

INSPECTION REPORT

KING EGBERT SCHOOL

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107129

Headteacher: Mr Bob Evans

Lead inspector: Roy Hedge

Dates of inspection: 26 - 30 January 2004

Inspection number: 259165

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

© Crown copyright 2004

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1197
School address:	Furniss Avenue Dore Sheffield South Yorkshire
Postcode:	S17 3QN
Telephone number:	0114 2369931
Fax number:	0114 2362468
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr James Powell
Date of previous inspection:	20 April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive of 1197 pupils (which is above average) with a sixth form of 222 students. The school serves two distinct communities. Over a third of its pupils come from an inner city area of considerable social and economic deprivation. Most of these pupils are of minority ethnic heritage though few are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Of the rest, a high proportion comes from a socially advantaged area around the school. Standards on entry to the school are average overall. There are relatively more pupils towards the extremes of capability on entry to the school than is usual and fewer than average of middling attainment. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. The school has a unit which it calls “the integrated resource” for 20 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The school is designated as a technology college. It has been awarded sportsmark status and three of its departments have a local leadership role under the Excellence in Cities programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2932	R Hedge	Lead inspector	Personal, social and health education
9424	J Cassidy	Lay inspector	
21937	C Peet	Team inspector	English
30702	P Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics
30512	M Bailey	Team inspector	Science Physics (sixth form)
24062	D Anderson-Cryer	Team inspector	Physical education
17015	L Denholm	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
11044	J Hedge	Team inspector	English literature (sixth form) English as an additional language
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education
29972	J Webster	Team inspector	Geography
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Citizenship Music
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
19386	T Watts	Team inspector	Special educational needs
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology
27082	G Henshall	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)
21785	V Kerr	Team inspector	Psychology (sixth form)
19043	D Lewis	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form)
11695	Dr A Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Educational Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	19
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	22
SUBJECTS [AND COURSES] IN KEY STAGES	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	53

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good, as is value for money. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve very well throughout their time at the school. The provision the school makes, including the quality of teaching is very good. Leadership is excellent. The school's accommodation is dilapidated and worn out, but is being replaced with a completely new building.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is outstanding
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The school meets the needs of pupils of all backgrounds and individual needs very well.
- Pupils respond very well to school. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Standards are not high enough in modern languages, particularly German, because teaching is not sufficiently challenging or engaging.
- Not enough time is allocated to religious education after Year 9 to meet statutory requirements and standards are not high enough as a result.
- The curriculum, especially that of the sixth form, has been improved to reflect the need for more vocational courses.

The school has improved further since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained or improved through a period when the school has admitted many more pupils from the inner city. The quality of teaching has improved. Leadership is now excellent and focused closely on driving up achievement. The school's curriculum has changed to meet the needs of all of its pupils. The issues raised at the last inspection have mostly been met, though statutory requirements for daily worship and religious education have not.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

There is very good achievement by pupils because the school is very good at teaching and supporting pupils of different backgrounds and particular needs. **At the end of Year 9 standards are well above average, which represents very good achievement.** Pupils of minority ethnic heritage make better progress in their time at the school than other pupils. Boys do particularly well, particularly up to Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs, including the most able and those with autistic spectrum disorder also benefit strongly from the school's provision and achieve well. Standards are consistently much better than the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and similar to those who admitted pupils at the same standards earlier. **At the end of Year 11 standards are above average and achievement is very good.** Pupils achieve very well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in all years. In modern languages, teaching lacks sufficient challenge in Years 10 and 11 and standards are not high enough. Standards are also too low in Years 10 and 11 in religious education because of a shortage of time for the subject. Standards in the sixth form have fallen over the last three years but this is as a result of the changing nature of the provision. More students who would not have

