

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGDOWN SCHOOL

Warminster

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126460

Headteacher: Mrs Sheelagh Brown

Lead inspector: Mr Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 10 – 14 November 2003

Inspection number: 259150

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 pupils: 11-18 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1395

School address: Woodcock Road
Warminster
Wiltshire
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Jack May

Date of previous inspection: May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Kingdown Community School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11–18, situated in Warminster, Wiltshire. Pupils are drawn from the town and its surrounding villages, but the school also serves a high proportion of pupils from military families, many of whom are in the school for only two years. The socio-economic background from which the pupils are drawn is below average. While a number are from professional and educated families, there are also many pupils from needy and educationally deprived backgrounds. There are currently 1395 pupils on roll, with 185 in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, but this does not take account of the number of service families. Attainment on entry is below average, particularly the pupils' language and literacy skills. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is average, with 149 pupils having identified needs. A significant number of these pupils have emotional and behavioural problems as well as learning difficulties of many kinds, including autism. Some pupils also have hearing and speech impairments. The school has a 16-place unit for pupils with dyslexia. Thirty-two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Pupils are almost all white British with a handful who are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. The school is a Sports College and has also been awarded Artsmark (silver), Sportsmark (gold) and Investors in People.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Lead inspector	
9789	Leigh Barclay	Lay inspector	
22958	Terry Bailess	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
19267	Philip Gibson	Team inspector	Science
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and technology, health and social care
8672	Michael Roberts	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31690	Bridget Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15304	Reg Fletcher	Team inspector	History
30743	Neil Cowell	Team inspector	Geography, citizenship
1610	Tim Royle	Team inspector	Art and design
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team inspector	Music, sociology
33164	Debbie Priest	Team inspector	Physical education
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Special educational needs
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	English in the sixth form, leisure and recreation
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **very good school** that provides very good value for money. Driven by the outstanding and inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the school is committed to offering the highest standards of teaching and the inclusion of all pupils. Standards are above average and improving. Pupils' achievements are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, very well supported by her senior staff, is providing a strong sense of common purpose and direction.
- Very good teaching and the positive attitudes of the pupils combine to ensure that most achieve well.
- The school is an inclusive community in which very good relationships and a friendly atmosphere, alongside productive links with the wider community, help to promote achievement.
- High quality management at all levels ensures that the school's procedures for self-evaluation are very effective.
- The very good personal development of pupils is strongly promoted by the school's pastoral support programme, opportunities for taking responsibility and the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Carefully targeted and sensitive support for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used enough to support learning.

Overall, the school has made very good improvements since the last inspection in 1998, maintaining the strengths identified and making confident and secure improvements elsewhere. 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 requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are still not met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good overall; in some subjects it is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and the sixth form. Standards in Years 7–9 are above average and pupils' achievements are good. Standards in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form are also above average, higher in some subjects. Pupils' achievements tend to improve as they move through the school, as a result of increasingly effective teaching. Performance in both GCSE and A-level examinations improved significantly in 2003, while overall performance in national tests in Year 9 also improved. Standards in English in Year 9 are above average and at GCSE level broadly in line with the national average. They are not quite as high as those in both mathematics and science, reflecting the lower standards of literacy on entry. However, overall achievement in both English and science is good. Achievement in mathematics overall is very good. In other subjects, most pupils' overall achievements are good in French, German, ICT, geography, music and physical education. They are very good in design and technology, history, business studies and art and design.

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. Pupils are keen to learn and their positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their achievements. Behaviour is also good overall, and many pupils demonstrate considerate and thoughtful behaviour towards others. Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance levels are average and are improving rapidly as a result of some effective school initiatives.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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

Teaching is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and the sixth form. Teachers are energetic and committed. They have high expectations, are confident in their subject knowledge, and set challenging work for their pupils. As a result, learning is very good in most lessons.

The curriculum is good, preparing pupils successfully for their future. It is enriched by an excellent range of out of school clubs and activities. Citizenship is taught but planning for the subject is not fully complete.

The school's procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils are very good. Tutors know their pupils well and are committed to their personal and academic development. Extensive links with the community and partner schools make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are excellent. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher has inspired and empowered team leaders at all levels in the school. She is very well supported by her deputies and senior team. The work of the governors is good. They provide experienced and committed oversight of the school's work, and are astute and confident in their role. Self-evaluation procedures are highly effective. Although some statutory requirements are not fully met, governors have done all they can and standards are not being adversely affected.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school's partnership with its parents is very 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 are expected to work hard, and that they make good progress as a result of good teaching. A small minority of parents are critical of the behaviour of some pupils.

Pupils 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 pupils 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:

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

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that requirements in relation to citizenship are fully met;

- review the arrangements made for providing a daily act of collective worship and formalise the provision for religious education in the sixth form.

THE SIXTH FORM AT KINGDOWN SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is providing a **very good** education for its students, and it has improved since the last inspection in 1998. Standards are getting better and results in 2003 were a significant improvement on previous years. Given their prior attainment at GCSE, students' achievements are good as result of very good teaching. There is a clear sense of direction and leadership, and management is very good. The sixth form is cost effective.

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 very good range of both academic and vocational subjects.
- Relationships are very good amongst the students and between staff and students.
- 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	English. Good. Above average A-level results and good achievement are the result of skilful and effective teaching. French. Good. Teachers enthuse their students and ensure that their achievement is good. Numbers in A-level groups are very small.
Mathematics	Mathematics. Very good. Very good, knowledgeable teaching leads to good achievement. Current standards are above average, although A-level results in recent years have varied.
Science	Biology. Good. Above average standards and improving examination results are the result of very good teaching.
Humanities	Sociology. Very good. Above average attainment and very good achievement are the result of excellent teaching and learning and the positive attitudes of the students. Geography. Very good. Results have been consistently above average. Achievement is good as a result of very good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design. Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is consistently of a high standard.
Health and social care	Health and social care. Good. Standards are above average reflecting A-level results in 2003. Students' achievements are good and the teaching is also good.

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 very good. Tutors know their students very well and are sensitive to their needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is excellent; management is very good. There is a clear rationale for the sixth form and the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to respond to individual student's requirements. Management systems are well organised and thorough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and consider that the teaching challenges them to achieve their best. They particularly appreciate the helpfulness of the teachers and the choice of courses. They consider that they are treated fairly and with respect. Their views are welcomed and often acted on. Some were critical of the level of advice on what to do on leaving school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of work seen overall during the inspection are above average at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school. Although boys do not attain as well as girls, the difference in most subjects is no greater than that found nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are at least good throughout the school; in a number of subjects they are very good particularly during Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout.
- Standards at all levels are improving and all pupils are increasingly doing better.
- Standards in English are not as high as in mathematics or science, reflecting the lower standards of literacy on entry in Year 7.

Commentary

1. Given the pupils' standards on entry in Year 7 as measured by their attainment in national tests taken at the end of their primary schools, most pupils' achievements are good. Although the school has a fully comprehensive intake, there are slightly more pupils with below average attainment on entry. Cognitive ability tests taken by pupils on entry indicate a lower ability in verbal than in non-verbal and quantitative tests. A significant number of pupils arrive with such poor skills in reading and spelling that they have considerable difficulty in coping initially with the demands of secondary school.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science was above average. In comparison with 'similar schools' i.e. those with pupils who achieved similarly in Year 6 tests, performance in all three subjects was above average, confirming the good progress pupils make during Years 7–9. 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 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (35.0)	n/a (33.3)
Mathematics	36.8 (35.3)	n/a (34.7)
Science	34.6 (33.5)	n/a (33.3)

There were 264 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Although girls tend to do better than boys, the difference in most subjects is no greater than found nationally. Able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well through Years 7–9. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are also good.
4. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2003 was 60.5 per cent, above the national average and above the similar schools' average. The average total GCSE points score per pupil in 2003 was 44.2, above the national average and well above the average of schools that performed similarly in Year 9 tests in 2001. Results improved markedly in 2003. Results overall since the last inspection have improved significantly from 40

to 60 per cent of pupils achieving A* to C grades. Value added analysis indicates that all pupils made good progress, but girls made particularly good progress. As a result, while girls reach higher standards in most subjects, the vast majority of boys are not underachieving.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60.5 (52.2)	52.6 (49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92.5 (85.4)	88.6 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94.0 (92.0)	94.6 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	n/a (37.0)	n/a (39.8)

There were 243 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. In 2003, almost all subjects did well, although in history pupils did not achieve as well as in other subjects. Results in physical education were also not as good as in previous years. The percentage of pupils achieving A* and A grades was lower than usual, although science and art and design did well in this respect.
6. Overall pupils' achievement, that is how high standards are in relation to their ability and prior attainment, are at least good throughout Years 7–11. In work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards were above average, in line with recent test and examination results. While there are a small number of boys who underachieve, most pupils make at least good progress and in a number of subjects at GCSE achieve very well. Girls in particular do well. The school has worked hard to engage and motivate a small minority of boys in Year 11 who were in danger of becoming disaffected, and this is increasingly effective, although it remains an ongoing priority. Children from service families often transfer into the school at unusual times. The school works effectively to minimise the impact of this on their achievement. Around 15 per cent of the school roll can change every two years. Despite the lower than usual percentage of pupils achieving A and A* grades at GCSE in 2003, inspectors found no evidence to suggest that able pupils and those whom the school identifies as gifted and talented are not achieving as well as other pupils.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and some very well in Years 10 and 11, both in the quality of their work and in their attitudes and personal development. Dyslexic pupils achieve very well in Years 7-9 because of the high quality of specialised teaching they get in alternative English lessons. The achievement of other pupils with special educational needs varies across different subjects, depending on how well teachers match the work to their needs. It is especially good in history lessons.
8. The most significant factors in the improving learning culture are the quality of teaching and the quality of faculty leadership, which has a strong focus on maximising achievement for all pupils. In addition, the good attitudes of most pupils to their learning help to promote good progress.
9. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards are above average in Year 9 and broadly average in Year 11. Given their attainment on entry, pupils make good progress and achieve well through the school. Standards of literacy are average throughout the school. Pupils speak fluently and usually with confidence. Listening skills are good and pupils listen with careful attention to both teachers and their fellow pupils. Most read reasonably fluently. They locate information quickly and bring a critical approach to what they have read. Most write well at length, organise their work well into paragraphs, and use punctuation accurately, although a small number make errors in spelling. Much writing in Years 10 and 11 is characterised by clarity and a good sense of structure.

10. In work seen in mathematics, standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and pupils' achievements are very good overall. Standards of numeracy are above average. Most pupils accurately use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, and are reasonably confident at mental calculations.
11. Standards in science are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Pupils' achievements are good throughout. They have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.
12. In other subjects, most pupils' overall achievements are good in French, German, ICT, geography, music, physical education and business studies. They are very good in design and technology, history and art and design. They are satisfactory in religious education, where difficulties with staff have led to some discontinuity in the learning. However, these problems have now been overcome and the pupils are now making much better progress.

Sixth form

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

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97	90.3
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	25.1	35.5
Average point score per student	231.9 (224.3)	263.3

There were 70 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

14. In 2003 results improved and were the best results ever for the school. Girls performed better than boys in 2003. In almost all subjects, students gained at least a pass grade. Students in business studies (both A2 and AVCE), physics, sociology, art and design, history and geography achieved well, and in almost all subjects, students achieved as expected or better. In vocational courses all students achieved at or above their targets. Students did less well in music, theatre studies, leisure and recreation, philosophy and physical education. However, students mostly achieved the grades that were predicted for them and numbers taking the courses were in some cases too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made. Students gained a high proportion of higher grades at AS level in business studies, English language, sociology and textiles. Results in other subjects were more mixed.
15. The school prides itself on open access to the sixth form and has adopted an inclusive policy towards taking students onto courses. It adopts a flexible approach and although the entry criteria state that potential A-level students must have a good pass grade at GCSE, a number of students are admitted with minimum requirements, particularly for intermediate level courses.
16. Inspectors judge the achievements of most students in the current sixth form to be good. 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 that were, students' achievements, given their attainment at GCSE, are good in English, mathematics, biology, geography, French and health and social care. They were judged to be very good in art and design and sociology. Standards in all the subjects inspected in detail were above average for

this stage in the course, apart from in French where they were average. In subjects sampled some good work was seen in German, chemistry, physics, music and business studies.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitude of pupils towards their learning is good, particularly in the sixth form where it is very good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Behaviour is good overall. Although most pupils behave well, there is a small minority who sometimes disrupt lessons by talking and failing to co-operate. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' commitment to school life and their involvement in the wide range of school activities make a very positive contribution to their personal development.
- The school's commitment to inclusion results in a low level of exclusions.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct, which are made clear to pupils and parents and consistently applied.
- Attendance rates are improving as a result of recent initiatives taken by the school.

