

INSPECTION REPORT

KNOWLES HILL SCHOOL

Newton Abbot

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113559

Headteacher: Dr C Pope

Lead inspector: Ian Stuart

Dates of inspection: 29 September – 3 October 2003

Inspection number: 259135

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1195
School address:	Old Exeter Road Newton Abbot Devon
Postcode:	TQ12 2NF
Telephone number:	01626 367335
Fax number:	01626 331369
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Bennie
Date of previous inspection:	27 April to 1 May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Knowles Hill was the first school in the South West to achieve Technology College status; it is now well into the second phase of this development, and this has enabled the school to extend its range of technological facilities both for pupils at the school and, in its extension work, for other schools and for the community. It has received two School Achievement awards over the last two years to mark improvements in its overall performance. It has sought, and received, recognition for other aspects of its work by obtaining awards such as Investors in People (IiP) and Investors in Careers (IiC). Its collaborative work at sixth form level with a neighbouring school has recently been extended so that, in Year 12, there is now an integrated timetable which enables students at either school to access courses at the other school; consequently, the options open to students at both schools have been considerably enhanced.

Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances from Newton Abbot and the surrounding area; about one third comes from the Torbay area. Overall socio-economic circumstances are average. Although there are a significant number of pupils of above average attainment on entry, there are very few of well above average attainment as most high attainers transfer from primary schools to local grammar schools at the age of 11. Overall, attainment on entry remains below average, though it is a bit higher than it was a few years ago. The number of pupils identified with special educational needs is below average, but there are others who do not appear on the special needs register; the number with statements is just below the national average. The present Year 7 has more pupils with special educational needs than other years. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities and it is rare for there to be pupils with English as an additional language. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual time of admission or leaving is about average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19298	Ian Stuart	Lead inspector	
9391	Norma Ball	Lay inspector	
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English; post-16 English
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics; post-16 mathematics
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector	Science; post-16 physics
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology; post-16 design and technology
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); post-16 ICT
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History; citizenship
30114	Ann Kenward	Team inspector	Geography; post-16 geography
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design; post-16 art and design
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education; post-16 physical education
32746	Lyn Clarke	Team inspector	Religious education
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Vocational subjects
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Post-16 health and social care

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
 Herringston Barn
 Herringston
 Dorchester
 Dorset
 DT2 9PU

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an improving school with many strengths. Overall standards on entry are below average, but they are average by the end of Year 11. Generally, therefore, most pupils make good progress in their time at the school. However, their achievements are better in Years 7 to 9 than they are in Years 10 and 11 because the curriculum and teaching tend to be better matched to pupils' needs in their earlier years than they are in the later years. Whilst many aspects of the leadership of key staff are good, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in the standards of pupils' behaviour are restricting the achievements of some pupils, and show a need for more rigorous management of some areas of the school's work. Overall, therefore, it provides a **sound** education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Whilst some teaching is outstanding and the majority is good or better, a significant amount is unimaginative, slow and does not inspire pupils to achieve to their fullest potential.
- The school provides a caring and supportive environment with a rich range of extra-curricular activities providing good opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' lateness to lessons is a cause of serious concern, and the behaviour and attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils are unsatisfactory.
- The school has good links with the community and with local primary schools, which have been enhanced by its being a Technology College.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) has been very successfully integrated into the work of most subject areas and is helping to raise achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' achievements in drama throughout the school and in English in Years 7 to 9 are particularly high.
- Weak areas of the curriculum are the provision for citizenship and for pupils' spiritual development; the use that is made of tutor time is unsatisfactory in many cases.
- The headteacher has a newly restructured and very effective team of senior managers. Along with some able middle managers, they have the potential to be powerful agents for further improvement.
- The sixth form is growing and sixth formers are mature, pleasant young people in whose company it is a pleasure to be.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. In particular, standards have risen from below or well below average to average; results have risen at a faster rate than the national trend, and the school has received two School Achievement Awards. The school is making good progress towards its targets in its second phase as a Technology College. However, there is still inadequate provision for spiritual development and collective worship, and some gaps in ICT provision in Years 10 and 11. Though much improved, the biggest challenge that continues to face the school is the need to reduce still further inconsistencies in its work through more systematic monitoring of matters such as the quality of teaching and the management of behaviour.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Overall, pupils' achievements are **good**, with most pupils achieving well compared with their prior attainment and ability. Achievements are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards rise from below average to average from Year 7 to Year 9 and remain average in Years 10 and 11. Overall achievement in the sixth form is good, with many achieving results better than would be expected from their standards on entry to the sixth form.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Their attitudes, behaviour and attendance are satisfactory overall, though their punctuality is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching is **satisfactory** overall, but there is much good, very good and excellent teaching; teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Pupils' learning closely matches the quality of teaching, though there are occasions when their unsatisfactory attitudes to learning hinder their progress despite competent teaching. However, because much teaching is good or better, overall, pupils achieve well during their time at the school. Particularly good strengths in the quality of education are: the opportunities for enrichment activities; the attention given to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety; and links with the community, other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good because there is a clear sense of direction and purpose, underpinned by a good improvement plan linked to the school's vision statement. There is also a strong team of senior managers. Because there are too many inconsistencies in the implementation and evaluation of some school policies and in the school's performance at present, management is satisfactory. The governors are a strong team able to provide appropriate expertise and challenge in their role; however, they have not ensured full compliance with all statutory requirements. Overall, leadership and management are **satisfactory**.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally satisfied with the school. 365 parents returned the questionnaire. The largest area of concern is over behaviour with 18 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that pupils behave well. The inspection team shares concerns over behaviour. In conversation, pupils do report some bullying, mainly name calling, and the pupils' questionnaire indicates that the majority of pupils do think that there is some bullying in the school. The inspection team recognises the efforts the school takes to reduce bullying to a minimum and the team does not believe that bullying is a significant problem. The pupils' questionnaire showed a more variable picture than the parents'. However, overall, most pupils are satisfied with the school. They are nearly unanimous in their belief that teachers expect them to work hard and do their best. Pupils also have concerns about behaviour, with 60 per cent of them expressing some concerns.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure greater consistency in all aspects of the school's work, particularly the quality of teaching and the management of poor behaviour;
- Tackle vigorously and coherently the problem of lateness to lessons;
- Strengthen some aspects that promote pupils' personal development, particularly provision for spiritual development and the more effective use of tutor time.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are met;
- Make arrangements for the adequate teaching of citizenship;
- Address how best the school can meet the requirements for daily collective worship for all pupils;
- Strengthen provision for religious education in the sixth form so that it meets the requirements of the local syllabus.

THE SIXTH FORM AT KNOWLES HILL SCHOOL

A bit smaller than average, the sixth form offers a range of academic and vocational courses which are enhanced by collaborative arrangements with a neighbouring school.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form makes effective provision for its students. Their personal development is good, and they are mature, well-rounded young people. In national comparisons, standards are average, though above average in some vocational courses. This represents good achievement for the majority of students. Cost effectiveness is good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The positive atmosphere and facilities the sixth form centre at Dyrons House encourage students to increasingly take responsibility for their own learning.
- The increased collaboration with Coombeshead School gives students at both schools a wide range of subjects and courses to study; the range is further extended by 'distance learning' courses taught through video links.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.
- Although teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory, there is little that is inspirational.
- Concerns about lateness to lessons apply also to sixth formers.

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	Good in English literature where lively teaching motivates students. Teaching was good in a sampled French lesson.
Mathematics	Satisfactory in mathematics with good relationships, hard work and some good or very good teaching.
Science	Satisfactory in physics where experienced teachers teach a modern computer-based course. Sampled lessons in biology and chemistry were very good .
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory in ICT with students organising their own research well. ICT is well used in other subjects, including some video conferencing.
Humanities	Good in geography with well-planned lessons and good use of fieldwork. The sampled religious studies lesson was good ; teaching and learning were satisfactory in a sampled history lesson, and students' achievement was satisfactory in the psychology lesson taught by video link.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good in product design with high results in 2003 and good teaching and learning. The sampled engineering lesson was satisfactory .
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory in art and design , though excellent leadership is now providing a firm foundation for rapid progress. The sampled theatre studies lesson was very good with well above average standards.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory in physical education with students having positive attitudes to their learning. The sampled lessons in the vocational courses of leisure and recreation and leisure and tourism were very good and good respectively.
Business	Good in the sampled business studies lessons with students achieving well.

Health and social care	Good in health and social care with consistently good, and often very good, teaching leading to good achievement in the four different vocational courses in this area.
General education	No personal, social and health education was seen, but the sampled critical thinking lesson was good with good achievement.

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 school provides **good** advice, support and guidance for students, recognising their growing maturity whilst surrounding them with well-organised help and information. Students are generally well assisted to make informed choices for their courses in school and for their moves forward into adult life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **good**, and, potentially, very good. The senior team in the sixth form has been recently strengthened and has a powerful range of complementary strengths. As a result, the overall needs of students are well catered for whatever type of course they are following; the collaborative arrangements with Coombeshead School are well managed.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are strongly supportive of their sixth form. They enjoy being in the sixth form and believe it is well run, helping them to become increasingly independent. They are pleased that staff are accessible and helpful, and acknowledge their expertise. They also believe that their work is assessed in a helpful way. They agree that they are well taught, though hardly any of them strongly agree that the teaching is challenging and demanding. They also have some concerns about advice given to them about subject choice in relation to future career options, though they think that, overall, the quality of advice and support is good, especially in relation to applications for higher education. Many conversations during the inspection week between sixth formers and members of the inspection team largely confirm the findings of the questionnaire; inspectors enjoyed their conversations and thank sixth formers for their help and co-operation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall standards are below average when pupils enter the school but are average by the time they reach the end of compulsory education. This represents good achievement generally, but more progress is made in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. There are some important differences in pupils' achievements in different subjects and lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; there are no significant differences between the standards reached by boys and girls.
- The standards achieved in drama throughout the school and in English by the end of Year 9 are well above average.
- Standards in mathematics are lower than in the other core subjects of English and science.
- Overall standards have improved since the last inspection, particularly from 2001 onwards, and the trend in results is above the national trend.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.7 (33.5)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	32.9 (33.2)	34.7 (34.4)
science	32.7 (32.8)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 213 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	44.7 (48.3)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	86.8 (88.8)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98.0 (97.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.1 (41.5)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 190 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Commentary

1. The profile of pupils' standards on entry, as indicated in their Year 6 national tests, and their potential capability, as indicated in cognitive ability tests, varies a bit from year to year, but there are some important common characteristics. Overall standards on entry are below average and, sometimes, towards well below average, with English weaker than mathematics and science. There are few very high attaining pupils. The cognitive ability tests, administered by the school during the autumn term, have shown a modest improvement in overall capability over the years and have approached the average mark recently. The weaker verbal scores and the virtual absence of very high scores match the national test results, but an overall comparison between national test scores and the cognitive ability scores indicates that many pupils arrive in the school as underachievers with below average standards. Generally, the school is

successfully raising levels of achievement in Years 7 to 9 so that, in most subjects, despite being below average on entry, overall standards are average. In Years 10 and 11, these average standards are maintained rather than improved, though there are important variations between subjects. The relative absence of very high grades at GCSE reflects the relative absence of pupils with very high potential, but the fact that 29 pupils in drama in 2003 obtained A* or A grades indicates that there are pupils in the school who, with first-rate teaching and high levels of motivation, can achieve very well indeed.

2. Standards in the national tests in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with the national average for both boys and girls at Level 5, though the numbers at Level 6 were below the national average. In 2003, results in science at Level 5 were average, but they were below average in mathematics. However, a notable change has been a significant increase in the number of pupils reaching Level 6 in mathematics and science, bringing them to around national averages. Even more significant is the improvement in the English results. In English in 2003, 92 per cent of pupils reached Level 5 and 74 per cent reached Level 6, both well above national levels. The English results show very good achievement, and the science results show good achievement, particularly at Level 6. In mathematics, they show sound achievement, with higher attainers achieving well. Pupils' high achievements in English reflect the quality of teaching they have received, and the focus of the leadership in the subject on establishing a common purpose amongst teachers who have high expectations and use a variety of strategies including collaborative working with drama and incorporating key features of the National Literacy Strategy in their work.
3. GCSE results rose very sharply in 2001 and were slightly above the national average. In the last two years they have dropped a little, but are broadly average and are better than the below and well below average results of a few years ago, and the upward trend is above the national trend. Various measures to show 'value added' and progress between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 can be interpreted in different ways, but, overall, in the last two years, they indicate satisfactory achievement. The vast majority of pupils are being entered for a range of GCSEs, with only two per cent in each of the last two years failing to obtain any GCSEs. The difference between boys' standards and those of girls is similar to that found nationally, but there are significant differences between the relative performance of different subjects. In 2002, pupils taking drama and art & design did much better in those subjects than they did in the other subjects they took, but pupils did less well in home economics, business studies, physical education and mathematics than in the other subjects they took. Relative performance information for 2003 is not yet available.
4. Standards seen in lessons and in the sampling of pupils' work broadly match the test and examination results and confirm that pupils are achieving well. In most subjects, standards are rising from below average on entry to average by the end of Year 9. Only in music, where there have been staffing difficulties which have held back pupils' achievements, and in history are standards below average by the end of Year 9. Most pupils are, therefore, achieving well in Years 7 to 9, and, in English and art & design, where standards are well above and above average, they are achieving very well. Sometimes, however, achievement is held back because pupils do not consolidate their work sufficiently. Outstanding teaching in the drama lessons that were sampled is leading to high achievement and very good learning in lessons that demand the highest levels of concentration and participation.
5. In Years 10 and 11, overall standards are average, though they are below average in music, again because of staffing difficulties last year; however, pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. Similar problems in art & design mean that achievement at present is not as good yet in Years 10 and 11 as it is in Years 7 to 9. Generally, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory rather than good because the curriculum and teaching are less well matched to pupils' needs than they are in Years 7 to 9. Where they are well matched, the difference in achievement is noticeable. Standards and achievement in drama continue to be high because of the first-rate teaching; achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages and religious education. In these two subjects in some schools, there are sometimes problems in

engaging pupils' interest and levels of motivation: not so at this school. In modern foreign languages, the focus on encouraging pupils to speak language with confidence is enabling pupils of all abilities to succeed and achieve well. In religious education, the good 'short course' curriculum and very good teaching are encouraging pupils to extend their thinking and to respond positively.

6. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are comparable with those of other pupils. Most leave with some accreditation, and some achieve very well because of the high quality of support given by individual learning support assistants. However, some dyslexic pupils and some with learning difficulties make unsatisfactory progress because there is insufficient expertise or structure to their work. The degree of challenge for gifted and talented pupils is variable. Some subjects identify particularly able pupils and make good provision for challenging extension work; others do not, and this is an area of the school's work where there is a need for further development to enable some pupils to reach high levels of achievement. However, an admirable scheme to bring together outside the normal timetable gifted and talented pupils for a range of stimulating activities to extend their knowledge and intellectual horizons has been initiated by the head of English. There are exciting plans for this scheme to develop and to include more pupils on a regular basis. This scheme is already raising levels of achievement of some pupils and has the potential to be a particularly effective way of stimulating able pupils to higher levels of achievement.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At present, results are better at A2 level than they are at AS level.
- Overall achievement is good for the majority of students.

