

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLYROOD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Chard

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123870

Headteacher: Mr Maurice Hicks

Lead inspector: Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 15 – 19 September 2003

Inspection number: 259147

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: Community
Age range of students: 11 - 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1274

School address: Zembard Lane
Chard
Somerset
Postcode: TA20 1JL

Telephone number: 01460 260100
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr. Ian Kelland

Date of previous inspection: April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Holyrood School is a mixed comprehensive community school for students aged 11 – 18, situated in Chard, Somerset. Students are drawn from the town and its surrounding villages. The socio-economic background from which the students are drawn is average overall but varies widely. While a number are from professional and educated families, there are also some students from needy and educationally deprived backgrounds. There are currently 1274 students on roll, with 148 in the sixth form. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is about average. Attainment on entry is average overall and improving, although verbal skills are not as good as non-verbal skills. The percentage of students with special educational needs is average, with 147 students with identified needs. A significant number of these students have emotional and behavioural problems as well as learning difficulties of many kinds including autism. Some students also have medical problems, visual and hearing impairments, speech and language disorders and many other complex or severe problems. Altogether 22 students have statements of special educational needs, including four in the sixth form. The school is overwhelmingly white British but with a handful of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are just 7 students with English as an additional language, who are given additional support. Students are relatively stable and few students leave the school other than at the end of Years 11 or 13. The school has recently been awarded Technology College status. It has also been awarded Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and Investors in People.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Lead inspector	
19639	Gillian Anderson	Lay inspector	
4486	Michael Weller	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science
22660	Allan Pemberton	Team inspector	Design and technology
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30136	Dennis Johnson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History, Religious education
7465	Richard Brent	Team inspector	Geography
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music
15590	Susan Slocombe	Team inspector	Physical education, Citizenship
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Special educational needs
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	English in the sixth form, Leisure and recreation

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good and increasingly effective** school and provides good value for money. Driven by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the school has made significant changes during the last two years. Standards are broadly average and improving. In a number of subjects, standards are above average. The overall good quality of teaching and learning is leading to improving achievements for all students.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, well supported by his senior staff, is providing a focus for change, a strong sense of common purpose and a determined drive for improvement.
- Good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students combine to ensure their achievements are at least satisfactory and often good.
- The school is an inclusive community in which good relationships and friendly atmosphere, alongside productive links with the community, help to promote achievement.
- Carefully targeted and sensitive support for students with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress.
- Management procedures do not ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment by teachers does not always inform students of their progress and of the next step in their learning.
- The vocational curriculum in Years 9 to 13 is not extensive.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used enough to support learning.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection in 1998. However, improvements in the last two years have been rapid, and the school is now poised to move forward with greater confidence. Standards in Year 9 tests and in GCSE and A level examinations have all improved. Key issues at the time of the last inspection have been tackled effectively, although the use of assessment and the use of ICT remain priorities for development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards in Years 7 – 9 are average and students' achievements are good. Standards in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form are average and students' achievements are satisfactory. Achievement is higher in the younger years because of the improving quality of education being provided. Older students, while achieving satisfactorily, have had a less consistently good experience. Current standards in the sixth form are higher than recent examination results would suggest. Results in 2003 were higher and improving standards have been maintained. Standards in English and mathematics are average by the end of Year 9 and 11. Students achieve well in English throughout the school; in mathematics, their achievements are good in Years 7-9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In science, students achieve well throughout and standards are above average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Students achieve well in most

other subjects, except religious education where achievements are unsatisfactory and information and communication technology where there are satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and that of girls.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall.

Pupils' attitudes are good, particularly in the sixth form where they are very good. Students are keen to learn and their positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their achievements. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most students behave well but there is a small minority of students whose behaviour and attitudes are unsatisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance levels are average and are improving rapidly as a result of school initiatives.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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

Teaching is **good** throughout the school. The quality of learning is helped by the way teaching encourages pupils to take an active part and the way learning is consolidated at the end of lessons through a well planned summary. The curriculum is satisfactory, broad and well balanced. Provision for students with special educational needs is particularly effective. The school's good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the arts and sport, is well supported. The school's links with the community make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good overall**. Leadership is good overall, as managers are increasingly empowered to seek improvements in the areas of their responsibility. Management is satisfactory. Line management and monitoring procedures are in place, but not systematically applied. While teachers are increasingly confident in reviewing their practice, evaluation is not sharp enough to enable best practice to be shared. The work of the governors is good. Governors are committed and hardworking and bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. Relationships with staff are very good. They have a good knowledge of the school's work and are confident in their role.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents: Links with parents are good. Parents are very supportive of the school and by and large, the school has their confidence. In particular they are pleased that their children like school and are expected to work hard; that their children make good progress because of the good teaching. A small minority of parents are critical of the information provided by the school on their children's progress and the behaviour of some students.

Students: Students express considerable support for the school and are fiercely loyal. They enjoy the challenge of the teaching and participate in all activities with enthusiasm. They feel trusted by their teachers. Whilst many students are critical of the behaviour of a minority, they feel that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- embed management procedures, to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and to offer opportunities to spread good practice.
- consistently use assessment by teachers to inform students of their progress and of the next step in their learning.
- improve the range of vocational courses available in Years 9 to 13.

- develop the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- review the arrangements made for providing a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT HOLYROOD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is providing a **satisfactory** education for its students, and it has improved since the last inspection in 1998. Standards are getting better and results in the last two years show improvement. Given their prior attainment at GCSE, students achieve satisfactorily as result of usually good teaching. There is a clear sense of direction and leadership, and management is satisfactory, although the analysis of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. The sixth form is not fully cost effective, although this is a conscious decision in expanding the range of courses offered in order to build up student numbers. For some years, a number of the school's most able Year 11 students have continued their studies elsewhere. This has had an impact on the overall results at A level.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students are overwhelmingly supportive and enjoy being part of the sixth form.
- Teachers are committed to the progress of individual students.
- The curriculum provides a good range of subjects at advanced level and opportunities for enrichment.
- Relationships are very good amongst the students and between staff and students.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to study vocational subjects and courses.
- The management and use of value added data to analyse performance and identify weaknesses are not good enough.
- There is not enough consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Student numbers in some subjects are too small.

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. English standards have been around the national average, and better in literature papers. Students' achievements are satisfactory. Good in French. Results have been lower than average, but standards are improving. Achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Results have been below average but are now improving. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are average and students' achievements are satisfactory.
Science	Good in physics. Although standards are generally below average, the teaching is good, and recent results indicate that an increasing proportion of students are attaining their target grades.
Information and communication technology	Not inspected in detail.
Humanities	Good in history. Standards are improving and are now average as a

Engineering, technology
and manufacturing

result of good teaching. Students' achievements are satisfactory.
Satisfactory in geography. Results have been below average, but
given the students' attainment on entry to the course, their
achievements are satisfactory.

No subjects were inspected in detail, although Textiles was sampled.
A level results in 2002 were very good.

Visual and performing arts and media	Good in music. Good teaching is leading to improved standards in both music and music technology. Students' achievements are satisfactory. Good in drama. Performance skills are well above average, but overall standards are pulled down by below average standards in students' written analysis. Teaching is very good.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory in leisure and recreation. Although standards are below average, students' achievements are satisfactory given their attainment on entry to the course.
Business	No subjects were inspected in detail, but one lesson of AS business studies was sampled. Standards are satisfactory and teaching of business theory is effective.
Health and social care	Not inspected in detail. Health and Social Care is a popular option and standards are satisfactory.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of **personal support and guidance** that students receive is **good**. Tutors know their students very well and are sensitive to their needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is now a clear rationale for the sixth form and the curriculum it offers. While systems are well organised and thorough, procedures to monitor performance against prior attainment at GCSE have only recently been introduced. The monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching are not systematic.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and consider the teaching challenges them to achieve their best. They particularly appreciate the helpfulness of the teachers and the careful marking of their work. They consider that they are treated fairly and with respect. Their views are welcomed and often acted on. Some were critical of the level of careers advice and the subject choices available to them.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of work seen overall during the inspection were average at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. Students' achievements are good during Years 7 – 9 and satisfactory elsewhere in the school. Both boys and girls achieve similarly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 – 9.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout.
- Standards overall are improving and all students are increasingly doing better.
- Standards in mathematics are not as high as in English or science, but are improving.

Commentary

1. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the students' performance in English, mathematics and science was average. In comparison with 'similar schools' i.e. those with students who achieved similarly in Year 6 tests, performance in English and science was average, while in mathematics it was below average. The three-year running average indicates a stronger performance in English and science than in mathematics. However, in 2003, results in mathematics improved considerably as the result of a sharper focus on effective teaching and learning. Results also improved in science where there was a considerable rise in the numbers of students achieving higher levels. The overall trend in performance in Year 9 tests has been broadly in line with the improving national trend, although results in each subject have varied.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.7 (33.4)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	33.9 (34.3)	34.7 (34.4)
science	33.2 (34.4)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 242 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Given the students' standards on entry in Year 7 as measured by their attainment in national tests taken at the end of their primary schools, most students' achievements are good. Cognitive ability tests taken by students on entry indicate a lower ability of most students in verbal than in non-verbal and quantitative tests. Progress in English is particularly marked in Year 9 where the teaching is very effective. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls, although girls tend to perform better in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Although the school has only recently implemented a programme for its gifted and talented students, higher attaining students achieve well through Years 7 – 9. The achievements of students with special educational needs are also good.
3. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2002 was 60.5 per cent, above the national average and in line with the similar schools' average. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to G grades was also above average. The 'capped' average total points GCSE score per student in 2002 was 37.7, above the national and in line with the similar schools' averages. Results dipped in 2003 after several years of

improving results. However, this was a less able year overall and the performance was in line with target grades. Results overall since the last inspection have shown good improvement from 45 to 57 per cent of students achieving A* to C grades.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60.5 (55.8)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93.6 (98.1)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	41.3 (40.2)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 220 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In 2002, results in history and design and technology were significantly better than results nationally for the percentage of students achieving an A* to C grade. In 2003, there were some strong performances in English language, science, art and history. Performance in history was particularly impressive with over one quarter of students gaining an A or A* grade. There were also high proportions of students gaining A or A* grades in English language and art. Students performed less well in mathematics.
5. Overall in work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards were average, in line with test performance at the end of Year 9 but lower than recent GCSE results. This is because the current Year 11 is a less able year. Their achievements, however, remain satisfactory. Students in Years 7 – 9 are achieving well overall. The school has made marked improvements in the last two years which have had a significant impact on the quality of learning and the achievements of younger students. While most students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving satisfactorily they have not benefited as much from the changes to the learning culture in the school. The school has worked hard to engage and motivate a small minority of boys in Year 11, for example, who previously had poor attitudes to learning. This has been very largely successful, but in the time available there has been too much ground to make up for this particular group of students.
6. Overall, however, there is no difference between the achievements of boys and girls. The most significant factors in the improving learning culture are the quality of teaching and the school and subject leadership, which now has a strong focus on maximising achievement for all students. In addition, the good attitudes of most students to their learning help to promote more sustained progress.
7. The progress of students with special educational needs is good, and better where individual attention is given by the teacher or teaching assistant. Standards of students with special educational needs vary according to the nature and degree of learning difficulty. Many students with moderate or severe learning problems enter the school at National Curriculum Level 2 or below and will never have the potential to progress to Level 4. Last year two students with identified special educational needs obtained 5 A*-C grades at GCSE and 15 obtained 5 or more A*-G grades. This as a good achievement. Other students gained accreditation through certificate of achievement and Youth Award programmes.
8. The achievement of the very small number of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) who have been in school for over a year is good. They have made good progress with speaking and listening and mathematical skills, and satisfactory progress with

reading and writing. They are well motivated and eager to succeed. Five other students with EAL have recently joined or are about to join the school. There is no variation in the progress made by the small number of minority ethnic groups of students.

9. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were average in both Years 9 and 11. Given their attainment on entry, students make good progress and achieve well through the school. Standards of literacy are average throughout the school. Students speak fluently and usually with confidence. Listening skills are also satisfactory and students listen with careful attention to both teachers and their fellow students. Most read reasonably fluently. They locate information quickly and bring a critical approach to what they have read. They are good at making deductions from the text and demonstrate these skills confidently in subjects such as history. Most write well at length, organise their work well into paragraphs, and use punctuation accurately, although a small number make errors in spelling. Most writing is characterised by clarity and a good sense of structure.
10. In work seen in mathematics, standards are average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are good in Years 7 – 9 but not so marked, though nevertheless satisfactory, in Years 10 and 11. Standards of numeracy are average. Most students accurately use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, and most, though not all, students are reasonably confident at mental calculations.
11. Standards in science are above average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Students' achievements are good in Years 7 – 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.
12. In other subjects, students' achievements are good in design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. They are satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) and have been unsatisfactory in religious education, where difficulties with staff have led to some discontinuity in the learning. However these problems have now been overcome and the students are now achieving satisfactorily.

Sixth form

13. In 2002, the results of students entered for AS and A level examinations were well below average. Results in most subjects have been consistently below average over the last four years, but some subjects do well, English literature, textiles, art and history in particular. Results in 2002 were an improvement on those in 2001, and in 2003 this improvement was sustained, although there are as yet no national comparators. Evidence from the inspection indicates that this improvement has continued and standards in Year 13 in most subjects are at nationally expected levels for this stage of the course.

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	80.5	90.3
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	22.7	35.5
Average point score per student	170.9 (158.5)	263.3

There were 62 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

14. Although results have been well below average, students' achievements are satisfactory. For a number of years, the sixth form has failed to attract all of its the school's most able students, a number of whom prefer to leave after taking their GCSEs and follow sixth form courses elsewhere. The school is now working with some success to retain all of its students and provide them with suitable post-16 courses. The school prides itself on open access to the

sixth form and has adopted an inclusive policy towards taking students onto courses. Although the entry criteria state that potential A level students must have a good pass grade at GCSE, a number of students are admitted with the minimum C grade.