Commentary

18. Attendance in recent years has been slightly below the national average, but has improved this year as a result of the school making their expectations clearer to both pupils and parents, as well as the introduction of a system for the daily follow-up of absentees. There is now lively competition between tutor groups to achieve the best attendance levels. The school's commitment to inclusion is demonstrated by the declining level of exclusions and the success in retaining and reintegrating disaffected pupils, to which everyone – from the governors and the teachers to the Pupil Support Unit - makes a valuable contribution.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.3	School data	1.4
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the last complete reporting year (2001-02)

19. The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are well motivated. Overwhelmingly, the pupils like their school and regard it as a good school. They are confident and form constructive relationships with other pupils and with teachers. They respond well to responsibility.
20. Most pupils behave well, but a small number of pupils create low level disturbance in classes, which others resent. The school has, in the past year, implemented a range of effective interventionist measures to deal with these, with the result that the offenders are promptly withdrawn from classes and made aware of their unacceptable behaviour. There were no incidents of bullying observed during the inspection. Although pupils and parents say that incidents of bullying do occur, they agree that they are usually dealt with quickly and effectively. A very small number of pupils are disrespectful towards their teachers at times.

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White - British	1315	178	5
White - Irish	4	1	0
White – any other White background	11	3	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	41	1	0

21. The school does much to promote the pupils' personal development and pupils behave with increasing maturity and understanding as they move through the school. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and the Learning to Learn programme for all pupils contribute significantly to their confidence and self-esteem. The promotion of the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, as it was at the last inspection. The themes for assemblies reflect the school's emphasis upon moral and social development. Pupils take their responsibilities on the year and school councils seriously and do worthwhile voluntary and charitable work. The art and design, music, history and religious education departments make a strong contribution to the pupils' cultural, including multicultural, development.

Sixth form

22. Students in the sixth form have very positive attitudes to their work. This is reflected both in the questionnaire where 96 per cent of students said that they enjoy being in the sixth form, and also in inspectors' discussions with students. They are highly motivated and work hard in lessons and outside school hours, and feel that they have a strong voice in school affairs.
23. A very good rapport between teachers and students has been established and a lot of one-to-one support is given to students, both academically and for careers and guidance, which the students really appreciate. They devote one period a week to help younger pupils with their studies and the sixth form council is active in raising money for charities. By the time they leave the school most are mature, responsible members of their community and independent learners.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. In particular, the very good quality of teaching, the effective use of assessment, the very good quality of advice and guidance given by tutors and pastoral staff and the highly effective links with partner schools and the community, are ensuring that most pupils' achievements are at least good.

Teaching and learning

Very good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, is ensuring very good levels of learning. Assessment of pupils' work is good and is being used effectively to inform planning and the pupils themselves on how they might improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and levels of challenge.
- Relationships are very good and, as a result, pupils grow in confidence.
- Much teaching involves pupils in active learning, but some is over-directed by the teacher.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported.
- Teachers do not use ICT consistently well to support the learning.

- Marking and assessment are used well to plan the next learning step.

Commentary

24. Around 93 per cent of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire consider that they are well taught. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science and a number of other subjects to be good. In art and design, design and technology, history, French and German, teaching is very good, while in religious education and citizenship, teaching and learning are less effective, but nevertheless satisfactory overall. Teaching is particularly effective in Years 10 and 11.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 162 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
21 (12.9)	56 (34.6)	57 (35.2)	28 (17.3)	0	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.

25. Improving the quality of teaching and learning has been a major focus of school development in recent years. As a consequence, teachers have an increasingly good understanding of how individual pupils learn and how best to structure their teaching to meet individual needs. This whole-school focus on the craft of teaching and learning has had a major impact on the quality of teaching. While teaching was judged to be good at the time of the last inspection, the proportion of excellent and very good teaching, almost half, is now much higher, and unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated.
26. Learning is usually led by the teachers with energy and commitment. Characteristics of the good teaching in all subjects are high expectations, the confident subject knowledge of the teachers, thorough planning, very good relationships between pupils and teachers, and high levels of challenge. Where lessons are less effective it is usually because either the pace of learning is too slow or pupils do not participate actively.
27. Very good relationships are the cornerstone of the good teaching. This enables teachers to create a relaxed, but nevertheless challenging learning environment, in which pupils are involved and committed to their work. It also ensures that reluctant learners and the small number of pupils who are poorly motivated are dealt with sensitively and usually managed well. Teachers' skilled classroom management also characterises much of the good teaching. Only on rare occasions do teachers fail to overcome these poor attitudes.
28. Teachers have high expectations in the most effective teaching. Pupils in a Year 7 art and design lesson were studying expressionism. Having previously discussed Picasso's 'Guernica' and explored the representation of anger in visual terms, the pupils embarked on large-scale colour chalk drawings on a similar theme. The teacher's introduction was inspirational and demonstrated a very secure understanding of the subject. Very effective questioning encouraged pupils to express their own views and ideas. Very detailed planning and an ability to present complex ideas simply enabled pupils to develop their skills and understanding in a highly individual way. Above all it was the teacher's high expectations that ensured that all made excellent progress.
29. Planning of lessons is usually thorough and effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. Good use is made of the school's four-part lesson structure ensuring that a lively introduction is followed by opportunities for active participation by all pupils and further opportunities to consolidate learning at the end through a well managed summary. Activities are often well planned to interest and motivate pupils. In many lessons active participation by the pupils ensures that learning is based on experience. In teaching that is less effective, this is often

because objectives are not made clear, or are merely a list of tasks to be done; sometimes the planning fails to address the needs of the often wide range of ability in the class. On occasions, the teacher dominates throughout and fails to give pupils the opportunity to explore ideas on their own or participate actively. Less effective teaching of this kind was seen in mathematics, science, religious education and music.

30. In many lessons the pace of learning is brisk. In an excellent Year 11 history lesson on twentieth-century Russia, the whole class quickly engaged in a question and answer session that explored pupils' previous knowledge. The teacher's rapid-fire approach challenged all pupils to support their judgements with reasoned evidence. The nature of these questions and the degree of challenge set exceptionally high expectations of the pupils' responses, which encouraged increasingly thoughtful and discriminating answers. High levels of challenge and a fast pace were maintained throughout. A sharp focus on GCSE examination criteria ensured that pupils were taught how to achieve well in forthcoming examinations. This focus on precision in answering examination questions is characteristic of much of the teaching in GCSE classes in all subjects. Where learning is only satisfactory, the pace of learning is often less demanding and pupils' concentration and participation not consistent.
31. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. There is a very strong team of teachers in the curriculum support faculty, whose planning is exemplary and who produce fast-paced lessons that are matched to pupils' needs and learning styles. They are particularly good at giving pupils strategies for organisation and independent learning. Individual education plans are clear and offer useful strategies to teachers, pupils and parents. Information for teachers is very thorough and, in most cases, they incorporate this into their lesson planning. On rare occasions this is not done so well. Teaching assistants are well trained and most are attached to different subjects ensuring good levels of subject specific support. However, there are not enough teaching assistants to provide support wherever it is needed.
32. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of ICT to support learning, and recent improvements to ICT resources are ensuring more regular opportunities in all subjects. Although teachers in art and design, design and technology and science use ICT confidently, there are too few opportunities to use ICT in other subjects.
33. Effective procedures are in place for assessing pupils' work. They provide teachers with a good range of data based on national and other tests, from which end of key stage predictions are calculated and against which performance is monitored effectively. Through Years 7-11, subject teachers add their own assessments and the resultant data is used by pastoral heads to identify pupils who are underachieving and take constructive action. Teachers use their own assessments to determine each individual pupil's target within each subject. There is particularly good practice in art and design, geography, history and special educational needs. External examinations results are analysed with rigour and the resultant action has had a significant influence on achievement. Some subjects such as ICT use their analysis to identify how examination performance may be improved. The relative achievement of boys and girls is also monitored.
34. The link between assessment and planning is strong. The way in which pupils' work is marked has improved considerably since the last inspection, with constructive written comments or diagnostic oral feedback. Consequently, pupils know how well they are doing in each subject and how they can improve. They indicated in questionnaires and interviews that this was so, a view supported by parents. Marking is usually done very well and is often innovative. The involvement of pupils in assessing each other's work is good, particularly in history, where GCSE pupils mark each other's work according to board criteria. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent in some subjects.

Sixth form

35. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. This is confirmed by the students themselves who consider that the teaching is both challenging and demanding. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was judged very good in mathematics, biology, French, geography and art and design. It was judged good in English and health and social care, and excellent in sociology.
36. One of the great strengths of much of the teaching is the teachers' subject knowledge. This enables teachers to approach the syllabus confidently, pose and answer questions that challenge the students' thinking, and plan lessons and schemes of work that successfully build on prior attainment in a meaningful and relevant way. Teachers' enthusiasm is often infectious and these qualities are significant in developing students' intellectual curiosity alongside a depth of understanding. An excellent Year 13 French lesson on smoking was conducted with sensitivity and good humour. The teacher's confident skills enabled students to participate with enthusiasm and commitment, developing their discursive and debating language skills in a challenging environment. The confident approach of teachers to their subject at this level is a key factor in students' good achievement. The commitment and hard work of staff is another important factor.
37. A range of varied activities and a good blend of direct teacher input and collaborative working and independent learning ensures that students remain committed to their studies throughout lessons. Students respond very positively to this approach. Although some lack confidence in their learning, most adopt a very positive and mature attitude to their studies. They are keen to do well and succeed to the best of their ability. This enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on the progress they make.
38. Many teachers adopt good strategies to promote students' independent learning and perseverance in solving problems and overcoming difficulties themselves. This was particularly evident in English, French, mathematics, sociology and health and social care. A Year 13 sociology lesson in which students were introduced to religious developments in contemporary society was characterised by probing and challenging questions that made students think more deeply than they had intended. As a result, their contributions to the lesson were thoughtful and often original. Not all teachers are as effective in promoting these skills and at times are over-prescriptive in their approach, not allowing the students to pursue their own thinking and ideas.
39. In discussion with the students themselves, it was clear that they have a mature and sensible view of what makes for effective teaching. They reported that teachers are always prepared to give them additional support when needed. They are clear about how well they are doing and in most cases confident about how to improve. Other students indicated that teaching that 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. As in the main school, students' use of ICT to support their independent learning is sometimes limited. This was particularly marked in mathematics and sociology.
40. Students' learning skills are good. Most students take care with the presentation of their work, and files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. In work that is undertaken independently of the teachers, students' skills in self-study and research are good.
41. Assessment practice is effective. End of course predictions are used to monitor performance constructively and to help teachers to set realistic targets within their subjects. Students' work is assessed and marked very well. Marking of written work is detailed in all subjects, but particularly in art and design, where a great deal of diagnostic comment is attached. Written comment is further supplemented by detailed verbal feedback in one-to-one discussion.
42. In questionnaires and interviews, students indicated their satisfaction with the way their work is assessed and the high level of developmental support that it occasions. There is particularly good practice in assessing students' work and in ensuring that they understand how well they are doing in art and design, biology, history, modern foreign languages, physics and health and

social care. Sixth form tutors also use assessment data to focus critically on their individual mentoring and in advising and preparing students for higher education opportunities or for employment.

The curriculum

The school provides good learning opportunities across Years 7-13. The curriculum is broad, ensures very good continuity and coherence for both boys and girls of differing aptitudes and abilities. It prepares them well for their academic and personal development, with a growing emphasis on vocational opportunities. The impressive and extensive extra-curricular opportunities are a very strong feature. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are adequate. Sixth form provision is very good, and provides an extensive range of opportunities for students to pursue their academic and vocational ambitions.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The variety of opportunities to meet the differing learning needs of pupils is very good.
- The expanding curriculum development and continuity for pupils aged 14-19 provides very well for both academic and vocational courses.
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities, strongly supported by pupils, are helping to raise standards.
- Opportunities for pupils to study more than one language at GCSE are limited.
- Students in the sixth form are able to tailor their courses to meet their needs very well – they can choose from a very comprehensive range of traditional academic courses and an expanding range of vocational opportunities that can be studied to different levels.
- The lack of provision for religious education for all students in the sixth form is a weakness.