traditionally stayed on for sixth form education are now taking vocational and other courses. Achievement overall in the sixth form remains very good.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, develop very well in response to the school's provision for moral, social and cultural development. The shortage of time for religious education and the school's failure to meet requirements for daily worship, together with a lack of careful planning means that provision for pupils' spiritual development is no better than satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are very good and the school is remarkably free of tension, of racial or other harassment or bullying. Attendance is good and pupils are punctual to lessons in spite of the difficulties of the site.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good in all years, including the sixth form. Pupils of all backgrounds and particular needs learn very well because of expert, engaging and challenging teaching. Only in modern languages does the very high standard the school has set itself falter and standards as a result are not high enough, particularly in German in Years 10 and 11. The school offers a **very good curriculum** which has responded well to changing needs since the last inspection. There are now more vocational courses and very good arrangements to provide for pupils with special educational needs so that they learn and achieve very well. Teachers work hard to overcome the shortcomings of a dilapidated building at the end of its life and about to be replaced. There is good care and support for pupils and the school relates well to parents, other educational institutions and the community. All of these strengths play their part in establishing pupils' very good achievement overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**, has energy, drive and vision, based on high expectations of what can be achieved. The impact of management is good. These factors are important in explaining the school's success, the very good achievement of pupils and the very good quality of teaching and learning. The governing body is very effective in most of its work of supporting the school and holding it to account, though it is **unsatisfactory** in so far as it has not made reasonable efforts to satisfy requirements for religious education and collective worship even though they were issues at the last inspection.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils think highly of the school and of the provision it makes. The school is over-subscribed. Pupils particularly appreciate the quality of teaching pupils receive though they think there is more unruly behaviour than inspectors experienced. Some parents remain to be convinced that the school takes their view seriously but overwhelmingly they feel that their children make good progress and are well taught in an atmosphere free of harassment.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that pupils experience more challenging teaching in modern languages in Years 10 and 11, based on higher expectations of achievement;
- ensure that there is enough time available for religious education after Year 9, in order to allow the statutory requirements of the local agreed syllabus to be met;
- improve the quality of careers advice for the small number of sixth form students who do not intend to go on to higher education;

and, to meet statutory requirements, ensure that all pupils experience an act of worship every day.

THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 222 male and female students studying a range of advanced level GCE and vocational courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall effectiveness is very good, as is value for money. Standards are average overall. The apparent fall in standards in recent years has been because the nature of the sixth form has changed and there are now many more students following vocational and other courses who would not have stayed on into the sixth form in the past. Students still achieve well on the individual courses they follow. The leadership of the sixth form by the headteacher and senior staff is excellent and day-to-day management is good. Teaching and learning are very good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Those sixth form students who do not intend to go to higher education receive inadequate careers advice.
- Achievement is very good, principally because teaching successfully promotes very good learning.
- The curriculum now meets the needs of students from a wide range of backgrounds and educational experience.
- Relationships between students and with staff are very good.

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	Excellent in English literature.
Mathematics	Very good in mathematics.
Science	Excellent in biology and satisfactory in physics.
Information and communication technology	Good in ICT.
Humanities	Good in geography and very good in psychology.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good in design and technology.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory in art and design and good in music.
Business	Good in business education.

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

Most students have **satisfactory** access to support and guidance, mainly from their subject teachers, and are happy with the quality of this provision. For those students who do not wish to go

on to higher education, though, there is too little advice and support about future careers. There is little time for tutors to get to know their students well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The success of the sixth form is in great part due to the **excellent leadership and good management of senior staff**. There has been good planning to widen the range of courses available in the sixth form in order to meet the needs of those students who may in the past have left the school at 16. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is **good**.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They enjoy it. They particularly appreciate the quality of teaching and feedback they are given about their work. They value the expertise of their teachers and the access to them which they enjoy. Nearly all students are happy with their choice of subjects and are appreciative of the broad range of enrichment activities the school offers. They say that relationships with other students are good. Those students not intending to go on to higher education say that they receive scant advice about careers. Many students feel that there is not enough time to build a relationship with their tutor.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is very good, especially in science. Boys do particularly well and achieve higher grades than girls in many areas. Pupils of ethnic minority heritage achieve lower grades, on average, than other pupils, but they make greater gains from a lower starting point on entry into Year 7. Their levels of achievement are better than other pupils. The school has maintained or improved results over recent years up to Year 11 in spite of a significant reduction in the test scores of pupils entering the school in Year 7. Sixth form results have fallen over the last three years because of the changing nature of the sixth form. Sixth form achievement, though, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teaching and dynamic whole-school leadership lead to very good achievement, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Good, well-focused teaching means that pupils of ethnic minority heritage achieve particularly well.
- Standards in modern foreign languages are not high enough because there is too much unchallenging teaching.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are not high enough in religious education because there is too little time for the subject.
- Well-organised and well-planned lessons, based on strong relationships and good discipline, lead to boys doing as well as or better than girls.