15. Boys tend to achieve less well than girls at this level. In 2002 students did particularly well in art and design, where results were well above average, and in history, where they were above average. They did less well in biology, business studies, mathematics and physics, where results were well below average. However, numbers taking the courses were in some cases too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made. AS results in communication studies and sports studies were above average, while those in design and technology were well below average. Results in the VCE leisure and recreation course were very low.
16. Inspectors judge the achievements of most students in the current sixth form to be satisfactory. Standards are improving as a consequence of increasingly effective teaching which offers better levels of challenge and independent learning. Retention rates through courses are good with most successfully completing the course.
17. Not all subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection. Of those which were, standards observed in English, mathematics, physics, history, geography, French, music and drama/theatre studies were average for this stage in the course. Standards in the leisure and recreation course were below average. For most students on these courses, achievements and progress through the course, given their attainment at GCSE, are satisfactory, and they are good in sports studies. In subjects sampled some good work was seen in textiles, communication studies, psychology and sociology. Both boys and girls are achieving satisfactorily, and students from ethnic minority groups achieve similarly to others. There are a very small number of students with special educational needs in Year 12. Their achievements in GCSE last year were good.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes of students are good, particularly in the sixth form where they are very good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Although most students behave well, there is a small minority whose behaviour and attitudes are unsatisfactory. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships and a friendly atmosphere characterise the school and help to promote increasing maturity as students move through the school.
- The positive attitudes of most students contribute strongly to their improving achievements.
- Attendance is improving, particularly for a small number of students in Year 11 with previously poor attitudes to school.

Commentary

18. Overall attendance is average and has improved during the last year. This is a result of increasingly effective work by the student services department in working with a small group of disaffected boys in Year 11. The school's commitment to inclusion is demonstrated through a number of successful curricular initiatives, including 'Firebreak' which aims to involve these students more fully: a small group of students follow a practical course for one day with the Fire Service. Some less able Year 10 students follow a Lifeskills course and other work-related courses within school. The improvement in attendance and attitude has been significant since this innovation started last summer in response to disaffection, poor behaviour, and non-attendance in Year 10. A social language course is improving the attitudes and manners of students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 10. Individual attention by teachers and teaching assistants also improves students' attitudes.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.7	School data:	0.9
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

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

19. In most lessons, students' constructive attitudes and enthusiasm help drive the learning forward. Students try hard, and are proud of their achievements. Overwhelmingly, students like their school and regard it as a good school. They are confident, enjoy the challenge of learning and commit themselves to activities well, both in and outside of lessons. Relationships between students are good and friendship groups are strong.
20. Most students behave well, although a small number of students behave badly in Year 11. In response to the student survey carried out before the inspection, a number of students expressed concern about the behaviour of other students. However, inspectors witnessed few examples of poor behaviour. The number of student exclusions is around the average. There were no incidents of bullying noted during the inspection; although incidents of bullying do occur, students themselves report that it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school has provided training for a number of students to act as peer mediators; this has proved effective and gives valuable support.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1263	86	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	1	0

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

21. The school does much to promote the students' personal development, and students behave with increasing maturity and understanding as they move through the school. The promotion of spiritual development, which was judged unsatisfactory at the last inspection, is now much more effective and a number of subjects contribute to this aspect of personal development. Students take their responsibilities on the student forum seriously, and this does much to encourage their sense of community and social responsibility. The school provides a strong moral framework and in general students respond positively. The 'Time Out' room was used

infrequently during the inspection week. The music, drama and art departments make a strong contribution to students' cultural development.

Sixth form

22. Students have very positive attitudes to the sixth form. While a number of their peers in Year 11 have left to follow a sixth form programme elsewhere, those that choose to stay are very positive about their experience. This is reflected not only in the questionnaire responses where 98 per cent of students state that they enjoy being in the sixth form, but also in student interviews. Students were especially positive about the accessibility and helpfulness of their teachers and the fact that they are treated fairly and with respect.
23. Relationships between students and between staff and students are very good. Students have confidence in, and respect for, the head of sixth form and his tutorial team. These positive attitudes make a strong contribution to the growing maturity and sense of responsibility of sixth form students. They involve themselves in charitable causes and help support younger students in their studies.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. In particular, the good quality of teaching and the inclusive curriculum, which is increasingly effective in meeting the needs of all students, are ensuring that students progress well.

Teaching and learning

Good teaching throughout the school is ensuring good levels of learning. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory and increasingly being used to inform planning and the students themselves on how they might improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to present ideas interestingly.
- While lessons are usually carefully planned, they do not always take account of the wide range of prior attainment in the class.
- Lessons are well structured to give students opportunity for active participation and consolidating their learning at the end.
- Homework is planned well to reinforce and develop the learning made during the lesson.
- Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support learning of individual students.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning
- Marking is good in history and English, but in a number of other subjects does not give clear enough guidance on how students might improve.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 177 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (2.8%)	28 (15.8%)	86 (48.6%)	56 (31.6%)	2 (1.1%)	0	0

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

24. Most students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire consider that they are well taught. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching in most subjects to be good throughout Years 7-11. In history, teaching is very good. In ICT, citizenship and mathematics in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are less effective, but nevertheless satisfactory. Characteristics of the good teaching in all subjects are the good relationships between students and teachers, and

the teachers' own subject knowledge and understanding, which enable them to explain things with clarity and confidence. However, the key factor limiting students' progress is the extent to which they are aware themselves of how to improve their work, and what the next step should be. Although most students are aware of their predicted level or grade, they are not always aware of how they might achieve this.

25. The teaching of literacy within English is good, but not all other subjects adopt a consistent approach to developing language and literacy skills. There is good practice in history in particular, but other subjects do not always ensure that agreed policy is followed. Many teachers regularly encourage speaking and listening skills through the effective use of questions and insisting on an extended response. In an excellent Year 8 history lesson on England in the 17th century, students were asked questions which probed their background knowledge and understanding. Their historical curiosity was developed successfully because of the lively enthusiastic approach adopted by the teacher. Above all it was the teacher's effective questioning which extended the students' ability to express their ideas and explain their reasoning.
26. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Several subjects, particularly science, geography and design and technology, are devising well-considered approaches to supporting numeracy, but practice both within and across subjects is inconsistent.
27. Teachers' skilled classroom management characterises much of the good teaching, and, in particular, the sensitive handling of some potentially challenging behaviour and poor attitudes from some students is very good. The calm, authoritative and non-confrontational approach adopted by many teachers is successfully involving all students in their learning. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher had to work consistently hard to engage the full attention and co-operation of a number of boys in particular. His interventions, support and monitoring of individual students were well managed, but overall the attitudes of a small number of students undermined their progress.
28. It is the high expectations of what students can achieve which characterises the most effective teaching. A number of teachers demonstrate flair and imagination in their teaching, even when dealing with mundane and routine aspects of the subject.
29. Planning of lessons is good and is usually effective in meeting the needs of all students. Teachers generally take care in ensuring that work is planned at an appropriate level of challenge. In mixed ability classes, work is often planned successfully to engage high, middle and low attaining students. This is not always the case, however, and in a few lessons, including those where students are grouped according to prior attainment, the work set was inappropriate, and all students were moving at the same pace. This impacts on the learning of both high attaining students and those with identified special educational needs. The school has recently appointed a co-ordinator for its identified gifted and talented students to ensure enrichment and challenge is offered to these students. Part of this role must be to ensure consistently high levels of challenge in all lessons.
30. Teaching of students with special educational needs is mostly good. A climate of praise is rapidly established in lessons so that students realise that there are some things they can do well, which helps their confidence. All teachers have a copy of the Student Services handbook, the special educational needs register and general information and advice on different special educational needs. Teachers use this well, and often refer to their own copies of students' individual educational plans. Where teaching assistants work with the classroom teacher the learning of students is more effective, as in history and science. In other subjects the learning of students with special educational needs is, on occasions, hindered through the lack of individual attention or adapted materials. Teaching in small withdrawal groups varies and is less effective in English when several year groups are taught in the same room. Very good teaching was seen in some special courses such as the social language groups and alternative curriculum Years 10 and 11. The assessment of students' individual needs by

Student Services is good, and individual education plans are now being used more effectively by all teachers.

31. Homework is set regularly and often used effectively to consolidate learning. Parents of students in Years 7 – 9 are informed of the homework programme in each subject and how they might effectively support and help their children. Homework is therefore planned as an integral part of each module of work. As a result it is often used effectively to consolidate learning and to develop research and enquiry skills independently of the teacher.
32. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of ICT to support learning. Most have now received specific training and are beginning to incorporate ICT into their teaching. The recent opening of the new learning centre provides some very good opportunities to extend this approach. However, in many subjects, particularly English, modern foreign languages, science, art and music, access and use are currently too limited.
33. The quality of learning in lessons and the rate at which the students progress are good in all years. Good teaching, however, is not always reflected in the good achievement of students. Although the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in almost all cases, a very small number of lessons were observed during the inspection where the rate of learning was not quite as good. In most cases this was because of the poor attitudes, motivation and behaviour of some students, which hindered good progress. However, these unsatisfactory outcomes were in the minority, and the overwhelming majority of lessons were characterised by positive approaches to learning and good behaviour by the students. In general, students work and try hard, concentrating and listening well.
34. The school's overall procedures for assessment in Years 7 to 11 are broadly satisfactory. Through its improvement plan and the appointment of staff at a senior level, the school has demonstrated its resolve to improve its assessment practices still further in the future.
35. In most subjects, the marking of work is sound and students are generally aware of the quality of what they have done. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the use of effort grades on all work undertaken independently and in the allocation of half-termly attainment grades. Marking is very good in English and history but teachers of science and mathematics give students insufficient written comments on how to improve the standards of their work.
36. Teachers make satisfactory use of assessment to inform their planning and for target-setting, particularly in Year 10 and 11. There has been an improvement since the last inspection in the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive database to store assessment information for all year groups and in the more efficient transfer of student data from primary schools. There is some very good practice in the use of assessment data to identify the needs of individual students and groups, for example in music and design and technology. Subject teachers are using data to set target grades for GCSE students but there is insufficient use of data to establish students' target National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 or to diagnose their learning needs. There are some instances of teachers adapting their curriculum in the light of assessment information, for example the changes in the history GCSE course to meet boys' needs, but as yet there is little evidence that teachers significantly change their practice following the analysis of data. The school has yet to establish systematic procedures for the assessment of the performance of whole teaching groups based on targets set and attainment recorded for individual students. The use of assessment data is good in design and technology, history, music and physical education, but is unsatisfactory in mathematics and citizenship.
37. Questionnaires and interviews show a high level of student satisfaction with the way in which their work is assessed. Most teachers make good use of the school's very effective *Next Steps* procedure whereby students are given specific guidance on how to meet their targets. In some subjects, teachers have provided students with descriptions in simple language of what they need to do to reach each National Curriculum level. However, this remains inconsistent.

While procedures for ensuring that students are aware of their standards and targets are good in English, history and physical education, they are unsatisfactory in mathematics.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 9 English lesson in which high expectations and challenging activities resulted in excellent progress.

In one excellent Year 9 English lesson on how to develop a line of argument, the teacher checked the students' understanding by inviting them to hold up portable whiteboards showing rhetorical devices, then matching and categorising connective words or phrases they might use to link sentences and paragraphs. Demonstrating a flow diagram on the board and taking ideas from the class, the teacher modelled how to develop an argument, point by point. Humorous examples were offered and students' ideas were skilfully drawn out. The teacher challenged the students to offer more precise vocabulary and set tight time targets ensuring purposeful work. By the end of the lesson all students had improved from making simple, unsubstantiated assertions to planning a four or five point argument. They were also very well prepared to use appropriate linking phrases so that paragraphs were coherent, and to adopt rhetorical devices to make their spoken argument effective.

Sixth form

38. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. This is confirmed by the students themselves, who consider that the teaching is both challenging and demanding. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was judged good in English, physics, history, geography, French, music and sports studies. It was less effective, but nonetheless satisfactory, in mathematics and leisure and recreation.
39. Strengths of the teaching include the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. This enables teachers to approach the syllabus confidently, pose and answer questions which challenge the students' thinking, and plan lessons and schemes of work which successfully build on prior attainment in a meaningful and relevant way. The confident approach of teachers to their subject at this level was characteristic of teaching observed in most subjects and is a key factor in students' good achievement. The commitment and hard work of staff is another important factor.
40. Most teachers have high expectations of what all the students in the group are capable of achieving. Students respond very positively to this approach. Although some lack confidence in their learning, most adopt a very positive and mature attitude to their studies. They are keen to do well and succeed to the best of their ability. This enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on the progress they make.
41. Many teachers adopt good strategies to promote students' independent learning and perseverance in solving problems and overcoming difficulties themselves. This was particularly evident in the lessons observed in drama and in leisure and recreation, where teachers adopted good strategies to encourage students to take responsibility for managing their own learning. For some students, this more independent and self-reliant approach to learning is the biggest challenge of sixth form work. Not all subjects are as effective in promoting these skills. In English classes for example, students are over-dependent on a high level of teacher support and structure. At times there is a tendency for teachers to over-direct the learning, and not allow students to pursue their own thinking and ideas. Establishing a balance between directed learning and opening doors for the students to pursue their own thinking remains a challenge for some sixth form teachers. In discussion with the students themselves, it was clear that they have a mature and sensible view of what makes for effective teaching. They reported that one of the key factors in the most successful teaching was the fact that teachers made the learning relevant to everyday events and to contemporary issues. In this respect, teaching in ICT, geography, and travel and tourism was judged to be successful.

42. Other students indicated that teaching which encouraged active learning was most helpful, and that too much note taking was considered dull. Students also reported that lessons in which their own views and ideas were valued were effective. In a highly challenging and entertaining AS level drama lesson, early at the start of the course, the teacher was introducing Year 12 students to the use of status in drama. Organised into groups of three, students were invited to take on the role of master, higher servant and lower servant. They were invited to improvise a response to a variety of situations based on a visit at short notice by the Queen. With each situation the teacher increased the sense of urgency, emergency or provocation. The students supported each other very well, rose to the challenge and sustained their roles. They were all able to communicate an excellent understanding of status through their use of space and levels, tone of voice, posture, movement, facial expression. They adapted rapidly, thought quickly on their feet and performed very inventively.
43. As in the main school, students' use of ICT to support their independent learning is limited. This was particularly marked in English, mathematics and music. Even in leisure and recreation, where computers are used frequently for research and the preparation of coursework, access in classrooms is limited.
44. Students' learning skills are good. Most students take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. In work which is undertaken independently of the teachers, students' skills in self-study and research are good.
45. Assessment practice in the sixth form is good and the school's development plan is clearly focused on improving the monitoring of students' progress and mentoring them on the organisation of their learning. In most subjects, marking is detailed and students are closely monitored in smaller teaching groups than in the rest of the school. There is good reference to examination grades in marking work and, although the use of positive written comment on students' work is inconsistent, students are often given detailed verbal feedback on their standards. Marking is very good in modern foreign languages and there is also good practice in English, history and mathematics.
46. The use of assessment information is generally good. Detailed information on students' prior attainment at GCSE is provided to subject staff but is not yet stored on the school's central database. The school has begun using the ALIS system to predict AS level and A level targets based on GCSE results and subject leaders are provided with statistical procedures to predict future grades. Through the sixth form's very comprehensive autumn review procedures, subject staff and pastoral staff establish target grades with students that are subsequently closely monitored and reported to parents. Very good use of assessment to meet individual students' needs is made in modern foreign languages and music.
47. Sixth form students indicated in questionnaires and interviews that they are very satisfied with the way their work is assessed. Those students who underachieve in relation to their targets are interviewed by pastoral staff and are given clear guidelines on how to improve the standard of their work. There is particularly good practice in ensuring that students understand how well they are doing in physical education and in vocational education subjects.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory range of curricular opportunities, providing breadth and balance. There are good opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities. The school accommodation and resources are adequate to support the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision for students with special educational needs ensures that their individual needs are well met.
- Good opportunities for enrichment through a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs enable students to broaden their interests and develop wider horizons.
- The school's inclusive ethos permeates all aspects of the school's curricular planning.
- Although the range of vocational courses is satisfactory, provision is not extensive particularly in the sixth form.