Commentary

43. The curriculum provided for Years 7-11 is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Statutory requirements are properly met, with the exception of planning for citizenship and a daily act of collective worship. Designation as a sports college has provided a strong impetus for improvements to the curriculum as has the award of Artsmark (silver) in relation to the performing arts curriculum. The school is committed to ensuring flexibility, and regularly reviews and evaluates its provision. The pupil achievement group analyses how well groups of pupils are performing and the information gained is used to inform curriculum modifications. Recent developments include some exciting and innovative approaches to provision. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through a series of planned study days and the Learning to Learn programme is very effective in enabling pupils to develop their learning skills and become independent learners.
44. Priority has been given recently to establishing progression and a continuity of opportunity for pupils aged 14-19, and good progress has been made in setting up a flexible structure that widens pupils' opportunities within and beyond the school. By developing a very good range of academic and vocational courses, the school is ensuring that pupils have a variety of coherent pathways towards higher education, training and employment.
45. In Years 7-9 the curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, drama and PSHE. All pupils take French or German. Arrangements for pupils to study two languages are not provided. In Years 10 and 11 courses in intermediate and advanced business studies GNVQ and AVCE science have been introduced. All pupils follow a core of English, mathematics and science, together with religious education and physical education. Pupils are then able to choose from a wide range of interesting academic and vocational options to meet their specific needs and interests including, for example, philosophy and ethics, dance, health and social care, and recently, engineering and building craft. As a result, pupils are able to tailor their own courses to their varying aptitudes and needs, including alternative accreditation to GCSE.

46. There is an excellent and very wide programme of extra-curricular activities in which large numbers of pupils and students take part. Parents are pleased with this provision and pupils appreciate the time teachers give to these activities. Sport and the performing arts feature very strongly, but the programme is extensive and includes opportunities for pupils to travel abroad, such as the art and design department visit to Paris to see the art galleries. This work does much to extend pupils' learning experiences and is also helping to raise standards, as does the provision of study support through, for example, homework clubs.
47. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is very good through the school. There is a range of provision from small group specialist teaching for pupils with literacy difficulties, to specific help with spelling, reading and homework, and additional support in class. Effective timetabling means that none of this involves withdrawing pupils from lessons, so they do not fall behind.
48. Staffing is good throughout the school. There are sufficient numbers of teachers and they have a range of expertise that covers the curriculum. Classes are on average 23 pupils, but this covers a wide range from small numbers in alternative English courses and the sixth form, to some large top sets in mathematics. However, the large size of these classes does not hold back the pupils' progress. There are no difficulties with recruiting staff and there have been some excellent appointments made to management at different levels in the school. Experienced teachers are taking the least able and sometimes most difficult sets of pupils.
49. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. The sports facilities are outstanding. Since the last inspection, a number of improvements have been completed: the Astro Turf pitch; specialist facilities for the arts including a first class dance studio; new science laboratories and sixth form study and social areas. These are all of a high standard and provide opportunities for independent learning and research. Sixth form students, in particular, make full use of them out of school hours as well as during the school day. The school's sports facilities are also a valuable resource and are well used by partner primary schools and the local community. Accommodation for ICT has been increased, but some computer rooms are still cramped and pupils need to move constantly during lessons between tables and shared computers, which inhibits their progress. Each faculty has its own suite of rooms. These are adequate except that more space to use computers in lessons is needed. Dining facilities are cramped. The pupils consider the toilets to be sub-standard. The school has yet to fully meet statutory requirements for disabled access.
50. Resources are mostly sufficient or in some cases better. Most departments have a range of textbooks and other paper-based resources that are well organised and managed. However, in religious education, the provision of up-to-date textbooks is unsatisfactory and this has an impact on standards in the subject. ICT resources are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education.
51. The library is well used by pupils during the day and after school in the homework club. However, the Year 11 and sixth form section contains a high proportion of fiction that does little to encourage reading by older boys. There are good displays, which encourage interest in a range of areas and the staff maintain a useful newspaper cutting section to support independent research. Across subjects, the provision of non-fiction books is variable, with little for mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, there is a large art section including books on ethnic art. Fiction is arranged by age group and for younger pupils is satisfactory.

Sixth form

52. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good in the sixth form. Following the previous inspection the school has successfully extended the academic and vocational opportunities available. High priority has been given to developing a flexible curriculum that meets the academic and personal needs of all students, regardless of their backgrounds.

Statutory requirements regarding the provision of religious education for all students in the sixth form are not met as religious education provision is not formally identified. However, the effective curriculum for personal, social and health education taken by all students covers elements of an appropriate religious education programme.

53. The curriculum offers a very wide range of courses at a variety of levels with both vocational and academic accreditation, and the school consults with students on their needs and aspirations. Recent developments include vocational courses in business, travel and tourism, leisure and tourism, art and health and social care.
54. There is outstanding choice from 43 subjects in the sixth form. Some are new opportunities which, building on traditional provision, provide a growing coherence and continuity that extends from Year 9 through into the sixth form. Students are able to successfully mix and match their courses and determine their pathways to higher education, training and employment through academic and vocational combinations that reflect their ambitions and aptitudes. This curriculum model very effectively ensures equality of access and opportunity for all students. There is clear intention to raise standards by ensuring opportunities for pupils of all aptitudes and abilities to continue their education post-16, and the staying on rate is testimony to its success.
55. As a consequence of such wide-ranging provision, the extent to which courses recruit varies. Overall, class sizes are efficient and in most subjects are sufficiently large for meaningful debate and effective sharing of ideas. The tutorial programme provides good support and monitors students' progress well, and there is a rich provision of extra-curricular opportunities. Aside from the lack of provision for religious education, the curriculum provided by the school is very good. Its dynamic evolution is ongoing and its development and use of additional funding are very well managed.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are very good. Teachers and the health and support staff know the pupils very well. Pastoral and academic monitoring procedures are highly effective in ensuring comprehensive support and guidance. The school actively seeks and respects the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is committed to full inclusion and every pupil is valued.
- The transition and induction arrangements for pupils joining the school from other schools are excellent.
- The school positively seeks, values and acts on the views of pupils.
- The school's close monitoring of the pupils' personal development means that the pupils' interests are promoted and safeguarded.
- Pupils are clear about their targets for improvement.

Commentary

56. All pupils are made welcome and valued. Most pupils have very good relationships with staff and feel that there is a sympathetic adult to whom they can turn. The personal and social education programme, largely delivered through special study days and tutor periods, makes a good contribution to the pupils' self-esteem and self-awareness. There are effective procedures for the protection of pupils in conjunction with the county's child protection agencies, and staff have received training.
57. The school provides a safe environment, and health and safety are monitored by the headteacher and governors. However, the facilities for dust extraction in design and technology are in need of urgent attention. Thorough risk assessments are carried out and precautionary

action is taken to eliminate and minimise hazards in classes and after-school clubs. Health and safety are emphasised in classes and the pupils are clear about the requirements. There are effective arrangements to ensure the safety of pupils when using the Internet. The site is well maintained and, apart from the excessive litter evident at the end of every break, the pupils treat their environment with respect.

58. The pastoral tutor teams move through the school with the pupils. This helps to ensure continuity and a good knowledge of individual pupils. Tutors meet regularly with year heads to discuss pastoral issues. Pupils are given constant feedback on their personal development, with targets for improvement, and a range of rewards. The school uses a dual-purpose form - Cause for Concern/Celebration - to good effect. Annual reports to parents include full information on their children's personal and social development. The individual programmes of the pupils with special educational needs are very well monitored and regularly reviewed.
59. Careers education begins in Year 7 and becomes more focused as the pupils progress. The emphasis throughout is upon raising the pupils' self-awareness of their abilities and potential, as well as extending their knowledge of the diversity of opportunities available. A good proportion of school leavers carry on with full-time education and a significant number of these go on to higher education, including some with no family history of university education. The Entry to Employment scheme has been a success for pupils with special educational needs. The school has introduced a Pathfinder programme that offers an alternative curriculum for disaffected Year 10 pupils. This is evidence of good career guidance and support, although a number of pupils on their questionnaire returns indicated that they were dissatisfied with their careers advice.
60. The school has very good links with its partner primary schools and has developed an impeccably thoughtful and supportive programme to integrate pupils into Year 7. This is also true for the large numbers of pupils who join the school at unconventional times. These are complemented by a follow-on nurturing arrangement for pupils who find it difficult to settle. Pupils and parents are full of praise for the transition arrangements. The pupils' primary school academic and pastoral records follow them to secondary school and are used well, along with 'pen pals', visit days and taster sessions, to provide continuity and minimise anxiety.
61. Pupils are encouraged to contribute their views on school issues in a number of forums, and they report that the school listens to and acts upon their suggestions, including new clubs, picnic benches, water fountains and proposals for spending the PTA funds. Year and school councils, and the sports council, take their responsibilities seriously, managing their budgets and tackling issues such as litter, which they recognise to be a problem.

Sixth form

62. The quality of personal support and guidance that the school provides for students in the sixth form is very good. The students value the dedication of their teachers and the one-to-one support provided, which they acknowledge contributes to their achievement. Tutors provide both academic and pastoral support, know their students well and are sensitive to their needs. The very good relationships between students and teachers give students confidence to raise any concerns they may have.
63. Admission arrangements for students entering the sixth form are good and students are given clear advice about course options. Some students' perceptions, expressed in the questionnaire, that they are not well advised, are not well founded.
64. Provision for careers education and guidance is good, although students who responded to the questionnaire were not all positive about the careers advice they receive. 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 very good, and there are very good arrangements – some outstanding – to work with the local community. Links with the local community and partner schools are very good and, in the case of sport, they are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication between home and school is very effective.
- Annual reports on progress are not consistently good.
- The school has extensive and productive links with partner primary schools and the community.

Commentary

65. The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure that parents are involved in and consulted on school developments. Parents' views were sought, for example, on the school's bid for Sports College status and on the home-school agreement. Most parents feel that their views are taken into account. Communication is very good and parents are very well informed about what is happening in the school. The weekly newsletters are very informative and parents are regularly invited into the school to learn about, for example, the approaches to teaching in Year 7 or the choices of options after Year 9. These evening sessions are very well attended. The pupils' personal organisers also provide a good channel for communication between school and home. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school and parents are encouraged to contact the school with any issues or suggestions.
66. Over 80 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire consider that the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress. Annual reports are full, although not all subjects currently indicate the level of attainment and, in some, the targets for improvement are very vague; in others, they are specific and clear. Senior staff and curriculum support staff work closely with parents on pupils' personal development plans and this partnership has a positive impact upon the attitudes and progress of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. In line with the school's commitment to complete inclusion, staff from the pupil support unit visit pupils before they join Kingdown.
67. The school has productive links with its partner primary schools. The carefully planned induction arrangements ensure that Year 7 pupils begin their secondary school life with confidence. The school's status as a Sports College means that it acts as a hub for the promotion of sport throughout the area. Physical Education staff are released to lead valuable staff development sessions in the primary schools, and the school sports co-ordinator's programme is a model of good practice. Primary school pupils make extensive use of the sports facilities and coaching offered at Kingdown. Teachers in other subjects attend the primary schools to take classes in the summer term when time permits. The school is a member of the area secondary school federation, which embraces eight schools in Wiltshire and has, since 2002, been federated with a middle school nearby to provide leadership and management.
68. Links with the local community are many and varied. Most of the school's extensive extra-curricular activities are open to all and members of the community join the sports activities - to participate and to coach - public speaking, fishing, archery and many more. There are also good links with the army, both for sport and for pastoral liaison during times of war. The annual sponsored walk involves all pupils and many members of the local community. There is a very strong neighbourhood engineers group that supports the school's design faculty with focus days and awards. Local employers offer work experience placements for pupils in Year 10. The school's annual musical production is well attended by people from the town and many pupils do voluntary community work.