Commentary

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100.0 (96.0)	94.8 (89.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.6 (32.0)	39.4 (37.9)
Average point score per pupil	211.4 (210.8)	263.3 (N/A)

There were 35 students in the year group. The percentage figures relate to A level examinations only.

Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. With relatively few high attaining pupils in the school, it is not surprising that overall standards of entry to advanced level courses are a bit below average. A-level results have fluctuated over the years for the school as a whole and for individual subjects. These fluctuations reflect different starting points more than different levels of achievement. Detailed information produced by the school shows that the vast majority of students in the sixth form in recent years have made at least as much progress as would be expected and have achieved satisfactorily. There is also evidence that many have achieved very well. Since the introduction of the new AS and A2 arrangements for advanced level work, results at A2 at the end of Year 13 have been particularly good with a 100 per cent pass rate in 2002 and a 96 per cent pass rate in 2003. This represents good achievement and a focus on students' strengths. AS results are weaker indicating that some students have difficulties in adjusting sufficiently quickly to the demands of advanced level work after GCSE.
8. With the inspection taking place early in the autumn term, it is too early to make reliable judgements on standards and achievements in Year 12. However, most students seem to be

settling to their new courses well and are enjoying their work with satisfactory achievement. Standards in Year 13 are average in most subjects and courses, but above average in English and product design. In most subjects achievement is good. Factors which encourage good achievement are students' active participation in lessons, good use of ICT to extend their work and the quality of their research skills. Many students on the advanced health and social care course have progressed from the intermediate course and are showing progressively more achievement. Where achievement is less good, students tend to lack confidence in their work and show more reluctance to read and research around classroom activities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Behaviour is overall satisfactory but some lessons are disturbed by unsatisfactory attitudes to learning and unsatisfactory behaviour by a minority of pupils. Attendance is satisfactory but pupils do not arrive for registration or lessons as promptly as they should. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development are good, but spiritual development is unsatisfactory, making these aspects of personal development satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils have positive attitudes and behave well; however, some lessons are disturbed by the unsatisfactory behaviour or unsatisfactory attitudes to learning of a few pupils.
- Monitoring of attendance is good.
- Punctuality to school and to lessons is unsatisfactory.
- There are some strong aspects of pupils' moral, social and cultural development, but provision for their spiritual development is much weaker, as it was at the previous inspection.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2001/2) (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.8
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.6
National data	1.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils (2002/3)

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Black or Black British – any other Black background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1150	49	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

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

Commentary

9. Most pupils like school. They enjoy their lessons and the good range of activities available to them. Overall behaviour in the school is satisfactory. Around the school pupils are lively but relaxed and enjoy their leisure times together with good relationships. Pupils who spend time in the learning support department enjoy good relationships with the staff there, and the lunchtime homework club attracts pupils who need a relaxed and friendly place to work. In the majority of lessons pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to their work. They listen attentively and

join in discussions and activities with interest. Some pupils, however, do not show positive attitudes to work; although not strongly challenging in their behaviour, they do not remain on task well and can distract other pupils around them. Likewise, where lessons lack real interest and pace to keep pupils focused on their work, some can become distracted and behaviour deteriorates. In both cases, lessons are interrupted and the learning opportunities are lost for the whole class; as a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. A minority of pupils can be very challenging and difficult to manage. There are appropriate procedures for senior staff to be available to support teachers in such cases but often notable disruption to lessons occurs. A more positive approach to behaviour management with greater consistency across the school is under review and will provide a valuable opportunity for reappraisal of behaviour management and promote a consistent approach by all staff. Nonetheless, pupils show growing maturity, appropriate to their age, in their time at the school.

10. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Monitoring of attendance is good and well managed by administrative staff working co-operatively with pastoral staff. A significant number of pupils arrive late for registration in the morning and afternoon. Late arrival at lessons is common and results in a ragged start to many lessons. This results in reducing the time available in these lessons which can in turn affect the achievement of all pupils in those classes. The school site is extensive but no official time is allocated for transfer times, especially between lessons 1 and 2 and lessons 3 and 4. Regrettably, pupils generally show a lack of urgency in their timekeeping, but recognition of transfer time difficulties would acknowledge the problems they face. Moreover, not all staff are consistent in their approach to late arrival. The recent appointment of an Attendance Officer is having a positive impact on improving attendance and punctual arrival to lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11.
11. Pupils understand the need for individual and corporate values which are expressed through negotiated class rules and ethical debates. Many subject areas enable pupils to draw on their own personal experiences in order to make sense of relationships and unfamiliar concepts. Overall, pupils have a good understanding of the principles which distinguish right from wrong, and are able to respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Work in drama makes a particularly valuable contribution to these aspects of pupils' personal development. Pupils' experiences are also enriched by the many visits, visitors and other community links that have been fostered. Where pupils encounter other cultures in such subjects as art, drama, English, music and religious education, diversity is celebrated and the school makes good provision in these areas. The school does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Assemblies lack music, artefacts or other foci, that would create a sense of worship, and those moments of reflection that would enable the spiritual dimension to be developed. Subjects are expected to incorporate spiritual aspects into their curriculum, but there has been no systematic mapping or monitoring of what is happening or should happen. There is no identification of gaps nor any quality control. Overall, therefore, whilst there is some good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, it is not a consistent picture across the whole of the school's work, making the overall provision satisfactory. Currently there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect on what it means to be human, to live in community and to appreciate the beauty and complexity of the natural and spiritual world.

Sixth form students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and behave well. Attendance is satisfactory but students are not as punctual as they should be. Their moral, social and cultural development is good, but there is little evidence of specific provision for the spiritual development of all students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in the sixth form behave well and provide good role models for younger pupils.
- Punctuality to school and to lessons is unsatisfactory.
- Arrangements to promote students' personal development are good overall.

Commentary

12. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and attendance is satisfactory. Some students, however, show a casual attitude to attending school and lessons on time; overall, therefore, students' attitudes are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring attendance are generally efficiently organised and any concerns about attendance are followed up quickly. Sixth form students show interest in their work and courtesy to staff and to each other. They provide very good role models for younger pupils. In most lessons students remain on task well and contribute ideas with confidence and maturity. They enjoy good relationships with staff and show a good deal of independence especially in their organisation and running of the sixth form house.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory with many strengths. The particular strengths are: the opportunities for enrichment activities; the attention given to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety; and links with the community, other schools and colleges. Whilst there is much good, very good and excellent teaching, teaching is judged satisfactory overall as some is unsatisfactory and poor. Pupils' learning generally matches the quality of teaching, but, sometimes, pupils learn less well because of unsatisfactory attitudes even when the teaching is competent.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with satisfactory assessment arrangements. They are stronger in Years 7 to 9, where teaching is good, than in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in the sixth form is good, though there is less very good or excellent teaching than is found in many school sixth forms.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is much high quality teaching, but also a significant amount that is unimaginative and slow.
- The best teaching comes from knowledgeable enthusiasts who challenge pupils fully to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Assessment is not always used as a tool to inform teaching strategies nor to inform pupils how to improve.
- Teachers use ICT well to support pupils' learning; their teaching of language and numeracy skills is more variable.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 154 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (4%)	26 (17%)	57 (37%)	54 (35%)	9 (6%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

13. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school has improved since the last inspection, reflecting the attention given to their improvement in school development plans. There is less unsatisfactory or poor teaching than there was at the last inspection, and now teaching in around one lesson in five is very good or excellent. However, there is a significant amount which, though competent, is lacklustre with a pedestrian pace; the main challenge for school managers is to ensure the same rigour to the monitoring of teaching applies in all subject areas

as it already does in some subjects. In the large majority of lessons, the quality of pupils' learning closely matches the quality of teaching, but there are a few occasions when more robust management systems are needed to support teachers in the management of pupils' behaviour. On these occasions, the unsatisfactory attitudes of a minority of pupils are greater than some teachers can effectively deal with, so, whilst the teaching strategies they are employing are satisfactory, pupils' learning is not satisfactory.

14. Many teachers are enthusiastic for their subject and are able to engross the full attention of pupils. Such teachers invariably have good subject knowledge which they use skilfully to achieve the right balance between their own input into the lesson and the opportunity for pupils to work independently. In an excellent Year 9 art & design lesson, for example, the teacher's exciting and enthusiastic introduction gave a vivid and entrancing description of two works of art; this led to highly challenging tasks for pupils in which they discussed, described, analysed, justified and interpreted the sculptures. They extended their vocabulary, confidence and understanding; all pupils contributed and they learned a great deal from each other. Good learning is encouraged in better lessons by the high quality of planning which usually means that there are a variety of crisply timed activities that progressively build up pupils' learning, and allow, at times, for different groups of pupils to be challenged at a level appropriate to the capabilities. Often, in these lessons, there are opportunities for collaborative work and the high quality of the teacher's questioning is frequently a hallmark of successful teaching. When one question and its response lead progressively to another not only is the pace of learning rapid but the depth of learning steadily increases. High quality questioning also enables the teacher to check how well pupils are learning during the lesson and to know when some learning points need reinforcing. Another feature of good lessons is the sharing with pupils of clear objectives of what they will learn.
15. Weaker lessons tend to have some common features. Often they lack a variety of methods; this and an inadequate use of resources mean that work is not sufficiently well geared to the needs of pupils of different capabilities in the class. Weaknesses in assessment also adversely affect pupils' learning in some lessons; whole class sessions do not sufficiently pick out how well pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, there is too much emphasis on process rather than understanding; as a result, pupils become bored with endless repetition but without improving their understanding. Sometimes the tasks seem to be designed to fill the time and to keep pupils occupied rather than the work being an exciting learning experience.
16. As well as the overall differences in the quality of teaching and learning between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, there are also differences between the quality of teaching and learning within some subject areas and it is in these areas that a more systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring teaching will bring benefits. In subjects where the overall quality of teaching is better and more consistent, it is because there is a common sense of purpose with high expectations and consistent practices in the teaching team. This applies particularly to matters such as marking and assessment, the use of National Curriculum levels to support learning, and strategies to tackle pupils' writing skills. Most subjects have good assessment policies, but the application of them into practices that influence teaching strategies is more variable. However, innovative assessment practices are being piloted in geography and drama which have much potential to help pupils' understanding of how they can improve and how to set short-term targets for improvement, and to help teachers to use assessment to adapt their teaching to pupils' individual needs.
17. Detailed comments on the quality, across the curriculum, of English, mathematics and ICT are found in those subject sections. Overall, teaching is satisfactorily contributing to improvements in pupils' literacy skills, but it rarely reaches the standards seen in English lessons. There is very good practice, for example, in art & design, and teachers in several subjects support literacy skills well through pupils' learning key vocabulary. Some subjects do also systematically plan the development of numeracy skills into their teaching. Teachers' use of

ICT as a tool to aid teaching and learning is good and is a strong contributor to improving standards.

18. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Some subjects such as drama, science, food technology and religious education match well to pupils' needs. But there is some inconsistency across the school, and where this is not done, the result is a lack of challenge for some pupils with special educational needs. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have poor literacy skills, but, although they are given reading tests on entry, these give a reading age rather than a diagnosis of their difficulties. Some staff are unsure how to adapt work for some pupils and need to have examples and clearer strategies in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs). Not all teachers are using IEPs to help them match work to pupils' needs, but, for example, good teaching and use of IEPs was seen in a low ability geography group, where literacy skills were successfully woven through the lesson. The use of ICT to support pupils with special needs is not always exploited enough. Planning between subjects and support staff is good in science and mathematics and in English, where support staff are employed to deliver the Key Stage 3 Strategy, but elsewhere it is too dependent on individuals finding time to do the necessary planning.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 8 drama lesson, expert subject knowledge was combined with excellent management skills.

The teacher's teaching skills, enthusiasm and use of praise consistently challenged the pupils' thinking and acting. The learning objectives were to create and sustain the characters of Christopher Craig and Derek Bentley after their arrest for murder, appreciate pathos and learn how to use thought tracking. The lesson involved still images followed by spontaneous improvisation with opportunities for the pupils to discuss and evaluate the social and cultural implications for both men and their families. Excellent use was made of sound and lighting to help sustain the character development. A 'Press Interview' brought everyone together with a variety of 'headlines' to describe the feelings and emotions being experienced in a final still images session. "Derek alone in his cell unsure of his crime" clearly identified pathos to the pupils. The teaching illustrated excellent balance between control and improvisation. The excellent attitude of the pupils and their relationship with the teacher enabled the subtleties of the 'subject' to be explored with some fine acting as a result.

Note: Other examples of outstanding practice can be found in the English and religious education sections.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Expert knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject are features of the best teaching.
- Most courses benefit from using the skills of more than one teacher.
- Some lessons lack sufficient challenge and pace.

Commentary

19. Teaching and learning in the sixth form seen during the inspection were good overall. No teaching was unsatisfactory, but no excellent teaching was seen. Sixth formers themselves, whilst valuing the teaching they receive, do not think that they are always sufficiently challenged by it.
20. The best teaching, however, does give challenge of a high order. In a stimulating chemistry lesson, for example, the teacher's expert knowledge and the tutorial style of the teaching brought out the best in the students whose learning proceeded rapidly. Where there are these high expectations, learning is particularly strong. English in the sixth form, for example, is taught by specialists with a strong passion for their subject which fires students' enthusiasm for learning. Other characteristics of successful teaching in the sixth form are the support that teachers give to encourage students to take increasing responsibility for their own learning;

teachers achieve the right balance between providing expert information and facilitating independent work. As in the rest of the school, lessons with pace, purpose and progression promote students' learning. A feature of the teaching in most subjects in the sixth form is the use of two or more teachers to teach the course. Students value this, acknowledging that different teachers bring different strengths to the subject and provide a variety of approaches. There is also much evidence to indicate that teachers involved in the teaching plan well together to deliver a coherent package to students.

21. Less successful lessons tend to lack pace or are too dominated by the teacher. Sometimes, a more rigorous approach to analysis by the teacher would encourage better development of students' thinking skills. At times, a more systematic approach is needed to improving students' basic skills. For example, the writing demands of sixth form work are usually much greater than in earlier years, and students need more support than they get in developing skills and techniques.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall with a number of strengths and innovative features. A good range of opportunities is provided to extend classroom studies and support pupils' interests. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for English, design & technology, modern foreign languages, art & design, and drama is particularly strong, and master classes in mathematics and science in Year 9 are valuable features of the curriculum.
- There is a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities, including an activities week.
- Statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are not fully met, and provision for citizenship is poor.
- Work experience arrangements are strengths, as are arrangements for particularly vulnerable pupils.