Commentary

1. Standards as measured by national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been well above average in the last four years. Results are well above the average of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and average in comparison to schools whose pupils did similarly well at the end of Year 6 in national tests. Standards have risen in line with the national trend even though there have been changes in the levels of capability of pupils entering the school in Year 7, as measured by the school's own testing regime. Overall, in recent years, boys have done better than girls, due, in part, to well-organised teaching and very effective discipline in lessons. The school makes a particular effort to meet the needs of pupils of ethnic minority heritage through well-focused teaching and as a result, although they do not reach such high grades as other pupils, most make better progress. By the end of Year 9, achievement is satisfactory in modern languages and geography, good in English, ICT, music, history, design and technology and religious education, and very good in art and design.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.2 (35.2)	36.1 (33.3)
mathematics	37.5 (37.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.5 (35.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 189 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. GCSE results were above average in the last two years. They are consistently well above the average of schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and average when compared to schools with similar Year 9 results two years earlier. It is much to the school's credit that performance levels over the five years from Year 7 to Year 11 have been

maintained as the school has attracted a growing proportion of inner-city pupils. Girls do better than boys, though by less than is the case nationally. Pupils of ethnic minority heritage continue to catch up. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorder, achieve very well. Achievement is very good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It is good in ICT, music, geography, history and design and technology and satisfactory in art and design. Pupils do not make enough progress in religious education because there is not enough time devoted to it to enable the requirements of the local agreed syllabus to be met. Achievement is not high enough in modern languages, especially in German, because too much teaching lacks the pace and challenge necessary to drive up standards. The school has met the challenging targets it set itself.

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	53 (53)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	95 (95)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.2 (34.7)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 195 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

The nature of the sixth form has changed in recent years as the school has developed courses for students who would previously not have pursued a sixth form education. As a result, overall standards have declined in the last three years, though they are still average overall and represent good achievement on the part of the school and its students.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.5 (91.4)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.7 (36.4)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	239.9 (254.2)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 71 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is above average and pupils are very punctual to lessons, especially given the inconvenience of moving between the two sites. They have excellent attitudes to their work and to lessons and behaviour is very good. These attitudes play an important part in raising levels of achievement. The school makes good provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development and satisfactory provision for spiritual development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to pupils enjoying challenging lessons. As a result, attitudes to learning are excellent. And behaviour in almost all lessons is very good.
- Good attitudes to work and pupils' respect for what the school has to offer lead to above-average attendance and to pupils making every effort to reach lessons punctually.
- The school is almost entirely free of tension, of racism and bullying. Any incidents are dealt with in a firm but sensitive way. As a result, pupils get on very well with each other.
- There is considerable respect for the values, feelings and belief of others.

Commentary

3. Pupils make every effort to attend regularly and to get to school and lessons on time. Movement about the dispersed site is orderly in spite of the difficulty of moving between buildings separated by a road.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.0
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.9
National data	1.1

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

4. The school has been extremely successful in establishing a civilised ethos, free of tension, of racial or other forms of harassment. Moral and social development is promoted successfully, substantially through the relationships teachers successfully establish with pupils in lessons and around the school. Discipline in lessons is established skilfully, without recourse to heavy handedness. As a result, pupils' attitudes to lessons and to their work are highly productive. Classrooms are civilised places in the main, with strong professional relationships between teachers and pupils and high levels of respect and tolerance between pupils. Pupils work together effectively, though in many lessons pupils tend to sit with others of the same ethnic background. The experience of classroom collaboration, orchestrated by skilful teachers, does much to promote pupils' social and moral education.
5. Behaviour in lessons and around the site is very good. There is occasional boisterous behaviour which teachers deal with well. There are fewer permanent exclusions than average. The incidence of temporary exclusion is higher among pupils of ethnic minority heritage, especially boys. Inspectors investigated this in some depth and take the view that the school is dealing fairly with its pupils, excluding pupils reluctantly and after due consideration.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	797	24	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	24	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	6	0
Mixed – White and Asian	23	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	14	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	194	18	1
Black or Black British – Caribbean	20	4	0
Black or Black British – African	25	8	0

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

6. Pupils develop mature and responsible attitudes in response to the efforts teachers make to promote civilised standards of behaviour and relationships. The programme for pupils' personal, health and social education, which includes religious education, successfully promotes broader understanding of moral and social issues. Assemblies too deal with these

issues as well as spiritual development. Overall, though, the school's promotion of spiritual development is no better than satisfactory, hindered as it is by the short time available for religious education, the failure to meet requirements for worship and the lack of an overview of what different subjects might contribute in this respect. On the other hand, the school is extremely successful in preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Pupils do well because teaching and the curriculum are very good, there are very good links with parents and other schools and colleges and leadership by the headteacher is excellent. There are good standards of care for pupils.