Sixth form

69. Communication and links with parents continue to be very effective in the sixth form. The school offers a good programme of guidance to Year 11 pupils, involving parents, enabling them to make informed choices about their post-16 options.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership is excellent and management procedures are very good. Inspirational leadership by the headteacher offers insight and a clearly articulated sense of direction. She is very well supported by her deputies and senior team, who work very effectively alongside governors and team leaders at all levels. The work of governors is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstanding and dynamic leadership by the headteacher.
- A very strong leadership team is ambitious for further improvement.
- Very good procedures for self-evaluation reflect the school's comprehensive and self-critical approach to development.
- An impressive commitment to the inclusion of all pupils.
- Governors provide experienced and effective support and challenge to the leadership team.

Commentary

70. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership. She is driving the school forward with energy and high ambition, inspiring the loyalty and commitment of the whole staff, making some outstanding key appointments and leading with a clear sense of purpose and direction. She has the committed support of governors and parents and her vision and values are widely shared.
71. The two deputy headteachers offer perceptive and critical support. The leadership team as a whole is a thoughtful and committed group. Individual members of this team are reflective and analytical, and are empowered to innovate and carry ideas forward with confidence. Leadership at other levels is also mostly very good. Most subject and pastoral team leaders are providing highly effective leadership of their teams, working hard to improve standards and implement the school's strategic objectives. They work conscientiously and have a good grasp of their responsibilities.
72. Management at all levels is very effective. Systematic procedures for the monitoring and review of all aspects of the school's work are in place and increasingly embedded in practice. Performance management has been introduced effectively, and links with the school's procedures for development planning and professional development. Departmental self-reviews are carried out with rigour and action is taken when underperformance is identified. This is a reflective school in which all members of the school community are involved in monitoring and reviewing practice with honesty and integrity. As a result, the school carries out a relentless quest for further improvement. It tackles this with assurance and imagination. Staff are encouraged to innovate and share best practice. The school's successful adoption of innovative programmes such as the 'Learning to Learn' strategy, the special study days for personal, social and health education, and the approaches to accelerated learning are examples of the school's approach.
73. The role of heads of year is very clear and they work effectively in monitoring the pupils' academic performance as well as their personal development. Heads of faculty use assessment data very well to review the work of their teams and where appropriate make changes to the curriculum.
74. The school makes an impressive commitment to educational inclusion adopting a thoughtful, intelligent and perceptive approach, in which pupils' 'right to be different' is encouraged and

respected. Planning for inclusion is comprehensive and the school has developed effective links across many different external agencies, for example, social services, the army and the Young People's Support Service, to ensure that individual pupils are well supported and integrated whatever their needs.

75. The management of the curriculum by the senior team is very good. Initiatives are carefully evaluated and supported by good staffing provision, which ensures a high degree of specialist teaching across the curriculum and explores greater flexibility in the use of staffing to meet the growing demands of the curriculum. The school makes good use of additional funding from its specialist status to underpin the growing curriculum opportunities, ensure their success and raise standards in physical education.
76. Leadership of special educational needs in the school is excellent. A strong sense of purpose, along with energy and enthusiasm, has ensured the building of an effective team of committed teachers and teaching assistants. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs takes an active part in the faculty and is well informed about its work. The school's management systems for special educational needs are clear and there is a strong commitment to the professional development of staff, alongside intelligent and creative use of funding.
77. The school development plan is a one-year plan that articulates the way forward. Each team leader prepares an annual management plan, improvement plan and training and resources plan for the area of their responsibility. This provides a common framework and ensures that targets set are manageable, appropriate and reflect a careful analysis of need. Overall, the improvement planning process is very sharply focused and provides a good framework for improving standards. Key issues identified by the inspection team have already been identified by the school in the development plan.
78. The school has managed its transition into a Sports College very effectively. The process has been used not just to lever up standards and the quality of provision in physical education and sport, but to embed the sports college mission – learning, challenge and excellence so that all can achieve – into the school's purpose. At one level, the impact of Sports College status has been transforming. Higher standards in physical education and sport, greater participation in a wider range of out of hours learning, and the award of Sportsmark Gold have all been achieved. In addition, however, becoming a Sports College has acted as a catalyst for higher quality provision across all subjects.
79. Governors are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They are involved in both strategic planning and monitoring, and have a good knowledge of the school. Several governors visit regularly, helping out in class. 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 her staff, they are prepared to question robustly. Statutory requirements are largely met, and there is no adverse impact on pupils' standards where there are omissions. Requirements in respect of collective worship are not fully met, because the accommodation does not allow the school pupils to meet together in one place. Smaller acts of corporate worship are held, but not for every pupil every day. The governors have ensured that citizenship is taught, but planning for its provision for the whole year is not yet in place. Religious education is not formally identified in the sixth form curriculum, but elements of the subject are covered well in the personal, social and health education programme.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,603,581
Total expenditure	4,584,098
Expenditure per pupil	3,341

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	62,127
Balance carried forward to the next	81,609

80. The school's budget is very well managed. An experienced finance officer has an assured grasp of financial procedures and budget planning. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. Budget priorities are made in the light of the school's educational priorities, and best value principles are applied wherever possible. The most recent audit judged the financial systems and controls to be secure. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and staff training are used well. The school is efficiently administered and it makes good use of information systems to process data, ensuring that information is readily available for governors and staff to manage the school effectively.

Sixth form

81. Leadership of the sixth form is excellent. There is a clear rationale for the sixth form curriculum and provision is carefully matched to demand. Although a number of courses run with small numbers of students, which means that the sixth form provision is only just cost effective, the educational rationale is clear. The school offers a wide range of courses and adopts a flexible response to the needs of individual students. Governors are involved in the overall educational direction of the sixth form.

82. Management of the sixth form is very good and is the responsibility of the head of sixth, who brings a conscientious and committed approach to her role. Systems are well organised and thorough. Performance data is very effectively used to set targets and monitor students' progress. Students who cause concern or who have work to be celebrated are acknowledged through the school's pastoral systems. The monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching is thorough and there are good opportunities for teachers to share best practice.

83. The school works hard to ensure that a high proportion of its Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form. Retention rates on courses are good with most students completing the courses that they started. The sixth form is now well placed to sustain and build on its considerable successes. 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: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and work conscientiously.
- Most pupils achieve well during their time at the school.
- Best practice in assessment and target setting could be more widely used.
- There are not enough opportunities for the use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

84. Year 9 test results in 2003 were above the national average and above average for similar schools. This represents good progress for most pupils during Years 7-9. Girls did better than boys, but the difference was in line with national trends. Standards have improved significantly in recent years, from below average in 2001. Work seen during the inspection reflects above average standards and good achievement by the end of Year 9. GCSE results for English in 2003 were in line with the national average, but below average for similar schools. They were above average in English literature, although only three-quarters of pupils were entered for this examination. That proportion will reduce further, to below half, in 2004. Girls again performed better than boys. At this level, results were better in mathematics and science. GCSE standards have remained broadly consistent over the past three years, except this year there was a marked improvement in the proportion gaining higher grade passes in English literature. Standards in work seen are average and achievement at this stage is satisfactory.
85. In Years 7-9, speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils are willing to make constructive contributions to discussions in a range of contexts, including whole-class, paired and small group work. Reading is satisfactory. The great majority of pupils are independent readers by the end of Year 9. For this age group, timetabled library lessons encourage wider reading. Written work is set and marked regularly, with appropriate opportunities for more extended writing. Pupils make a conscientious effort to write fully and develop essays in detail. Very good practice was seen in one Year 9 lesson, with careful modelling of the skills required to structure an argument about proposed laws on smacking children. Most take care to present their written work neatly and carefully. But, for average and lower attaining pupils, errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation hold back overall standards.
86. In Years 10 and 11, relevant skills are consolidated and developed satisfactorily. Most pupils take part confidently in discussion. For example, Year 10 pupils were able to put forward and justify their opinions on the use of cinematic techniques in Hitchcock's 'Psycho' with understanding and maturity. Extended personal and creative writing is well structured and developed. Higher attaining pupils also write intelligently about literature studied. Essays are usually developed in sufficient depth, with good use of textual detail to substantiate arguments. More could be done to encourage wider reading at this level, however. GCSE coursework is usually well presented, but technical accuracy remains a problem for many. Access to ICT equipment is limited during lesson time, and there are inconsistencies of approach between

classes. There could be further development here, to help pupils to use new technology more effectively to improve literacy skills.

87. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers manage pupils well in most classes, and constructive relationships are formed. Teachers know their subject well and lessons are suitably varied, with a range of methods used to engage pupils effectively in learning. They are also prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed, in after-school catch-up sessions and booster classes. The timing and pace of lessons are not always well judged, however. In some, activities are allowed to overrun, and are not always well matched to the learning needs of pupils. In others, too many activities are planned, so that effort is rushed and assimilation of ideas is limited. The end of the lesson often suffers and there is insufficient time to reflect on key points and evaluate learning in final plenary sessions. In general, work could be better adapted to the needs of different groups of pupils within classes. Pupils with special educational needs make equal progress alongside their peers, but support from teaching assistants during lessons is very limited. The help that is provided is very effective. Overall, pupils' learning is good. Most are conscientious and try hard to improve their work. Further development of self and peer assessment, to inform individual targets for improvement, could focus pupils' efforts more clearly and improve knowledge of their own learning.
88. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of faculty is very experienced and provides an excellent role model. There are clear strengths in encouraging team working and co-operation amongst staff. Schemes of work are used well and kept under continuing review. There is a programme of lesson observations, and checking of work set. This could be developed further to ensure consistency of approach between classes, for example, in the use of homework, best practice in assessment and planning to incorporate ICT skills in lessons. However, since the last inspection, standards of attainment and of teaching have improved significantly, and improvement overall has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

89. A literacy co-ordinator was appointed some three years ago. She has worked hard to provide training for staff and to develop a wide range of teaching resources on which all faculties can draw. Effective strategies for teaching writing skills in particular are now embedded in lesson planning for most subjects. Standards are satisfactory overall, although much scope remains for further improvement, in particular in the technical accuracy of written work.
90. Effective practice to promote good standards of speaking and listening was seen in many subjects, including French, religious education, ICT and art and design. Pupils share ideas well in informal group discussions especially. In a minority of lessons, unchecked background chatter holds back learning, however. More emphasis could also be given to presentation skills, for example, in pupils' reports to the whole class in final plenary sessions. Reading is developed effectively through coming to terms with a variety of texts and media, including use of the Internet for research. Pupils write regularly for different purposes. Factual note making and analytical report writing are required in most subjects. They also have greater opportunities to produce more extended and creative writing, for example, in English, history and geography, than at the time of the last inspection. Teaching of grammar and use of dictionaries feature strongly in French. Key words and rules of grammar are also displayed in many classrooms. Teachers could reinforce their use more during lessons, however. Modelling of skills and the use of writing frames, to help pupils to develop and structure written work effectively, are used to good effect in English, history and geography. Guidance on the presentation of written work, and the need to check for errors, is included in exercise books for most subjects.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9 and very well in Years 10 and 11 because of very good teaching in both French and German.
- Very good marking and assessment ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Very good relationships with pupils and a range of motivating activities ensure that pupils have very positive attitudes to language learning.
- There are too few opportunities for ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The lack of departmental policies and documentation means that there are inconsistencies in approach.

Commentary

91. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average in French and well above average in German. Girls performed better than boys in both languages. The results of the teachers' own assessment at the end of Year 9 were average. Standards seen in Year 9 are average in French and German. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. In Year 9, all pupils speak confidently with good pronunciation and most pupils have developed good listening and reading comprehension skills. Higher attaining pupils in French and German are already able to use the past tense well in speaking and in writing and can respond at length. Average and lower attaining pupils can write shorter descriptive texts and give simple opinions. Pupils respond very well to instructions and explanations in the foreign language and have good grammatical awareness. However, their ability to use the language spontaneously in the classroom and for their everyday classroom needs and requests is more limited. In Year 11 standards seen in both French and German are well above average, which represents very good achievement. Higher attaining pupils in both languages can write accurately and at length, use a wide range of language and express opinions with reasons. The writing of average and lower attaining pupils contains more mistakes and a more restricted range of language, but still communicates meaning across a range of topics. Many pupils have high standards in speaking and speak confidently over different topics switching tenses accurately. They all have good listening skills and higher attaining pupils can listen and respond to rapid authentic language.
92. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7-11. Very good planning ensures a range of activities, which ensure that pupils know what they will be learning and how well they have done in their language lessons. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use the foreign language for instructions and explanations in the classroom, thus providing a very good model for pupils' own language. There is a very good emphasis on pupils' grammatical accuracy and pupils are always encouraged to speak at length. However, there are not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to use the language spontaneously in the classroom. The pace of learning is brisk, pupils work well collaboratively and they have a very positive attitude to language learning. Marking is very good; it encourages, praises and gives focused advice on different aspects of pupils' language. The very good use of assessment ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
93. The curriculum offered in modern foreign languages is good overall. However, there are too few examples of work that uses ICT to support language learning. The examples seen were restricted to word-processing, with no use of email, the Internet or other software packages. There are also no opportunities for pupils to study more than one language.
94. The leadership and management of the subject overall are good. Although during the week of the inspection the head of faculty was absent, the acting head of faculty ran the department effectively in his absence. She is very well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and has led on or contributed to many faculty initiatives, including the development of the Key Stage 3 strategy and schemes of work. Teachers work well as a team, provide mutual support and share good practice. There is a strong commitment to succeed. However,

there are inconsistencies of approach due to the lack of departmental policies and documentation that would underpin the strengths of the department and provide a focus for review and development. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Although other departmental documentation remains unsatisfactory, there are now good schemes of work in place. The quality of teaching has improved, as have standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 11 German lesson in the context of the world of work successfully used a range of activities to introduce complex new language to improve the standard of pupils' written and spoken German.