Commentary

22. The curriculum in the school is satisfactory overall and good in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is broad and balanced and suitably designed to meet the needs and abilities of pupils, though it meets pupils' needs better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In Years 10 and 11, there are some gaps in provision and opportunities, and some restrictions on access to particular courses that adversely affect the achievements of some pupils. Provision is good throughout Years 7 to 11 in the subjects named above. In physical education, despite the problems of having playing fields two miles from the school, good use is made of resources, including the swimming pool that is adjacent to the school, to enrich the curriculum opportunities for pupils. In modern foreign languages, suitable arrangements are made to teach two foreign languages to pupils who would benefit from studying French and German. Good arrangements are made with primary schools which enable staff to work with pupils in Year 6 to build a knowledge not only of new pupils coming to the school but of the primary curriculum; this contributes well to ensuring a smooth and well-managed transition for Year 7 pupils. Valuable curriculum initiatives have been introduced; for example, in mathematics and science, there are specially organised classes in Year 9 to extend higher attainers' learning. Following concerns about some underachievement by girls, girls are being taught separately from boys to help raise their levels of achievement in these subjects. Whilst it is too early to be sure that these arrangements will be successful, inspection evidence is positive and the initiative shows a creative approach to curriculum arrangements.
23. In Years 10 and 11 a suitable range of courses and options are available to pupils, including two vocational GCSE courses which have replaced GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses. An enterprising feature of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is the opportunity for vocational course

pupils to retain a basic interest in modern foreign languages. The curriculum for this modern foreign language course is very appropriate and there is evidence of success and enjoyment by pupils who might, in many other schools, become disaffected by having to continue to learn a modern foreign language. Another success area in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is the provision for religious education where there has been notable improvement since the last inspection. All pupils follow a 'short' course leading to GCSE accreditation, and, again, inspection evidence indicates that most pupils gain much from the course. Strengths of the curriculum are the cross-curricular links in ICT which are good in all years. However, against these strengths are gaps in the teaching of some statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11, a fact that was noted in the last inspection report. Furthermore, most pupils do not have the opportunity to gain a qualification in ICT at the end of Year 11, a surprising omission in a technology college. A serious gap in the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is caused by the school's failure to implement, since September 2002, the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship. A start is being made now to address this major weakness, but there is a long way to go before the school can be sure that it is meeting requirements.

24. Work experience opportunities in Years 10 and 11 are well planned and greatly valued by pupils. In addition, the school makes arrangements for a significant number of pupils to undertake regular work experience throughout the year and, where it is considered to be appropriate, to attend college one day per week. These arrangements provide commendable flexibility in the school's work to provide a relevant curriculum for pupils. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, pupils undertaking vocational courses are mainly lower attainers because, in the main, vocational courses are only available to a particular band of pupils rather than being a genuine option to all pupils; further more, there is no specific course in Years 10 and 11 for pupils with learning difficulties that prepares them for the next stage of education or work. However, the school's arrangements to cater for the most vulnerable pupils in Years 8 to 11 through the 'Chances' project are very good and show a full commitment to the inclusion of all pupils. Liaison between the school and the project, which is based on the school site, is very good and enables a small number of pupils, who might, otherwise, be permanently excluded, to continue to follow a full course of study. With the exception noted above for pupils in Years 10 and 11 with learning difficulties, the majority of pupils with special educational needs have a curriculum that does meet their needs. There is a new emphasis on minimising withdrawal from lessons except where special programmes of work are needed. However, it is important that these are up and running faster in Year 7 in future.
25. Out of school activities, including work experience and visits to places of academic and cultural interest, are extensive and good. The activities provide a rich tapestry of opportunities for pupils, enrich the school curriculum, augment classroom work and help promote the personal development of pupils. Classroom studies are well extended through, for example, field trips in geography, visits to mosques and synagogues in religious education and theatre visits in English. The out of school activities are well used and valuable to pupils. Activities Week in the summer is a popular tradition and pupils are able to select from an enterprising range of activities and venues from cycling in Devon to trips to France and Germany.
26. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and does not, in itself, have an adverse effect on standards. In some areas it is good, for instance in music, where pupils have rooms and spaces to practise. Pupils with special needs are taught in a suite of rooms and most subjects enjoy classrooms which are close together and facilitates co-operation over teaching the curriculum. On-site facilities for physical education are limited but there is good access to a swimming pool. Staff and pupils cope well with problems caused by having to use off-site sport areas. The school site is extensive and divided by a road which causes problems with lateness. Lessons regularly begin up to ten or more minutes late with the inevitable adverse effect on standards and achievement that this loss of time brings. The 'main school' site is well maintained and attractive with imaginative displays of art. The other part of the site is partly shared with the community and some buildings, such as the languages block, are in a poor state of repair. However, the building has been adapted for disabled access so that almost all areas are wheelchair-accessible, and it is possible for a wheelchair user to cover a normal

timetable. The library is good and the good range of books is well used both for teaching and private study. Resources in general are good, for instance in food technology and science. The school has a high level of ICT resources. These considerably enhance opportunities, for example, in art where students can scan and manipulate images both in the art room and in the networked computer suites. On the other hand, there is not enough software to help students with special educational needs which, at times, limits what can be used and the standards they attain.

Sixth form curriculum

Curricular provision in the sixth form is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Co-operation with a neighbouring school and enterprising use of video links extend curricular opportunities for students.
- There is a good range of health and social care courses.
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met.
- Good extra curricular provision enriches learning and sixth formers enjoy good facilities in their sixth form base.

Commentary

27. The good curriculum of the sixth form is appropriately designed to meet the needs of the students and reflects the school's open policy for admission to the sixth form. Advanced level academic and vocational courses and intermediate level vocational courses are well planned; provision is enhanced by the links with a neighbouring school, making possible more options for students to choose. These links are much more extensive in Year 12 than in Year 13 as the sixth form timetables of both schools are now fully integrated. The range of courses in health and social care is a particular strength. Pioneer work in video linking has been carried out in the school and this is very effectively used in psychology, law and government and politics where students are linked to tutors far distant from the school. Not only do video links enable extra courses to be offered to students, but the need to prepare thoroughly in advance of the link encourages good independent learning and research skills. Courses are enhanced by good opportunities for students to gain practical experience, for example, in product design where links to local business and work experience placements extend classroom studies. Religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements, a point noted in the previous report, although a useful 'ethics' day is held each year. Although the range of courses is extensive, particularly when courses at both schools and the 'retake' courses in mathematics, English and science are taken into account, general extension courses, such as general studies, are limited; the course in critical thinking is a notable exception. Extra-curricular opportunities remain good, as in the main school.
28. The sixth form students enjoy the facilities of a large old house which is well used for classrooms, tutorial rooms, meetings and for relaxation. A very good careers room and a college application resource centre are also on hand in this sixth form centre. Otherwise students' lessons are spread throughout the rest of the site, which is satisfactory overall and does not adversely affect standards. As with the younger pupils, resources for students give them good facilities to achieve well. Students have similar access to ICT and the library.

Care, guidance and support

Overall arrangements for pupils' care, guidance and support are good. The school provides a safe and caring environment for pupils. Support and advice based on monitoring are sound and satisfactory arrangements are made to canvass the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff give high priority to the care and welfare of pupils and know them well; induction arrangements are very good.
- Form time is not productively used in the majority of cases.
- Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to put forward their views through School and Year Councils.

Commentary

29. Teachers assign a high priority to the care, welfare and safety of pupils in their care. Child protection matters are led with a clear sense of their importance and training is already planned for all new staff to ensure that they are well briefed in dealing with any concerns they may identify. First aid cover within the school is good and sensible arrangements are made for pupils who are unwell. During the inspection two health and safety concerns were reported to the school but overall health and safety matters are carefully managed. Regular inspections of equipment are carried out and pupils are well informed about safety procedures and handling equipment sensibly in classes, especially in physical education.
30. Teachers know pupils well and provide sound guidance, advice and support. Within the pastoral system heads of year and tutors move up through the school with the same year group and build up good relationships and a depth of knowledge and understanding about the pupils for whom they are responsible. Staff give generously of their time in helping pupils with any problems or concerns they may have. Although variable across the school, monitoring of the personal development of pupils is sound and enables staff to guide and counsel pupils appropriately and set realistic personal targets for them when necessary. Each pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Needs has a number of learning support assistants; however, a weakness is that there is no one individual who acts as a first point of contact and ensures that statements and provision match each other. No lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) were observed during the inspection but the scheme of work covers topics that are found in such courses in most schools, including drug and alcohol abuse and sex and relationships education. From available evidence, appropriate training for staff has been provided. However, in the majority of cases, the form periods after afternoon registration are not productively used and do little to enhance pupils' personal development of social awareness. In a few cases, inattentive and negative attitudes of the pupils led to some tense form times focused only on management of behaviour in the class. Arrangements for the settling of pupils into the school in Year 7 are very well managed and the primary liaison teacher has established well-structured pastoral and academic links with a large number of primary feeder schools. Pupils are known as individuals before they arrive in Year 7 and, through induction days and a gradual introduction to the school on the first day of the autumn term, they settle quickly. Good care is taken to inform and guide pupils in their GCSE and vocational course choices for Year 10 and later in choices for the further education in the sixth form, other colleges or to employment. Careers guidance and counselling, especially by school staff, are good and pupils appreciate the quality of the support and advice they receive.
31. Pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to put forward their views principally through the Year and School Council structure. Pupils have contributed good ideas on a range of issues such as school meals and charges in the canteens, and the need for more lockers. Many suggestions have been implemented. Through projects and competitions it has also been possible for pupils to have a positive impact on school life. For example, pupils designed traffic calming systems and parking restrictions to the road outside the main school which have been implemented; they have improved road safety for all pupils.

Sixth form care, guidance and support

Sixth form students receive a range of good advice and guidance and their development is well monitored. They contribute ideas well and their views are well regarded by the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good monitoring of students' personal and academic development.
- Staff know students in their care well.
- The sixth form council is an effective channel of communication.

Commentary

32. The close partnership between staff and students and the good knowledge staff have of students in their care helps to promote students development in a safe and happy environment. Staff provide good care and guidance for students on a personal and academic level. Teachers are generous with their time in talking to students socially as well as helping them with any problems or worries they might have so that students feel well supported and grow in confidence as they move through the sixth form. Careers guidance is generally good and staff direct students to possible courses. The good range of course and university information available in the sixth form house also enables students to access additional information and reach their own decisions about future paths they might take. The regular activities programme which is followed by all students allows them to take an interest in another area outside their studies, often linking them into the community around the school. Such outside interactions promote the maturity of the students well and help to develop a broader perspective on life outside of school. Equally positive is the sense of responsibility which students bring to their management role in their sixth form base in Dyrans House. They value their sixth form base and show good responsibility in caring for it. The Sixth Form Council is effective and well used for students to put forward their ideas, knowing they will be respected and valued by staff.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are sound and links with other schools and colleges are well developed and sensibly used.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Home School Association is not well developed.
- Community links, especially through work experience arrangements, are well used.
- Good links with local schools at primary and secondary level are well developed and extend pupils' learning.

Commentary

33. The partnership with parents makes a sound contribution to pupils' learning, and all parents receive clear and regular information about the progress their child is making and school events. Information about the school, especially in the newsletters each term, is well presented and celebrates the success of pupils in a wide number of areas. However, information to parents about special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Both the prospectus and governors' annual report need to be revised to come into line with current requirements. Individual educational plans do now include ways in which parents can help, but it is too early to say how successful this new development has been in raising standards. There are satisfactory opportunities for parents to talk to teachers and the pupil planners provide a valuable link between home and school. Some parents felt that communications with the school could be strengthened and this has been recognised by senior staff, who are considering ways of extending regular contact between parents and pastoral staff. The very active approach of the attendance officer in following up with parents promptly any concerns about attendance and punctuality has been much appreciated and parents value this direct approach from the school. A number of curriculum events have been organised by the school to inform parents about new subject initiatives or provide guidance on how they can help their children at home, but such

events are not always well attended. Members of the Home School Partnership provide practical support on occasions such as parents' meetings, but other events are not well supported. Parents are generally positive about their partnership with the school and feel that they are listened to and their concerns are recognised and dealt with efficiently.

34. The school has good links with the local community and uses these links well to enrich the learning experiences of pupils. Pupils benefit greatly from the extensive work experience opportunities and the many visits made in the local area to support their classroom studies. Through visitors to the school who contribute to lessons such as PHSE, the curriculum is extended. The care and support of staff for pupils are enhanced by good links with a range of local agencies and support services.
35. Good links exist with other schools and colleges. The carefully organised and managed links with an extensive range of primary schools ensure good curriculum links are maintained. Smooth and supportive transitions arrangements are made to ensure the move from primary to secondary school is an easy one.

Sixth form links with the community and other educational establishments

There are good links with the community and with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The learning opportunities for students are extended through links with Coombeshead School and through video links to other educational institutions.
- Contacts with institutions of further and higher education are good.

Commentary

36. Through a well-planned range of activities, students are able to develop good links with the community and extend their understanding of the practical responsibilities of good citizenship and develop their own social skills. Regular links are made with local employers and business through work experience and subject departments. This provision is good and valuable to students. Links with the neighbouring secondary school, colleges and universities have been developed well to strengthen the school's curriculum and to help students move forward into the next phase of their education. An especially valuable initiative of the school is the distance learning programme via video links that gives students access to courses and tutors outside the school community. Through the sixth form council students link to other student bodies locally and have a broad perspective of their role as citizens.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior managers are providing good leadership by giving the school a good sense of purpose. Management is satisfactory with further work needed to ensure consistent practices throughout the school. The governance of the school is satisfactory with many strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement since the last inspection with much improved results, rising at a faster rate than national results.
- The senior management team has been re-structured and extended, and is well-equipped to take the school further forward.
- There are many talented middle managers; middle management is now much stronger than it was at the previous inspection.

- Although leadership is providing drive and direction for raising standards, there are weaknesses in the ways that some key areas of the school's work are managed.
- The governing body has much experience and expertise, but a number of areas of its responsibilities have not been addressed sufficiently well.

Commentary

37. The previous inspection report referred to a lack of a shared sense of purpose and to weaknesses at middle management level. These two criticisms no longer apply, but references then to inconsistencies of practice still do apply to some areas of the school's work, and some key issues from the previous inspection have not yet been tackled rigorously enough.
38. In many areas the school has successfully moved forward. Its successes have been recognised by a number of awards, including twice obtaining a School Achievement Award for improved performance. Enterprisingly, the school has tackled some staffing issues through the process of obtaining Investors in People status, and is well advanced in implementing the agreement on workload reforms. The school is now well into its second phase as a specialist Technology College and is successfully implementing the Technology College development plan. The strength of links that have been developed with other schools and the community is an important aspect of its success as a Technology College; another is the quality of the use of ICT across the curriculum and the high level of many of the school's modern technological facilities.
39. The headteacher has taken the opportunity recently to re-structure the senior management team. New appointments and redesignation of responsibilities have been made in response to the identification of areas which the school wants to develop further, or of areas that it has identified as its weaker areas. Indeed a strength of the leadership and management of the school is the clarity with which it has evaluated its performance to identify weaker areas. It has had a slightly optimistic view of some of its strengths, but it has correctly identified areas that need improvement. Notably, the two new appointments this term at assistant headteacher level have a particular brief to bring more cohesion to the school's inclusion policies, its special educational needs provision and its behaviour management structures. Much good work has already been done to make the school as inclusive a community as possible, and, for example, the lack of any permanent exclusions for over two years is one indication of the success of the 'Chances' strategy. The school improvement plan has a clear agenda that is tackling the right issues and it is firmly rooted within the school's vision statement which has been reviewed recently by the governors.
40. Not only is the structure of the senior management team appropriate for the tasks ahead, but the personnel within it have a wide range of complementary strengths. Together they bring much talent and dynamism. The headteacher has a first-rate senior team around him, and he and the team are providing good leadership for the school. Whilst the quality of middle managers is more mixed, there are many able subject and year leaders, with leadership being judged good in many areas, very good in science and religious education and excellent in art & design. New leadership of special educational needs is also very good. After a difficult period of staff shortages, one of the new assistant headteachers has now taken charge of this area and has a very clear view of what is needed, and several reforms are already in hand, even though at present, because of recent problems, management of special educational needs still has some unsatisfactory aspects.
41. Overall, therefore, there are many strengths in the school's leadership and there are many good aspects of management to make sure that things happen. However, although standards have risen significantly and the overall quality of teaching is much better than at the previous inspection, there are weaknesses in some areas where the impact of leadership and management has been less successful or where outstanding issues from the previous inspection have not been tackled successfully. The problems with the delivery of ICT identified in this report are particularly important, because the school is a technology college. Issues of

behaviour and punctuality have also been highlighted in various sections of the report. However, there is a recognition of the problems, and new appointments should make an impact on school policies and procedures. A vigorous, consistent, achievable and coherent strategy, understood by pupils and staff alike, needs to be a high priority for the school's management. Provision for spiritual development is a key issue from the last inspection that has not been tackled sufficiently. The introduction of citizenship has not been satisfactorily managed.

