average and that achievement within lessons is satisfactory. Long-term achievement, however, is affected by the amount of time allocated to the subject, which makes it difficult to cover topics in great depth.
144. Curriculum leadership is good. The teacher in charge of citizenship has a clear vision of what needs to be done to take the subject forward. Management is also good. Clear progress has been made with the introduction of the subject. Teachers are committed and enthusiastic and have worked hard to develop an interesting programme of relevance to pupils. The head of department has carried out a useful audit of other subjects and extra-curricular activities to map their contributions to the subject and the groundwork has been laid to begin assessing pupils' work at the end of Year 9.
145. Citizenship was not a National Curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection, and so no judgement on improvement is possible.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. Only courses entering more than five candidates are included here.

### *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	12	58.3	81.6	8.3	33.2	17.5	33.2
Business	10	80.0	89.1	30.0	31.7	34.0	35.4
Chemistry	13	53.8	84.8	0	36.9	14.6	35.2
Geography	9	77.8	88.3	11.1	36.4	28.9	36.3
ICT	9	66.7	78.2	0	20.6	14.4	28.5
Mathematics	8	62.5	74.2	23.5	34.3	20.0	31.3
Physics	13	30.8	82.0	0	82.0	6.9	34.3

**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	9	100	96	100	48.7	117.8	89.3
Business	20	100	96.5	5.0	32.8	71.0	79.0
Chemistry	11	90.9	92.2	18.2	45.8	60.0	84.9
English	8	100	98.4	100	43.8	112.5	86.4
French	5	100	96.3	100	46.1	96.0	85.5
Design and technology	6	100	95.3	0	35.4	66.7	78.2
Geography	17	100	97.0	53.0	40.4	88.2	83.5
German	7	100	96.3	28.6	44.3	77.1	84.6
History	9	100	97.1	11.1	41.0	77.8	83.3
Mathematics	9	100	93.3	88.9	69.7	111.1	87.1
Physics	12	100	92.8	50.0	42.8	83.3	82.9
Sociology	11	100	95.4	27.3	38.6	74.5	82.7

**Level 2 vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business VCE	10	80.0	86.7	20.0	1.9	56.0	61.9

**ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus subjects were English and French. A Year 12 media studies lesson was also sampled. This new course, developed in the English department, has proved popular. Teaching was good and standards were above average. The students made good progress in deconstructing representations of both same, and different, sex relationships in the film 'Point Break'. The teacher's very good knowledge of the subject was a significant strength of the teaching.

**English**

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

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The 2002 A-level results were very high.
- Standards seen in Year 13 are well above average and the students' achievement is very good.
- Very good and enthusiastic teaching enthuses the students.
- Excellent coursework provision results in very high grades.
- The subject's leadership and management are very good, and this ensures that teachers and resources are used to very good effect.
- Module test results show the students' techniques of examination writing require improvement.