Commentary

48. Curricular opportunities are satisfactory and the curriculum now meets statutory requirements. Since the last inspection there has been development of both ICT and religious education. ICT is taught discretely across both key stages, including a GCSE short course; all students follow a short GCSE religious studies course in Years 10 and 11. The teaching week is 26 hours with an additional 20-minute tutor time each day. This exceeds national recommendations, although some time is lost each week owing to the problems of movement between the school's two sites. PSHE is taught during a one-hour lesson each week.
49. The curriculum in Years 7–9 is broad and balanced. Most classes are mixed ability, but setting is progressively introduced in English, mathematics and science to provide more focused teaching. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 introduces a number of innovative approaches to meeting the needs of individual students, particularly for those students who find the full range of GCSE courses too challenging. In addition to a compulsory core of subjects, students choose two courses from a range of subjects in the arts and humanities. Provision is made for the most able students in music and English to take GCSE early.
50. The provision for vocational education is satisfactory at present and planning is in place to extend it next year. All students in Year 10 go on a work placement in a local business. Students can choose to take vocational GCSE courses in health and social care or leisure and tourism. There are also valuable vocational elements in art and textiles but no vocational ICT courses. Business is taught as a traditional academic GCSE.
51. The school provides an alternative to the full GCSE programme for those who find the full range of subjects at GCSE unsuitable for them. Some students in Years 10 and 11 are advised to choose a work related option, and students are advised to study for a Youth Award where this is appropriate. Individuals are achieving very well. The folder of one gold award candidate was found to be very impressive particularly in the quality of ICT work. This provision of alternative courses meets students' individual needs well.
52. Taken overall, this pattern gives equal access to the curriculum throughout the main school. Curricular planning and schemes of work are satisfactory in all subjects and there is good provision for progression between Year 9 and GCSE courses.
53. The provision for students with special educational needs is good. In Years 7 to 9 all students follow the National Curriculum, although some need the programmes of study for earlier stages. Small groups are organised to withdraw such students from mainstream classes in English, modern foreign languages and mathematics, taught by trained teaching assistants. English, mathematics and science run small sets to provide appropriate work and more individual attention, enabling many students with special educational needs to obtain a GCSE grade or alternative accreditation. Practical subjects often include students with special educational needs, who enjoy lessons and achieve well. Individual education plans inform teachers of needs and relevant learning strategies, and are well used, although targets for some students need to become more specific with small progressive next steps and success criteria.

54. Student Services is fully inclusive and deals equally with all individual needs, expanding this year to include gifted and talented students, where planned programmes are beginning to be implemented and for an increasing number of students who speak English as an additional language.
55. There is a good range of opportunities for learning and support outside the school day. The newly-equipped Learning Centre attracts a significant number of students to use its facilities after school. This homework club provision is strengthened by the presence of library staff and teachers, who are available to support students' progress.
56. There are numerous subject-specific lunchtime and after-school activities that provide good opportunity for enrichment and social and cultural development with a wide range of choice across music, drama, art, geography, languages and sport. Visits and exchanges have taken place with many overseas countries, with data gathered often being used in subsequent teaching and learning activities. For example, the area of design and technology has an impressive range of visits, including a recent trip to Italy which focused on aspects of art history and textile design.
57. Staffing is good, with sufficient specialist teachers to cover the curriculum, although qualifications and experience in work-related courses needs improvement. New teachers are supported through a well-planned induction programme. A significant feature is the large number of support staff, and the way that they are integrated within the work of the school, taking on co-ordinating responsibilities in Student Services. Professional development for all staff is well organised, and the recent award of the Investors in People is indicative of how valued staff feel.
58. Overall accommodation is satisfactory. The large, attractive site has adequate specialist and general teaching rooms. However, the split site causes considerable difficulties which the school has done well to minimise through reorganising subject bases and incorporating movement time into the school day. Accommodation for special educational needs is well located but lacks sufficient small teaching rooms. Recent building work has created some new facilities, and the new Learning Centre in particular is beginning to open up the considerable potential for independent learning and research.
59. The provision for resources is satisfactory. Most subjects have an adequate range of resources, which are used effectively to support learning. ICT resources, although much improved recently, have suffered from a lack of investment over a number of years. The consequence is that computers are not yet used extensively by students.

Sixth form

60. The sixth form adds to and extends the curricular opportunities in Year 10 and 11, offering a total of 21 AS courses within a five box choice system. There is considerable flexibility in the provision, resulting in a high degree of student choice at AS level. This represents good progress towards a 14-19 philosophy for students following a more academic pathway.
61. However, the choice for those wishing to follow a mainly vocational pathway is limited. Two AVCE courses in Health and Social care and in Leisure and Recreation are offered. This together with a Work Ed partnership with Somerset College of Arts and Technology constitutes the only vocational provision. The Work Ed partnership is a new initiative to link school support for students with college and work placements. It has potential for considerable development although few students are involved as yet. Only one GNVQ intermediate course is taught, Leisure and Tourism, and this tends to attract mainly male students. There are good links with local businesses and students on vocational and other courses benefit from work placements but they do not take part in Young Enterprise activities.

62. From this academic year, all students in the sixth form take AS General studies and take part in a personal, social and health programme. This adds considerably to the overall worth of the experience. A good range of after-school activities adds breadth to the experiences, as do a large number of subject-based visits to places of interest throughout the UK and beyond.
63. As a community school, adults can attend sixth form courses through an agreement with the school's community education programme. Where adults join these classes they often bring life experiences that add a degree of enrichment for school students.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of students are satisfactory. Students are well known by teachers and pastoral and academic procedures are effective in ensuring good support and guidance. The school actively seeks to involve students in its work, listening to and valuing their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The transition arrangements for students joining the school from their primary schools are carefully and sensitively managed.
- The school positively values and acts on the views of students through the student forum.
- Health and safety procedures are not formalised and site inspections are not sufficiently regular.
- The use of tutorial time is not consistently effective.

Commentary

64. The school is committed to its local community and ensuring that all students feel welcome and valued. It prides itself on its inclusive approach. Most students have good relationships with staff and feel that there is a sympathetic adult to whom they can talk if necessary. They feel supported and cared for. Typical of the comments from students were: 'teachers respect you' and 'treat you as an individual'. The school trains older students to act as peer mediators and buddies. Younger students reported that they valued the buddy system in particular in making them feel they belonged. At the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors, parents commented that they were confident their children were well cared for.
65. Health and Safety procedures are satisfactory, but arrangements for regular inspections and risk assessments are not formalised. However, all staff are conscientious in their approach to keeping the site safe. The senior manager responsible is aware of this issue and is taking steps to regularise the procedures. Child protection procedures are effectively in place and all staff have received training.
66. The pastoral teams have been re-organised and both tutors and team leaders move through the school with the students. This helps to ensure continuity and a good knowledge of individual students. Pastoral team leaders are now taking a much greater role in monitoring the academic as well as the personal development of students. This has given them a much more significant role in relating to all students and not just those causing problems. Some inconsistencies in the quality of tutorial time remain, but team leaders are working hard to ensure these are eliminated. A programme for tutor development is being implemented and ways to review and share good practice are being developed.
67. The school has very good links with its partner primary schools and works hard to ensure that the arrangements for the transfer and induction of students in Year 7 are smoothly managed. This programme is valued by parents and the students themselves. It provides a strong basis for students to settle in quickly and build on their learning from primary school.

68. Students take their responsibilities on the student forum seriously. Established two years ago, students are elected by their peers and have a small budget to spend as they decide. They consider that their views are listened to carefully and students have contributed to school policies on mobile telephones and the school catering. Students have reported to the governing body.

Sixth form

69. The quality of personal support and guidance that students receive throughout their time in the sixth form is good. In this regard, the head of sixth provides a good role model. Tutors provide both academic and pastoral support, know their students very well and are sensitive to their needs. The very good relationships between students and tutors give students confidence to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. Students were particularly appreciative of the commitment and approachability of teachers, and their willingness to offer advice and support.
70. Admission arrangements for students entering the sixth form are good and students are given clear advice about possible course options. Some sixth formers' perceptions that they are not well advised at this stage of their school career are not well founded.
71. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. Although students who responded to the questionnaire were not all positive about the careers advice, the school tackles this well. At key points in the sixth form, students are given clear guidance and support about opportunities in higher education, future careers and employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are good, and there are good productive arrangements to work with the wider community that it serves. Links with the local community and partner schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student Services give good support to high need families.
- Good educational links are maintained with partner schools.
- Links with the local community provide a good resource for the school's work.
- Annual reports are inconsistently written and some do not always give sufficient detail in reporting on progress.

Commentary

72. The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure parents are involved and consulted on school developments. Communication is effective and most parents feel reasonably well informed about what is going on. The school issues parental questionnaires every three years to gain their views alongside other more focused questionnaires on particular issues. Parents' views were sought, for instance, on changes to the school day, on the provision for disability and on changes to the school uniform. Parents' focus groups have been held and the headteacher is keen to extend consultation and plans to hold regular open surgeries. Newsletters and letters home provide an effective means of communication. Homework planners also provide a good channel for communication between school and home. Homework itself is planned well in advance and parents are sent booklets home explaining the plan and how they might help their children. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school, and parents are encouraged to contact the school whenever there may be problems.
73. The school provides satisfactory opportunities for parents to be kept informed about their child's progress. While most parents feel they are kept well informed, a minority who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting and responded to the questionnaire did not feel so happy.

Annual reports are not consistently well written, with some subject comments lacking precision and giving little guidance on how students might improve.

74. The Student Services team has made increasingly effective links with families in difficult circumstances. A family support programme has recently been introduced, and this has already impacted on the attendance and motivation of the small number of targeted students. This commitment to inclusion and the school's strongly held view that it serves all members of its community permeates its approach to work in this area.
75. The school has productive links with its partner primary schools and alongside its carefully planned induction arrangements for students in Year 7 ensures that students begin their career at Holyrood with confidence. Wider links with other secondary schools in Somerset help to counterbalance any risk of insularity. These have been mined effectively to provide enrichment courses for gifted and talented students as well as joint professional development for teachers and support staff. The school has worked imaginatively to provide vocational courses for a small number of students through links with a local college. The school's plans as part of its Technology College bid demonstrate a commitment to further its links with partner institutions. Curricular links between the school and primary schools are effective in a number of subjects.
76. There is very close contact with parents of students with special educational needs. Details about each individual child's needs and characteristics, including management strategies, are entered on the register of special educational needs, which includes concern of any nature. Links with external agencies of many kinds are very good, with regular visits to the school and exchange of information. The Connexions service is always involved with transfer reviews of students on the register.
77. Members of the community contribute to specific programmes including providing opportunities for work experience for Year 10 students and the industry forum. During the inspection, outside speakers made valuable contributions to both the Year 11 and Year 13 citizenship programme. Links with the community are good, with local employers willingly providing extended work experience placements. The allotments project, where students with special educational needs work with the local basic education adults' unit, is a good example of innovative community links.

Sixth form

78. Communication and links with parents continue to be effective in the sixth form. The school is an active community school providing facilities and resources for a wide ranging adult education programme offered in collaboration with Somerset adult learning and leisure. There are some shared classes at sixth form level. The school has a good programme of guidance to Year 11 students, enabling them to make informed choices about their options post-16.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are good. Excellent leadership by the headteacher is providing the school with a focus for change and a determined drive for improvement. He is well supported by governors and team leaders at all levels. Management procedures are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstanding and inspirational leadership by the headteacher.
- A strong leadership team committed to improvements.
- Procedures for line management and the monitoring of teaching and learning are not yet systematic.
- An impressive commitment to the inclusion of all students.
- Governors provide experienced and effective support and challenge to the leadership team .

Commentary

79. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership. Since his arrival two years prior to the inspection, he has been driving the school forward with energy and high ambition, taking decisive action where necessary to secure improvements. He has inspired the loyalty and commitment of the whole staff, and leads with a clear sense of purpose and direction. He has the committed support of both governors and his senior staff and his vision is widely shared.
80. The newly created leadership team is an experienced, thoughtful and committed group. Individual members of the senior team are reflective and analytical, and now feel empowered to innovate and carry ideas forward with confidence. Leadership at other levels is good, but varies and is not consistently so. Most curriculum and pastoral team leaders are providing effective leadership of their teams, working hard to improve standards and implement the school's strategic agenda. They work conscientiously and have a good grasp of their responsibilities.
81. Management at all levels is satisfactory. Effective procedures for line management and the monitoring of teaching and learning are, however, not yet carried out systematically. Many procedures are only recently in place and their impact has yet to be felt. Performance management has been introduced effectively. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning by curriculum team leaders is not systematic or focused on providing clear evaluation of what works and what is less effective. As a consequence, the procedures for spreading best practice are not well established. This is an increasingly reflective school in which all members of the school community are involved in monitoring and reviewing practice and seeking ways to improve standards. However, if the school is to be more confident in its approach to self-evaluation, all managers should be involved in a systematic way in monitoring the work of their teams, of spreading best practice and in taking action to address weaknesses.
82. The role of pastoral team leaders has been developed to include the monitoring of students' academic performance as well as their personal development. Curriculum team leaders are learning to use assessment data to review the work of their teams and where appropriate make changes to the curriculum. Team leaders now have a good understanding of their roles.
83. The school makes an impressive commitment to educational inclusion. Leadership and management of the school's Students Services are outstanding. A strong sense of purpose, along with energy and enthusiasm, has enabled rapid recent improvement and the building of an effective team of committed teachers and teaching assistants. This has enabled the department to, for example, respond quickly and effectively to the need for support for newly arrived students who speak English as an additional language. Student services have also been involved in drawing up plans for the 'gifted and talented' programme.
84. The school improvement plan is a one-year plan set within a three-year context. Targets are appropriate and reflect a careful analysis of need. Overall, the improvement planning process is sharply focused and provides a good framework for improving standards.
85. Governors are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. Governors are involved in both strategic planning and monitoring. They have a good knowledge of the school and several make regular visits during the school day. Governors listen to students and the student forum has reported to the pastoral committee. Governors' contributions are both thoughtful and effective. They are kept well informed, and comprehensive performance and financial data are provided for them to make informed judgements and decisions. They are consulted on strategic and school improvement planning, and are increasingly confident in their monitoring role. While they are very supportive of the headteacher and his staff, they are prepared to question robustly. Statutory requirements are largely met, although requirements in respect of collective worship are not fully met.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,810,408	Balance from previous year	163,550
Total expenditure	3,851,248	Balance carried forward to the next	122,710
Expenditure per pupil	3,009		

86. The strategic use of resources is good. Specific grants, for example those for special educational needs or for staff training, are used properly. The school is good at matching spending to educational priorities through its well-costed improvement plan. The apparently large budget surplus at the end of the financial year 2002/2003 reflected planned provisions for the application for specialist school status. Governors ensure that a proper balance is struck between providing a cost-effective staffing structure and the need to provide proper surroundings and learning resources. Spending relative to income is biased slightly towards Years 10 and 11, and against Years 7-9, but this reflects learning priorities. Its effects are seen in the improving attainment relative to ability of Years 10 and 11 without compromising the achievement of Years 7-9. There are good arrangements for securing best value, for example in the acquisition of new computers and the finalisation of the new school meals contract. Financial administration is very good: the very recent audit report noted only minor points for action. Financial organisation of special educational needs is clear, open and effective with expenditure matching the income from the local education authority and other sources.