42. The systematic monitoring of teaching needs to be more rigorous to reduce to a minimum inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in the school. Whilst structures and procedures do exist and performance management procedures are in place, the evaluation of teaching is, at times, not leading to sufficient improvement. The challenge is to raise the quality of some teaching up to a higher level, including higher expectations of what constitutes good teaching. Much innovative work is already in place with an advanced skills teacher, for example, working with other teachers to raise the standards of teaching further. There is also much good and very good practice in the school which needs to be shared more widely. These are tasks for further development by the school's management at senior and middle levels.
43. Despite these weaker areas of management, there are strengths other than those mentioned already. The headteacher, with key administrative staff and governors, is a skilful manager of the school's budget which is properly and well linked to the school improvement plan and Technology College development plan. The school's finances have been very well managed through a very difficult year, and there is clear financial strategic planning which is an essential feature for the school's long term stability. Parents are very positive about the way the school has improved, even if some are frustrated by what they see as inconsistencies in the quality of education at times, and parents acknowledge the strength of the school's leadership, with most of them believing that it knows where it is going.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,892,307	Balance from previous year	93,581
Total expenditure	3,992,848	Balance carried forward to the next	-6,960
Expenditure per pupil	3,413		

44. The school is fortunate to have a governing body that has much expertise and experience. More recently, it has become better informed about the school and is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are fully involved with the school improvement plan and the school's vision statement; a notable development is the governing body's own version of the plan which is designed to assist its monitoring of it. The governors properly exercise their role as 'critical friends' and take adequate steps to see that the school applies the principles of best value. However, they have not been sufficiently stringent in their review of some areas of their responsibilities. There are some omissions in their annual report about special needs and some lack of knowledge about current legislation. They have not ensured that the school is meeting statutory requirement for ICT in Years 10 and 11, and they have not adequately addressed how the school can best move towards the requirements on collective worship. They have not challenged the school on the introduction of citizenship. So, whilst there are many good aspects of the governance of the school and governors are to be commended for their work, these omissions mean that governance is satisfactory overall.

Sixth form

The leadership and management of the sixth form have recently been re-structured and are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A deputy headteacher leads a strong team of managers, with complementary skills; they provide effective leadership and management for the sixth form.
- Co-operative arrangements with a neighbouring school are well managed.
- The academic, vocational, social and personal needs of students are well managed.

Commentary

45. It is clear from conversations with sixth formers that they have been well catered for over many years, but the recent restructuring and extension of the sixth form management team is now making provision more thorough and coherent. Both leadership and management are good, and, potentially, very good when the new arrangements have had time to become firmly embedded.
46. A deputy headteacher has a very clear strategic overview of the sixth form, provides firm leadership and has clearly identified areas for further development; she also ensures that links with the neighbouring school are effective and harmonious. The day-to-day running of the sixth form is in capable hands. Three teachers have particular areas of responsibility, but are able to link together and are beginning to make a well-integrated team. One has particular responsibility for the tutorial programme and counselling, another is injecting more rigour into the analysis of performance while a third concentrates particularly on careers and progression after the sixth form, as well as co-ordinating vocational courses. This is a powerful combination and is beginning to provide a strong basis for the further development of the sixth form.
47. As stated earlier, relationships in the sixth form are good, and one reason for this is the way there is a successful partnership between staff and students over the management of the sixth form base in Dyrons House. Very good facilities are provided for the sixth formers, most of whom respond positively, and the sixth form council works effectively with sixth form managers. There is, however, scope, for there to be greater involvement of sixth formers with the rest of the school, and this is a challenge for the sixth form managers in the future.
48. Governors have a good understanding of the importance of the sixth form for the overall viability of the sixth form, and also ensure that a proper balance is kept between the relative costs of the sixth form and the rest of the school. They do need, however, to look more closely at provision for religious education in the sixth form. Whilst the 'ethics' day is a valuable occasion, it is insufficient to meet the requirements of the local syllabus for sixth form religious education.

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**.

- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good because of very good teaching.
- The teachers make highly effective use of assessment to help pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- A more consistently rigorous approach to teaching is required in Years 10 and 11 to raise standards further.

Commentary

49. Results in the 2002 end of Year 9 national tests were average and maintained the school's upward trend. English results were better than expected given the pupils' previous attainments. They were better than in mathematics and on a par with science. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Results for 2003 show a remarkable improvement: three quarters of the pupils attained the higher Level 6 or better and one in five the highest Level 7; overall, they are well above the national average. At GCSE, the English results for 2002 were broadly average: girls did better than boys. In 2003 there was a fall in the proportion at A*-C. Results in 2002 GCSE English literature were broadly average but boys' results were below average. The proportion gaining grades A*-C increased significantly in 2003. In 2002 the GCSE results in both subjects were as expected given the pupils' previous attainments.
50. Standards of pupils in the current Year 9 are well above average. This represents very good achievement given their below average attainments on entry. Pupils make significant gains in their ability to write accurately and extensively in a range of styles. Their confident use of paragraphs results in well organised and clearly communicated writing. They discuss the themes of texts with understanding and are developing a growing appreciation of how an author conveys a text's themes. Higher attainers make good gains in their use of powerful expression. Standards in Year 11 are average and represent satisfactory achievement. Although redrafted course work - following a teacher's marking - shows many can write at above average standards, some pupils need more assured examination techniques to secure higher grades. Higher attainers again write powerfully and analyse texts in detail, supporting their judgements with frequent quotations. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving very well in Years 7 to 9. Well-structured teaching that is sensitive to their learning needs helps them to gain greater confidence in expressing their opinions and experiences in writing. Some make a lot of spelling and punctuation errors. Their progress is satisfactory in Year 11.
51. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in Years 7 to 9. A consistency of purpose characterised the strong teaching in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are learning very well because teachers are using their specialist knowledge to plan lessons that have pace, purpose, frequent activity changes and very high expectations. All pupils study challenging texts. Year 9 pupils respond well to the challenge of writing lengthy assignments that require careful structuring and attention to the effectiveness of their vocabulary and expression. The subject's clear focus on improving writing skills has a major impact on standards. Marking and assessment are strengths. Use of National Curriculum levels and related criteria effectively help pupils know how well they are doing and what to do to improve. The consistently rigorous approach to teaching observed in Years 7 to 9 was less evident in Years 10 and 11. The

department is rightly reviewing its procedures for course work completion but should explore ways to establish a common sense of purpose so planning, teaching and learning consistently match the pace and expectation so evident in the earlier years.

52. The leadership of the department is very good and the management good. The sense of common purpose and high expectations observed in Years 7 to 9 have been enhanced by other effective strategies such as working with drama colleagues to secure knowledge of the text and a master class for pupils aspiring to the higher levels. There is clear evidence of rigorous self-evaluation but the subject needs to extend the implications of the findings into teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 to establish the consistent application of procedures and best practice. The pupils have good attitudes in English. Unsatisfactory behaviour was rare. Pupils respond well to the busy, hard working atmosphere in lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9. There has been good improvement since the last inspection as confirmed by the rapidly rising standards in Year 9 and there is a good capacity for further improvement of provision in Years 10-11.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 11 pupils made outstanding progress in understanding the themes and characters in “Lord of the Flies”.

Key teaching strengths were the excellent planning of a series of fast paced activities (pairs, groups, whole class, individual) that carefully matched clearly displayed and understood learning objectives. Pupils evaluated each other’s writing from a previous lesson to assess the security of their partner’s understanding, enhancing their own in the process. A relentless pace followed. In groups they identified salient features about each character. Individually they filtered their findings into “memory triggers”. Having shared their conclusions with a partner they reported back their own and their partner’s observations to the base groups. The teacher conducted the sequence of activities skilfully, giving valuable periods for reflection and whole class questioning to check and share learning. He frequently uttered: “Take a few seconds thinking time...” so pupils gathered their thoughts and reported back crisply. Learning was further secured by a silent period of reflective writing in which they recorded what they had gained from the lesson. This was the last lesson of the day in a small room on a wet muggy afternoon but attitudes were never less than excellent because of the teacher’s very high expectations, the lesson’s ferocious pace and purpose, and the highly engaging range of relevant learning activities.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. The standards of language and literacy observed in all subjects are average. The provision made to improve literacy standards is satisfactory. This is an area for further development so pupils can apply and achieve in all subjects the qualities of language-use they display in English. Provision in art & design and drama is very good. In art & design, for example, engaging starter activities such as “vocabulary bingo” resulted in Year 8 pupils having a secure understanding of key terms associated with three-dimensional work. Other Year 8 pupils achieved strong representations of pathos and evocation after the drama teacher’s careful exploration of these terms. In other subjects inspectors observed some strengths in relation to the learning of key vocabulary, support for better structured writing and guidance on how to use higher reading skills such as skimming and scanning. But these strengths were not apparent on a consistent basis in all subjects. The school is using Literacy Progress materials for pupils in Year 7 who join the school with below average test results but has not identified a means of organising the scheduling of the lessons to use the materials to their best advantage. Following careful evaluation the literacy co-ordinator has correctly identified what needs improvement.

Modern foreign languages

Provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the faculty has clear strategies to continue improvements in standards.
 - GCSE results in 2003 showed a remarkable improvement; having been average in 2002, they are likely to be well above average when national comparisons are available.
 - The faculty offers nearly all pupils the opportunity to take an examination in a modern foreign language.
 - Teaching is challenging and has high expectations of pupils, but good practice is not systematically identified and shared.
 - The well-developed assessments systems are not yet integrated into day-to-day use in planning or with the pupils.
54. In the 2002 GCSE results, the percentage of grades A*-C in French was just below the national average. However, pupils' results were generally better than in their other subjects and showed good achievement. Results in French in 2003 show a remarkable 50 per cent improvement in the number of higher grades from an entry similar to the previous year. The percentage of pupils at grades A* to B doubled in 2003, and, overall, results are likely to be well above the national average. These results reflect the positive changes introduced following an analysis of previous results. However, in 2003, German results showed a fall in the percentage of higher grades A* to C.
55. In present work, by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11, overall standards in modern foreign languages are at expected national levels, though standards are higher in French than in German. In the key skills of speaking and listening pupils attain levels above national expectations. This is because teachers challenge the pupils by teaching in the foreign language and expecting pupils to use it in their replies. As a result, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 already show fluency at a level usually expected at GCSE. In Year 11 lower attaining pupils have the confidence to speak and they succeed in communicating even though they make mistakes and their written work is less well developed. Pupils preparing for GCSE are guided to use the level of language required for higher grades, but this challenge is not always extended to the earlier years. Overall achievement is good and reflects the good teaching and learning. In most groups pupils' positive attitudes create an environment where pupils achieve well because the whole lesson can be focused on learning. However, in a minority of groups in German poor attitudes are a barrier to achievement.
56. Overall, teaching is good. It is at least satisfactory in all year groups, but more frequently it is good or very good. Good relationships encourage pupils to participate without fear of failure. At GCSE level, the benefit of experienced teaching shows in the results. Teachers plan well with activities for all pupils to be active participants in their own learning. Pupils enjoy learning and prove the saying 'the best way to learn a language is by speaking it.' Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs learn well because teachers adapt the work to enable success. In the best lessons seen there are high levels of expectation of pupils' active language use and the constant demand to extend written and spoken answers.
57. The leadership of the faculty is good and shows clear insights into the areas for further development. The opportunity given by the faculty for nearly all pupils to take an external examination in a modern foreign language is commendable. The teachers work well as a team but there is no formal system to identify and share the good practice observed. Assessment systems are good, but national levels and grades are under-used on a day-to-day basis to inform pupils or challenge them. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. This is a faculty with the capacity to continue to raise the status and standards of their subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy has been well introduced in lessons supported by a detailed and differentiated scheme of work.
- Teaching and learning are overall good in Years 7 to 9, but some lessons for lower-attainers lack variety and are slowly paced. Teaching is satisfactory overall.
- Assessment procedures are well established and analysis of national data is thorough, though on-going assessment is not influencing teaching nor informing pupils of what they need to do to improve.
- Years 10 and 11 pupils are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons.
- Monitoring of the teaching in the subject is not effective enough and as a result there is a lack of consistency, which is undermining standards.