## Commentary

146. Results in the 2002 English literature A-level examination were very high; in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Results were not as high in 2003, but were in line with expectations based on the students' prior attainments. In the 2002 AS examination results were above average and students tended to do better than expected. In 2003, AS results improved and were significantly better than expected. Retention rates are good.
147. Standards are well above average in the current Year 13. Achievement is very good given that the students started the course with attainments that were broadly average for an A-level course. During lessons, in coursework and in their written work, most students show qualities associated with grades A or B. They write with a consistently evaluative style. They analyse texts in detail and, most significantly, explore critically the impact of an author's use of language. They write with clarity and accuracy. Detailed exploration of linguistic symbolism was clearly evident when students discussed Fowles' use of natural imagery to introduce Sarah in 'The French Lieutenant's Woman' and subsequently compared it with Hawthorne's introduction of Hester in 'The Scarlet Letter'. The students' attitudes to work are also very good. They persevered well, as when encountering difficult and elusive imagery in 'The Prelude'. The significant area for development concerns techniques of examination writing, since many students' examination module grades are not as high as their coursework. Standards in Year 12 are above average and students, from a wide range of starting attainments, are showing good achievement. Higher attainers write with a secure analytical style, but some lower attainers tend to be too descriptive. The students' standards in using ICT are above average and they show average standards in application of number.
148. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers know their subject very well and have a very good knowledge of examination requirements. Consequently, students make very good progress in the required knowledge of the texts, and of literary techniques. Lessons are enthralling because teachers plan a wide range of activities and share their enthusiasm for the subject. There is a lot of challenge, with students frequently required to provide presentations, work collaboratively and carry out independent research. The pace of lessons is brisk; the clear use of learning objectives ensures a strong sense of purpose. They make good use of Internet resources. Support for coursework is excellent and results in some outstandingly high grades. Students valued the supportive individual tutoring on their novels set in the context of World War One. Teachers mark work well, specifically recognising strengths, but pointing out targets for improvement. The students' understanding of how to improve is strengthened because of the teachers' good use of assessment objectives. Earlier sharing of potential target grades and related criteria in Year 12 would strengthen this understanding even further.
149. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Teachers collaborate well. Teachers are well deployed to make best use of their strengths. Evaluation is very good and seeks continuous improvement. For example, the head of department has identified the need for an induction and transition module at the start of Year 12 to accelerate the students' adjustment to the course. Standards are better than at the previous inspection so improvement has been good.

## French

Provision in French in the sixth form is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students gain above average standards at A level, which represents high achievement.
- The teachers are very well qualified, resulting in very effective teaching that is characterised by a high level of challenge.

- The students are encouraged to improve their French by skilful teaching, which gives them the linguistic tools to speak and write with increasing confidence.
- Leadership and management are highly effective.

## Commentary

150. At A level, results in 2002 were well above average, with the majority of candidates obtaining the highest grades. Students generally did better than their GCSE results would suggest. Results have been at this level since the previous inspection, including in 2003. Retention rates are good.
151. Students make the transition from GCSE to A level very effectively, and by the end of Year 13 standards in work seen during the inspection are well above average. This represents very good achievement, given that standards on entry to the sixth form are average. By the end of Year 13, the students can conduct extended dialogues in French, making valid points and defending a point of view. Their listening and reading skills develop well as they tackle challenging material, moving from gist comprehension to more precise understanding. They have mastered basic grammar well, and have a broad range of vocabulary and idiom with which to express themselves in speaking and writing. They write accurately, although some make errors when handling more complex structures in extended writing. The higher attainers write fluently and at length, with a high degree of accuracy; they attempt more complex sentence patterns, conveying well-developed and thoughtful ideas.
152. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned, and the teachers' expertise and commitment to the subject are key factors in promoting very good learning and achievement. The teachers give the students challenging work to do in lessons and in their private study time, and ensure that they can use more sophisticated language by specifically teaching them a range of synonyms and other phrases and structures they need to do this. As a result, the students have the linguistic tools to speak and write with growing confidence. In lessons, the teachers give time to students to express their own ideas and opinions, and encourage and engage them very well, so that they are very well involved. Their relationships with their teachers and each other are very good, and there is a learning culture based on communication, collaboration and mutual support. The computer language laboratory is used regularly and very effectively to give the students opportunities to work intensively on text and on their speaking skills. The marking of written work is conscientious, and the teachers' comments demonstrate high expectations of the students' intellectual effort and attention to detail; this is clearly a strong factor in the progress that the students make. Aspects of literacy, such as reflecting on functions of language, are well taught. The students have full access to the department's excellent computer provision to enable them to improve their linguistic skills as well as their information and communication technology skills. A French language assistant is used effectively to support speaking, listening and writing skills on an individual basis; the students rate this opportunity highly. There are occasional opportunities to develop the key skill of application of number through French by, for example, interpreting statistics or graphs.
153. The curriculum leadership of French at this level is very good. The department has high aspirations for every student, and good assessment and monitoring procedures underpin this. Many students have benefited from study visits to mainland Europe, which the department organises regularly, and in the sixth form there are good opportunities for work experience in France. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## MATHEMATICS

The focus subject was mathematics.

### Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above average and have improved since the previous inspection.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and support students well in their examination revision.
- Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with their students and give their time freely outside lessons to support students who have difficulties.
- Sometimes, insufficient account is taken of the spread of ability to cater specifically for individual needs.
- The provision for ICT within the department is underdeveloped and its use is inconsistent across the department.

## Commentary

154. In the 2002 A-level examination, results were very high, in the top five per cent nationally, in comparison with national averages. The results have improved since the time of the previous inspection, although the 2003 results saw a slight drop. Results were in line with expectations across the attainment range. In the 2002 AS examination, results were average; the 2003 results saw a further improvement, especially in the proportion of higher grades. Results tend to be better than expected from GCSE performance, particularly amongst average attainers. Students in the school are also entered for A-level further mathematics, but numbers are too small to make comparisons with national statistics. Retention rates in the sixth form are good.
155. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average. On the basis of their above average prior attainment, achievement is good. Students can solve trigonometric equations and use differentiation and integration with confidence. Higher attaining students, following the further mathematics course, can use De Moivre's theorem and make good use of proof by induction methods.
156. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons start promptly and proceed at a good pace so that valuable curriculum time is maximised. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their exposition is carefully planned to ensure that objectives are met and syllabus requirements are covered. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with their students and happily give their time outside lessons to support those who are having difficulties. However, marking is irregular and inconsistent across the department and there is not enough evidence of catering for the wide spread of ability in classes. Students have a good idea of their target grade, but less idea of what to do to achieve it.
157. Curriculum leadership is good and there is a clear educational direction for mathematics in the sixth form. Staff teams work co-operatively with one another, but inconsistencies exist because of a lack of guidance and monitoring to identify and act upon weaknesses. Schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed to provide a framework for lesson planning or give details of suitable resources and background reading.
158. The provision for ICT in the sixth form is satisfactory, but underdeveloped. The department makes some use of computers including graphical calculators. An interactive white board has recently been introduced to the department, but enrichment opportunities, such as making use of the Internet, are underutilised. The provision for literacy is satisfactory, but inconsistent across the department. Students' folders demonstrate good presentation skills, although some of the folders, especially those of boys, do not provide a useful tool for revision purposes.
159. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. Results have improved since the last report and remain high in comparison with national averages. Teaching has improved, but some teaching lacks challenge and does not take sufficient account of the spread of ability in the class. Students' attitudes to mathematics and their work remain positive.

## SCIENCE

The focus subject was chemistry, but physics was also sampled.

The A-level results in physics were average in 2002, but well below average in 2003, when only two students took the A-level paper. Numbers have increased again, and standards seen in class are average. In a Year 13 lesson about nuclear fission and fusion, teaching was satisfactory, but the students' response to the tasks set by the teacher showed a lack of enthusiasm. Moreover, the level of attendance was low. Nevertheless, students' target grades for 2004 suggest an improvement in results is likely.

### Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are very involved in their work, and concentrate well in lessons.
- There is regular use of ICT; this adds interest to the work and extends learning.
- Assessment information could be better used to show students how to improve.