Sixth Form

87. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is now a clear rationale for the sixth form and its curriculum offer. In a deliberate strategy, for example to recruit more students, the curriculum has been expanded to match that offered by other local post-16 institutions. This has meant that the sixth form is not currently cost effective as some courses run with small numbers of students. This policy has been introduced with the agreement of governors. Governors show a satisfactory application of the principles of best value: the take-up of courses is monitored carefully but more could be done to cost the provision accurately. Nevertheless, governors are aware of where other providers are better placed to meet the needs of students, for example, in some of the vocational areas.
88. Management of the sixth form is the responsibility of the head of sixth, who brings a conscientious and committed approach to his role. Systems are well organised and thorough, although procedures to monitor performance against prior attainment at GCSE have only recently been introduced. This has reduced the schools' ability to intervene and plan appropriately. The monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching are not systematic, and opportunities for teachers to share best practice are not provided on a regular basis.
89. The school has been successful in attracting a higher proportion of its Year 11 pupils to stay on into the sixth form, although the percentage is still too low. Retention rates on courses are good with most students completing the courses that they started. The sixth form is now well placed to sustain and build on its considerable successes.
90. The governing body is well informed of the performance of the sixth form, and governors play an active role in contributing to the constant drive to raise standards of achievement still further.

PART C: QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The quality of provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and sometimes very good teaching leading to effective learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The achievement of students of all abilities in Years 9, 10 and 11 is good.
- Good leadership and management that have ensured standards have been maintained despite staff absence and changes in the last year.
- There are not enough opportunities for the use of ICT in English lessons.
- The withdrawal of lower attaining students for literacy support during English lessons needs to be reviewed.

Commentary

91. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 in English are average. Despite a slight decline since the year 2000 in results in national tests at the end of Year 9, attainment is similar to the national average. Girls perform better than boys but not markedly so. Students' work improves noticeably during Year 9 and the achievement of students at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, is good. All students, apart from those with specific learning difficulties, read independently with a growing appreciation of fiction and non-fiction texts. Higher attaining students consistently write fluently, expressively and accurately. Other students develop their ideas at length, punctuate clearly and organise their writing into paragraphs. They are less confident in adopting a formal style and they use vocabulary less precisely.
92. Attainment in GCSE English and English literature examinations is close to the national average. There is a clear trend of improvement over recent years with boys' attainment much improved since the last inspection. Results for GCSE media studies vary from year to year but were above average for 2003. The achievement of students of all abilities in Years 10 and 11 based on prior attainment is good. Students read critically and express themselves both orally and in writing with increasing fluency, accuracy and precision.
93. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Where learning is effective teachers communicate the objectives of the lesson clearly and give clear criteria for success. Students are given helpful frameworks to plan and structure their writing and the teacher clearly models appropriate language and style. For example Year 9 students were introduced to rhetorical devices, ways of linking paragraphs and how to develop a line of argument stage by stage, so that they could all employ these features in their own writing. Homework is an integral part of learning. Students are expected to continue to develop a piece of writing started in lesson or students' research helps them to understand the historical context of a class novel. Learning is less effective where:
 - the pace is slow and time is not used well, for example not enough time is left to check students' understanding at the end of the lesson;
 - writing is not modelled so lower attaining students find it difficult to start;
 - there is insufficient consideration of what students already know and can do, particularly at the start of Year 7.

94. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good. It is characterised by well-planned and well-structured lessons with a good balance between clear teacher exposition and student activities. Teachers question skilfully and organise a variety of activities such as small group discussion to check that all students understand. For example, after a preliminary discussion of a difficult short story, Year 10 students were invited in pairs to sequence directly stated and implied events from the narrative. This was an effective way to encourage a critical second reading. Teachers encourage a high degree of independent learning where appropriate. They also frequently reinforce examination assessment criteria.
95. Teachers' marking of students' work is conscientious. They give detailed, constructive comments on how to improve. The consistent use of assessment sheets and the collection of portfolios of students' work to demonstrate progress have been started but need continued development.
96. The English curriculum meets a wide range of student needs. In Years 10 and 11 students can choose a GCSE media studies course in addition to GCSE English and English literature. Although all students begin a GCSE course in Year 10, some lower attaining students benefit from converting to a Certificate of Achievement course. Students in Years 7 to 9 with literacy difficulties are given support in smaller groups withdrawn from English lessons. Although some make good progress this needs reviewing on the grounds that they could do better if taught by specialist English teachers. At present opportunities for the use of ICT are limited although there are plans to build more opportunities for all students into schemes of work.
97. Both the leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear development plan based on the analysis of need. A regular check is made of teaching and learning and the quality of students' work. Although there were a number of teacher absences and changes last year, standards were maintained. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with noticeable improvements in the quality of writing and the achievement of boys in GCSE examinations.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

The teaching of literacy within English is good, although there are inconsistencies in approach across other subjects, and more needs to be done to ensure good practice is shared across all subjects. Teachers regularly encourage speaking and listening skills through the effective use of questions, but many students still lack confidence in their ability to discuss ideas at length in class. In both history and modern foreign languages for example, the students' writing skills are better developed than their verbal and discursive skills. In drama, teachers encourage the students to evaluate each other's performance, but their use of language sometimes lacks precision and a wide vocabulary. The correct use of specialist terminology is encouraged in design and technology, music and increasingly in geography. Writing skills are taught well. In some subjects, particularly English and history, students are given regular opportunities to write for different purposes, and are given effective support in structuring and expressing their ideas.

Modern foreign languages

The provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, with very good learning resources.
- There is a positive atmosphere in lessons that encourages learning.
- Good leadership of the subject promotes supportive relationships between teachers.
- Students are well prepared for public examinations.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to support modern foreign language learning.

- Monitoring of standards and the sharing of good practice need further development.
- There is inconsistency in marking and the use of written comments to students on how to improve.

Commentary

98. Results and current standards are above average in French and German in Year 9 and Year 11, although boys achieve fewer of the higher GCSE grades than is found nationally. Students' achievement is good overall in all years, taking into account the 2003 examination results as well as how well current students are doing. Achievements are improving as students are given more opportunities to practise speaking in class. Currently, standards are higher in writing than in speaking and most students in Year 11 are able to write a detailed account of their holidays or a letter to a newspaper in the foreign language. Boys generally achieve less well than girls.
99. Students in Years 7 to 9 learn well in lessons because the teaching is good. Teachers provide a good variety of activities that give students a wide range of active learning opportunities, including pair-work, games and class surveys. In one lesson, the teacher captivated students with a remarkable mime activity that gave them a very good understanding of grammar. Expectations of behaviour are generally high and, in most cases, the attempts of a small proportion of boys to disrupt learning are effectively dealt with by teachers. There is an insistence on high standards throughout. However although most teachers use the target language consistently in lessons, this is not the case where teaching is less effective.
100. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 because teachers plan their lessons very well and ensure that students build successfully on what they already know. They provide very good resources to supplement textbook work and make very effective use of visual images and recorded material. As a result, students are fully engaged in their work and make good progress. In a small number of lessons, however, teaching lacks pace and students' attention begins to wander. GCSE students are given good advice on how to prepare themselves for public examinations. At its best, marking is attentive and gives students a clear indication of their effort and of the standard of their work but there is a need for greater consistency and for more written comments by teachers indicating what students need to do to improve. Teachers create a positive and cheerful atmosphere in lessons that builds students' confidence and encourages good learning.
101. The leadership of modern foreign languages is good, with a clear focus on improvement and very supportive relationships between teachers. The subject would now benefit from further development of its work on monitoring standards of individuals and of groups of students, and on the sharing of good practice. There is insufficient curriculum time for students taking two languages in Years 8 and 9 and all students need better access to ICT equipment in their language learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Curricular provision is good, particularly for the lower attaining students.
- The Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well in lessons. Students enjoy the quick fire arithmetic session and are enabled to work at an appropriate level.
- Self-evaluation of the department is good.
- The range and variety of teaching and learning strategies are not wide enough.
- ICT is underused as a resource for teaching and learning.

- Aspects of assessment are not sufficiently implemented to be effective.
- Policies are not applied consistently across the department.
- There are not enough opportunities for sharing good practice.

Commentary

102. In national tests taken by Year 9 students in 2002, results were broadly in line with the national average, although they improved significantly in 2003. GCSE results in 2002 were also average, but dipped in 2003. Standards in work seen were average in both Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Year 11. Evidence from the inspection suggests that standards in both the current Year 9 and Year 11 are set to improve further. In Year 9, the students in the top set are already working at a higher level in much of their recent work and making good progress. In particular students are making confident use of fractions and negative numbers.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a good command of the subject. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 because of the variety of teaching strategies employed that engage and involve the students, such as collaborative working. Marking sometimes lacks supportive comment, and an indication of the next learning step. Less effective teaching is characterised by an over-reliance on the use of the textbooks and published worksheets and where the focus of lessons is on process rather than understanding. Teachers are following the guidance of the numeracy strategy well and a particular strength is the way lessons begin with mental arithmetic exercises linked to the main topic of study. However, succinct learning objectives are not consistently shared with students and as a result the plenary session is often overlooked. The use of ICT as a teaching and learning resource is inconsistent. Despite the late start of some lessons due to the size of the campus, teachers make effective use of time and insist on high standards of behaviour. Homework is issued regularly as an extension to classwork but with few opportunities to extend the higher attaining students. Good use is made of teaching assistants working with lower attaining students on 'bite size' activities.
104. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Year 11 students were observed making good use of previously taught skills while completing a course work investigation on 'sequences of squares and identifying the n^{th} term'. Students have the skills and capacity to work independently, but the pace of some lessons is slow and lacking challenge. Marking of students' work is regular but provides little information of how well they are progressing in relation to their target grades. Students report that teachers are always accessible and they particularly value the support of teachers when they have difficulties. The relationship between students and the teacher is good. Sometimes, however, poor work goes unchallenged and there is less insistence that corrections are made. Overall, learning is satisfactory. Students acquire new knowledge and skills in their work, develop ideas and increase their understanding as they progress through the school.
105. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department carried out a thorough self-evaluation of its work as part of the successful Technology College bid. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have improved, particularly in Years 7 - 9. Improvements to the curricular structure alongside a full complement of staff and suited accommodation have all contributed to raising standards. However, there are insufficient opportunities for departmental monitoring and the sharing of good practice.

Mathematics across the curriculum

106. The national numeracy strategy has been implemented well in terms of the mathematics lessons themselves, though few other departments have systematically planned for the development of numeracy into their subjects. There is good practice in geography and modern foreign languages where schemes of work identify for teachers what students are likely to already know in mathematical terms. Overall the contribution of lessons to mathematics

across the curriculum is satisfactory, and students' skills are developed well enough to ensure they have full access to the curriculum.

107. The school's aim is to improve levels of numeracy and is committed to the development of the numeracy strategy as part of the Technology College. An audit of existing practice across the curriculum has been completed and whole school staff training has focused on raising awareness of numeracy.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has developed a strong sense of purpose in the department.
- Thorough curricular planning provides detailed guidance for teachers.
- Teaching is good and results in good learning in lessons.
- All but a small minority of students have a positive attitude to their work.
- Examination results are improving.
- There are inconsistencies in the work of the department because of a lack of regular monitoring.
- There is insufficient sharing of good practice by teachers.
- The use of ICT is under-developed.
- Some resources are of inferior quality.

Commentary

108. Students' standards in science on entry to the school are broadly average. They were also average in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, and average compared with similar schools. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. Results were similar to those in English, but better than in mathematics. Achievement by students in 2003 was good. Their results showed a big improvement, especially in the number of students gaining higher grades. Girls performed particularly well. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were above the national average. They improved further in 2003, mainly due to improved results from the girls, resulting in good achievement overall.
109. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 were above average. All students follow the same scheme of work, and all achieve well. Their level of concentration is high. For instance, lower attaining students in Year 8 are able to distinguish between plant and animal cells, and in Year 9 they show understanding of the function of lungs in mammals. In both lessons, they worked hard throughout. The result is good achievement. There is a wider range of courses available in Years 10 and 11. Standards are generally higher in Year 10 than in Year 11, so results look set to improve. Higher attaining students in Year 10 show a good understanding of the priority being placed on renewable energy sources. By Year 11, higher attaining students are able to recognise that variation in human characteristics can be inherited through genes, or caused by the environment. Lower attaining students follow a less demanding course more suited to their level of understanding, and which allows them to gain success. Students with special educational needs also generally achieve well. Overall, achievement is good in Year 10, but satisfactory in Year 11.
110. The standards of teaching and learning are good throughout the school, with a small proportion of very good teaching. Students work particularly well in groups during practical and discussion sessions. Planning is very thorough and there is good liaison with the technicians. This results in prompt starts to lessons and a sense of purpose. Most teachers make lesson objectives clear to the students. Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour, and they are very supportive of students with difficulties; however, they do not always provide sufficient

challenge for the higher attainers. In a minority of lessons the teacher is too dominant and does not provide enough opportunities for students to learn by thinking and doing. However, teachers are beginning to use techniques to encourage active learning, as in a Year 9 lesson on pulse rate. Students respond very positively to this style of teaching, and a very good working atmosphere developed in the lesson. There are inconsistencies across the subject, for example in the use of techniques to develop students' numeracy and literacy skills. There is also insufficient use of ICT, although opportunities for its use are integrated into the schemes of work. Homework is set regularly, but does not always include that extra question to challenge the higher attainers. The marking of work is satisfactory, but needs closer monitoring; only a minority of teachers provide enough advice for students about how to improve their grades in national tests. The use of assessment data is slowly improving, and helps teachers to identify more quickly any students who are underachieving.