Commentary

58. Results in Year 9 national tests and GCSE in 2002 were below average though pupils' achievement was satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school. In 2003, standards improved in the Year 9 tests for higher-attaining pupils, but were below average for the proportion reaching Level 5. GCSE results declined in comparison with other core subjects and are likely to be well below average. Both boys' and girls' underachievement was significant, partly because of staffing difficulties last year. Current standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE are overall average, with a stable staffing situation helping to raise standards. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory but inconsistent; however, progress made by high attainers in Years 7 to 9 and Year 10 is good because teachers have high expectations of them.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their planning, exposition and explanation. There is a good balance between theory and practice. For example, Year 9 pupils' good review of fractions, decimals and percentages enabled work to be extended to percentage increase and decrease of fixed sums of money. Good use is made of differentiated work sheets in lessons but they are not used well for homework to extend the more able. Work is marked up to date. Most relationships between teacher and pupils are good. When teachers have high expectations in terms of standards of work and behaviour, pupils respond well. Pupils benefit from initial 'quick-fire' questions linked to main lesson objectives though use of the whole-class session to consolidate pupils' knowledge and give some understanding of how well they are progressing is unsatisfactory. Some lessons for lower attaining pupils lack variety, with no use of 'bite size' activities to support their learning. However, good use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs.
60. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Year 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Of the lessons observed, good progress is undermined by limited teaching methods and resources plus a lack of challenge. Opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, hypothesise outcomes and demonstrate what they know, understand and can do are uncommon. The focus of much work is on textbook exercises and as a result lessons are often slow and uninspiring. ICT is used well to support pupils' learning. The recording of key words, statements and formulae by average and lower-attaining pupils to support revision are infrequent. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of pupils impacts on the progress of others though generally relationships between pupils and teachers are good.
61. Leadership is satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced with changes to the curriculum designed to address gender issues. The scheme of work is detailed and differentiated. Standards are improving at the end of Year 9. Procedures for assessment and the evaluation of assessment data are good though on-going assessment is inconsistent and not informing pupils what they need to do to improve, particularly at GCSE level. However, overall management of the department is unsatisfactory because monitoring and evaluation of the subject's policies are inconsistent. As a result, there is wide variation of classroom practice which is limiting the overall achievements of pupils in mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons, and other departments have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. In art and design, physical education and design and technology, schemes of work identify what pupils are likely to know, understand and can do in mathematical terms. There are particular strengths in data handling and statistics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed, and are helping to raise pupils' standards.
 - Overall, good learning results from good teaching in all years, but a small minority of pupils misbehaves and interrupts the progress of the others.
 - ICT facilities are good and enable teachers to use up-to-date techniques in a variety of activities.
 - Learning in lessons is curtailed by the late start of lessons and by the need to revise previous work because pupils do not do this sufficiently well at home.
 - Many pupils have been involved in exciting projects to take science out of school and to demonstrate it to the adult population and in primary schools.
63. In Years 7 to 9 standards in class match national expectations, but much hard work has seen a steady increase in national test results in recent years. In 2003 the proportion achieving Level 6 nearly reached the above average benchmark. Achievement is good, and often very good, from starting points that are below average. In Years 10 and 11, standards of written work improve somewhat, but the overall standard seen is still only at the nationally expected level because pupils do not sufficiently re-learn or consolidate their work at home and their subsequent recall is often poor. This reluctance, coupled with staffing problems in the last two years, partly explains why GCSE results have not improved as anticipated. Therefore, although achievement is good over pupils' whole time in the school, it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
64. In the laboratory, pupils of all ages look forward to practical work, enjoy the lessons and attain creditable results. In five years they have progressed from total unfamiliarity with apparatus in Year 7 to becoming competent investigators who can explain their results and say how their work could be further improved. Pupils co-operate well together and organise their equipment responsibly. Mutual help over minor problems is evident. Pupils with special needs cannot be distinguished from their classmates other than by the quality of their written work, or the presence of a support assistant with them. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and pupils are not afraid to seek advice, although, when questioned directly, they are often not confident enough to suggest a positive answer or to offer their own ideas. This lack of confidence is partly due to insufficient re-learning of earlier work and becomes more apparent in Years 10 and 11.
65. Teaching overall is good, and novel approaches, a variety of activities and plenty of practical work all lead to good learning. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use the available resources well. Most lessons have good pace and plenty of challenges, but from time to time a small group of disinterested pupils interrupts progress and wastes time while the teacher gets them involved in the lesson once more. The policy of alternate boy-girl seating helps to maintain good behaviour and concentration. Recent literacy initiatives have resulted in improved spelling and understanding of scientific words. The availability of the science computer room has resulted in a wider range of ICT-based activities being included in lessons, and this facility has improved motivation and achievement. Due to the distance between buildings, the start of some lessons is often delayed while pupils move from one site to another.

66. The leadership of the faculty and its management are both very good, succeeding in overcoming the staffing difficulties of the last two years and developing in all the teachers the common aim of the best possible results for each pupil. This very good team spirit has also enabled the faculty to take pupils out into the wider community to demonstrate what they know and can do to both primary schools and in street demonstrations and the evening Science Fair on school premises. Accommodation is largely vintage, but the large laboratories give teachers flexibility to re-arrange the accommodation for special events, and this often results in unusual and often memorable activities which raise motivation and interest. The laboratories are all bright and cheerful with extensive displays of pupils' work, of reference material and of scientific 'word walls'. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has developed a positive ethos towards ICT and there is a good capacity to accept change across the school.
- There are well prepared teaching materials and resources, but there is not an effective team to work together because of the lack of specialist teachers other than the head of subject.
- Pupils in Years 7 – 9 have a good, well-structured curriculum, but statutory requirements for Years 10 and 11 are not fully met.
- There is a lack of accreditation, detailed assessment and a range of courses for the majority of Year 10 and 11 pupils.

Commentary

67. Year 11 pupils were not entered for an examination or an accredited course in 2003; similarly, all of the current Year 11 and the 75 per cent of Year 10, who are not taking a GCSE course, are not following an accredited course. These pupils are taught ICT through other subjects. Many have good experiences in some of these lessons, but the school cannot be secure that statutory requirements are met. There is no coherent approach to monitoring the teaching and learning of the National Curriculum requirements for the subject in Years 10 and 11. The Year 10 pupils who study a double option GCSE are making good progress at this early stage in the course, with many achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. It is too early to make a judgement about standards.
68. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that standards are average, although there is an upward trend in the number of pupils who reach the higher levels. Inspection findings support this judgement. This represents good achievement as pupils enter the school with varied, and sometimes poor, knowledge of ICT. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well as the result of a well-planned curriculum that is taught weekly. This ensures a steady and progressive increase in knowledge over time and in the majority of lessons. Practical hands-on tasks clarify theory and help those who struggle. Pupils benefit from the good use of ICT within most subjects, which reinforces and extends the teaching in the weekly classes.
69. Overall, teaching is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers use well prepared teaching packs conscientiously and learning is sound. Good use is made of national initiatives to enhance learning. Lessons have clear introductions, followed by related activities and a final revision session. The odd poor lesson was the result of the teacher's inability to influence pupils' bad behaviour and negative attitudes, including lateness to lessons. Very good teaching was occasionally seen, characterised by pace and challenge. A focus on independent learning, linked to systematic computer-based tasks, motivates pupils who are studying for the GCSE double option. Brisk learning has occurred in the first few weeks of the course.

70. Improvement since the last inspection and leadership and management are satisfactory, reflecting a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Day-to-day management is good. The head of subject has overseen the implementation of a number of initiatives that has enhanced the status of ICT within the school and the community. There are many opportunities for pupils to use computers outside lessons. He works hard to fulfil many responsibilities, including curriculum innovation. However, this has been hindered by the lack of a departmental structure and specialist teachers whose main responsibility would be to meet the requirements of a top-notch ICT department. There is not a team of expert staff with in-depth and up-to-date subject knowledge and high expectations for learning. Consequently, very little good teaching with zest and great enthusiasm was seen. Staffing constraints also contribute to the restricted curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 where there is not a range of courses to meet pupils' needs or their interest in a vocational education.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is **good**, with ICT making a good contribution to teaching and learning in a number of subjects. It is particularly strong in geography, design and technology, art, physical education and science. The impact of ICT as a tool to improve subject knowledge is always satisfactory. Some subjects such as music and also special educational needs have already identified areas that require development in order to improve provision.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good knowledge, understanding and commitment to the subject and they use the resources effectively.
- Standards have improved by the end of Year 11 over the last four years and pupil numbers have increased as a result.
- Teacher expectations, in some classes, are too low and lead to lack of challenge, a slow pace of learning and some unsatisfactory pupil attitudes.
- Several lessons begin very slowly, because of poor pupil punctuality. The time available in Years 7 to 9 could be used more effectively with a wider range of effective starter activities.
- Sound assessment structures are in place; however, additional targets would enable pupils to gain a greater understanding of how to improve their work.
- The scheme of work, with the clear identification of the cross curricular themes, provides a good basis to develop a wider range of teaching and learning strategies.

Commentary

72. Pupils have below average standards at the beginning of their study of history. By the end of Year 9, judging from the work seen and the pupils' responses, standards remain below the national average. The GCSE results in 2002 were below average, although there was a steadily improving trend over the previous three years. In 2003 the percentage of pupils achieving A* to C grades is likely to be above average and shows a marked improvement on the previous years. However, the work seen during the inspection indicates that the standards of the current Year 10 and 11 pupils are below average and they are working at a similar level to those pupils in 2002. The successful learning strategies of 2003 will enable the good practice to be continued, when disseminated to new members of the team.
73. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9 pupils develop a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of primary and secondary data, timelines and

causation. By Year 11, pupils have developed a sound understanding of the causes and effects of the Vietnam War. Pupils are also able to use ICT to develop their course work on the use of weaponry in the First World War.

74. Overall the teaching is satisfactory and it supports satisfactory learning over time. Most lessons are well planned and organised and provide a sound basis for learning. PowerPoint is used effectively to give, for example, a comprehensive picture of the differences between the Catholic and Protestant churches in the sixteenth century. A few lessons are led too much by the teacher with an insufficient variety of learning activities. As a result of this, some pupils become complacent, do not engage as actively as they might in their own learning and achieve below their capability. Clearer learning objectives and a regular review of what pupils have learnt would enable greater progress to be made in these lessons. The question and answer activities, in most lessons, are effective and pupils demonstrate good oral skills. The higher skills of analysis and evaluation are not well developed through the use of extended writing experiences in Year 9.
75. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have improved in Years 10 and 11; however some teaching and learning, and some pupils' attitudes, need to be more effectively developed. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, with good organisation, and the faculty leadership has provided good support for history; this has ensured that the history improvement plan is soundly based with clear priorities.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements in Years 7 to 9 are good, with a high proportion reaching Level 5 in 2003.
- The subject's focus on assessment has helped to improve standards.
- Good use of ICT with all year groups has developed pupils' ICT capability and their geographical understanding.
- Innovation in extra-curricular activities has helped to interest pupils in the study of geography.
- Lack of provision of differentiated work for pupils at each end of the ability scale has hindered progress for these pupils.

Commentary

76. Overall results in the teacher assessments in 2003 showed that pupils made very good progress from below average standards on entry to the end of Year 9, where over 80 per cent of pupils, boys and girls almost equally, achieved Level 5, well above the national average; however, the number of pupils reaching higher levels than this was below average, reflecting the nature of the school's ability profile. Present standards by the end of Year 9 do not yet match the 2003 test results, but are around average and show good achievement. Pupils then make generally satisfactory progress to Year 11 where, from 2000 to 2002, 60 per cent achieved an A*-C grade in their examination, a result slightly higher than the national average. Overall, pupils did better in geography than in their other subjects, and, in 2002, boys achieved a slightly higher pass rate than girls at the higher grades, an improvement on earlier years. This year, 42 per cent of pupils obtained a higher grade, a below average result and against the improving trend, but information from the school indicates that, overall, pupils again did better in geography than they did in their other subjects. Present standards in Year 11 are average in geography with satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11; but, at both key stages, there is insufficient focus on the needs of pupils with special educational needs which means that some of them achieve less well than other pupils. However, taken overall from Year 7 to 11, achievement is good, and the subject contributes well to cross curricular learning, with emphasis on literacy in lessons and very good use of ICT.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is good from Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; in Year 10, not all the work is sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils who are taught in mixed ability groups. Lessons are characterised by the teachers' good subject knowledge and crisp, forceful delivery, using good resources and varied strategies to make learning interesting for pupils. Teaching is however too narrowly focused towards test and examination performance, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with some subsequent loss to pupils of their appreciation and enjoyment of the subject. The teachers make good use of ICT to teach the syllabus. For example, a GCSE lesson featured good use of web information for pupils in a low ability Year 11 set so that they could make their own fact sheet about Bangladesh. Pupils made rapid progress in their geographical knowledge and were working at a high level of understanding and competence. The subject has good assessment practice already embedded but is extending this evaluation to give pupils individual targets levels and grades to aim for, with advice as to how they can improve their work.
78. Overall leadership is good. There are strong systems of organisation already in place and the schemes of work for the GCSE course have been rewritten. Following work undertaken by the head of the humanities faculty, 'Assessment for Learning' practices have been introduced recently into the subject, acting as a pilot scheme for the other faculties in the school. The new head of subject already shows a sure instinct to promote geography through: an extra-curricular club which focuses on transport safety and has recently won a national award; through the public celebration of excellent pupil work; through the department's very good wall displays; by participation in Geography Action Week and by integrating ICT into the curriculum at each key stage.
79. The major issues of the last inspection, including a greater variety of tasks in lessons and improved provision for boys, have been addressed. Standards of work in the subject are higher now than at the last inspection when they were generally below average; they are now reaching above average by the end of Year 9 and are average overall. So, overall, improvement has been good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well structured planning and differentiation, together with a consistent focus on literacy skills, results in good achievement from Year 7 through to Year 11.
- Pupils apply themselves to learning with energy and enthusiasm because teachers' expectations of behaviour and learning are high.
- Skilful questioning by teachers enables pupils to explore complex concepts and deepen their understanding.
- Marking enables pupils to understand what they must do to improve their work but not how they might do it.

Commentary

80. Standards on entry are below average and the previous experiences of pupils in religious education are extremely variable, but the strong emphasis on literacy skills and experiential learning means that pupils' standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 9. Girls did better than boys according to the 2003 assessments by teachers, and this is a concern that teachers are addressing in their work to raise boys' standards further. Results in the GCSE short course in 2003 were average, but a considerable number of appeals have been made about the results of some pupils, and the outcome of the appeals is still awaited. Achievement in all years at present is good with standards rising all the time, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Emphasis on the language of feelings is improving boys'

achievement and support for all pupils to extend their writing to match their thinking means that pupils of all abilities can succeed.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, they are very good. Well structured planning, taking account of pupils' individual learning needs, and effective use of resources, enables all pupils to have equal access to each topic. Skilful questioning and well-timed moments for reflection encourage pupils to extend their thinking and give clear reasons for their responses. Most pupils respond positively to the pace and energy engendered by the teachers. ICT is used successfully to support independent learning.
82. Both leadership and management of the subject are very good. Regular evaluation of policy and practice ensures quality and consistency within the subject. The head of subject has high aspirations, drives the vision for the subject and is a positive motivator and influencer of pupils and staff. Professional development opportunities are well targeted to the needs of individual teachers and the development of the subject.
83. The stimulating curriculum provides opportunities for the exploration of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of life. Positive values and personal citizenship are features of all lessons. Many visitors and opportunities for visits add enrichment for the pupils and deepen their understanding of other faiths and traditions. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Statutory requirements are now fully met in Years 10 and 11.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 8 religious education lesson, pupils reached excellent levels of achievement and took their thinking to new heights.

The lesson used a skilful combination of questioning, explanation and opportunities for reflection, supported by the use of art and religious artefacts. Pupils were totally engaged by this approach to the Apostles' Creed, with the complex concept of the Trinity; the concept, which centred around the words of Jesus, was explored through art and artefacts. Through skilfully guided reflection on the Last Supper and the group at the foot of the cross, pupils considered and sensitively articulated the feelings of Christ's family and friends and the personal response of Christians to Christ's sacrifice. The vocabulary of feelings, drawn from the pupils, was affirmed and consolidated through the actions and words of the Communion Service so that pupils successfully encapsulated the concepts of salvation, remembrance and the corporate nature of belief in their writing.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in resistant materials and graphics are above average by the end of Year 11.
- There is good analysis of data, targeting improvement, but guidance sheets for pupils at different attainment levels need to be implemented across all areas of the faculty.
- There are good assessment procedures, but pupils do not always understand how well they are performing and what they need to do to improve.
- There are good relationships and a positive learning environment in most classes.
- The monitoring of teaching needs to be more sharply focused on how pupils are learning and good practice needs to be shared more widely.