After a rapid oral recap of the previous lesson about work experience, pupils interviewed each other and made notes in German about their partner's daily routine at work. They then listened to the teacher's explanation and demonstration completely in German of how to use 'nachdem' and 'bevor', supported by moving words on the overhead projector to reinforce new word order and tense use. Using individual white boards pupils then worked on linking sentences using the new structures and had to hold their responses up for the teacher to see. The competition to produce the new structures as fast as possible, with the winners being rewarded, meant that all pupils were highly motivated to produce accurate complex language. Pupils then looked at a model text that showed how the new structures along with other linking words could improve the level of language before producing independently their own very good accounts based on their partner interviews.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Key Stage 3 strategy has been introduced well into lessons supported by a detailed scheme of work.
- Leadership and management are very good and have resulted in continuously improving standards since the time of the last report.
- Pupils' overall achievement from Years 7-11 is very good.
- Teaching is overall very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of ICT as a resource for teaching and learning is not strongly evident.

Commentary

95. In 2003, standards in the Year 9 national tests were overall above average. Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school is very good, and standards in work seen reflect the most recent test results. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 are well above average and pupils' achievement compared to prior attainment in Year 9 is very good. Current standards in Year 11 are similar. Standards in both national tests and GCSE examinations have improved continuously since the time of the last inspection. Standards in GCSE statistics in 2003 are below average, although pupils achieve well.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good in Years 7-9. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their exposition and explanation. There is a very good balance between theory and practice, for example, Year 9 higher attaining pupils' review of straight line graphs enabled the teacher to explain the 'cover-up' method for plotting linear functions expressed differently. Pupils demonstrated the newly taught skills well, which led to points of intersection and future work solving simultaneous equations. All pupils acquire new skills quickly and their capacity to work independently results in much work being completed. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, who, as a result make good progress and achieve very well. Teachers' planning is good, but learning objectives are not sufficiently detailed to make the end of lesson review worthwhile. Opportunities for pupils' personal development and an active approach to learning is not always evident, particularly with respect to the lower attaining pupils for whom 'bite-size' activities would better serve their short concentration spans. ICT is underused as a

resource for learning. Very good use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs who make as good progress as their peers.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' command of the subject is very good and used effectively to advance pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. For example, the lowest attaining Year 10 pupils made exceptional progress learning to multiply and divide decimals by multiples of ten. Some excellent teaching strategies ensured that pupils could apply newly taught skills across the curriculum. For example, high attaining pupils in Year 11 were first taught the skills to identify 'multipliers' before calculating the unknown lengths of similar figures. Homework is issued regularly and rigorously tracked. As a result, pupils are aware of how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils are fully engaged in their work and make very good progress.
98. Leadership and management are very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and issues raised in the last report have been addressed and standards have consistently improved. Monitoring and self-evaluation of policy, standards and teaching are well established, resulting in appropriate action. Procedures for assessment are secure and analysis of results is very good. There are clear objectives for improvement and a shared commitment to raising standards further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

99. The Key Stage 3 strategy is used well in mathematics and other faculties have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. In geography, music, art and design and design and technology, schemes of work identify what pupils know, understand and can do in mathematics. There are particular strengths in handling data and the use and application of mathematics. A co-ordinator has been appointed to manage and evaluate the further development of numeracy across the curriculum. In-service training to raise staff awareness has occurred and members of the mathematics department have identified aspects of numeracy delivered across the curriculum. Pupils' skills are developed sufficiently to ensure that all have full access to the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and there is a clear focus on teaching and learning.
- Effective lessons with clear structure help pupils to learn well.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is well matched to pupils' needs and this contributes to very good achievement and improving results.
- There are good mechanisms to set targets, track pupils' progress and pupils are clear about the marking grades used. Marking could be further developed to provide guidance for the next steps in learning.
- The department should explore opportunities for pupils to work in pairs or small groups to discuss their ideas.

Commentary

100. Pupils' standards on entry are slightly below average when compared with the national average. In 2003 results of national tests in Year 9 show that pupils reach average standards and above those of pupils with similar prior attainment in other schools. Presentation skills are generally below average, but improve steadily through the school. In 2003 GCSE results were well above average.

101. Pupils' achievements are good through Years 7-9 and standards of work seen during the inspection were above the national average in Year 9. For instance, in Year 8 they are able to contribute to a question and answer session and so develop their understanding of key features of predators and prey. In Year 9 they learn about the co-ordination of reflex actions extending their prior work on bones and muscles. The range of courses in Years 10 and 11 caters well for pupils' needs with many following an Applied Science GCSE. In Year 10 higher attaining pupils work carefully using a range of apparatus to measure the efficiency of a variety of fuels. They understand the difference between accuracy and reliability when recording observations and begin to link these to their knowledge and understanding of the structure of fuels. In Year 11 higher attaining pupils are able to recognise the differences between variability in human characteristics inherited through genes or environmental factors. Standards of work are well above average and achievement is very good through Years 10 and 11.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. A key feature of lessons is a clear structure and effective classroom management. In a Year 7 lesson an excellent starter activity enabled pupils to demonstrate good prior knowledge and understanding. They then carried out an investigation of how effective different combinations of metals are in making a 'fruit cell'. An effective plenary session allowed both pupils and teacher to see that very good progress had been made. In a Year 11 lesson pupils extended their understanding about endothermic and exothermic reactions learning about activation energy through purposeful and lively teaching. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, pupils show positive attitudes and sustain concentration in lessons. Not all lessons cater adequately for the range of pupils' needs. In addition opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs or groups are sometimes missed. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and the marking policy is consistently used and understood by pupils. There is a good system to track pupils' progress and identify underachievement. However, few teachers are writing comments that will enable pupils to know how to improve their work.
103. Leadership and management are very good. The head of faculty leads an effective team where there is a very good ethos and where learning is a clear focus. There are excellent opportunities for curricular enrichment including a very successful astronomy club, summer schools, revision classes and after-school provision for gifted and talented pupils. The department is well supported by an effective team of science technicians. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed. ICT opportunities are now mapped across the curriculum to develop both data logging skills and the use of multimedia. Teachers could further enhance lessons by using ICT to present information or model scientific phenomena.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and, as a result, achievement by pupils is good, including those with special educational needs.
- There is insufficient curriculum time in Years 8 and 9 to meet fully the demands of the National Curriculum.
- Assessment is very helpful to pupils; it enables them to know how to improve their levels of performance.
- There are insufficient ICT rooms of an appropriate size to enable the development of ICT skills and their wider use in other subject areas.
- Independent learning contributes strongly to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

104. Standards on intake in Year 7 are well below average and this is evident in the poor keyboard skills of a minority of pupils. At the end of Year 9 standards are average. This represents good achievement. Good progress continues through Years 10 and 11 and standards overall at this stage are also average. GNVQ results in 2003 were well above average, which represents very high achievement by those pupils with very limited ICT experience prior to Year 10. Achievement is also good in lessons, and, because of the good quality individual support from teachers, achievement by pupils with special educational needs is also good. For Year 7 pupils in only their second lesson using PowerPoint, this meant that by the end of the lesson all of them could animate text in their slides, with the higher attaining pupils exploring a variety of formats. Weak literacy skills hinder pupils' progress at all levels.
105. The quality of teaching is good, and much was very good or excellent. Teachers' relationships with pupils are very good and, as a result, their response is positive. Expectations are high, and lessons are planned very well, with a very good structure and pace of activities. Consequently, pupils are challenged by their assignments and concentrate well. The use of language in lessons is excellent and aimed at improving and developing pupils' vocabulary and understanding of technical language. This and the use of writing frames support the development of literacy skills. Although the provision of resources has improved, there are insufficient ICT rooms of an appropriate size to enable the development of ICT skills and their wider use in other subject areas, and insufficient curriculum time in Years 8 and 9 to meet fully the demands of the National Curriculum. Assessment procedures are very good. The outcomes have been used to shape changes in the study programmes, but are not used yet for departmental target setting. Examination results are analysed carefully to determine the extent to which predicted grades are met and where improvements might be effected.
106. Leadership and management are very good. The provision of new equipment and the recent major upgrade of hardware to replace the outdated equipment reported at the last inspection represent a significant and positive improvement. Planned developments, particularly the provision of additional hardware, are very clear and detailed and should offer increased opportunities to exploit the use of ICT in both teaching and learning. Monitoring is very well organised and in-service training has been positively directed at developing the Key Stage 3 strategy. The Programmes of Study are very good. They are clear and detailed, although they do not identify opportunities to explore citizenship issues. Both standards and teaching have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

107. The use of ICT in other subjects is just satisfactory in most subjects, but there are weaknesses in others. All departments have ICT embedded in their Programmes of Study and teachers and special educational needs support staff have been trained to use ICT in the teaching of their subjects. However, as yet ICT is not consistently used to support learning in all subjects. Unfortunately, the ICT rooms have only become available as part of a staged sequence since 2001 and many of them have a limited pupil capacity, which inhibits their use. Short-term development planning is detailed and specific and should alleviate many of these difficulties within 12 months. The use of ICT is good in the teaching of art and design, design and technology, science and special educational needs pupils in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form it is good in art and design, music and design and technology and very good in physics and health and social care.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results for GCSE are well above national averages with high numbers of A* and A grades.
- Both boys and girls often do better in geography than in the other subjects that they take at GCSE.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject provide a very secure base for the future.
- ICT provision is limited and this restricts learning.

Commentary

108. Standards are broadly average in Years 7-9, but higher than this in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievements are good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average, with girls doing particularly well. On entry some pupils have lower than expected standards in geographical skills and knowledge. The department has good strategies to tackle this and to improve geographical skills and knowledge. After two months in school Year 7 pupils, including those with special educational needs, can identify and name continents and explain the nature of the earth's core, mantle and crust. By Year 9 pupils can explain collision margins and conservation zones. They use geographical evidence well to assess risk from tectonic activity and can prioritise responses to natural hazards. Graphical techniques are used well in relating plate boundaries and earthquake epicentres. Diagrams show care, detail and accuracy.
109. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work hard with care and effort to achieve a good basis for GCSE examination. All pupils have a good understanding of how to apply their geographical skills and knowledge. Numeracy skills are used very well in interrogating and constructing population graphs. Choropleth mapping is used effectively to show population density. Enquiry techniques are developed effectively in a survey of Warminster. Pupils in Year 11 write detailed answers and use statistics and case studies to improve the quality of their answers.
110. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers make clear the learning objectives and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is strongly focused on examination criteria and this helps to focus the learning. Teachers skilfully describe geographical processes and explain new concepts clearly. They understand the special educational needs of some pupils and give them good support. Work set in lessons does not always take sufficient account of the different learning needs all pupils. Learning is particularly effective when strategies are varied, when effective use is made of ICT, and pupils are engaged actively in the learning. Fieldwork opportunities are excellent and a very important factor in enhancing understanding of, for example, coastal processes at Lulworth and retail and industrial developments around Bristol.
111. Management and leadership are very good, as is the improvement in provision since the last inspection. Limited access to ICT hardware is restricting the development of the teaching and learning, although a good plan is in place to effect further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and energetic leadership and management provide clear vision.
- The very high quality of teaching and learning is rewarded with comparable achievement.
- The history curriculum throughout the school is broad, balanced and very well delivered.
- Extra-curricular provision is developing.
- Average standards in Years 7-9 are improving, but constrained by a shortage of time.