111. Leadership of the science department is good, but there is insufficient delegation of responsibility to help overcome the difficulties of laboratories on two different sites. The curriculum has been thoroughly and effectively reviewed. Opportunities for enrichment are beginning to increase. There are detailed schemes of work; these provide very good support for teachers. Insufficient time is set aside for the monitoring of standards in order to spread good practice. As a result, some of the exciting teaching techniques being used are not replicated across the department.
112. Since the previous inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. Standards in national tests have remained above national averages, and show signs of further improvement. The accommodation has improved, and includes plans for the provision of additional computers and data projectors. The quality of resources also is set to improve through the school's involvement in national initiatives. This will have a major impact on teaching styles and students' involvement in the learning process.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a clear improvement in this area since the last inspection.
- The school has made considerable investment in new hardware and software provision, including a well-equipped learning centre.
- The curriculum area has made substantial and positive input into the plans for Technology College status; when implemented this development has strong potential for building on the current successes of the school in the area of ICT.
- Statutory requirements are now met and there is discrete ICT provision in KS3 and a mandatory GCSE short course in KS4.
- A systematic assessment and target setting system has begun to have positive effect, but National Curriculum levels are not used to the full.
- There is little systematic opportunity for the development and sharing of good ICT practice across the curriculum.
- The curriculum team leader has insufficient time to develop staff and monitor curricular development across the whole school.

Commentary

113. Standards are average at the end of both Years 9 and 11 and students' achievements are satisfactory. Data from teacher assessments indicate that those achieving Level 5 and above in Year 9 are below the national average. However, work scrutiny during the inspection clearly indicates that students have progressively been developing autonomous skills and building on their potential from Year 7 onward. From this it appears that the levels achieved are at or very

close to national averages. ICT is now taught as a discrete subject from Year 7 onward. In Years 10 and 11 there is a newly introduced GCSE short course taken by all students. Whilst this is the first year, work completed by these students shows that they are working at potential achievement grades of A-E, with predicted grade distribution broadly equal to national averages.

114. Standards on entry to the school vary considerably, but all students make clear gains during Year 7. They achieve a satisfactory knowledge of the uses of a range of hardware and software and are able to identify and discriminate between methods of presentation for various audiences. By Year 8 they are able to use formulae functions of spreadsheets to illustrate their work, and they can manipulate various forms of graphical presentation to fit varying purposes. Students gain a satisfactory understanding of control and data manipulation through FLOWAL techniques. Year 7 skills in using the internet develop well, with many able to use various search engines with discrimination. Year 9 students make at least satisfactory progress in the design and use of complex databases. Throughout Years 7–9 there is good development of the distinctive analytic vocabulary of ICT, and most students make at least satisfactory progress in the development of skills of layout of work using software such as PowerPoint. Whilst there is some good use of students' own data in Year 8, the majority of work is completed using data provided by teachers.
115. In Year 10 students begin their assignments for the GCSE short course. They satisfactorily approach the key process requirements of analysis, design and test, implementation and evaluation. They further develop satisfactory and sometimes good presentation skills using modern software. Their subject vocabulary is well established and develops progressively. They use and develop model layouts provided by their teachers, and as a result, their skills of layout are often good.
116. Overall, boys and girls achieve in accordance with national expectations and students with special educational needs achieve in accordance with their potential. Overall they show good attitudes to ICT and have a well-developed awareness of related social, economic and moral issues, such as those of data handling and privacy.
117. Teaching is satisfactory overall and in some lesson it is good. On occasion the newly installed hardware and software creates problems for teachers. However, they address these well and have good strategies for various situations. Overall they are well prepared and use ICT in a thorough and professional manner. They use the vocabulary of ICT consistently and clearly and constructive peer help in classes. As a result of these good features, students emulate their teachers' behaviour and enhance their own achievements significantly. Teachers know their students well and consistently encourage individuals to reach their potential.
118. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of department consistently aims for progress, is respected and embraces change where necessary. Whilst she is both outgoing and effective and continually encourages improvement, her role outside the ICT department is indistinct and there is insufficient time available to plan across the curriculum and to develop the role of colleagues working in other departments. The head of department is very supportive of new core ICT teachers, but more will be required in order to fulfil the ambitions of Technology College status.
119. Management is good. There are clear procedures for the management of performance and for the use of assessment data, but the latter skill requires further development. The evaluation of student performance and the setting of individual targets make good use of assessment data on entry, with all core ICT teachers provided with an analysis of individual student learning styles. Marking is accurate and helpful, and verbal feedback is good. Whilst feedback and target setting on the basis of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades has been established, there is considerable room for development of both teacher and student understanding in this area. On a departmental level the management is increasingly efficient and effective, but management of the more complex area of whole school ICT requires more

attention. There is good use of the technician and teaching assistant staff, and overall the resources available are now good.

120. There has been a significant improvement in ICT since the last inspection. The school now fulfils statutory requirements and there is every prospect of further progress. The ratio of computers to students is now very close to the national average and is planned to improve significantly. New computer suites and a well-equipped learning centre have underlain the improvement. All computers from old rooms have been upgraded and will be redeployed across the curriculum network. Despite the fact that ICT across the curriculum remains under-developed, the emphasis on the creation of a core staff and the achievement of Technology College status is an indicator of the school's continuing commitment to improvement in this area.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

121. ICT skills across other curriculum areas are variable. In English, mathematics, science and modern languages, progress has been made, but in these areas overall opportunities are limited and inconsistent. In geography and history there is good use of the internet and electronic whiteboard and several lessons are held in ICT suites.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall across the school.
 - Standards of attainment are improving and most students achieve well.
 - Planning for the wide ability range in every class is not based securely on assessment of students' progress.
 - The monitoring of teaching is not regular enough.
 - The subject has not yet been successfully developed as an academic discipline that appeals equally to boys and girls.
122. Results and current standards are similar in Years 9 and 11 and are average. This is an improvement over recent years. Students' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11, a judgement which takes into account the 2003 results as how well current students are doing. However, achievement looks set to improve further and standards are higher in Year 10 than in Year 11. A particular feature of Year 11's achievement is that students have overall lower ability levels than, for example, those studying history, but the students do as well in geography as the other subjects they take. Standards, achievement and teaching have improved since the last inspection. The trend has been upward, particularly in Year 9, as a result of good teaching and the students' overall higher ability levels. The geographical knowledge, skills and understanding in both Years 9 and 11 were below average on entry and their achievement is therefore good. Other factors contributing are the development of fieldwork and the enhancement of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout all years. In Years 7 to 9 teachers follow a curriculum which incorporates geographical inquiry, places, patterns, processes and environmental change. This is enhanced by the increasingly effective use of the literacy and numeracy strategies. As a result, students learn well and lay a firm foundation for GCSE study. Learning is also helped by the subject knowledge and confidence of the teachers. Thus, for example, students acquire a sound understanding of location and the identification and development of geographical argument. This was apparent in work in Year 8 where students

grasped the reasons for the price of trainers in the UK by comparing them with the pay of workers in Indonesia. Many then went on to produce some persuasive letters of protest to the company's managers. The department recognises in its development plan that standards will improve further when assessment is sharpened and the results used to broaden its approaches to mixed ability teaching. Currently, teachers take insufficient account of the means that some students – particularly those with verbal reasoning difficulties – use to learn about geography. Examples were often seen of an inability to balance exposition, effective questioning, independent work and checking for understanding.

124. In Years 10 and 11, students pursue an appropriate examination course which is enhanced by the effective use of mathematics to produce, for example, graphs and tables to illustrate population and migration trends. More students than in Year 9 use ICT to inform their studies; however, this is often done at home as access in school has been limited. Year 11 students benefit from some well-planned and organised fieldwork opportunities. These have a beneficial effect on their understanding of physical geography and coastal landforms in particular. Teachers know and enjoy their subject and those seen during the inspection help students to produce work which is appropriate in quality and quantity. The result is that learning is good and students enhance their understanding. A good example seen was when a teacher with a Year 10 class used a rope, hair dryer and water tray to demonstrate the principle of wave formation. All present understood it by the end of the lesson. Teachers are well aware of what the examination course requires and prepare students well. This was seen when a teacher dealt effectively with some students in a class new to her who had fallen behind with their course-work.
125. The leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. Geography has found it difficult to establish itself as one of the first humanities options of choice for students in Years 9 and 12 – particularly for girls. Additionally, there have been weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching which have led to variations in the quality of learning for some students. On the other hand, the curriculum is now more effective, being appropriately inquiry based. The teachers are subject specialists and fieldwork provision – though not overall resources – is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Students achieve well because of the very good teaching.
- Marking is of a high standard, and comments in students' books clearly indicate what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision.
- In order to further raise standards, the department should review its strategies for the highest attainers.

Commentary

126. Results in the GCSE examination were above average in 2002 and those for 2003 show a continuation of this trend. Students do better in this subject than in others that they take.
127. When students enter the school, standards are about average. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement. Students write well, with increasing confidence. This can be seen, for example, in their work on the sinking of the Titanic and in letters written to survivors of the Holocaust. Students show less confidence, however, when they express themselves verbally. Although higher attaining students are articulate, many find

difficulty in using formal language to explain or analyse. By the end of Year 11, the attainment of students opting to take history at GCSE is above average, particularly in the number of B grades obtained. Their achievements are good. They analyse historical sources well, using skills they have begun to learn in Year 9. Again, many students write with more confidence than they show in discussing their ideas. In order to further raise standards, the department should review its strategies for enabling the most able students to gain Level 7 by the end of Year 9 and A and A* grades at GCSE.

128. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Teachers structure lessons well; a very good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of all students. This was evident, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where they looked at portraits of James I and compared them with written evidence about his character. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good and a higher than average proportion opt to take the subject for GCSE. The pace of learning is always brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. Marking is often exemplary and is a strength of the department. Comments on exercise books, for example, clearly indicate what has been done well and what needs to be done in order to improve. Sometimes this is colour coded, so that students see very easily a pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers make very good use of questions to engage students' interest and also to check and reinforce their understanding. This was evident, for example, in a Year 9 lesson where the teacher was setting the scene for a unit on the sinking of the Titanic.
129. Leadership is very good with very clear vision and direction. Teachers work well as a team and there is clear evidence of the sharing of both good practice and concerns. The Year 9 curriculum, for example, has recently been reviewed. Management is also very good; planning for improvement is strong. Clear progress has been made since the last inspection. Assessment is now a strength of the department and the use of ICT is much improved. The department makes very good use of an interactive whiteboard, for example. Although the permanent history classrooms provide a very positive learning ethos, with noteworthy displays of assessment information, students' work, and other materials, some teachers have no specialist rooms of their own and cannot make use of such a wide range of resources as their colleagues. Provision is enhanced by a range of visits to places of historical interest.

Religious Education

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. The department now has stable, largely specialist staffing.
 - Although achievement over time is unsatisfactory, it is now satisfactory in lessons and reflects the improved teaching.
 - Marking does not tell students how well they have done and what they need to do in order to improve.
 - Students lack the detailed knowledge and understanding of specific religious beliefs and traditions which would enable them to obtain the higher levels or GCSE grades.
130. Standards were below estimated averages for A*-C grades in the 2003 short course GCSE examination. This was the first time the school had taught this course. Standards in terms of A*-G grades, however, were in line with national averages.
131. Standards continue to be below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Achievement over time is unsatisfactory. This is particularly because students lack a detailed knowledge and understanding of specific religious beliefs and traditions. They are therefore not able to make the best use of their skills in reflecting upon the meaning of religious faith. Students in Year 11, for example, understand that the concept of justice is important but can provide no detail about what Christians or Muslims mean by justice. This lack is more apparent in Years 10 and 11 because students in these years are still not convinced of the value of the subject. They have

also not had the benefit of stable staffing over the period of their course. Achievement within current lessons, however, is satisfactory and reflects the improved teaching and staffing.

132. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers use a good range of activities which capture the interest and involvement of students, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where attitudes towards the subject are most positive. Teachers use questions well to check and reinforce understanding and also to help students clarify their thinking. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, the teacher enabled students to develop an understanding of the differences between knowledge and belief. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher made good use of relevant examples to build students' understanding of the complexities involved in making moral decisions. Students in all years tend to write with more confidence than they show in verbal discussion – in all lessons seen, however, students of all abilities try hard to explain themselves clearly. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that classrooms are bright and cheerful with good displays of work, posters and religious artefacts. Marking of students' work, although regularly done, does not sufficiently indicate what students have done well and what they need to do in order to improve.
133. Leadership of the department is satisfactory, although improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The staffing situation has recently improved and this is reflected in the good teaching seen during the inspection. The newly-appointed head of department, who is currently on maternity leave, has already begun to revise schemes of work and plan for the future. The department is now poised to move forward with more confidence. Statutory requirements to provide religious education for all students are now met.

TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students achieve well; they make particularly rapid progress across Years 7-9.
- By Year 9, standards are better than expected. GCSE results in Year 11 are above average; work in textiles is noteworthy.
- Good teaching enables students to do their best, though they do not always get sufficient guidance when they need to be creative and think for themselves.
- Assessment procedures are very good; they are used better in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9.
- Very good extensions to the curriculum include design-based visits abroad.
- Leadership and management are good; delegation of responsibilities is effective but the monitoring of lessons could be improved.

Commentary

134. Provision for courses across Years 7-11 was inspected. This included food technology, textiles, resistant materials and graphics.
135. In 2002, 77 per cent of students gained A*-C in GCSE, compared with 67 per cent nationally. New courses were introduced for 2003, making comparisons with 2002 unreliable. In 2003, 53 per cent gained A*-C, compared with 51 per cent nationally. Over recent years, the subject has been amongst the five best in the school. For several years, girls have done better than boys. There is no apparent reason for this, other than that girls put more time into perfecting their course work. All standards are better than at the time of the previous inspection.
136. Standards in work seen are above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are good throughout. Students who enter the school with differing experiences quickly learn to apply the design process in food technology, textiles and resistant materials. Some early lessons in textiles, for example, are inspirational. In their first lesson, students in one Year 7 class were in awe of the teacher's demonstrations showing how heat transfer is

used to produce patterns on fabrics. They could not wait to start transferring patterns, created from an analysis of their own random shapes using viewfinders. By the end of the lesson, most students were well on the way to producing a fabric cover for their homework planners. In other aspects of the subject, students also do much better than normally expected by the time they reach Year 9; standards have improved since the last inspection.