Commentary

84. Standards of work in Year 9 are average overall and match recent teacher assessments. From below average attainment on entry, pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9. This shows good achievement. Girls usually produce a better standard of work, particularly in design folders. Neat, accurate work was seen in a Year 7 healthy eating project which looked at nutritional values, and good shading techniques showed awareness of light and dark requirements in resistant materials. Interesting work of a high standard in a Year 9 scone making project looked at various toppings suitable for different consumer groups. These and other projects demonstrate that pupils have good presentational skills, use colour appropriately and follow the design brief correctly. Where the work is weaker, it is due to poorer presentation both written and graphical, inaccurate sketching and lack of colour to improve quality of the work. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well with good quality practical work.
85. Standards of work in Year 11 are average overall and above average in resistant materials and graphics. Current work in food technology is showing improvement from recent results at examination level. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the different specialisms experienced varied success with resistant materials, graphics and electronic products performing particularly well. Results in food technology were well below average with pupils performing significantly less well than in their other subjects. In 2003 there was a dip in performance overall, particularly in food technology and electronic products, mainly because pupils did not complete their coursework. During the inspection some examples of particularly good work was seen in all specialisms. In textiles, for example, there was good research into dance costumes and into Japanese cultures in the Kimono project. Some of the investigative work on construction methods and materials in the clock project in resistant materials was of a high standard with good evaluation. The better projects in all specialisms have good standards of graphical presentation. Where the work is weaker, it is mainly due to poorer presentational skills, incomplete work, lack of depth in research and little development of ideas. Overall, achievement is satisfactory across the specialist areas in Years 10 and 11. Literacy skills are well supported including written and oral contributions. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and ICT, including CAD/CAM, is used appropriately, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes are usually good in all areas, but there are some distractions during teacher demonstrations or explanations which hinder their achievements. Pupils talk confidently about their work but some are unsure of how well they are performing against National Curriculum levels.
86. Pupils' achievements are closely related to the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, it is good, being good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory with good features in Years 10 and 11; some very good teaching was seen. In the better lessons, learning is good because lessons are well planned and pupils are well managed; lesson objectives are shared with the class and there is a good mix of activities. Good lessons also make reference to assessment criteria in the learning process. For example, a well-structured graphics lesson with specific targets for improvement enabled a group of mainly lower attaining pupils to achieve well. Where lessons are only satisfactory, there is some lack of pace and pupils are insufficiently challenged; as a result, they waste time and sometimes misbehave.
87. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of purpose across the faculty. Documentation is thorough and well prepared and good schemes of work are in place; assessment procedures are good and there is very good analysis of data to include targets for improvement. However, the good guidance material that is used in one area of the faculty to help pupils understand their present level of attainment, and what they need to do to get better, needs to be extended to all areas of the faculty. Monitoring of teaching requires a sharper focus on the way pupils learn and needs to include sharing good practice. Relationships are good and the acting head of faculty is providing good direction for the subject in the present difficult circumstances. Accommodation is good in food technology and textiles and satisfactory in resistant materials where the workshops are rather dated, limiting the range of practical work. But, the split site accommodation is not helpful in day-to-day communication and the current time-tabling arrangements present problems in completing practical tasks in food technology. However, resources are good including the high quality CAD/CAM facility which is available to

other schools as part of the school's initiative as a Technology College. Improvement since the last inspection has been good including this development of CAD/CAM, the introduction of GCSE Engineering and a general improvement in examination performance. Involvement in the Arkwright scholarship scheme for higher attaining pupils is a good feature encouraging pupils to become engaged in aspects of technology and industry.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music and art & design were inspected in detail. Work in **drama** was sampled as part of assessing the overall quality of education in the school.

88. **Drama** is a strong and successful subject within the Creative Arts faculty. It also links closely with the English department and plays a significant part in developing literacy skills. In Year 9, for example, learning how to direct Macbeth increases pupils' understanding of text, meaning and interpretation whilst also increasing their vocabulary in the context of the play.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and two examples of outstanding practice were seen. As a result of the very good teaching and learning, pupils' achievements are very good and often excellent, with the subject making a very substantial contribution to pupils' personal development. In doing so, drama contributes extremely effectively to the exploration of citizenship themes and offers many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop confidence, learn independence and refine their group work skills. The range of enrichment activities within drama is broad and high quality productions raise the profile of the school and foster partnerships with the community.
90. An example of outstanding practice in drama is given in the teaching and learning section of this report.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average; boys and girls do equally well.
- There is excellent leadership and very good management of art throughout the school which are resulting in rapidly rising standards following a very difficult period of upheaval.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes excellent.
- Opportunities for the higher and lower attainers could be made clearer in some lessons.

Commentary

91. Standards at the end of Year 9 in the teacher assessments in 2003 were well above average for boys, compared with the national picture, and around average for girls. Because boys nationally tend to do much less well than girls, these assessments show little difference between boys' and girls' standards. Work seen during the inspection shows a similar picture with boys and girls are evaluating and developing their work equally well. Achievement at this stage is good, as pupils enter the school with, at best, average knowledge and skills in art. New teaching strategies and challenges in the summer term, for example to improve boys' achievement, made a significant contribution to the boys' results.
92. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average. The 2002 GCSE results reflected this, with girls attaining above, and boys below, the national average. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement when compared with their earlier performance. The subject's evaluation of the disappointing 2003 GCSE performance shows that this is because the pupils' drawing and recording skills were not well developed and they did not provide sufficient analysis and

explanation for their ideas. In addition the acute staffing problems last year, and consequent upheaval, left pupils insufficiently supported at a critical time.

93. Teaching is good and leads to good learning at all levels. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and instruct the pupils clearly. Lessons are well paced so that, for instance when learning new painting techniques, frequent assessment of progress and input by the teacher enables all pupils to achieve their best. The best lessons are characterised by lively introductions using stimulating resources which engage the pupils and keep their interest going throughout the lesson. Occasionally the progress is slowed by some unsatisfactory behaviour from a few pupils, but teachers use a consistent and firm strategy to deal with this. It is clear that the pupils are learning to respect their teachers and enjoy the lessons. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Less successful lessons could be improved by ensuring that both higher and lower attainers clearly understand what they could achieve by the end of the lesson. All the teachers attempt to begin the lessons promptly but are hampered by the pupils' late arrival.
94. The leadership provided by the new head of art is excellent. She has vision, energy and a determination to raise achievement following a very difficult period when standards dropped. As a result, overall standards have already been restored and, in some areas, raised so that improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The curriculum has already been improved. For instance, new measures to improve the pupils' listening, speaking, writing and analytical skills are proving extremely effective and boosting their confidence. In an excellent lesson with Year 9 students, the teacher held the pupils' rapt attention whilst she showed them how to analyse and describe modern sculptures. The pupils' response as they worked in groups was outstanding. Many pupils, including the less articulate, surprised themselves with the depth and richness of vocabulary they achieved in both their discussion and when addressing the whole class. The head of art has also improved other aspects of the subject's work, such as marking and assessment and the study of art and artists, which were criticised in the previous inspection. The management of the department is very good, with critical evaluation of teaching, staff training and support already firmly in place.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject has the potential to improve because the new head of music has a clear vision for the development of music in the school.
- The resources provided by teachers are of very high quality and they are organised and used well.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn to play musical instruments.
- Standards are lower than they should be because of a fragmented curriculum caused by recent staffing difficulties.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to use ICT to support music making and do not always know what they need to do to improve their work.

Commentary

95. Pupils enter the school with standards which are below average. Pupils currently in Year 9 will achieve standards which are below the national average; achievement is satisfactory overall. When national comparisons are available, GCSE results in 2003 are likely to be well below average. Present standards in Year 11 are below average because pupils did not always receive specialist support in lessons last year. Achievement, which has been unsatisfactory, is now set to improve and standards are higher in Year 10 than in Year 11.

96. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well paced, although sometimes the activities do not cater for the needs of all members of the group. Teachers show lively enthusiasm and whilst this motivates some pupils to work hard, it causes others to misbehave. Pupils often arrive late and this limits learning. Teachers regularly focus on musical language and encourage its correct use, although pupils' understanding of basic words is limited. Pupils in Year 8 have difficulty identifying instruments, and in Year 9, they know the words associated with Reggae, but not what they mean. In Years 8 and 9, keyboards help learning because pupils have been taught correct techniques. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 respond well to tasks because they are carefully planned and explained by the teacher. Some pupils in Year 11 are not motivated because they experienced a lack of regular specialist teaching in Year 10.
97. The leadership of the subject is good because the new head of subject has a clear idea of what needs to be done. The new scheme of work will provide a coherent learning experience for pupils as they move through the school. The management of the department is satisfactory. There is currently no process for logging what pupils can do and what they need to do to improve. Pupils have target grades, but do not know what they need to do to achieve them. The department has very good accommodation and the good facilities for pupils to work in groups during lessons are well used. The organisation of computer resources, with only two workstations in the department, severely limits the use that can be made of them during music lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
98. The school offers a wide range of instrumental tuition, and this is provided free for pupils undertaking examination courses. Pupils' attitudes towards this provision are unsatisfactory at present and many absent themselves from lessons without good reason. The subject makes very good provision for those who want to make music together beyond lesson time and this engenders a very positive learning culture at lunchtimes and after school. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and, after a period of decline brought about by staffing difficulties, the subject is now well placed to improve further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and learning result in good progress in lessons.
- The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade passes at GCSE is improving.
- Most pupils have good attitudes and behave well in lessons.
- The achievement of Year 11 boys in the common course is not as good as it could be because of limited teaching time.
- There are some weaknesses in schemes of work that limit achievement over time in some cases.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are not effectively moderated.

Commentary

99. Results in the GCSE examination were in line with the national average in 2002. Provisional results in 2003 show a good improvement in the proportion of A* to C grade passes. This continues the rising trend over the last three years. Far fewer girls than boys take the course, hence it not possible to comment realistically on gender differences.
100. By the end of Year 9 standards are average for the majority of pupils. Swimming standards, however, are good and, for the more capable, very good. This is as a result of effective teaching and the regular provision of swimming throughout Years 7 to 9. Both boys and girls are developing their range of shots in badminton but there remains a tendency for many to simply return shots to an opponent rather than trying to make them move. Overall achievement is satisfactory, but it is good in Years 7 to 9 because standards on entry were below average.

By the end of Year 11 standards are average with satisfactory achievement. Boys' achievement in games' lessons by the end of Year 11 is not as good as it could be because the actual teaching time they receive is only 25 minutes per week when they choose the games' options, the playing fields being some distance from the school. No girls' lessons were observed. Standards in the Year 11 GCSE course are above average. In their swimming lessons, for example, pupils are well taught and, as a result, are developing their personal survival skills well. Much improved attitudes of pupils towards the GCSE course since the previous inspection have helped improve standards. Individual pupils from across all years have gained representative honours at area and county level in a variety of sports. School teams are local senior schools swimming champions and under-15 Devon friendly league winners.

101. The quality of teaching and learning is good across all years and results in good progress in individual lessons. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught. The good quality teaching is typified by pace, purpose, progression and challenge. There is consistent insistence on high standards of behaviour. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, which helps create a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. All groups of pupils are therefore able to make good progress in their learning. The use of extra adult support in a Year 7 swimming lesson was also very beneficial in this respect. Teachers circulate well in lessons and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes pupils aware of their capabilities. On odd occasions, however, there are insufficient structured opportunities for pupils to be involved in peer evaluation and coaching – this would deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. Teachers make good use of ICT, particularly the use of 'PowerPoint' presentations in theory lessons. The quality of marking of GCSE theory work is inconsistent and pupils are not always being told what they need to do to make further progress. Furthermore, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are not effectively moderated to ensure consistency and accuracy.
102. Both the head of boys' and girls' physical education work closely together but leadership and management are only satisfactory because there is insufficient focus on the overall curriculum, which means there are weaknesses in some of the schemes of work. This adversely affects achievement over time, even when progress in individual lessons is good. The subject continues to support well the school's extra-curricular provision but that for boys is predominately focused on inter-school competitive fixtures rather than activities to attract a wide range of pupils. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Comment on general sporting provision in the school

103. General sporting provision in the school is satisfactory. The physical education department does not formally collate numbers participating in extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have the opportunity to participate in two hours of quality sporting activity per week. The majority of this time is formally timetabled and enhanced by extra-curricular provision. In Years 10 and 11, only those pupils who follow the GCSE examination course have easy access to two hours of quality sporting activity per week. Sporting provision has also been improved for post-16 students, particularly those in Year 12 who have the opportunity to join in one hour of Wednesday afternoon activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocational GCSE courses have recently been introduced, replacing the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses. Leisure and tourism and engineering are taught and are reported on. Additionally, in this curriculum area, business studies GCSE is also taught. Two Year 11 **business studies** lessons were observed. Teaching and learning were good in one lesson and satisfactory in the other; overall standards are broadly average. One lesson demonstrated the value of very effective use of up-to-date ICT facilities which, combined with good planning, motivated pupils to achieve well. The other lesson, though sound, was too dominated by the teacher and lacked challenge and pace to be entirely effective in encouraging pupils to achieve to their full capability.

Vocational courses (leisure and tourism, and engineering)

Provision in vocational courses is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for work experience and links with local businesses are very good.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the vocational areas.
- Skills in the use of ICT are being developed well.
- Attitudes and behaviour are sometimes unsatisfactory and this adversely affects learning.
- Higher attaining pupils have not had the opportunity to choose vocational courses although provision has been extended for Year 10.

Commentary

104. In 2002 standards were significantly below the national average in both vocational areas; results in 2003 were similar. Present standards in Year 11 are below average. However, in contrast to many schools, the courses have recruited from the lower range of attainment, but access to engineering has now been widened in Year 10.
105. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory; many achieve well because of their sound attitudes, the vocational bias of the courses and the way they respond to their work experience on one day per week. Some individual pupils achieved very well, and some have progressed to advanced courses, but the achievement of a number of pupils is unsatisfactory because of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. Leisure and tourism pupils know about different visitor attractions and they have a secure grasp of basic business vocabulary. They can all use web sites to access information because they all have at least sound skills in using computers; however, some have weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. The course work of some engineering pupils is very good. In class they can follow instructions and produce accurate drawings. Pupils clearly enjoy some aspects of their work, particularly using computers. Pupils with special educational needs are making secure progress because of the effective use of computers and other resources, but they do not always have sufficient support in class.
106. Teaching and learning are good. A range of factors contribute to this judgement, including the organisation and pupils' experience of work placements as well as teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the vocational area. The range of activities is good in leisure and tourism and they provide a good level of learning in many lessons. In engineering there is clear focus on practical skills. There is a good use of ongoing assessment through questioning and citizenship, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developed well. However some lessons would benefit from better management of behaviour and more careful monitoring of pupil progress throughout the lesson. Pupils are taking some responsibility for their own learning because of the vocational approach and the emphasis on using their work placements to provide real examples. Pupils taking the NVQ route are well monitored and benefit from the college link. Most are working in construction related activities but other options are available. Work placements provide a very valuable addition to learning opportunities.