- Resources for history are unsatisfactory; although in some cases they are of very good quality there are significant shortcomings, especially in ready access to ICT for history.
- Accommodation and storage of resources are poor.

Commentary

112. Standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Pupils' achievements are very good throughout. Teacher assessments in Year 9 in 2003 reflected standards in work seen, but GCSE results were well below average. These particular results were very disappointing and have been subject to an inquiry. The department is tackling the issue of underperformance in 2003 seriously. There is no evidence from the inspection that pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Predicted grades for 2004 indicate a much stronger performance at GCSE.
113. On entry to the school, pupils' standards of attainment in history are often well below national expectations. Standards are average by the end of Year 9, representing very good achievement, although a few pupils have difficulty with some important historical concepts. Pupils' historical knowledge and skills develop consistently through the school and pupils who elect to follow a GCSE course have a secure foundation for further understanding.
114. The quality of teaching is very good. In all year groups, the impact of teachers' very good subject knowledge is clearly seen in very detailed planning, preparation and presentation of lessons. Teachers' very high expectations of pupils' engagement with history are combined with unusual levels of energy and dynamism coupled with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. This engenders very positive attitudes, behaviour and attention to the task in hand by pupils, who clearly value their history lessons highly. Lapses in such very high standards of behaviour are rare and very well managed by teachers. Consequently, learning is active and pupils make very good progress. Teachers make very good use of questions to engage pupils' interest and also to check and reinforce their understanding. The pace of learning is always brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met.
115. The department is very well led with very clear vision and unusually high levels of commitment and energy. Teachers work well as a team and there is clear evidence of the sharing of both good practice and concerns. Management is also very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, despite poor accommodation and resources to support learning.

Religious education

Overall, provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good new leadership has the vision to raise standards.
- Very good assessment procedures are being used effectively to improve learning.
- There is insufficient time allocated in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision of textbooks is poor.

Commentary

116. There was no GCSE examination entry in 2003. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 9 and 11 had been adversely affected by the school's inability to fill the vacant head of department post during the previous academic year. The attainment of pupils in Year 9 is below the expectations of the agreed syllabus for their age. However, in relation to their prior attainment, this represents satisfactory achievement. For timetabling reasons, there was no opportunity to judge the attainment of Year 11 pupils. The time allocated to teaching the syllabus in Years 10 and 11 is, however, too low for pupils to reach the expected standards at

age 16 years. The attainment of Year 11 pupils following the GCSE religious studies examination course is well below average. Pupils began the term demotivated, and with much lost ground to recover. Now that staffing issues have been resolved, they are achieving satisfactorily, and standards are beginning to rise.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and good or better in around half of lessons. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject, know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn, and share their objectives with them. They plan their lessons well to achieve their aims, challenging pupils with a good variety of interesting activities and tasks that are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 10 pupils made very good gains in understanding types of Hindu literature, their importance and use, because the teacher made excellent use of active learning techniques, including games, to fully involve them in their learning. Teachers make very good use of assessment to help pupils to understand how to improve their work. Meaningful homework extends the learning in class. Where teaching is less secure, it is overly-directive in style, and does not give pupils enough opportunities for developing skills of independent learning, research and enquiry, and extended writing. Such opportunities are also constrained by the poor provision of textbooks, which are few in number and out of date.
118. Since September, the department has been very well led and managed by a specialist teacher who has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be raised. Significant improvements have been made in a very short space of time, for example, to styles of teaching and learning, assessment procedures and schemes of work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 11.
- Very good teaching supports pupils very well in their learning.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their work.
- Marking and assessment are not consistently of a high quality.
- Respond to health and safety recommendations made by specialists contracted by the school.

Commentary

119. Examination results continue to show significant improvement with 2003 GCSE results being well above average. Girls achieve better grades than the boys, although both boys and girls achieve better than the respective national averages. Pupils achieve better results in textiles, graphics and health and social care than in other design and technology subjects.
120. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach standards broadly in line with national expectations. This is better than the teachers' own assessments of pupils in Year 9. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils show average skills in designing and making. They work in a range of materials and produce well-made products. They apply a good range of formal drawing skills as well as freehand sketching to show the main stages of product development. Literacy skills are above average. Pupils write in a variety of styles and use a range of technical terms well in their design work. Above average numeracy skills enable pupils to work accurately when managing results of surveys and standard measurements, which they apply well to their own designs. However, pupils at this stage are restricted from more independent designing and use only

basic stages of the design process. Achievement overall is satisfactory compared to the average design skills pupils have when they join the school in Year 7.

121. Year 11 pupils make rapid progress as they are provided with more open design opportunities for their GCSE coursework. Pupils reach well above average levels and, as a result, their achievement is very good. Pupils show confidence in applying a more complex design process and, therefore, gain marks at each stage of their coursework. In the work seen, very good graphics skills help pupils to enhance the quality and presentation of their design portfolios in all material areas. The majority of pupils use ICT well. However, ICT is underused to raise the quality of work for a significant minority of lower attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 where teaching is more closely geared to examination criteria. In Years 7-9, teaching is focused on establishing basic skills and promoting quality and accuracy. Although teachers succeed well in achieving this goal there are, however, few opportunities for pupils to experience freedom in their designing. Lessons are well structured and teachers ensure that pupils' learning is underpinned with appropriate knowledge, which enables them to work through each task. A good range of activities help to keep pupils' interest and provides the challenge for them to master the skills they encounter. In Years 10 and 11, lessons are very well planned to provide pupils with clear guidance for coursework. Pupils benefit from teachers' very good specialist knowledge. Classroom displays are stimulating and give good examples of previous work. Pupils are encouraged to test their products at various stages and include a good variety of industrial processes and techniques. Teachers provide good individual support for pupils in lessons and, as a result, pupils achieve very well.
123. The department is very well managed. The head of department has established good working relationships amongst staff. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection and issues raised then have been tackled well. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama was sampled. Standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils work well together to plan and prepare small group performances. They develop good communication skills and some ability to evaluate their learning and achievement. In Years 10 and 11, drama is an increasingly popular option at GCSE. In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grade passes was in line with the national average. Standards have been maintained consistently in recent years. Achievement is good. Teaching is very good. Teachers manage pupils very well, and relationships are positive. Pupils clearly enjoy and appreciate drama lessons. The department also makes a valuable contribution to school life through extra-curricular activities, including the annual school production.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and management ensure a clear vision for progress and improvement.
- Teaching and learning are consistently of a very high standard.
- The curriculum for art and design is well conceived, relevant, broad and balanced.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good.
- Standards of work develop and improve considerably as pupils move through the school.

Commentary

124. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average and continue a rising trend. Girls were particularly successful and outperformed the boys overall. In relation to prior attainment the pupils' achievements at all levels are very good. On entry to the school, the standard of pupils' work is below average. As pupils move through the key stage, standards improve consistently and by the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Most pupils are confident artists, able to apply their developing skills in using the formal elements of art in creative and imaginative ways. The well-conceived curriculum enables pupils to develop skills that will be useful throughout their lives and, for those that take up the subject at GCSE, build a secure foundation. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills continue to improve and standards of current pupils are well above average. Through Years 10 and 11 pupils rapidly develop their confidence especially in relation to their knowledge and understanding of the work of artists in relation to their own and others' work. A particular strength in Years 10 and 11 is the rich use of sketchbooks for pupils to record and develop their ideas.
125. Teaching is very good overall throughout the school with a significant amount that is outstanding. In all year groups pupils benefit from highly skilled teachers who prepare challenging and interesting lessons that enable pupils of all abilities to succeed. Their specialist knowledge enables planning and assessment to be sharply focused on pupils' acquisition of skills and confidence in talking about and appreciating their own and others' work. Energy, commitment and enthusiasm across the team are exceptional. Characteristics of the excellent teaching include very high expectations, firm discipline, effective use of time, effective use of limited resources, good questioning strategies and the ability to target support or guidance to the needs of individuals. Marking is very good and features well-focused, substantial comments forming an important and valuable dialogue with pupils. Pupils apply themselves well; their capacity to work independently and collaboratively is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
126. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department works tirelessly showing exceptional commitment to both staff and pupils. Clear vision and sense of purpose generate high aspirations across the staff team. The curriculum is very well planned and is developed to build on basic skills with the formal elements of art and design. Pupils are enabled to develop their personal work in the context of the world of art and design and understand how their own work and the work of others relate to it. Monitoring procedures are effective. Resources for art and design are barely adequate, but management of them is excellent. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, when standards were already high.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching strategies support independent learning.
- Good planning and schemes of work result in effective teaching.
- Extra-curricular activities provide very good enrichment opportunities.

Commentary

127. In 2003 results at GCSE were in line with national averages with 65 per cent gaining A* to C grades. By the end of Year 9 pupils' musical knowledge and skills are in line with the national average. They are able to listen critically and can improvise and compose melodic and rhythmic material in a given structure. Most use musical terminology with understanding and have a growing confidence in keyboard skills. There are still gaps in pupils' skills especially in

listening and playing in ensemble, where a sense of pulse and rhythm is insecure so that, for example, paired playing is not synchronised well. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for with material tailored to their needs so that they achieve as well as the others. Higher attaining pupils are able to work independently and creatively, elaborating on basic melodies and rhythms. Boys and girls achieve equally well in music making, although pupils who have instrumental tuition reach the higher levels of attainment because their sight-reading and general musical competence is so much more secure. Given the well below average prior attainment on entry to the school pupils' achievement is good.

128. Present standards in Year 11 are average and improving, particularly in performance and composing. Good critical and listening skills are evident in group and self-evaluation, for instance, when a Year 10 class suggested improvements to performances. Pupils produce some very creative and imaginative pieces in a variety of styles, for example, dance forms such as the gavotte. Pupils use ICT very well and incorporate a range of sampled sounds into their compositions. Theory work is less well developed, but still shows a satisfactory grasp of the knowledge required for the examination. Year 11 pupils are generally competent performers on their chosen instruments, although some performances lack attention to dynamic and phrasing with a sense of shape and musical style. Pupils at this stage continue to achieve well.
129. Pupils learn well because teaching is good overall with some very good features. Lessons are well planned and where teaching is very good the pace of the lesson is brisk and pupils rise to the challenge of enthusiastic teaching and high expectations. Self-evaluation and group critical input encourages independent learning because the pupils see how they can improve and perform better. Very good learning strategies such as eurhythmic exercises involve every pupil and are an excellent method of embedding basic counting skills and holding one part against another. Where the lesson is over-dominated by the teacher a small minority of disengaged pupils become restless and interrupt the lesson with low level disruptive behaviour. This also occurs where there is an insufficient number of activities to engage and interest them. However, pupils' attitudes are generally good and they work purposefully in their lessons. The use of ICT is a growing strength of this department and supports pupils' learning, particularly in composition work at GCSE level. A significant indicator of pupils' enjoyment and interest in music is the growing number opting to take music in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who receive instrumental tuition from visiting teachers make very good progress because the teaching is both thorough and challenging.
130. The department is very well managed and led within the supportive creative arts faculty. There is vision and commitment to developing and improving this subject throughout the school, for example, wider use of technology as an aid to better learning. Teachers are well supported in their professional development, sharing good practice and undertaking in-service training. Music contributes significantly to the life of the school and the wider community and to the enrichment of the pupils through choir, bands, concerts, musicals and trips to concerts. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably in the now very effective schemes of work in Years 7-9 and the growing numbers taking music not only at GCSE level, but also in the sixth form.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons well using a good progression of activities.
- Achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
- Leadership and management are very good providing a clear vision.

- Extra-curricular provision is excellent and pupils participate enthusiastically.
- The department makes outstanding links with partner primary schools.
- The use of ICT particularly for analysis of performance is currently underdeveloped.