137. Teaching is good, though a significant amount is very good and there was a small amount of excellent and satisfactory teaching. This shows a good improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was equally balanced between good and satisfactory. The strengths of teaching, which enable students to achieve well, lie in teachers' subject knowledge, their ability to manage and organise classrooms and the co-ordination of their planning which ensures progression and continuity. However, they do not have enough strategies to stimulate students' free thinking when different ideas and solutions as part of the design process have to be generated.
138. Students with special educational needs and higher attainers get good support; a classroom assistant often helps these students to achieve well. Through an additional industrial arts course for a small group of disinterested students in Year 11, staff retrieved their interest and they went on to produce toys and household items of high quality. A strength of the department is the opportunities students have to extend their design studies. Visits and exhibitions of students' work take place frequently. These include visits to the Royal College in London, the Versace Exhibition and the Salvatore Ferragamo in Florence. Although teachers have identified gifted and talented students, there was no evidence during the inspection of them receiving any special encouragement or support.
139. In Years 10-11, teachers' use of assessment is very effective and helps students to achieve well. It helps to clarify targets and gives students good opportunities to appraise their own work. Teachers' assessment in Years 7-9 is not as secure. Their routine marking does not always provide subject feedback and some work in notebooks goes unmarked.
140. Teachers' use of ICT is growing; in graphics it is already established and helps students to research and present their work. In other areas, they use it less well, mainly because access to computers is not convenient. Teachers stress specialist terminology in most lessons and this helps students to consolidate their achievement in literacy. There is routine application of numeracy, but this is not yet incremental or structured.
141. Leadership and management are good. Delegation is clear, including responsibilities for literacy and numeracy. Teachers work well as a team and they are clear about improvements required to improve standards; this is particularly the case in the use of ICT and the school's newly opened learning centre. Monitoring takes place in lessons; there is scope to make this more consistent and systematic in order to provide teachers with regular and focused feedback and to share best practice more easily. As the department embarks upon its new technology status, it has the capacity to become a true centre of excellence. Improvements since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision for art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
 - The students' achievement is good.
 - Teaching and learning are good: teachers are committed and enthusiastic.
 - The curriculum is good and students enjoy the variety of work and opportunities.
 - In lessons, teachers do not always make clear to students the standards that will be expected of them.
 - Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT in art lessons.
 - The teachers' strategies for improving the students' writing, speaking and listening are not consistent enough.
142. Standards at the end of Year 9, as assessed by teachers in 2003, were above average and these are consistent with work seen in the inspection. Students are able to incorporate ideas from other artists in their work. The sketchbooks show the way that students learn to convey ideas and feelings in a highly personal way, then evaluate and improve their work. Standards in the GCSE examination have been above average for the last two years and this continues into the present Year 11. Students use signs, symbols and conventions in art to inform their ideas and show independence in their approach. Whilst girls generally do better than boys, the difference is similar to the national picture.
143. Students' achievements are good. Students enter the school with broadly average knowledge and understanding and become increasingly confident in expressing themselves through a range of media. Students are keen to do well because the school values success in the arts, as shown by the Artsmark Gold Award, and the curriculum is enriched by its links with the local community and visits to national and international galleries and places of interest.
144. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers are committed and enthusiastic. The tasks set for students are challenging. Good planning ensures that students build well on previous experience. In the best lessons teachers inspire students to very good learning. Students almost always aim to do their best, listen carefully and show initiative. In a very good lesson Year 9 students were encouraged to explore emotional expression through both abstract representation and the use of symbols. Picasso's *Guernica* and the teacher's vivid stories encouraged them to shake off conventional ideas so that, by the end of the lesson, they had achieved some dramatic results in an unfamiliar medium. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and this is reflected in the students' positive attitudes. The teaching encourages students to think and plan for themselves. The teachers' assessment tells them clearly how well they are doing and gives good ideas for improvement. Teachers share National Curriculum levels with students and relate these to the progress they are making. Where lessons are less successful it is because the teacher does not make clear what standards they expect students of differing ability to achieve and then get them together at the end of the lesson to share the results.
145. The day to day management of art and design is good. The leadership of the department is currently shared by two teachers and this temporary arrangement is working satisfactorily. Teachers work well as a team. Regular monitoring and evaluation of work leads to changes in short term and long term planning so that, for instance, there is consistency in assessment and continuity in students' experiences as they move through the school. Less successfully, the adoption of strategies for Years 7-9 in numeracy, literacy and teaching methods is inconsistent. There are few opportunities for students to use ICT in art lessons although many are using home computers for research and homework. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in raising standards in art.

Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led and managed.
 - Teaching and revised curriculum are good.
 - Assessment is used very well to monitor students' progress and to inform curricular planning.
 - The opportunities for all students to participate in musical activities both in and outside the College.
 - The department is split across both sites, making communication difficult, and there are insufficient practice rooms.
 - The lack of sufficient access to ICT prevents the department from adequately teaching all aspects of the National Curriculum and GCSE.
146. In the 2002 GCSE examinations the percentage of students obtaining A*-C grades was in line with the national average. This includes a number of students who sat the examination in Year 10 in 2001 and all achieved A*-C grades. For many of the Year 11 students who achieved below a C grade, their music grade was amongst the highest they achieved. Boys achieved higher marks than girls because this particular group of students contained some musically able boys. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were slightly below those of the previous year.
147. Inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Year 9 are average. The majority of students enter the school in Year 7 with a wide range of musical experiences, many of which are below expectations for the end of Year 6. Consequently standards at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement in most aspects of the subject. However, the insufficient amount of experience students receive in working with ICT is having an impact on the achievements of many of the musically less able students who take GCSE. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are also average, although students' achievements are good. Some Year 10 students achieve very well and are preparing to take the GCSE in one year.
148. Teaching overall is good. In some lessons it is very good. All teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. However, in the more successful lessons it is the understanding of how students learn combined with the teacher's infectious enthusiasm which produces good progress. In other lessons the teaching does not encourage students to participate and become involved in their own learning. Lessons are thoroughly prepared though and resourced to cater for students of all musical abilities. This is particularly the case with students with special educational needs, who are taught in the same classes as their peers, and very often make good progress. Provision for more musically able students varies according to the teacher. Although the more able students in Year 10 are given extra tuition to sit the GCSE examination a year early, there is insufficient sustained challenge in Years 7-9 classes. Further opportunities for the more musically able are, however, offered in the form of instrumental tuition provided by a group of external teachers.
149. Leadership and management are very good, and improvement since the last inspection has been good. A well-planned curriculum and very effective assessment practice ensure that students make good progress. The department is also making a good contribution to students' literacy and numeracy skills.
150. The accommodation available for music is unsatisfactory as the department is split across two sites with some classes receiving tuition on both sites. There are insufficient practice rooms on the upper site and none on the lower site. Present resources are unsatisfactory as there are insufficient computers to enable ICT to become an integral part of the Year 7-9 music curriculum on the upper site and none on the lower site. As a significant number of students do not play acoustic instruments when they enter the school in Year 7, the lack of computers and opportunity to use them in lessons and after school is impeding the development of their composition skills.

Drama

The provision for drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning leading to above average levels of performance in Year 11.
 - Very good systems of assessment and student self-evaluation ensure that students understand how to improve.
 - There is good management and leadership of a growing team of specialist teachers.
 - Students' language and literacy skills are underdeveloped.
 - Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are underdeveloped.
 - Current accommodation is inadequate for the planned expansion.
151. A sample of two lessons was observed: one in Year 7 and one in Year 11. Good foundations are established in Year 7 and standards are average. By the end of Year 11 standards of physical performance are above average. Standards of evaluation in written coursework are not as high, resulting in attainment in GCSE examinations which is average. Achievement is, however, good with a high proportion of lower attaining students choosing the subject and progressing well.
152. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 7 is good. Strengths include the teacher clearly communicating the learning objectives, giving clear instructions and establishing firm expectations of behaviour and performance. Through demonstration and improving technique, students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, learned how to build and develop a role with a partner. An observed lesson demonstrated how they accomplished this through controlled movement and improvised dialogue.
153. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 11 is good. Students respond well to a range of initial stimuli (aural, visual and written) using a variety of previously learned techniques to develop their improvisation. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. For example, the teacher encouraged one group of abstract thinkers to ground their performance in more physical expression. The performance skills of students of all abilities are expressive and inventive. They project their voices well and movement is controlled and disciplined. Students' evaluative skills are less developed and teachers need to ensure that students use language more accurately and precisely for oral and written analysis.
154. Leadership and management of the subject are good and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. All students in Years 7 to 9 now receive a regular weekly drama lesson and two groups in Year 10 and two in Year 11 follow a GCSE drama course. There is a growing team of five specialist teachers who are well led and managed. Student assessment is a strength. All students are involved in self-evaluation and are given clear targets for improvement. Schemes of work are being developed to cover the increased number of drama lessons now offered.
155. The subject offers many opportunities for enrichment beyond lessons through clubs, workshops and school productions. To further encourage more boys to choose the subject the performing arts faculty wishes to extend the range of technical opportunities, for example in the use of sound, lighting and video work. The present accommodation, which is just adequate, would limit expansion. The lower school gymnasium that is used for some lessons is inappropriate, acoustics are poor and large wall mirrors and windows to the outside are a distraction.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm.
- Staff/student relationships are very good.
- Accommodation and resources are very good, allowing the study of many physical activities and games.
- Students have very positive attitudes and good standards of behaviour.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- There are no individual written records of participation and achievement for Year 11 students not studying for GCSE.
- Students' achievements in written examinations could be improved.

Commentary

156. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average at grades A*-C, but slightly above at grades A*-G, with a 100 per cent pass rate. The majority of students score well in the practical aspects of the subject but find the theory and written examinations more challenging. GCSE results in 2003 are below expectations with a number of students not achieving their predicted grades. Strategies to assist students in improving their written work and examination skills need review. Standards in work seen in the GCSE group in Year 11 were below average, consistent with recent results.
157. Standards in Year 9 and the core provision for Year 11 were above average. Their achievements are good. On entry to Year 7 most students have limited experience of physical activities and games. In response to effective teaching, students achieve well in lessons and by Year 9 make significant progress in all activities. Students gain a good knowledge of the rules of a number of games and acquire the skills to participate successfully in them. In swimming they increase their stamina and technique and many become capable swimmers with proficiency in a number of strokes. In Years 10 and 11 all students have some choice of the physical activities and games in which they participate. This helps to maintain their interest and motivation. In team games such as hockey, football, rugby, and netball they refine the techniques and skills required to play games with confidence and enjoyment. Tactics and strategies are understood well and demonstrated in lessons and in a variety of sporting fixtures against other schools. In badminton, students in Year 10 build up a wide variety of shots and were observed practising how to serve accurately.
158. In all years a feature of most lessons is the development of the ability to evaluate, in a helpful and perceptive manner, their own performance, and that of others, as they increasingly take responsibility for self-improvement. Their needs and abilities are known to staff who provide appropriate individual coaching and advice. Students make good progress and achieve well. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
159. Students with special educational needs are fully involved in lessons. Their individual requirements are well known to the staff and appropriate support is provided when necessary. They make good progress and achieve well. Talented students are identified and are encouraged to work with greater independence. Supervised by the teacher, they often lead groups for warm-up activities at the beginning of lessons.
160. Overall the quality of teaching is good. The teachers have extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject and this, together with their individual expertise in specific activities and games, provides well-informed and specialised teaching. Lessons are well planned and organised so that skills and knowledge are developed logically. Active demonstrations and good modelling of technique by the teachers help to improve the students' understanding and competence. Based on mutual respect, very good relationships give students the confidence to try new activities in a safe, caring environment. Teachers are

enthusiastic about the subject and pass on their enthusiasm to their class. Behaviour is good because the students are interested in the lessons and are eager to improve. Any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with in a firm non-confrontational manner. Assessment procedures are effective overall with students regularly receiving grades for effort and achievement. The department has only recently started to link students' assessment grades to the national levels of attainment. This is an area for continuing development. While sixth formers have the opportunity to undertake the Community Sports Leader Award, there is no opportunity at present for students in Years 10 and 11 to develop their sports organisation skills, for example by taking the Junior Sports Leaders' Award.

161. Both the leadership and management of the department are good and are reflected in the SportsMark that has been awarded for the high quality of physical education and sporting provision in the school. Teachers work very well together, with the team leader providing clear educational direction. Regular team meetings provide opportunities for potential improvements to the department to be identified and discussed. Good progress has been made since the last inspection both in the standards students achieve and in the quality of teaching and learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

These courses were sampled during the inspection.

Business studies is a traditional rather than vocational GCSE course. Standards are satisfactory and students are introduced to business theory effectively in Year 10.

One lesson of vocational GCSE Leisure and Tourism was observed. Standards are below the national average and are affected by the lack of dedicated ICT resources.

Vocational GCSE Health and Social Care is taught well and a Year 10 lesson introduced students to a variety of health issues very effectively.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Overall the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planned events and visits enhance the taught programme.
- External speakers are used well.
- Schemes of work are well planned and include PSHE and careers.
- A complete audit is needed to determine in which subjects elements of citizenship are being taught.
- Assessment of students' progress and achievement is not well developed.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and opportunities for the sharing of good practice.
- Timetabling arrangements should be reviewed.

Commentary

162. The subject is at an early stage of development. Citizenship is taught in distinct modules as part of a combined programme with personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and careers, and also through discrete citizenship activities and events. The scheme of work is well considered and planned, and it provides for the logical development of knowledge, skills, and concepts. Good use is made of links with external agencies whose representatives visit the school to provide students with an insight into aspects of their work. A number of outside

visits are organised to help develop the students' understanding of a range of complex and challenging issues. When learning about democracy and the role of central government, students in Year 11 visited London and the Houses of Parliament.