107. The school aims to help pupils to fulfil their potential by raising awareness of careers and work place opportunities. The three members of staff involved in planning this provision work very closely together. Management is good. It ensures that liaison is effective, and review and evaluation are good. Links with the local business community are managed very well. Good leadership has ensured the development of new courses and new initiatives. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The vocational provision is promoting achievement for many more pupils and the work experience programme has been considerably extended. However the pupils who are at present taking vocational courses are still mainly from the lower attainment band.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No specific lessons were seen in personal, social and health education (PSHE) because none were scheduled to take place during the week of the inspection. There is insufficient evidence in samples of work to make any reliable judgements on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. The contribution of the PSHE curriculum to the overall experiences of pupils is covered in the curriculum section, and there are references to the contribution that other subjects make to PSHE in various subject sections, and comments about citizenship are made below.

Citizenship

The provision in citizenship is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Poor leadership and management have produced inadequate planning and a curriculum which does not meet the National Curriculum requirements.
- There is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of the teaching or learning and, as a consequence, no effective assessment procedures are in place.
- No subject schemes of work or improvement plans are in place and the omission of these planning tools have led to a serious lack of rigour and emphasis in delivering the subject.
- Most staff have not received any training for over two years and some staff none at all.

Commentary

108. Although some lessons in some subjects contain work that contributes to elements of citizenship, there is little evidence of any coherently planned citizenship activities in Years 7, 9 and 11 and it is impossible to judge what the standards are in these years. In the other years there are some citizenship activities in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. However no lessons were seen during the inspection and no written evidence was available. As the majority of pupils are not currently following a recognisable curriculum, their achievement is poor.
109. It is not possible to give a judgment on teaching and learning as no evidence was available during the inspection. No lesson plans were available, nor any record of pupils' work. No systematic monitoring or evaluation of teaching or learning is in place to assess the development of the subject. The school managers are unable to successfully track the limited activity that is currently taking place.
110. The leadership has recently changed and, in the four weeks prior to the inspection, a clear vision has been beginning to identify the outstanding issues. Previously some initial planning had taken place but this was not translated into any meaningful subject delivery. Management was poor because it did not ensure that the heads of year were aware of their responsibilities in delivering citizenship. Consequently delivery is extremely patchy. Initially subject contributions were to be included in the curriculum; however this did not take place. English, drama and

religious education have identified curriculum topics that could be included. A new mapping exercise may identify further areas for inclusion in an enhanced curriculum. Similarly the summer activities week identified citizenship outcomes, but they were not fully developed within a comprehensive scheme.

111. To date because of previous poor leadership and management, the subject has not developed sufficiently to meet National Curriculum requirements. The appointment of a new co-ordinator to manage the subject has already begun to inject new vigour into the planning and development of citizenship, although it is too early to see any substantial changes in place.

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, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. Information is only given for subjects for which there was an entry of at least five candidates.

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
Art & design	7	14.3	90.0	0.0	42.7	2.9	39.0
Business studies	5	40.0	89.1	20.0	31.7	18.0	35.4
English literature	6	100.0	94.4	0.0	37.9	28.3	38.9
Design and technology	10	80.0	89.2	0.0	32.0	25.0	35.7
Geography	6	83.3	88.3	0.0	36.4	20.0	36.7
History	5	100.0	91.8	0.0	37.2	26.0	37.8
Mathematics	8	25.0	74.2	0.0	32.5	6.3	13.3
Other social studies	9	44.4	83.2	0.0	34.3	19.9	34.8
Total of all subjects taken	77	64.9	86.0	5.2	33.6	19.9	34.8

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	100.0	96.1	44.4	48.7	80.0	85.1
Business studies	5	100.0	96.4	0.0	32.8	60.0	76.5
Drama	9	100.0	98.1	66.7	41.5	104.4	82.9
English literature	11	100.0	98.5	36.4	43.7	76.4	84.3
Design and technology	8	100.0	95.3	25.0	35.5	75.0	76.5
Geography	6	100.0	97.1	0.0	40.5	63.3	80.0
History	7	100.0	97.1	0.0	41.0	68.6	81.2
Other social studies	5	100.0	94.3	20.0	38.9	64.0	77.7
Health and social care (VCE)	7	100.0	90.3	42.9	16.7	81.4	62.9
Total of all A-levels taken	72	100.0	94.8	30.6	39.4	76.7	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was inspected in depth, and **French** was sampled. The number of recent examination entries in French has been too few for any valid national comparisons to be made. In the one lesson sampled, teaching was good and well targeted in securing basic grammar. Students responded positively and showed good achievement and a good standard in oral work. They have bridged the gap from GCSE to the requirements of AS level well. The collaboration with another school has meant that there is now a larger group studying French which has brought considerable benefits for the dynamism of the group for learning. Students benefit from the teaching strengths of two teachers.

English

Provision for English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good lively teaching motivates the students.
- The teachers provide very good written and spoken feedback to the students.
- There are improved AS results in 2003, but prior attainment data could be used more effectively to set targets.

Commentary

112. Results in the 2002 A-level English literature examination were below average, as were the A-level results in 2001 and 2000. Male students did significantly better than females. The results fell in 2003 and the entry was small. In the 2002 AS examination results were broadly average. In 2003 they improved significantly by approximately one third of a level. Overall results were as expected given the students' earlier attainments.

113. In work seen during the inspection, standards in the current Year 13 are above average, reflecting these students' results in the 2003 AS examinations. Achievement is good given the wide range of the students' prior attainments at GCSE. All have made good progress in their

ability to debate the complexities of the different genres they study. Discussions emanating from Iago's alleged 'motiveless malignancy' demonstrated a secure knowledge and understanding of a range of interpretations. Impressively, students of all attainments participated with confidence and enthusiasm when speculating on the reasons for Iago's vow of silence near the play's close. Significant strengths were the students' comfort in arguing the merits of ambiguous or even contradictory interpretations and their use of technical terms. Comments both challenged and affirmed: all opinions were examined critically. Higher attainers are making very good progress in their control of the essay techniques and the written analytical skills associated with the higher grades. The writing of other students is not yet matching the quality of thinking they show in discussion. They have secure knowledge of a text's themes but they have not yet secured the necessary consistency of evaluation in their essay style. Whereas higher attainers analyse closely the impact of an author's use of language on meaning, other students are not exploring this sufficiently.

114. At this early stage of the year, it is too soon to judge the standards of the current Year 12 but they are making a sound start to their post-16 English studies. They showed some assurance when discussing and writing about the themes in "The Tempest" and responded well to a challenging written assignments on the narrative function of the opening chapters to "The Handmaid's Tale".

115. Teaching and learning are good because the teachers are subject specialists with a strong passion for their subject. The students confirmed that this passion fires their enthusiasm, not only for prescribed texts but for further reading. As a result, students have a very positive attitude to their work and lessons. The students' progress is effectively supported by good teaching methods. High expectations led to the students analysing the fluctuations in the structure of Iago's language as well as its significance. Teachers make sure that the students are clear about the requirements of the course's assessment objectives. Teachers support independent learning effectively through well-constructed study guides providing students with information about learning methods and suggestions for further research. The quality of marking is very good. The use of grades is accurate and extensive comments provide clear guidance about strengths and weaknesses. The teachers are especially effective in helping the students become more assured in dealing with the ambiguities in the text. The teachers help the students to develop an effective critical vocabulary to support their textual analysis. To raise and secure standards further, a more explicit approach to supporting the students' writing skills is required.

116. The subject is well led and managed but the potential for using prior attainment data to set both realistic and aspirational targets is not fully realised. However, evidence showed that the subject is beginning to make progress on this issue. Both recruitment and retention are very good. Nearly one quarter of the current Year 12 students are taking English literature. Students receive good guidance about ICT sources to extend their understanding of critics' responses to the texts and movements they study. The wide range of attainment on entry confirms the subject's good provision of equal opportunities. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their knowledge of the subject effectively; relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Students work hard and are encouraged to think for themselves.
- Below average teaching time in Year 12 and 13 limits achievement.
- ICT is under-used as a resource.

Commentary

117. Too few students took A-level mathematics in 2002 to enable any reliable judgement to be made on the results. AS mathematics results were well below average. In 2003 AS mathematics results are likely to be below average though students' achievement was satisfactory in relation to their GCSE results. A-level results are also likely to be below average, but students' achievement was good in relation to their prior attainment, with a high proportion achieving A and B grades and grades A to E. Current standards are average and students are achieving well. Their files are well organised and provide a good record for revision. Year 12 students make good use of past GCSE work to move into new areas and are well into the course. For example, they worked well on polynomials in pure mathematics and coding when calculating the mean of a discrete variate from a frequency table in statistics. In Year 13, students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in class and in their written work. In one lesson, for example, students working independently demonstrated the theoretical application of force in mechanics and defined the exponential function and value of e based on graphs of similar functions in pure mathematics.
118. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, though it ranges from satisfactory to very good. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject effectively. They plan well with a clear purpose for each lesson. As a result, the students work hard and are encouraged to think for themselves. In some lessons students contribute a great deal, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding at the whiteboard. A variety of teaching methods is used and good working relationships with the teachers helps the students achieve well in lessons. However, achievement overall is hampered by the lower than usual amount of teaching time coupled with a delayed start to some lessons; this restricts the treatment of some topics and opportunities to practise newly acquired skills. Too little use is made of ICT to extend and to develop students' work. Work is marked regularly, but the marking offers too little guidance to students in terms of achieving target grades. Provision for the teaching of the key skills course on the application of number in support of vocational courses studied in Year 12 is good.
119. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Monitoring and assessment procedures are well established. Planning is effective with a range of courses that meet the needs of all students. Student numbers have increased in Year 12, and standards are improving. There is a commitment to raising standards further; issues raised in the last report have been addressed and improvement has been satisfactory. Teachers are approachable and are prepared to use their time outside lessons to provide support. However, despite these strengths, the weaker areas identified above, plus the lower than usual amount of time for mathematics, mean that overall provision at present is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

The main focus of the inspection was on **physics**, but one lesson of **biology** and one of **chemistry** were also sampled, as well as samples of work. All three disciplines have been characterised by small groups of students. In the Year 12 AS Chemistry examination in 2003, all three candidates gained grades in the A – E range; at the A-level at the end of Year 13, two chemists gained A or B grades and all but one gained a grade in the A – E range. In Biology, two of the three candidates gained A – E grades at AS level, and, at A-level, 11 of the 12 candidates gained A – E grades, four being at the higher A or B level.

In the sampled lessons in biology and chemistry, teaching was very good in each of them. The large **biology** group contains students of a wide range of ability and maturity, and standards and achievement at this early stage were at expected levels. However, the lesson had a cracking pace with high expectations, plenty of challenge and plenty of support, so there were encouraging signs for the future. The Year 13 **chemistry** lesson saw work and challenge of a high order. The teacher's excellent rapport with students and the tutorial style of the teaching encouraged students to volunteer answers and build confidence; questions and answers flowed freely in both directions and students got maximum value out of the teacher's expert knowledge and achieved very well.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced and enthusiastic staff teach a modern, interactive computer-based course which encourages independent learning and consolidation, but students do not take full advantage of this.
- Experimental opportunities are frequent, and students' ICT skills are used and developed in parallel with their scientific skills.
- Assessment at the end of each topic keeps students aware of their attainment and progress, but additional test material is currently needed.
- 'Advancing Physics' is a self-contained package and students rely almost exclusively on the material within it, with little need for additional notes. Therefore, they are not developing sufficiently the research and writing skills that will be needed in higher education.

Commentary

120. Standards are around average in the classroom and in examination results. In 2003, seven candidates entered the AS examination at the end of Year 12 and five passed in the A – E range. At the end of Year 13, all three candidates in the A2 exam gained A - E grades, but none at the higher A or B levels. Year 12 students – all male – are coming to terms with the more complex science of advanced level work, and of the greater demands made of them. Despite their creditable results in this year's GCSE examinations, these young men are not yet confident in their own abilities and are tentative in their approaches, still relying heavily on teacher guidance and supply of information. Nevertheless they have made a promising start and are becoming aware of the gaps that they need to remedy in both knowledge and practical skills. The three male Year 13 students also lack confidence despite their encouraging AS level results this summer. They also are working at the nationally expected standard. Achievement over both years is therefore satisfactory.
121. All students are interested and well motivated and work productively, co-operating well together. Their lack of self-confidence, however, makes them reluctant to volunteer an answer unless directly called upon and they falter when faced with a 'what if?' type of question. Recall of earlier work is not always secure, indicating poor preparation and revision, and some basic practical skills need further development – for instance, they needed considerable 'prodding' to suggest ways in which a fairly simple experiment on the stretching of a metal wire could be made to yield more accurate results.
122. The standard of teaching is good, and different approaches and enthusiasms of the staff add variety and increase interest and motivation. Small-group teaching is tutorial in nature – often round a table rather than in front of a blackboard all the time – and this enables the less confident to be supported and any higher attainers to be suitably extended. Students benefit from three different physicists in the teaching team, and good relationships make for a relaxed yet informative atmosphere in which support can be provided in an informal manner whenever it is needed. As a result, learning in individual lessons is good and proceeds at a pace which ensures that everyone is involved. Teachers have very good subject expertise and their enthusiasm, commitment and good-humoured approaches are motivating factors.
123. The proximity of the science computer room to the normal laboratory is a distinct advantage to this course, but the students rely heavily on the text book and CD ROM resources and have few additional notes. The library is well resourced for independent research and learning but is not used by students to voluntarily 'read around' their topics or to glean additional information and data – skills that will be needed at university. Year 13 students reported that the system of assessment kept them aware of their attainment and progress and they regarded it as a

supportive measure to their studies. Because of the experience of the teachers, the course runs smoothly and leadership and management are satisfactory. Attention to additional test material and to strategies to encourage students to develop more extensive research and writing skills will help to raise standards further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry because of good relationships and well prepared assignments that require pupils to organise their own research.
- Students benefit from good advice and individual attention from the teachers.
- Achievement could be even better at times if there was more stringent attention to the detailed requirements of the assessment criteria and if the pace of all lessons matched that of the best.
- Too few visits, visitors and curriculum links with industry limit the value of practical applications of the subject.

Commentary

124. Over the past few years, the results for the Advanced Vocational Certificate Examination (AVCE) in ICT have been broadly in line with the national average, although not many students obtain the highest grades. The GNVQ results present a similar picture. The provisional results for 2003 indicate that these standards have been maintained for the advanced course. Students achieve well when their results are compared to their attainment on entry into the sixth form. This has also been the case for those who opted to take the GNVQ Intermediate course, until 2003, when no students passed. However, the school has appealed against the results. No reliable judgements can be made yet on present standards in Year 12 as students have only been studying the courses for a few weeks, having entered the sixth form with no formal qualification in ICT.
125. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Well-written assignments result in the progressive increase in knowledge and learning, with the majority of students trying hard to succeed and complete their research. Relationships are good and teachers offer pertinent advice on a one-to-one basis, thereby improving achievement. A more consistent focus on a brisk pace of learning would also improve standards. A scrutiny of the work of past students indicates that teachers and students sometimes lack a rigorous approach to analysing and meeting the detailed criteria that determine their academic success. The lack of visits and visitors means that important opportunities to enliven teaching and learning are missed, so, although achievement is generally good, there is potential for even higher achievement and motivation.
126. The management and leadership of ICT education in the sixth form are satisfactory as are improvements since the last inspection. This reflects a balance of strengths and areas that require development. ICT Level 2 Key Skills have been introduced for all pupils on a vocational course but there is no provision for accreditation for higher level achievement. ICT is used well to support teaching and learning in other subjects and aspects of the sixth form curriculum. For example, there is extensive use of video conferencing to promote learning. The AVCE three-unit course has been successfully introduced, and has become a popular subject, with few leaving the course. However, the GNVQ Intermediate course is now attracting so few students that its viability in terms of meeting students' needs and the efficient use of resources is questionable. There are insufficient strong industrial links or consistent references to the all-encompassing nature of ICT in modern life to enhance the ICT examination courses and to emphasise the practical applications of the subject.