#### Commentary

160. Students with a wide range of prior attainment are given the opportunity to study AS and A-level chemistry. In 2002, the last year for which national data are available, results in external examinations were well below average, and 2003 results are at similar levels. There have been few A or B grades, but most students entered for the examination have gained at least pass grade. At both levels, students tend to obtain results that are slightly better than would be expected from their modest GCSE performances, with male students adding greater value than females.
161. The take-up of the subject is good, as is the retention rate. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average, students are achieving well in relation to their now broadly average standards at entry, and have very good attitudes to the subject. The course is carefully structured, so there is good progression from one lesson to the next. In Year 12, for instance, there is good reinforcement of the theory of alkanes and alkenes through discussion and practical exercises. Similarly, in Year 13, previous work is consolidated before students undertake a titration of permanganate solution. They, therefore, learn well and overall standards are above average. Students listen well, and there is mutual respect between teachers and students. As a result, students respond well to questions from their teachers, who deal sensitively with any lack of understanding. Students are, therefore, confident and ask questions when requiring further explanation.
162. There is regular and increasing use of ICT by students to record differences in temperature when measuring enthalpy changes, and for research. The subject also makes a good contribution to the development of students' application of number, especially when using graphs and formulae. Their communication skills are improved through the need to express themselves clearly and concisely when answering examination questions.
163. The quality of teaching is always good, with a number of very good lessons. Teachers have a good command of their subject, and lesson planning is very thorough. There is good progression in the work. Students comment on the quality of support provided to help them adjust to the increased depth of understanding required at A level. Students are provided with regular practical work, so that they develop a wide range of learning skills. However, they do not always have sufficient time to reflect on the wider implications of their results. The school is improving the use of target grades for students; this encourages them to make full use of their potential. Assessments of students' knowledge and understanding are regular, but standards

are not always compared with national grades. Other than 'work harder', students are often unsure what they have to do to improve their standards. There is also some monitoring of the quality of presentation of work in folders. These are, therefore, mostly well maintained and provide a useful base for revision.

164. There is good curriculum leadership of the subject. Good management includes some informal monitoring of the quality of teaching. The course is well organised, but the schemes of work for each module lack sufficient detail. There is increasing use of examination data to monitor the work of the subject, and to measure the value added between GCSE and AS and A level of each year group of students. School data indicate that examination standards are set to rise. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

No work was seen in this curriculum area.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus subject was geography. Work was also sampled in history and psychology. In the history lesson observed teaching was satisfactory and students were engaged well in their learning. During a good Year 13 psychology lesson, the students made good progress in exploring the causes and outcomes of rapid eye movement during sleep. The teaching was good with notable strengths in the subject knowledge. Students worked very hard and, during a pair exercise, drew on a wide range of studies to support their conclusions. Standards were above average.

### **Geography**

The overall provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Mutual respect and good relationships enable learning to flourish.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good, leading to good achievement.
- More use of ICT in lessons is needed to enhance research skills.

### **Commentary**

165. In recent years, the pattern of AS and A-level results has been above average, and the 2003 results have been at similar levels to those of 2002. Students show average standards at entry, and do better than expected. Students tend to do better in geography than in their other subjects. Retention rates are good; most students complete the course.
166. In work seen, standards are above average, and this represents good achievement for the students concerned. Higher and average attainers tend to show the best achievement because they enjoy the subject, are highly motivated and teachers have high expectations of them. There are no differences in achievement between male and female students. Students extend their geographical knowledge and develop spatial awareness as well as the skills of interpretation, analysis and evaluation, becoming confident learners by the end of Year 13. Good literacy skills are developed especially in extended writing. Students can apply a suitable range of numerical techniques, but ICT skills need enhancing in the classroom in order to vary learning strategies and aid research. However, ICT is used well in coursework.
167. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good. Teachers have a strong subject knowledge and use a range of learning strategies in lessons. They encourage thinking skills and use oral work to challenge responses, and to develop analysis and evaluation. Students can speak and write fluently, as was evident in topics such as agricultural change in contrasting regions. Their maturity of response and the good support on examination

technique from their teachers, especially in the use of past papers, lead to high grades. Students are offered good advice on note taking, and are encouraged to present their work to each other. They work very well together offering much mutual support. Learning takes place in a very warm and supportive atmosphere where good relationships, trust and high personal challenge form the basis of good outcomes. The students' regard for the teachers is very evident. Geography makes a pleasing contribution to their social, cultural and moral awareness.