163. Standards are average in Years 9 and 11 and achievement is satisfactory. At the beginning of the school year election of student representatives to the school's student forum provides a focus for initial work on citizenship. Students learn about the roles and responsibilities involved and how to choose a suitable candidate by identifying the skills and qualities required. The election procedures mirror as closely as possible those for general elections, with students learning about the process in varying levels of detail that reflect their age and understanding. The forum has a real impact on school life. It discusses issues raised by students and, where appropriate, makes representation to school management. For example, the representatives negotiated a mobile phone policy which allows students to bring these to school.
164. In Year 10 the 'Volunteering Project' provides for active involvement with the local community. Students offer help to local people, such as walking a pet or tidying a garden. Students in Year 11 planned and organised a very successful 'Fun Day' for students with special educational needs from local schools. Not only did students increase their knowledge and understanding of the community in which they live but they also developed a wide range of skills required for the organisation of the event. Future special event days are planned that will concentrate on the promotion of citizenship. Students have equality of opportunity and access to the current curriculum.
165. Elements of citizenship are taught in a number of other subjects. Mapping, where this occurs, has not been completed so there are instances that are not identified as contributing to the overall programme of teaching and learning.
166. Teaching and the quality of learning are satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are shared with the students. Teachers try to make the lessons interesting and informative with varying degrees of success. In some lessons students are attentive and behave well, participate in question and answer sessions, and complete written work to a good standard. Some poor behaviour was observed in the few lessons where teachers find it difficult to motivate students and involve them fully in tasks and activities. One of the reasons for this is the students' dislike of the present timetabling as it results in them losing a lesson in other subjects.
167. Assessment procedures are still in a developmental stage. There are none in Years 7, 8, and 9. There is no co-ordination of assessment in Years 10 and 11 and, although some students receive certificates for their involvement in citizenship activities, there is no consistent, formal assessment procedure.
168. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily by the curriculum team leader who provides a good range of resources and advice for those teaching the subject. At present there is little monitoring of teaching and learning, thus reducing the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement, and to share good practice.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	12	50.0	90.0	25.0	42.7	22.5	39.0
Business Studies	7	85.7	89.1	0.0	31.7	25.7	35.4
Communication Studies	10	90.0	94.2	40.0	36.1	37.0	38.5
Design and Technology	7	28.6	89.2	0.0	32.0	5.7	35.7
Other Social Studies	8	75.0	83.2	0.0	32.5	23.8	33.6
Sociology	8	62.5	83.7	0.0	33.6	18.8	33.8
Sports/PE Studies	5	60.0	88.2	40.0	27.7	26.0	33.8

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	22	100	96.1	72.7	48.7	103.6	85.1
Biology	6	100	91.6	16.7	36.3	60.0	74.1
Business Studies	8	100	96.4	0.0	32.8	5705	76.5
Communication Studies	9	100	98.3	22.2	36.8	77.8	81.1
Drama	7	100	98.1	57.1	4105	82.9	82.9
English Literature	7	100	98.5	57.1	43.7	82.9	84.3
Design and Technology	9	100	95.3	22.2	35.5	68.9	76.5
History	9	100	97.1	33.3	41.0	84.4	81.2
Leisure and Recreation	12	41.7	86.9	0.0	12.7	21.7	58.3
Mathematics	6	100	93.3	33.3	52.2	63.3	84.7
Other Social Studies	5	100	94.3	20.0	38.9	72.0	77.7
Physics	5	100	92.8	0.0	42.8	56.0	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus during the inspection was on English and French. Communication Studies and German were sampled.

169. Communication studies is a popular subject in the sixth form. Two groups are following the AS course in Year 12 and two at A2 level in Y13. Two lessons and students' work were sampled. Standards are above average. Attainment in the most recent AS and A2 examinations is above average. Achievement is good with no marked differences between male and female students. The quality of coursework is particularly good. Students are given very good opportunities for wider reading, the use of ICT and independent market and audience research. Students produce artefacts such as information brochures, guidebooks and leaflets to a near professional finish. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students are given very good support and guidance on the organisation of their work and have a clear understanding of course requirements. Lessons and resources are very well prepared. For example, in one lesson, discussion was stimulated by a well-chosen selection of photographs of local buildings that students had to categorise.
170. Very small numbers of students have been entered for A level German in recent years and standards have been average. In the lesson observed students were taught well and made good progress.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the teaching experience promotes a good quality of learning for all students.
- Student attitudes are good in both year groups.
- The subject is well led and good management has ensured that the impact of staffing difficulties has been limited to reduce any effect on students' results.
- Students can choose from three different courses and the visits to theatres add a valuable element to their studies. Students in Year 11 have the opportunity to begin AS work.
- Although students have good ICT skills, computers are not available for use in classrooms.
- There is not always sufficient opportunity for independent learning.
- The management and use of assessment data requires further development.

Commentary

171. The school enters students for both the literature and language examinations. In 2002 attainment was at the national average in the literature course in A2. No students were entered on the language course. In 2003 standards were good in that 95 per cent of students passed and 30 per cent achieved the higher grades. Standards were a little higher in the language and literature group with five of the seven candidates gaining A or B grades. Literature results were good at AS but staffing problems clearly affected standards in the language and literature course. The trend is for standards to be close to the national average although there has been considerable fluctuation in standards and size of groups from year to year.
172. Standards are above average in the present Year 13 literature group although standards are lower in the other group, again reflecting the staffing problems affecting the department last year. Most students have continued into the second year. In both courses it is clear that there are higher attaining students but also some, particularly in the language and literature group, who find the subject difficult. Standards overall are close to the national average.
173. Overall achievement is satisfactory in relation to results in previous tests or examinations because of the quality of teaching and the positive attitudes and response of the majority of students. Some individual students have been awarded exceptionally high marks in individual units. Students work very hard, contribute well in class and prepare well for lessons. There are

more female than male students but there is no evidence of difference in attainment or achievement. Higher attaining students are clearly reaching their full potential in the subject.

174. It is clear that all students require, at least initially, a high level of support with unfamiliar vocabulary. In studying *The Handmaid's Tale* none of the students were familiar with the more unusual vocabulary. Students progress well because teaching focuses on basic as well as higher-level skills. In a Year 13 lesson on *Othello* the teacher clearly understood that students needed support with spelling as well as with the structure and themes of the play. In Year 12 students are given a good introduction to the courses and very clear information about examination board requirements. Some students are now completing AS course work in Year 11.
175. In Year 13 students are able to talk about the characters in *Othello* with confidence and explain the different themes within the play. Higher attaining students are able to make comparisons with earlier work on *King Lear* and to set *Othello* in the context of attitudes, for example to racial prejudice, at the time when the play was written. In a very enjoyable Year 12 lesson, poetry studied in Year 11 and chosen by students was skilfully used to help them with approaches to AS work.
176. Students are supported well by the careful use of the whiteboard to focus learning. Students are confident in using websites for research and they use computers for course work, which is often of an excellent standard, but there are no computer facilities for presentations in the classrooms.
177. Teaching overall is good. The lessons observed showed that the very good subject knowledge and experience in teaching at this higher level is being used to ensure effective learning in the classroom. A particular feature of the teaching is the way in which students' ideas and contributions are valued, used and developed for the benefit of the whole class. All teachers encourage discussion, group work and the sharing of ideas and learning is enhanced by regular visits to theatres in London and Stratford. However, in a small minority of lessons students are not encouraged to be independent learners and there is insufficient variety of approaches to teaching and learning. Advice and guidance through marking of student work is particularly effective and is valued by all students.
178. The department is well led and management is good. There is an emphasis on review and development. Staffing problems and the recruitment of new teachers have been managed well. However, the use and management of assessment data is not fully effective as yet. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision for French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers of French are a team of very good linguists with a demonstrable love of their subject.
- The leadership is good and fosters supportive and collaborative relationships.
- The lessons are very well planned to help students to make the transition to advanced level work.
- Teachers combine encouragement with an emphasis on high standards.
- Progression between the AS-level and the A2-level courses is insufficient to achieve appropriate group sizes for collaborative learning.

- Students need guidance on wider reading in French and on extended writing, including imaginative and creative writing.

Commentary

179. In recent years, very small numbers of students have been entered for A level examinations in French and their results are below average. Standards are, however, improving and the work of current students in lessons is broadly in line with the national average at both AS-level and A2-level. The transition from work in Year 11 to advanced level study presents a challenge to these students, particularly in terms of the complexity of grammar and the breadth of vocabulary required. Despite these difficulties, their achievement is satisfactory when compared with their previous attainment at GCSE. By the time they reach Year 13, they are able to write informatively on a wide range of topics and to use complex language to argue a case using appropriate specialist vocabulary.
180. Students achieve well in their lessons because they are well taught by teachers who clearly love their subject. The teachers know their students well and have a very good understanding of their learning needs. The lessons are very well planned to assist students in making the transition to advanced level work. They offer a high level of encouragement and create a positive atmosphere in lessons that successfully builds students' confidence. A remarkable feature of the teaching is that, whilst maintaining this non-threatening learning environment, teachers have very high expectations and continually challenge students to raise the standard of their work. This emphasis on high standards is characterised by the consistent use of French as the language of communication and an insistence on correct accent and intonation from students. In one lesson, students clearly shared the teachers' own fascination with language and were totally absorbed as she explained aspects of the evolution of French from its early origins. The best lessons are characterised by pace, often with quick-fire question and answer work and rapid transition from one activity to the next. Students enjoy the lessons because they gain a very real sense that they are making progress. They respond well when their views and experiences are valued in language learning and when they are given opportunities to engage in genuine independent research, using French websites for example. Students on the A2 level course in particular would, however, benefit from guidance on wider reading in French, perhaps of contemporary fiction suited to their age and interests. They should also be guided towards some extended writing in French, including creative and imaginative writing. Teachers assess students' work very thoroughly and use day-to-day assessment very effectively to plan lessons that meet students' needs. As a result, students of French have a very good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
181. The leadership of the team of very good linguists in the modern languages department is good and fosters supportive relationships and first-rate collaboration between teachers. Resources for teaching sixth form French are very well organised and the reference materials, in particular, are of very high quality. The department now needs to improve progression between the AS-level and the A2-level courses so that Year 13 teaching groups can achieve a size more conducive to collaborative learning at this advanced level. Since the last inspection, standards have been sustained and teachers have successfully addressed the challenge of raising expectations by reducing the use of English in class as the principal medium of communication. Improvement overall since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject effectively.
- Standards over the last three years are improving with all students completing the course achieving GCE A level grades A to E.
- Good working relationships with the teachers help the students to achieve well.
- Below average curriculum time undermines students' achievement.

- ICT is underused as a resource for teaching.

Commentary

182. The department provides AS and A level courses in Years 12 and 13 that attract a reasonable number of students. Most students who begin the AS level course complete it. A few students do not move onto the A2 courses in Year 13. All of those who complete the A level course achieve grades A to E.
183. AS level results in 2002 were below the national average, which represents unsatisfactory achievement. A level results were also below the national average, though all students entered for the examination achieved a pass grade or better. This represents satisfactory achievement based on students' prior attainment at GCSE. In 2003, AS level results show no improvement compared to the previous year. A level results are similar to the previous year with a significant increase in the proportion of students achieving GCE grades A and B. Current standards of work seen are average and achievement is satisfactory, both for Year 12 and Year 13 students, in relation to their GCSE results. This is because Year 12 students make good use of past GCSE work to move into new areas; for example, in statistics when studying 'box and whisker plots' based on knowledge of cumulative frequency curves and 'frequency density' when studying histograms. Year 13 students recall knowledge and apply it confidently in class; for example, when discussing strategies for comparing the experimental and theoretical probability to a problem of combinations and permutations set by the teacher.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; they plan well, with a clear purpose for each lesson. Teachers maintain a brisk pace in lessons and set challenges that are intellectually demanding and deepen understanding. Students make good efforts to understand the work they are doing. As a result, students are motivated and are prepared to work collaboratively and to think for themselves. A variety of teaching methods are used though little use is made of ICT and the interactive whiteboard in the department. In some lessons, students contribute a great deal through discussion, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding at the whiteboard. However, progress is hampered by the lower than usual amount of curriculum time. The extensive size of the campus also results in considerable delays to the start of many lessons, restricting the treatment of some topics and opportunities for students to practise newly acquired skills. Homework is set regularly and students' work is marked up to date, but the marking offers too little guidance that is related to individual targets and examination requirements.
185. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Monitoring and assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers are approachable and give up much of their non-contact time to support students as part of the department's open door policy. Good self-evaluation has resulted in strategies for improving standards though student numbers remain static. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

SCIENCE

The focus was on physics, but biology and chemistry were also sampled.

186. In biology, recent examination results have been well below average, and students have not achieved as well as expected at either AS or A2 level. As a result, the retention rate in Year 13 was very low. A good lesson was observed in Year 12; students learnt the difference between reducing and non-reducing sugars. They then worked enthusiastically while carrying out a series of tests to determine which foods contained these sugars.
187. In chemistry, examination results have been well below average, but students have mostly obtained a pass grade, and also achieved their target grades based on their GCSE performance. Two lessons were observed. In a satisfactory theory lesson in Year 12 on empirical and molecular formulae, the teacher provided extra help for the slower learners, but

the overall pace was too slow for the higher attaining students. In a good Year 13 lesson, students contributed well after a slow start because the teacher patiently involved them in the development of the theory of reaction rates. Their learning was good as a result, but they had not prepared themselves well for the lesson.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are experienced and have a good command of their subject.
- The advancing physics A level course is thoroughly planned; the result is good teaching and learning.
- Students have a positive attitude to their work, and particularly enjoy practical tasks.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Examination results are below average.
- The number of students taking the course is rather low, but retention rates are good.
- The monitoring of the quality of work in folders is infrequent, but tests are thoroughly marked.

Commentary

188. Results in recent A level examinations were below average. Few students obtained A or B grades, although a high proportion of students obtained pass grades. For instance, in 2002 overall results were well below average, but all students entered for the examination obtained a pass grade. In relation to their GCSE results, students overall did less well than expected. Results in 2003 improved slightly, and some students with modest GCSE grades did relatively well. Results at AS level were below the level expected because of the difficulty students experienced with one of their modules. They are planning to retake this module in an attempt to improve their grades.
189. The standard of work seen in lessons during the inspection was broadly average. There are no consistent differences in the standards of male and female students. In the work seen in Year 13, students' achievements are satisfactory. The pace of their lessons is generally good, and the underlying theory fully covered. In one lesson, students were unable to suggest a means of measuring the density of air using a large polythene container. The teacher left the problem with them to discuss and make suggestions for the next lesson, therefore requiring them to think about their work. In another lesson, the teacher provided a short, knowledgeable and interesting lecture on the historical development of our understanding of Earth's place in the universe. Surprisingly, this did not provoke a series of questions from the students. Their recall of previous work often shows a lack of confidence, and students are not in the habit of preparing themselves thoroughly for each lesson by reading through their notes of previous work.
190. Students in Year 12 have just started their course, and are clearly noticing the difference in standard between GCSE and A level studies. Nevertheless, they are involved in their work, and responding to the challenge. A significant proportion of the group are not taking mathematics, and their confidence with calculations therefore suffers, for instance when rearranging equations. They are also too reliant on using a calculator. The majority of students set their work out clearly, showing how they arrive at their answers.
191. Teaching is good, and provides students with a good opportunity to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well, and generally expect students to contribute. Teachers ask frequent questions in order to involve students, but do not encourage students to ask questions. In a Year 12 lesson about the properties of materials, the lesson was too dependent on the teacher, and did not require enough input from the students. There was too

little time for the practical tests, and too little time to discuss outcomes. Insufficient demand was placed on students to think, and thereby to develop their understanding.