HUMANITIES

Geography was inspected in depth and one lesson of each of history, psychology and religious studies was sampled. The course in government and politics, taught by video link, was not sampled.

The sampled history lesson was an A2 level Year 13 class with 13 students. Teaching and learning were satisfactory with average standards. The lesson was well planned and organised and the students were encouraged to share their ideas with each other. Their responses were mixed, with some taking an active part in the discussion, while others preferred to be observers in the debate. Knowledge and understanding of the prohibition movement in America in the 1920s were patchy, reflecting the level of research undertaken by individual students.

Psychology is taught to Year 12 students by video link with the one hour session following a seminar format. The students were attentive and positive; they were well-prepared and confident in participating in the remote learning process. The relaxed environment and methodical teaching led to satisfactory learning and achievement with standards that would be expected at this early stage of the course.

Religious studies is taught to both Year 12 and Year 13 students at the same time. However, good teaching with careful planning which took individual students' needs into account led to a supportive structure in which all students achieved satisfactorily. Overall, standards are average.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned using a variety of resources and strategies to assist learning.
- Assessment is very helpful to students with individual feedback and target setting.
- The subject uses good fieldwork and study resources in the local area.
- At times, teaching lacks a clear explanation of complex concepts, and students do not always join in discussions sufficiently.

Commentary

127. Standards in this year's A-level examinations were around the national average. The subject usually has had about ten students choosing to study AS and A-level geography and their performance has generally been slightly below the national average. In the last two years there has been a 100 per cent pass rate, and although in 2002 this was still below the national average in terms of proportions of higher grades. In 2003, with an increased percentage of higher grades, overall standards are likely to be average when national comparisons are available. For the last two years the results in Year 12 at AS level have also improved and the subject has achieved an 88 per cent pass rate, also with some high grades. Retention from AS to A-level has been high. Students' achievements have been good when compared to their standards on entry to the courses, and present achievement is also good. Sixth formers are also encouraged to develop key skills within their lessons and show good ICT competency and good ability to select and process relevant information; however, their verbal communication is somewhat weaker overall.

128. The quality of teaching and learning is good; it is always at least satisfactory and much is good. Lessons are characterised by their pace and the variety of resources used to provide information. However students are required to work quickly to complete tasks; whilst this is commendable most of the time, there are times when they are at a loss to understand complex ideas and principles. On these occasions, there is room for more explanation by the teacher

rather than an expectation that completing work will, in itself, ensure understanding. ICT is used extensively and effectively to support learning; this was particularly well used in an Intranet lesson where students were provided with information relating to the San Andreas fault to bring into their analysis of its impact on parts of California. Course work and research topics give students the opportunity to work independently. They are well supported by teachers and given constant positive assessment advice with individual targets.

129. Leadership is good at post-16 level. The department has rewritten its schemes of work, introduced new assessment practices and is constantly reviewing its performance and evaluating its work. There is a good team of specialist teachers committed to developing the subject. They make good use of outdoor and regional facilities such as study centres to develop students' understanding of geography at the post-16 level. This and other developments have contributed to the good improvement in standards since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on A-level courses in product design, but GNVQ Intermediate engineering is also taught in Year 12. One lesson was sampled. The lesson was satisfactory with average standards being attained. The students found independent work difficult and the teacher had to direct the lesson throughout. Whilst the students' responses in the lesson itself were good, their inadequate preparation for the lesson meant that it got off to a slow start.

Product design

Provision in product design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination performances were high in 2003 and likely to be well above the national average.
- Retention rates from AS to A2 levels are high.
- The recent change of examination board allows more flexibility in teaching the curriculum, though there is insufficient use of industrial visits to support learning.
- Teachers are well qualified with good teaching expertise, though they need to monitor students' weaker work more rigorously.
- Students' standards of graphical presentation are high, but they do not always meet coursework deadlines.

Commentary

130. The 2002 A-level results were below average for A-B grades but all students were successful at A-E grades. From a small entry in 2003, the A2 results were well above the provisional national average for students gaining A-B grades. AS results have been average over recent years. Standards of work in lessons and in work seen are above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12 for this stage of the course. Given students' standards on entry to the course, this represents satisfactory achievement at AS level and good achievement at A2 level. Current standards of coursework also support this judgement.
131. In Year 12, written assignments are mainly well presented showing a good understanding of requirements. In Year 13 a good range of work is being investigated in design folders. The work is of an above average standard overall showing a variety of research skills, good investigation of materials, consideration of environmental issues and manufacturing techniques. Good use of ICT to enhance presentation and analysis is seen in most work. The best work shows good relationships within the chosen theme, for example sea life or natural forms, when designing products for a particular purpose. The fashion project in textiles is very well researched and presented showing high quality work and a good balance between traditional and old shapes in

the lamp project designed for a wide range of consumer tastes. Where the work is of a lower standard, it is due to incomplete coursework, poorer presentation and insufficient research and development of ideas.

132. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers use good subject expertise in their particular areas to develop and expand ideas resulting in an increase in students' learning and understanding. In a Year 12 lesson, students were purposefully engaged in developing the skills required in a case study; good reference was made to assessment criteria and of exemplar material to support the learning. In a Year 13 lesson students were engaged in individual project work with the teacher giving good support to students. The mentor system is a good feature of teaching. Students have very positive attitudes to the work. Independent learning skills are well developed. The good teaching results in high standards of graphical presentation by most students.
133. Leadership and management are good and the new course of study allows flexibility in the teaching. With the exception of 2002, the examination results show good achievement by students and student numbers have increased. However, weaker students require more rigorous monitoring to ensure that the help they need is clearly identified and acted on quickly. The use of industrial visits would help students' learning by extending their experiences and link what they are doing with the commercial world. Nonetheless, since the last inspection a change of examination board has allowed more specialist areas to be involved in the teaching and created wider opportunities for students, and overall improvement has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

In this curriculum area, A-level courses are taught in theatre studies and art & design. Art & design was inspected in detail, and one **theatre studies** lesson was sampled. It was a very good lesson. The quality of relationships created a first-rate partnership between students and the teacher and with each other. Despite a rushed conclusion which reduced the time for self-reflection, well-developed drama skills, underpinned by theory and trust, led to very good learning and achievement with well above average standards.

Art & design

The provision for art & design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent leadership and very good management of art in the sixth form which are providing a firm foundation for rapid progress in the subject.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- The sixth form art curriculum is in a state of flux and it is not clear that all students are on a suitable course.

Commentary

134. Current standards at the end of Year 13 are average. A-level results in 2002 were average and in 2003 are likely to be above average when national comparisons are available. Achievement is satisfactory as most students entered the course with a high GCSE grade. However, the intermediate AS level results have been well below expectations, making achievement unsatisfactory last year. Last year, students suffered from acute staffing problems and consequent upheaval. Those who took AS last year, in particular, had developed insufficient independent learning skills early on and were unable to demonstrate the high levels of research and analysis needed in the examination. This resulted in half the students failing to gain a grade. The recent changes made by the new head of art have taken these shortcomings into

account, so that both Year 12 students and the remaining Year 13 students are making good progress.

135. Teaching and learning are good overall. At the instigation of the head of art, teachers are concentrating on developing the students' drawing, recording and communication skills. This is particularly important since the new Year 12 group have a wide range of prior attainment at GCSE. Some of them have a limited artistic vocabulary. In one lesson, for instance, when discussing a painting, the teacher worked hard to get the students to draw on their understanding of the visual elements. She provided opportunities to discuss and to talk to the whole group, and provided models of good writing and a framework for them to build on. Similarly, where the problem is with expressive recording techniques, the teachers' own high level of knowledge and skill is brought into play, for example when demonstrating and illustrating the imaginative use of acrylic paint. Lessons are not as successful when the teacher and students are not fully prepared for the lesson. Both are still adapting to the new regime and programme of study, which are, in any case, still evolving. One Year 12 lesson got off to a shaky start because the teacher had not prepared the resources well and students lacked confidence in their responses.
136. The new head of art is providing excellent leadership. She has vision, energy and a determination to raise achievement and expand the curriculum. Management is very good, with critical evaluation of teaching, staff training and support already firmly in place. This ensures that classes shared between two teachers have continuity and a consistent message. As well as implementing a range of measures to improve the A-level students' exploration of the work of other artists, the head of art has re-organised the accommodation and improved the facilities. Students now have better opportunities to use computers and photography plus a small studio within the creative arts block. However, standards for entry to the A-level course have been lowered, in order to accommodate students who failed to get the expected GCSE grade. This has called into question the suitability of this course for the full range of students. The head of art is currently exploring other options, for example, a vocational course. Nevertheless, because of the high level of commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers, the school has good prospects for restoring achievement to its previous high level. With the upheaval there has been, standards dropped, but the rate of improvement is now rapid, with much potential for further rapid improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In this curriculum area, physical education is taught at AS and A-level and was inspected in detail. As part of the school's vocational provision in the sixth form, courses in **leisure and recreation** and **leisure and tourism** are taught. One lesson of each was sampled. The AVCE **leisure and recreation** lesson was very good. There was a very good vocational and careers focus and much emphasis on students taking responsibility for collecting evidence and for their own learning. Students are achieving well because of the very good teaching and learning that take place, and they are attaining national average standards. The Year 12 intermediate level GNVQ course on **leisure and tourism** also had a good vocational approach. The sampled lesson took place in an ICT room and students made good use of ICT. Standards at this stage are average, but students are achieving well because of the good teaching.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and learning results in good progress in lessons.
- The proportion of students attaining A or B grade passes at A-level was 100 per cent in 2002.
- Students have positive attitudes to their learning.

- Leadership and management of post-16 provision lack a focus on the overall teaching of the curriculum.
- Analysis of examination data within the physical education department is not well developed.

Commentary

137. Results in the A-level examination in 2002 were well above average, with good retention rates from Year 12. Provisional results in 2003, nevertheless high, show a drop in the proportion of students attaining A or B grade passes. No data for AS level was available in the physical education department, nor was there any data showing gender breakdown or analysis of value added data for students.
138. In Year 13, standards of work seen are average overall. Students have a secure grasp of the effects of exercise on the body and are developing well their knowledge and understanding of the effects of recovery time on exercise. In one lesson, this was as a result of the teacher including a practical investigation for students to complete. Similarly, in another lesson, students were involved in coaching one another; as a result, they were developing well their observational and analytical skills. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to their standards at the end of Year 12.
139. The quality of teaching and learning is good and students make good progress in their lessons. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught and are enthusiastic in their approach. The good quality teaching is typified by pace, purpose, progression, challenge and the involvement of students in their learning. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students worked very effectively in small groups to develop their knowledge and understanding of specific muscle groups as related to sports physiology. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good, which helps create a positive atmosphere in lessons. As a result all students are able to make good progress in their learning. Teachers' effective use of questions ensures all students are involved and challenged as well as deepening their knowledge and understanding. Homework is set and extends students' learning but expectations are unclear as regards further individual research. Some students, for example, commented that they really only completed the set tasks and did not do further work.
140. Though there is no one identified as having particular responsibility for post-16 provision in the subject, leadership and management are satisfactory. Two members of the department oversee the delivery of the examination courses and teachers have undertaken relevant professional development. However, the arrangements do mean that there is insufficient focus on the overall structure of what is taught; thus, whilst progress in lessons is good, achievement overall is only satisfactory. Students comment very favourably on the quality of support and guidance teachers provide for them in the examination courses. Sports' leaders' courses are no longer offered to post-16 students but all Year 12 students now have the opportunity to be involved in timetabled sporting activities for one hour per week. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Business studies is taught to AS and A2 levels. It was not inspected in depth, but two lessons were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Overall, teaching and learning are good with students achieving well. In both years, standards are in line with national expectations. In one lesson, effective use was made of case studies with good examples from the world of business. In the other, there was a strong intellectual content and challenge; there was good progression and effective use of time, so, despite the late start, achievement was good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good, and often very good, teaching results in good achievement by students at all levels.
- Assessment is used very effectively to show students how to improve their work.
- Students benefit from the skills and experience of health care practitioners.
- Assessment is not used well enough to ensure that higher attaining students are appropriately challenged.

Commentary

141. Results for students taking AS level and AVCE (double and single award) courses in health and social care were above average in 2002 and likely to be a little higher in 2003. Results for those following the GNVQ (intermediate) course were average. Four different courses are offered, catering well for students with wide ranging abilities. Students enter health and social care courses in Year 12 with overall GCSE results that are about average. Almost all complete their course and many progress from GNVQ in Year 12 to more advanced courses in Year 13. Current standards seen during the inspection are above average overall, reflecting recent results and representing good progress and achievement bearing in mind students' earlier GCSE results.
142. Teachers reinforce the value of care very effectively in their interactions with students. They respond positively, usually contributing well to discussion because they feel secure that contributions will be valued by teachers and other students. In portfolio work, several Year 13 students demonstrate very good achievement when they use visits to doctors' surgeries and primary schools to analyse and evaluate the care shown to clients in practical situations. Many lessons make very effective use of the skills, and particularly the experience, of health and social care professionals who either visit in person or talk directly with students by video-link. In one lesson, a former health care practitioner held students' attention by using her wealth of experience to provide examples and anecdotes to explain the importance of monitoring routine physiological measurements over time. Teachers structure lessons well so that learning objectives are clear, and usually use a variety of approaches to maintain students' interest. In Year 12, students watched a video presentation showing young children at play which enabled them to quickly understand the key features in child development; most showed good achievement by going on to consider how different environments might affect development.
143. Students say that they are pleased with their choice of course and appreciate their teachers' efforts to help them improve. Teachers mark students' portfolio work thoroughly. As a result students have a clear view of the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve. In lessons, particularly in Year 12 and where Years 12 and 13 are taught together, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively enough to stretch higher attaining students, for example by encouraging them to consider higher level requirements in pairs or small groups.
144. Health and social care is well led and managed. Teachers work well together as a team, for example in implementing a recently devised student handbook that will help students and teachers set targets for improvement and monitor progress towards them. However, there are too few opportunities for teachers to share good practice, resulting in some inconsistency in students' experiences across the subject.
145. It is not possible to judge improvement since the last inspection because the report contained no specific mention of health and social care.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Because none was taught during the inspection, it is not possible to comment on the standards being achieved in the course on personal, social and health education in the sixth form. A number of other courses contribute to students' personal development and overall experiences. One of them, **critical thinking**, is being taught after the end of the normal school day to enable any student who wants to attend to be able to do so. One critical thinking lesson was sampled at AS level with Year 12 students. The students' achievement was good when they analysed texts to identify examples of flawed arguments. Both teaching and learning were good on this relatively new course in the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