168. Leadership is good and there is a strong sense of direction for geography. Management is good, making sensible decisions on staff deployment and resources. The latter are adequate. Schemes of work are effective in ensuring consistency, while assessment through the use of data and target setting is now a feature in raising expectation and delivering good results. Little comment was made in the previous report on geography in the sixth form, but it is evident that satisfactory progress has been made in terms of results.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No work was seen in this curriculum area.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus subjects were art and theatre studies.

### **Art and design**

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in public examinations are exceptionally high.
- Leadership and management of art and design are excellent.
- The excellent specialist teaching inspires students to achieve very well.
- The students' independence and positive attitudes support very good learning.
- Accommodation is overcrowded and restricts the range of work and thus achievement.
- ICT is underused to support learning because there is no space for computers.

### **Commentary**

169. The A-Level examination results in 2002 were very high, in the top five per cent nationally, and improved again in 2003. They are very high for both male and female students. Almost every student achieved an A grade. Over time, results have been sustained at least at well above average levels. The AS examination results are also high, and indicate very good achievement from Year 11. Students tend to do better than would be expected from their above average standards at entry; this is particularly so for lower attainers. Retention rates are good.
170. Standards of work for the current Year 13 students are very high. Achievement is very good. Students experiment, explore ideas and develop their practical and research skills. They apply these very effectively to the development of imaginative and expressive artwork on a bold scale. Knowledge and understanding of artists and artistic conventions are well developed, and students use these references very effectively in their own work. They make effective use of the Internet for research, and some visit galleries and exhibitions to broaden their experience of art and design. The lack of space and computer related resources, however, mean that, although they have satisfactory skills few students use ICT to develop their art and design work, for example, through image manipulation. Standards in Year 12 are well above average for this stage in the course, and students are achieving very well based upon their standards at the end of Year 11. Observational drawing and painting skills, in particular, are very strong. Literacy skills are of a good standard and are used well in critical studies work.

171. Excellent specialist teaching inspires and sets high expectations through challenging individual support. Students are highly motivated and very confident independent learners. Opportunities for independent work in a studio environment rich in examples of high quality work are a strong feature of the department's culture for learning. Teachers communicate specialist knowledge clearly, and through regular monitoring of work, have a good knowledge of the students' individual needs. They use this well in the planning and organisation of lessons. Teachers have a broad range of expertise and are familiar with course requirements, which enables them to give accurate advice to students on what and how to improve. The teachers provide regular comments, and involve students in analysis and discussion on how to improve their work. This promotes excellent attitudes and develops their ability to perceptively reflect upon their work and reach high standards in both their written and practical work. The subject is very popular, which places a strain upon the inadequate accommodation and resources. Students and teachers cope well with accommodation that limits the range of three-dimensional work that can be undertaken, but these constraints mean that achievement could yet be higher.
172. The curriculum leadership of art and design is excellent and promotes exceptionally high standards and very good achievement by all students, in spite of substantial accommodation problems. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good.

### **Theatre studies**

The provision for theatre studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good use of assessment means that lessons focus on what the students need to do to raise standards.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The school is taking effective steps to implement its strategy of establishing post-16 drama work.
- Standards in Year 13 are below average because the standards of written assignments require improvement.