192. Students' folders of work are maintained in satisfactory order. Much of their writing is comprised of notes from the lesson with a follow-up set of questions or calculations for homework. There is little differentiation of task in order to stretch the higher attaining students. Marking of students' work concentrates on their calculations, and assessment tests. There are insufficient constructive comments written in folders to advise students how to improve, and few references about how the work measures up to A level grades.
193. Students report that they enjoy the advancing physics course. They value the opportunities provided to talk to their teachers about any difficulties they are facing. They have a positive outlook on their work, and know their target grades for the national examination. Retention rates are good.
194. Leadership of the subject is good, and the course modules are well planned. The regularity of assessments is increasing, so that teachers have a wide range of data about each student's performance. This is not yet effectively used in order to bring about early identification of any underachievement, and to take action to overcome this. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

195. Information and Communication technology is available as an AS subject. Previous results cannot be used as indicators of performance owing to the low number enrolled. Two Year 12 classes were observed and a sample of current work scrutinised. Standards are average and represent at least satisfactory achievement, with predicted student grades ranging from A to D. Students show a good attitude to their work, with a good element of peer help used. Teaching is satisfactory, with students encouraged to develop their potential. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

The focus subjects were history and geography. One lesson in sociology and one in psychology were also observed. Teaching was good in psychology and very good in sociology. Students in both subjects are enabled to achieve well. Students' attitudes in both subjects are positive.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and are now average.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and of a good standard. As a result, students learn well and show positive attitudes.
- Marking is very good with clear guidance on what has been done well and what needs to be done in order to improve.
- There is scope to provide further challenge for the most able.
- Students need more structured opportunities to improve their speaking skills.

Commentary

196. Results in the 2002 A level examination were below average for A to B grades. However, all students obtained a pass grade and standards in terms of average points score are in line with national averages. 2003 examination results show similar results.

197. When students enter the sixth form, standards are broadly average. Progress from GCSE to AS level is smooth. Standards are average by the end of Year 13, representing satisfactory achievement. Standards have therefore improved since the last inspection. Both average and lower attaining students are enabled to work to their full potential; there is still scope to more effectively challenge the most able and thereby increase the number of A and B grades gained in the subject. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence to produce well-balanced arguments. Most students write well, although they are somewhat less confident when analysing or explaining verbally and would benefit from being provided with more structured opportunities to improve their speaking skills.
198. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons are well planned; students are enabled, for example, to develop comprehensive diagrammatic notes to show the relationship between Charles I and Parliament. Teachers are clearly enthusiastic about their subject and students are positive about their history lessons. During discussions, several said they wanted to continue with the subject at university. They behave maturely and show good levels of perseverance and concentration. This was evident, for example, in a lesson where students worked on their personal studies. They have chosen a wide range of subjects, ranging from a study of Somerset during World War 2 to an examination of the role played by J Edgar Hoover. Marking is of a high standard with clear guidance on what students need to do in order to improve.
199. Leadership is good. Teachers are reflective and have worked hard to improve provision. Standards are higher and the quality of teaching is better. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching at AS level is good.
- Fieldwork is good and a departmental strength.
- The development of the students' numeracy skills is good.
- The range of specific learning resources could be extended and used better.

Commentary

200. The subject caters for 16 students: nine boys on an AS course and seven boys and girls on an A2 course. An inclusive admissions policy permits students who have not studied the subject before to take the course and the student retention rate on both courses is very good. Given the below average attainment on entry, overall achievement is satisfactory. Results in 2003 were below average and nobody gained either an A or a B grade. However, these results need to be set against a background of falling uptake of the subject: from 1999 until 2002, no students were entered at A Level. There is no appreciable difference in the performance of boys and girls.
201. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students is average. Students show evidence of good note-taking skills and there is evidence of the effective use of ICT and, in particular, mathematics for learning and coursework. Students make good spider diagrams, use tabulation regularly and annotate diagrams well. Coursework based on fieldwork is good. For example, when working on the vegetation, soil conditions and morphology of coastal dunes, students analyse data well; they show good evidence-linking skills and draw valid conclusions. When writing essays, however, many have difficulty in managing a range of geographical information in different forms and from different sources and in synthesising

them. This is linked to the insufficient use of a range of specific learning resources such as maps, photographs and up-to-the-minute texts.

202. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and the positive interaction between students and teachers ensures that the former develop a secure knowledge base. This was seen in a Year 12 class studying problems associated with the development of coastal towns such as Poole. Through the effective use of a conflict matrix, the teacher was able to help the students extend their understanding of issues such as housing, waste, conservation and tourism and to develop their own insight into an important geographical problem.
203. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is now an enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching team committed to raising standards, particularly in the area of human geography. The good fieldwork provision promotes better standards and students consider that they are well supported. The monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching has been unsatisfactory in the past and the department lacks some resources; nevertheless, standards have improved since the last inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory and, provided the weaknesses mentioned above are addressed, there is a good capacity for further advance. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Engineering, design and manufacturing

Textiles was not a focus of this inspection but was sampled. Standards in the A Level examination in 2002 were very high, with nearly all students gaining an A or B grade, but the 2003 results will probably be closer to the national average. One Year 13 lesson was observed which was good. The teacher had evaluated the students' needs and set work which extended their observation and drawing skills to provide powerful images of natural forms. The best students were beginning to develop these in imaginative ways to form textile designs.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was not a focus of this inspection but was sampled. Standards in the A level examinations have been variable over the last 5 years, with no overall trend. In 2002 the proportion of students gaining an A or B grade was above average. The results in the 2003 will probably be below average, although students taking the Advanced Subsidiary exam, at the end of Year 12, did much better. Two lessons were observed, both satisfactory. In one, Year 12 students used wire to model flower shapes based on the work of Georgia O'Keefe. The teacher had planned the lesson thoroughly with good resources to stimulate the students to experiment with new materials. In the other, Year 13 students were introduced to the research facility of the new learning centre, where they explored ways of obtaining information and images on their chosen artists. In both lessons, learning was limited by the lack of clear objectives and a clear evaluation at the end of the lesson.

Music

The quality of provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching provides the students with a firm foundation not only for A level work, but also for study at a higher level.
- The wide ranging knowledge and experience of the staff are very good.
- Students have a very good attitude to the subject and good relationships with the teachers.
- Students enjoy their studies and music making.
- There are insufficient ICT resources to meet the requirements of the AS level syllabus.
- There are insufficient practice rooms.

204. Numbers entered for both AS and A level examinations have been very small recently, making national comparisons invalid. In general, students have achieved grades which reflect their ability and potential. Retention rates have been good and this year a total of 11 students are beginning either music or music technology courses, continuing the trend of increasing numbers.
205. The standard of work seen in the current AS music technology course is average, and their achievements are satisfactory. Students have had little or no experience of the techniques required for this course, but in lessons observed they were seen to be achieving well. Standards of work seen in the present AS Music and A2 Music courses are also in line with expectations.
206. Teaching is good or better for all courses. Both members of staff have a very good knowledge of the subject and a combined broad range of musical experiences to offer the students. However, opportunities for students to learn independently are limited. Good relationships exist between the teachers and students and these, combined with the students' good attitudes to the subject, create a productive learning environment. Homework is regularly set to reinforce the learning which has taken place in the previous lesson, and to maintain motivation for developing the various techniques which are essential to ensure mastery of the examination requirements.
207. Leadership and management are very good. The same rigour is applied to the development of appropriate syllabi and assessment procedures as is to be found in the main school. Good opportunities for musical enrichment are available from the number of extra-curricular activities on offer, the re-organised instrumental tuition, and the regular musical concerts which are held both in and out of school. Accommodation is limited with insufficient work rooms and inadequate music technology for any of the courses. Tuition is challenging for both teachers and students as all three courses have to be taught at the same time in a practice room for half of the lessons allocated. With the growing numbers of students applying for each course, accommodation and resources are priority issues to be addressed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Drama and theatre studies

The quality of provision in drama and theatre studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to well above average performance skills.
- Students' independence, creativity and opportunities to take responsibility and very well developed.
- There are very good curriculum enrichment and opportunities beyond lessons to work with professional practitioners.
- Students' analytical and writing skills need to be improved to raise attainment in examinations.

Commentary

208. The standards of physical performance in drama are well above average. The standards of written expression and written analysis of all but the high attaining students are below average. Consequently attainment in examinations at AS and A2 level is average. There is no clear trend as results vary according to cohort each year. In 2003 no students attained the highest grade at either AS or A2 levels but all students attained pass grades. Achievement based on prior attainment is good. There is no difference in achievement between male and female students.

209. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teacher establishes an atmosphere of mutual trust where all students feel confident enough to take creative risks. Students are very supportive of each other and demonstrate highly developed skills of collaboration and negotiation resulting from the teachers' high expectations and a high degree of challenge. Teachers know students' individual strengths and weaknesses very well and encourage them to take responsibility, for example directing a scene or performing a role. Students' ideas are valued and extended through skilful questioning and dialogue. At both AS and A2 level students are introduced to a wide range of drama techniques, theories and genres which extends their own repertoire. For example Y13 students during their devised work in process on the theme of violence effectively used monologues, improvisation, freeze frame, questioning *Mr. Punch* in role, chorus, and a gangster rap performed in the style of dialogue from Restoration comedy. Year 12 were exploring and putting into practice the theories of Johnstone on improvisation and status in drama.
210. Teaching of examination techniques is less effective. Although they are given good support and are recommended to read widely and research the background to set texts, students still felt under-prepared in Year 12 for the written aspects of the AS examination. Teachers need to ensure that students constantly use the correct language and concepts of the subject both in oral and written evaluations.
211. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Students receive very good opportunities to take responsibility and widen their experience beyond the lessons in school. They have seen a variety of productions in local theatres and further afield. They are all given the opportunity to perform at the Tacchi Morris theatre in Taunton with professional practitioners and to attend workshops. They also help with drama lessons with younger students in school and in community drama projects. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Two physical education lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence from these lessons, and from the scrutiny of students' written work, indicates that achievement for those studying examination courses is satisfactory. ICT is used well in the presentation and illustration of students' course work. Although recreational activities and games are included on the timetable, the number of students wishing to participate varies significantly from week to week.

Leisure and tourism GNVQ Intermediate AVCE Leisure and recreation

The overall provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear progression route from work in Years 10 and 11.
- The vocational approach is promoting independent learning skills.
- Student show good attitudes to their work.
- AVCE students make very good use of work placements.
- Standards are below the national average.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge but they do not have relevant vocational experience.
- ICT resources are limited and the students do not the opportunity to use computers in the main teaching room.

Commentary

212. Students in Year 12 who are not ready to begin an AVCE course can take an intermediate GNVQ in Leisure and Tourism. Standards currently are below the national average although

they have been well below in the past. Achievement was unsatisfactory in 2002 when of the thirteen candidates only six were awarded a pass grade. In 2003 the pass rate improved and of six candidates five passed but again there were no merits or distinctions. Two of the present Year 13 AVCE group progressed from intermediate level; they have achieved well but overall achievement is still only just satisfactory.

213. In 2002 results were well below the national average on the AVCE Leisure and Recreation course and the majority of students failed. In 2003 six students were entered and four were awarded at least one D grade in the double award. At the end of Year 12 four students were awarded E grades and one a D grade and one was unclassified. In 2003 students achieve appropriately in relation to their standards on entry, despite the staffing problems within the department.
214. Standards in the present Years 12 and 13 are below average. The standard of some assignment work is good and the students are working towards C and D target grades in the double award although the majority achieved E grades after the first year. There is no difference between the standards or achievement of male and female students on the intermediate course although far more candidates are male. Retention rates are satisfactory although some students do choose to leave at the end of Year 12 others have successfully gone on to AVCE and higher education.
215. Achievement is now satisfactory because students have good attitudes to their work, enjoy sharing learning with others and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Staffing problems have now been resolved. However it is clear that in the recent past attitudes were less satisfactory and students were failing to reach their full potential particularly in the Intermediate GNVQ course. Students in Year 13 show a high level of interest in the course content and many are planning to study aspects at a higher level or to work in the vocational area. They have clearly been given good support and advice and they value work placements that give them a real insight into the leisure industry.
216. In Year 13 students respond well to questioning and they recall knowledge gained from previous lessons or individual research. All are using the appropriate vocabulary. They show secure knowledge of different aspects of the industry and of business related aspects such as marketing. Students answer confidently on health and safety issues and the identification of potential hazards, for example in a swimming pool. They use computers for research and in the preparation of high quality course work but computers are not available in the teaching room. Teachers use overhead projectors well but are not able to model the style of presentation that is now the norm in the leisure and business world. The vocational area makes a valuable contribution to the development of skills in communication and numeracy. By Year 13 students are working with appropriate maturity, confidence and independence.
217. Teaching and learning are now sound overall, although it is clear that staffing difficulties affected both standards and the experience of students last year. The lessons observed show that teachers have secure subject knowledge, especially of the business element of the course, although this not always supported by experience in the vocational area. An effective Intermediate GNVQ lesson introduced students to the concept of marketing different tourist destinations well although some students were impeded by lack of general knowledge on geographical location and climate. Students on both courses use computers well. They go on visits to extend their experience of tourist or leisure sites and good use is made of the leisure centre on the school campus. Marking is helpful and students are very clear about the examination board criteria.
218. Management is satisfactory and resources have been developed well. Assessment information is now more readily available but is not yet being used to raise standards. Year 13 students are very appreciative of the quality of support from their teachers. The AVCE course has been effectively introduced and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory although standards have not yet shown sufficient improvement.

BUSINESS

One lesson of AS business studies was sampled. Standards are satisfactory and teaching of business theory is effective. Students new to the subject were able to quickly grasp the basics of marketing because of the good quality of teaching.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

AVCE Health and Social Care is a popular option and standards are satisfactory. Teaching provides good practical examples to support the theoretical aspects of the course.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	5	3
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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