Commentary

131. Overall, standards in physical education are above average, and pupils' achievements are good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In examinations at GCSE in 2003 pupils' results were above average, and many did better in physical education than in their other subjects. In Year 7 dance, pupils demonstrate good control of their body popping and robotics, as elements of their street dance and in games, pupils are confidently able to apply tactical centre pass strategy in a game of netball. In Year 9 in health related fitness, pupils can name and demonstrate the components of fitness. In a hockey lesson observed, pupils could successfully apply defending tactics to different situations. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils are participating in either GCSE or other accredited courses. This exemplary and wide-ranging curriculum provides successfully for all abilities. In addition, many pupils are undertaking the Junior Sports Leader Award in their own time. GCSE pupils are on target to achieve well above national expectation. Low attaining pupils are making very good progress and in first aid, they can describe a fracture, a break, the difference between a burn and a scald and how to treat them.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Well-planned lessons incorporating clearly defined learning objectives and a good progression of activities enable pupils to develop, select and apply skills and techniques appropriately. Pupils respond enthusiastically and in all but one lesson seen every pupil participated. A very enthusiastic and lively approach by teachers thoroughly motivates and engages the pupils. In all lessons teachers emphasise key words and are adept at asking probing questions to confirm understanding and ensure that pupils think more deeply about the issues. While teachers evaluate skills, technique and strategies, opportunities for the pupils themselves to evaluate their own and each other's performance are less common. However, the department is planning to develop this aspect through the increased use of video and ICT.
133. The department is very well led and managed. As a result of regular self-review, the subject leader is providing clear direction for the department with a particular focus on teaching and learning. The department makes good use of assessment to plan the curriculum and set targets. Pupils themselves are clear about their progress. However, ongoing assessment of pupils' progress is less effective in informing them of the next step in their learning and how they might improve. Activities in the curriculum do not always give equal weighting to different aspects of physical education. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. Standards have improved significantly and the school has deservedly acquired Sports College status and Sportsmark Gold. The school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular sports and games activities. These are widely supported by pupils of all ages.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are very good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience in business or industry.
- Resources are good, but there is only limited access to computers.
- The department is led and managed very well.
- Assessment procedures are good, but marking is not always sufficiently detailed.

Commentary

134. In 2002 standards were significantly above the national average. In 2003 results were affected by staffing problems, but were still above the national average as they are in the present Year 11. Pupils clearly achieve very well and many pupils improve on their target grades. More boys take the subject, but overall there is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Business studies is increasingly popular and pupils from a wide range of attainment choose the subject. The department would like to offer a vocational course to meet the learning requirements of lower attaining pupils.
135. Attitudes are good overall and pupils respond very well to the challenge of a new subject in Year 10. They have good computer skills and use these to prepare presentations on local companies. By Year 11 they have a secure grasp of basic business-related vocabulary because teachers focus on this well and all pupils keep a glossary of new terms. They use case studies well and are confident in using balance sheets and cash flow charts. The highest attaining pupils can explain what is meant by limited liability. Business studies makes a valuable contribution to literacy, numeracy and citizenship.
136. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject and have experience in business or industry that helps to give them a real insight into the business world. Resources are readily accessible and they are well used, although not all classrooms have appropriate ICT resources. Lessons are well structured and provide a good range of activities. There is good use of ongoing assessment through questioning and a good balance between consolidating existing skills and knowledge and the introduction of new information. Assessment is frequent, thorough and accurate, but pupils would benefit from more detailed and diagnostic marking. Pupils are taking responsibility for their own learning, for example, in their local study.
137. The department is very well led and management is very good. It ensures that members of staff work together very effectively so that standards are consistently high. Planning is very effective and newly qualified teachers are well supported. Established links with the local business community provide a valuable resource for learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship is identified in all subjects across the curriculum, and taught in all years.
- Planning for the teaching of the citizenship curriculum is incomplete.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress is not sufficiently developed.
- Reporting to parents does not yet include citizenship.

Commentary

138. The standards in citizenship are not assessed by the school, but inspection evidence indicates that, these are broadly average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. The subject is mainly taught within the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which gives access to all pupils. However, during the inspection week almost all lessons were on themes not forming part of the citizenship curriculum.

139. Other subjects also contribute, but in an unco-ordinated way. A curriculum audit was completed in 2001 and all subjects know the contribution they can make to citizenship. However, citizenship is not usually specifically identified as such. In a Year 11 geography lesson, for example, pupils studied issues of international trade in raw materials without its relevance to the citizenship curriculum being noted. This was despite the department already identifying the issue as contributing to the citizenship programme.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A Year 10 lesson on international loans and overseas development gave pupils good opportunities to understand and discuss financial and moral issues of debt and dependency. Boys and girls participated equally in class discussion, spoke thoughtfully and listened well to the views of others. Good teacher intervention raised standards by checking pupils' understanding and encouraging application. Learning materials are not yet well enough developed to ensure that the highest attaining pupils are extended. Suitable materials are also needed to help those who find recording their ideas difficult. Resources need to be enhanced to support the citizenship scheme of work as it is put in place.
141. The leadership of the subject is currently unsatisfactory. There is no whole-school policy, syllabus or scheme of work. A scheme of work based on national criteria is in preparation and a teacher has been appointed this term to develop citizenship throughout the school. As yet, there is no formal scheme of assessment and neither teaching nor the progress of pupils is monitored. Future planned developments include meeting assessment, monitoring, reporting and National Curriculum requirements. There are a number of whole day events each year that give opportunities for pupils to experience elements of citizenship, but these are different from year to year and so do not form a coherent programme that all pupils experience as they progress through the school. The work of the school council is an effective application of citizenship.
142. Since the previous inspection, when citizenship was not a National Curriculum requirement, a start has been made, but much remains to be done. The school is aware of the need to quickly improve provision for citizenship and is keen to see progress. However, the citizenship co-ordinator does not have designated time to develop the subject. Plans to improve citizenship across the curriculum by further training for teachers are not yet in place. Management is unsatisfactory because statutory National Curriculum and reporting requirements are not met.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight 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 2003.

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	7	71.4	90.0	28.6	42.7	31.4	39.0
Business Studies	9	66.7	89.1	11.1	31.7	23.3	35.4
Chemistry	9	77.8	84.8	0.0	36.9	17.8	35.2
Drama	7	71.4	94.6	0.0	37.6	18.6	39.1
French	5	80.0	85.4	20.0	35.2	26.0	34.9
History	8	87.5	91.8	0.0	37.2	32.5	37.8
Mathematics	10	50.0	74.2	0.0	34.3	12.0	31.3
Other Social Studies	6	33.3	83.2	16.7	32.5	13.3	33.6
Physics	6	66.7	82.0	0.0	36.2	21.7	34.3
Sociology	6	100.0	83.7	33.3	33.6	36.7	33.8
Sports/PE Studies	5	100.0	88.2	20.0	27.7	38.0	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	17	100	96.1	64.7	48.7	96.5	85.1
Biology	7	100	91.6	14.3	36.3	48.6	74.1
Business Studies	16	100	96.4	25.0	32.8	75.0	76.5
Drama	7	100	98.1	0.0	41.5	65.7	82.9
English Literature	13	100	98.5	38.5	43.7	89.2	84.3
Design and Technology	6	100	95.3	16.7	35.5	76.7	76.5
Geography	9	100	97.1	55.6	40.5	91.1	80.9
German	7	100	96.3	0.0	44.3	51.4	82.1
History	11	100	97.1	0.0	14.0	63.6	81.2
Mathematics	15	100	93.3	6.7	52.2	62.7	84.7
Physics	5	100	92.8	20.0	42.8	80.0	78.6
Sociology	17	100	95.4	52.9	39.6	87.1	79.1

Sports/PE Studies	9	100	95.4	0.0	29.5	57.8	73.2
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Business AVCE	12	100	87.1	58.3	16.5	88.3	60.1
Health and Social Care	6	100	90.1	23.1	16.3	78.5	62.5
Travel and Tourism	12	83.3	88.1	25.0	15.7	71.7	61.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in detail and German was sampled. While relatively small numbers of students take German, results in 2003 were in line with the students' predicted grades. A Year 13 lesson was observed. Good teaching ensured that students were speaking and responding confidently using a wide range of language.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are above the national average.
- Teachers know their subject very well, and lessons are carefully planned.
- Students are well motivated and make a good effort in their work.
- Large teaching groups in Year 12 create extra burdens for teachers.
- There are few opportunities to enrich the curriculum outside the classroom.

Commentary

143. In 2002, A-level English Literature results were above the national average, with all students passing and almost 40 per cent gaining A or B grades. 2003 results were still better, with 50 per cent gaining A or B grades. Overall, the achievement of individual students is good, and most reach or exceed their target grades in examinations.
144. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and students' achievements are good. Students made constructive contributions to class discussions in all lessons observed. Written work is also effective. The best coursework essays are mature and coherent. On the language course, for example, students analyse the use of language in BBC and Sky news reports in some depth. Writing by higher attaining literature students, including essays on Blake's religious beliefs in 'The Songs of Innocence' and characterisation in 'Twelfth Night', is informed by a sensitive personal response and well supported by detailed textual reference. The work of lower attaining students shows less capacity to evaluate style and technique, and is sometimes marred by poor expression. Writing is well presented, however, with students making good use of word-processing skills.
145. Teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared and characterised by positive working relationships between staff and students. In the best lessons, a range of teaching methods is used to create a successful balance between teacher input and student contribution. Teachers know their subject very well, and are able to communicate their own interest in language studies and literature effectively. This clearly enhances students' response to the subject overall. Coursework is assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against examination grade criteria. Larger teaching groups in Year 12 create additional burdens on teachers in terms of assessment and monitoring of progress, but they remain prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. Students have a positive attitude to their work and are well motivated. Teachers do much to

encourage them to develop independent learning skills, through wider reading, note making and research. Opportunities to broaden students' horizons through external visits, study days and theatre trips have been limited in recent times, however. More could be done in this respect to further strengthen students' interest.

146. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are very good. Planning for the subject is thorough. Teachers collaborate closely to share good practice and are committed to continuing improvement. In particular, importance is attached to keeping up to date with changes in examination requirements at this level. Standards of attainment at A level have improved since the last inspection, and overall improvement has been good. Staff have also worked very hard to expand provision successfully with the introduction of new courses at both AS and A level. Numbers of students have increased significantly over the past two years.

French

The provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning ensure that students are highly motivated.
- Teaching methods enthuse students and provide opportunities for speaking and independent learning.
- A very good scheme of work, which includes a range of student support and guidance, supports very good learning.
- Groups in Year 13 are very small.

Commentary

147. In both 2002 and 2003, students achieved their predicted grades, but numbers taking the examination in both years were too small to make national comparisons. Standards seen during the inspection are average overall. There is a range of ability in both Years 12 and 13 and achievement is good. In Year 12 students have good listening skills and understand both rapid instructions and taped material. They respond to a range of authentic French texts and have produced accurate and varied writing, covering different topics. In Year 13 students speak with confidence and writing includes a range of complex language and idiomatic expressions, covering, for example, social problems and political issues. Students respond to a range of texts, using summary, note taking and translation.
148. Standards of teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and knowledge of the examination requirements help to prepare students to achieve success. They use a range of strategies and activities to ensure that students learn new language, practise and reinforce their language skills and have fun. Consequently, all students are highly motivated, with very positive attitudes to language learning. In a Year 13 lesson, French tongue-twisters were used in a game to improve pronunciation and increase oral confidence and a cartoon was used to stimulate a debate about passive smoking. Very good use of assessment and knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses ensure that all students have appropriate targets and support. Marking is very informative and students use comments effectively to improve their work. Teachers provide opportunities to work independently, with some use of ICT.
149. Leadership and management are good. Teachers collaborate well, supported by a very good scheme of work so that students are very clear about what they are learning and when. The scheme of work, which includes student support and guidance, is valued by both teachers and students and would provide a good model for the German scheme of work, which is less well developed. However, there is a need to review further the achievement and results at AS in languages and to develop strategies to encourage a better staying-on rate into the second year

of study. Improvement since the last inspection is good with particular improvements in teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject effectively.
- Very good relationships with the teachers help the students to achieve well.
- Students work hard and are encouraged to think for themselves.
- ICT is underused as a resource for teaching.