### **Commentary**

173. The course is relatively new to the school so there were no A-level candidates in 2002. In the 2002 AS examination, the number entered is too small to allow reliable comparison with national figures. However, most candidates achieved as expected from their prior GCSE profiles, although some lower attainers tended not to do as well as expected. In 2003 a small number of candidates at both A level and AS achieved as expected given their prior attainments. Retention rates are good.
174. Standards are below average in Year 13, but achievement is satisfactory, and in keeping with the students' below average standards at the start of the course. Achievement is lower than it should be because of gaps in the security of students' knowledge and understanding of techniques and terminology. Students' written and performance work reveals secure knowledge of the texts they study such as Pinter's 'Betrayal' and Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler'. They have a sound understanding of the principles underpinning Brecht's work. They also have a sound awareness of the contemporary influences on writers. However, certain flaws constrain standards. Evaluative and critical assignments tend to be too descriptive and narrative in nature. There is not enough focus on exploring links between text, director, actor and audience. The writing contains too many inaccuracies. There is not enough use of the technical language of the subject, reflecting gaps in knowledge and understanding of key terms and concepts. General expression is not precise enough. In performance, although projection and intonation are secure, interpretations tend to be too narrow. Achievement is good in Year 12, where standards observed are broadly average, and where the students are

benefiting from recent staffing changes. Students responded with maturity and concentration to their warm-up activities. Most showed a good capacity for independent research when they successfully presented a group overview of contemporary influences and trends in post war British theatre. They are developing a good theoretical understanding, which they express through increasingly assured use of appropriate terminology. The students' standards in using ICT and in the application of number are average.

175. The teaching, carried out by staff newly appointed to the school, is good. It is the basis of the good achievement in Year 12, and is focusing sharply on the gaps in Year 13, following a good assessment of learning needs. Significant strengths were observed in the planning of lesson objectives and topics in order to improve standards. A lesson on Brechtian theory helped to improve and consolidate the students' assurance in their use of terminology; another lesson on Pinter was supported by a very well planned and comprehensive glossary. Teaching is challenging, continually making expectations of the students in terms of answering questions, thinking for themselves, working collaboratively and in performance. So the content of lessons is well planned to match not only the needs of the curriculum, but also the gaps in students' knowledge. Assessment of both practical and written work is informative and challenging. However, even more explicit development of writing techniques, including appropriate use of subject and general terminology, is required to help students raise standards. Students in both year groups enjoy the lessons and the work. They are encouraged well by their teachers, but the confidence of a few is not as high as often seen in post-16 drama.
176. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The school has made a strategic decision to improve provision and performance in the subject. In practice, this has involved taking the opportunity to recruit two new specialists and placing the overall management of the subject in the hands of an experienced and successful leader. These steps have contributed to what is now good provision. Expectations are high; accommodation is good. There was no post-16 drama at the time of the previous inspection. It now has a secure foothold.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus subject was physical education.

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good; teachers have good knowledge and high expectations of students.
- Marking and monitoring of work and oral feedback are insufficient in order to help students improve.
- There are insufficient resources to support A-level courses.

### **Commentary**

177. Examination courses in the sixth form are new; the school has not yet had any A-level results. In 2003, a small group of Year 12 students took AS; the small numbers make comparison with national data unreliable. Students gained results that were in line with expectations from their prior GCSE profiles.
178. Students in Year 12 embark upon the course with a broadly average standard in physical education. In work seen, standards are average by the end of Year 13. Years 12 and 13 students are achieving satisfactorily. Year 12 students show sound knowledge of the role of the UK national sporting bodies and the recent changes that have taken place. They understand the different reasons for participation in sport and the impact of lifestyle on sport.

Most students are confident in their use of specialist knowledge and start to apply theory into practice. All Year 12 students have the opportunity to participate each week in physical education as a recreational activity, which is taken up by a small percentage of students. Standards are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily.

179. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both years, but the impact is lessened by shortcomings in accommodation. Enthusiasm for the subject, clear objectives and good subject knowledge enable teachers to motivate and interest students. Teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching methods, but these are constrained by accommodation. For example, there is no room dedicated as a course base. However, good access to computers allows Year 12 students to successfully share their homework about UK sporting bodies through PowerPoint presentations. Students are highly motivated and involved in their own learning through Internet research and problem solving. Good questioning leads to good discussion, for example, on participation in sport. At times though, there are not enough resources for all the students. Very good relationships and very positive student attitudes help to underpin learning. Student files show that they are covering the syllabus. However, discussions with students and the observation of their files shows insufficient marking and oral feedback so that students often do not know what they have to do to improve.
180. Overall, the leadership of the sixth form course is satisfactory. The physical education examination course is in the early stages of development, with a doubling of numbers of students taking the course this year. The head of department gives clear direction for the development of the courses. Students' work is monitored, but marking and feedback to students are insufficient in order to make them more aware of the ways to make improvements. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, as at that time, there was no A-level course.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus subject was business studies. Economics at A level was also sampled. Standards in economics are very high; recent examination results have placed the school in the highest five per cent nationally. In a Year 12 lesson seen, excellent learning resulted in students giving clear and accurate presentations of a complex situation. Their peers offered mature and highly intellectual challenge to their views. These strengths reflected the excellent teaching that took place.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Almost all students, males and females alike, gain results that are at least in line with expectations.
- Students benefit from the teachers' good understanding of assessment.
- The negative attitudes of a small number of students on vocational courses, and the sometimes poor accommodation, have an adverse effect on learning and achievement.

### **Commentary**

181. Students in Years 12 and 13 may follow two-year courses leading to either A level or an AVCE in business. In addition, a one-year GNVQ Intermediate course is offered. Standards on entry to these courses are below average overall.
182. The trend in examination results since the previous inspection has been downwards for all courses. In 2002, the last year for which national data are available, A-level examination results were below average, with males doing slightly better than females. In the AS, results were better, and above average overall. The AVCE results were below average. The fall in

results over time was because of a fall in the standards of students entering the courses. However, in both 2002 and 2003, male and female students across the attainment range tended to do slightly better in all three courses than would be expected from the previous GCSE performance. Improved AS results in 2003 point to the decline now being reversed. In the GNVQ Intermediate course, standards are below average, although in line with expected levels for the students concerned. Retention rates are good overall.

183. The standards of work seen on the A-level course during the inspection are average for males and females alike, with satisfactory achievement in relation to prior attainment. However, some students are on course to reach the highest standards. Most students have a firm grasp of basic concepts, and can apply these to new problems. Overall, oral competence is better than that seen in writing; whilst note-making skills are sound, some extended writing lacks polish. Evaluation of work is a relative weakness. Whilst most students are confident users of ICT, many lack the skills of numeracy that are needed to gain a proper understanding of financial strands of the course.
184. Standards on the AVCE course are below average; achievement is satisfactory. Students are efficient at scanning evidence and drawing appropriate conclusions, but standards are limited because too few then go on to weigh the value of that evidence. Oral competence is below average, with limited use of technical vocabulary, and a lack of confidence in speaking. Written work in portfolios is usually well organised and presented, making effective use of ICT. Students demonstrate rather less competence than usual in numeracy; they lack the ability to 'read' figures for the underlying story.
185. Teaching is good overall; however, in some AVCE and GNVQ lessons, the negative attitudes of some students mean that the impact of teaching on achievement is limited. Teachers control such students well, but the constant irritant of having to do so reduces what can be done with others. Teachers know the subject material well; most are also very familiar with course requirements, and this helps students to know what is expected of them. For example, in one revision group, the teacher worked carefully through the language used in the case study to help the students to get the right balance in their answers. Teachers draw well on the students' own experiences of work and business, and have good expectations of what students should be able to do. However, not all students value education sufficiently well to benefit from this.
186. The leadership of the subject is good. The head of department is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject at this level, although the development plan emphasises outcomes rather than inputs. The teaching of AVCE and GNVQ students in the same class on some occasions is unsatisfactory. The subject lacks a firm base; much of the accommodation used is inadequate and some is poor. There is a lack of basic teaching aids such as projectors or even white boards in some areas. In spite of falling standards at entry, the department has continued to ensure that achievement is at least satisfactory across the range of attainment. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

There are no courses in this curriculum area.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

No work was observed in this curriculum area.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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