Commentary

150. In 2002, AS-level mathematics results were below average and students' achievement in relation to GCSE performance was unsatisfactory. In 2003, AS-level results improved significantly: they were well above average and students' achievement was very good. A2-level mathematics results in 2002 were well below average and students' underachievement was significant. In 2003, A2-level results have improved and are average compared to the previous year.
151. Current standards are above average and students are achieving well. The quality of student files is overall satisfactory with some very good examples of highly organised work by Year 13 students providing a good record for revision. Some Year 12 work files require better management with more detailed note taking that supports the learning process. Year 12 students were observed making good use of their past GCSE work to move into new areas of study and are well into their courses. For example, in calculus, after deriving from first principles the general derivative for a function of x , students were able to apply their knowledge of the rules of indices as well in order to simplify the process of differentiation. In Year 13, students recall knowledge very well and apply it confidently in class. In one lesson, for example, students successfully applied the methods they had learned in Year 12 calculus to analyse more complex functions.
152. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject effectively. Lessons are planned well with clear purpose. As a result, students work hard and are often encouraged to think for themselves. In some lessons, students contribute a great deal, although some lessons are strongly teacher led. Too little use is made of ICT and other resources to enhance the quality of teaching and develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding further. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Teachers are prepared to use their time outside lessons to provide additional support. Homework is set and tracked rigorously. Procedures for assessment are secure and students' performance is closely monitored.
153. Leadership and management are very good. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' progress is comprehensive. Planning is effective with a range of courses that meet all students' needs. Very good self-evaluation has resulted in improvements to the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and there is a commitment to raising standards further.

SCIENCE

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

In chemistry, examination results have been average with most students obtaining a pass grade, although some have fallen short of their target grades based on their GCSE performance. Most of the students who attempted the AS examination continue into A2. In an excellent lesson in Year 13, students made exceptional progress taken beyond the expected requirement. In physics, examination results have been broadly in line with national average with good retention from AS to A2. In a very good lesson in Year 12 students were able to use data from the Apollo 11 moon landing to calculate acceleration.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are experienced and have a good command of their subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and, as a result, students have a very positive attitude to their work.
- Students' work is regularly marked and informal assessment is carried out mainly through questioning students in lessons.
- Much teaching involves delivery of content with limited time devoted to develop understanding.

Commentary

154. A-level results in 2003 improved and most students achieved as expected from their GCSE results. At AS level, results were above average with many students achieving higher grades. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average. Students in Year 12 are coping well with the increased demand in standards of the AS course. They demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding about the structure of nucleic acids and are able to follow successfully a protocol to extract DNA from their own cheek cells. In Year 13 students develop their knowledge and understanding of the structure and function of synapses and can link this to the effects of various drugs, which block or inhibit neurotransmission. Current A-level students are achieving well on the evidence of work seen during the inspection. Students' files are well organised and well presented. Much of their work consists of well-written notes supplemented by questions from previous years' examination papers.
155. Teaching and learning are very good. The pace of lessons is good with a clear structure that supports learning. This often includes useful starter and plenary activities, which enable both students and teachers to gauge progress. In a very well planned lesson in Year 12 students made very good progress in understanding the cell cycle and could identify key details in the sequence of mitosis, because of the good range of activities. In a Year 13 lesson students developed a good understanding of the structure and function of the nephron and appreciated the role of antidiuretic hormone in homeostasis. Many lessons involve significant coverage of content, but with too little time spent developing deeper understanding or in discussing emerging issues. Marking is particularly helpful in informing students about how they might improve. Students are very positive about the teaching. They particularly value the support provided by staff both within curriculum time as well as outside this through formal extra lessons and informal discussion. Often students are invited to 'step outside their comfort zone' to attempt increasingly more complex work.
156. The department is well led and managed with significant contributions from other teachers within the team. Planning is thorough and organisation is good. Teachers review the curriculum regularly in order to raise standards, but students do not have enough information on how they can plan their own learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography and sociology were inspected in detail, while history was sampled. Results in history in 2003 were above average and the quality of teaching, learning and achievement seen is very good.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level standards are consistently in the top 25 per cent nationally.
- Students often do significantly better than in the other subjects they study.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, experience and enthusiasm.
- Lessons have clear structure and are well planned and resourced.
- Some teaching is over prescriptive and encourages dependency.
- Fieldwork opportunities are excellent.

Commentary

157. In 2003 A-level results were the highest in the school with most students achieving A or B grades. Around one third of students taking AS attained the higher A and B grades; half continued their studies for a second A level year. Observation of lessons and analysis of work show standards are above average. Students' achievements are good.
158. Students apply their theoretical knowledge well in many case studies and so raise examination performance. On the management of rivers they draw on their knowledge of the Mississippi, Nile and Colorado as well as rivers in the UK. Students can interpret a wide range of maps and diagrams and develop very good techniques by assessing environmental impact and surveying attitudes to natural and built environments. However, some students in Year 12 do not routinely support their statements with enough factual detail. Fieldwork is a strength and includes detailed work on the Dorset coast processes, an analysis of socio-economic environments in Swindon and personal research on local rural settlements. In coursework, map and graph interpretation are good. Students display a wide range of skills and produce fieldwork assignments of a high standard. They make very effective use of new technologies, including the Internet, to enhance the accuracy, range and presentation of their work.
159. Teaching and learning are very good and expectations are consistently very high. Up to the minute sources are employed very well to provide relevant, topical and interesting information, statistics, photographs and articles to challenge higher attaining students and extend others. Assessment practices are excellent and students have clear targets. Students' progress is constantly and very effectively monitored. Teachers know their needs very well and so give effective individual guidance, which improves understanding and motivation and greatly contributes to high standards. Instruction is sometimes didactic and limits opportunity for students to test their understanding of new learning through discussion and activity.
160. Numeracy skills are developed well, as when interrogating Swindon deprivation indices and census data. Students have a very good command of technical subject language. Male and female students alike display very positive attitudes, participate equally and speak highly of the quality of teacher support and encouragement they receive. Fieldwork opportunities are excellent and a very important factor in enhancing understanding of, for example, coastal processes at Hengistbury Head and river systems in Wales. There is good growth in geographical maturity in oral work and in writing by the second A-level year.
161. Work in the subject is very well led and managed with very good planning to sustain standards. Teachers are well motivated and focused on achieving high results for their students. Some

very good use is made of new technologies that enhance teaching and learning. Very high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weakness

- Excellent teaching encourages independent learning, which results in good achievement.
- Marking and assessment is detailed and thorough.
- Well-planned and full schemes of work maximise available time for delivery.
- Students respond well to the teachers' high expectations.
- Use of ICT to support teaching and learning is underused.

Commentary

162. Examination results at AS level and A level have been above the national average. Present standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average. Students quickly learn to discuss sociological concepts and use terminology with understanding because definitions and proper usage are well rehearsed and tested frequently. Written work is of a good standard and indicates that students are able to marshal facts and arguments as well as quote authorities and sources appropriately. In writing on the sociology of religion, for example, students evaluate the impact of belief on social behaviour effectively. Given no prior knowledge of this subject students make rapid progress at AS level and continue to improve at A level so that overall achievement is very good. Coursework is of a high quality and shows a good grasp of methodology and sociological theories generally.
163. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Long experience and very good subject knowledge make for excellent delivery and very thorough examination preparation. There is an excellent rapport between teacher and students and they respond very well to the challenge and high expectations of their teacher. For example, a strong feature is the relentless pressure on students to make intellectual effort beyond what they think they are capable of. Very probing and effective questioning by the teacher forces students to think through and explain their ideas carefully. Marking and assessment of students' work is thoroughly done and gives good guidance on how to improve. The personal development of students is promoted well in sociology because they come to a better understanding of human nature and social behaviour. However, insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance and stimulate learning still further.
164. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision and teachers are ambitious for their students to achieve the highest standards. Schemes of work are well thought out and very effective in raising standards. Self-evaluation and professional development are satisfactory and ensure that the department is flexible in meeting the needs of the students and kept abreast of relevant examination requirements.
165. This subject was only briefly commented on at the last inspection. Therefore, there is no judgement on improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was inspected in detail, while music and drama were sampled. Two lessons in music were sampled. The students were working productively on their own compositions and the teacher's interventions were both supportive and challenging. Standards in drama are improving as a result of good teaching. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of theatre trips, including an annual residential visit to Stratford, which broaden students' understanding and interest very effectively.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leadership and management are excellent.
- The standard of teaching and learning is very good.
- Students are highly motivated and confident independent learners.
- Resources and accommodation for the sixth form students are limited and students do not have the opportunity to work on vertical surfaces.

Commentary

166. Results in the 2003 AVCE, AS and A2 examinations were well above average and show a trend of improvement. An increasing proportion of both male and female students are achieving the higher grades. In relation to their GCSE attainment the students achieve very well. Standards of work for the current Year 13 students are above average in relation to course expectations, and students' achievements are good. Students are very highly motivated and confident independent learners. This is due in large part to the very good and often excellent teaching that encourages students to experiment, take risks and explore their ideas. Students have well developed practical and research skills and apply these effectively to the development of very imaginative and highly original artwork. They use a wide variety of media and techniques in two and three dimensions on a variety of scales. During the inspection, the Year 13 AVCE group were using video to record presentations about their experiences on a fieldwork visit to Brecon. They talked about their artwork with great confidence, explaining how they had used a variety of media, including 'found' objects and natural materials to create works inspired, for example, by artists such as Andy Goldsworthy. Knowledge and understanding of artists and work from other cultures and times are very impressive and students use these references effectively in the development of their work. Sketchbooks are used particularly effectively as a record of the development of ideas and experiences. Students use the Internet for research in addition to visiting galleries and exhibitions to broaden their experience of art. There are insufficient opportunities for students to work on vertical surfaces. Standards in Year 12 are above average for this stage in the course. Students are achieving well and have made good progress in broadening their experiences from Year 11, supported by the very good monitoring and guidance provided by the teachers.
167. Teaching is very good with a significant amount that is outstanding. As a consequence, students have rapidly become confident and independent learners. Teachers have very high expectations, set challenging coursework tasks that extend and motivate the students, and communicate their specialist knowledge well. The broad range of expertise within the staff team enables them to give very high quality advice on what students can do to improve their work.
168. Leadership and management of art and design are excellent, promoting high standards and very good learning through a strongly collaborative team approach. There is a shared vision and understanding with a clear focus on the development of imaginative and independent work. Staff work very effectively as a team to support students and give willingly of their time. They use the available accommodation well and work very hard to ensure that a broad range of opportunities is provided through both lessons and extra-curricular activities. As in main school art and design, the department has made good progress since the last inspection, when standards were already high.

BUSINESS

Business studies at AVCE was sampled. In the lesson observed students showed a good understanding of human resource management. Students are also entered for AS and A2 examinations. In 2003 students' results in all courses were above the targets set because teaching and resources are good and students are well motivated. Standards overall are above the national average and students achieve well.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and Social Care

The provision for health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are above average.
- Teaching is good and, as a result, students make good progress in their learning.
- Teaching enables students to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Students show very good attitudes to their work.
- There is very good use of ICT, which motivates students and raises standards.

Commentary

169. Examination results in 2003 were above the national average. A significant number of students achieved A and B grades. Standards seen during the inspection were also above average. This represents good achievement overall.
170. Students develop a good understanding of human development and of local and public services. They develop good skills in independent research and report writing. The best written work shows above average understanding of the subject and students apply their numeracy skills well when they analyse, interpret and present national data. Their understanding of sociological concepts is good and written explanations show good interpretation of the facts. Work is accurate, thorough and students show a variety of styles in their writing. They apply well-developed and extensive subject vocabulary and students speak confidently in class, often presenting complex information to others. All students have work placements and they draw well on this experience, which enhances their work in class very well.
171. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use their experience and expertise well to engage students in work that is interesting and relevant. Work is well matched to the learning needs of the students and there is a very practical approach to the various aspects of work covered. As a result, students respond well and very good relationships between staff and students enhance the learning in lessons. Teachers provide structured learning resources, which enable students to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning. However, in some lessons, teaching does not involve students enough and this results in students learning passively. Students make very good use of ICT in their work, which is often word-processed, containing illustrations and supported with data processed using the computer. They effectively present information to others using presentation software. An example of this was seen in a lesson where students prepared a presentation for senior teachers on smoking and another on the impact of stress on sixth formers when there is overload of work. The course makes a good contribution to students' literacy skills, public speaking, listening and computer skills. Marking and assessment of students' work is thorough and this provides good support for students to make further improvements.

172. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear vision for the subject, supported by a team of teachers with a shared commitment to maintaining and improving standards. Systems for monitoring teaching and the work of students are in place and are being used to good effect. However, pupils are taught mainly in the textiles rooms and there is a lack of a central base where pupils can also work in their free time and draw on specialist resources.

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

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