Teaching and learning

Overall pupils learn very well because teaching is very good. The assessment of pupils' work and its use to promote their progress is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is at least good in more than three quarters of lessons as a result of teaching which is good or better.
- Sixth form teaching is a particular strength. Teaching in a third of these lessons is very good or excellent and none is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers are very skilful at meeting the needs of pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and with different needs.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils in lessons are very good. In most lessons teachers manage to create an ethos in which pupils are motivated and engaged and learning can flourish.
- Pupils respond to teachers' high expectations of them by working and trying hard.
- In too many modern languages lessons, pupils are passive and disengaged because of teaching which lacks the necessary impact.
- Pupils' work is mostly carefully marked but there is too little use made of assessment

Commentary

7. Pupils achieve so well because the general quality of teaching is very good. Leadership and management have been extremely effective in promoting the quality of teaching through systematic review of lessons, support and training. As a result there is hardly any unsatisfactory teaching and most lessons rise above the merely satisfactory.
8. At the heart of the school's success are the skills teachers bring to bear in meeting the diverse needs of pupils from varied backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, are taught very well, whether by subject teachers, or teachers and support staff from the two support units. Mostly, pupils are given assistance in their normal subject lessons, whether by teachers or support staff, and the quality of this support is very good. Pupils are also withdrawn from several lessons each week to help their learning by providing extra teaching based on their subject lessons. Pupils having difficulty with their homework have very good opportunities to do their work with teachers and support staff in small groups. They receive very good explanations, clarification and extra work so that their understanding becomes embedded. This is very valuable in enabling these pupils to keep up with their classmates in subjects throughout the curriculum.
9. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are also withdrawn for lessons directly aimed at their main barrier to learning; their difficulty in relating to other people, and their personal and social skills. Staff have very good knowledge of how to approach this aspect of their learning, and they build up good and positive relationships that boost pupils' learning tremendously.

10. Pupils for whom English is not their first language also learn very well because teaching is tailored to their needs very effectively. There is very good support for them in lessons and, when they are withdrawn for specialist help, their teachers successfully build their confidence and skills. Across the curriculum, there is good practice in geography, French, drama and English. Teachers take time, for example, to explain points of vocabulary and language which these students find difficult
11. A wide range of extra activities in addition to challenging teaching in normal lessons provides good intellectual stimulus to the highest attaining pupils. As a result they too achieve very well.
12. In almost all the lessons seen during the inspection teachers succeeded in engaging pupils' attention and developing positive attitudes towards learning. Lessons are characterised by high levels of mutual respect between teachers and pupils. There is a productive informality in most lessons, so pupils ask and answer questions readily and participate in a focused way in the varied activities teachers prepare for them. These activities successfully involve pupils because of strong planning and a successful mix of methods. Teachers talk with enthusiasm about their subjects, set challenging tasks and use innovative methods such as interactive whiteboards with skill. There is some outstanding practice in design and technology. In art and design there is very effective emphasis on the teaching of basic skills to younger pupils. In many subjects, science being a major example, the national Key Stage 3 strategy has been implemented to excellent effect. These lessons are well organised, are based on high expectations of what pupils can achieve and have very good pace and challenge. As a result, pupils learn very effectively.
13. There is too much teaching to older pupils in modern languages which fails to promote satisfactory progress. As a result there is a measure of underachievement, especially among boys of potentially average attainment. Learning is unsatisfactory because pupils are not effectively motivated by lacklustre teaching. Particularly in German, too many pupils make too little progress in learning to speak the language.
14. Teachers mark work carefully and use pupils' assessments to guide future work in a satisfactory way. The school's new procedures for using assessment data to set targets for pupils are good, but as yet they are not fully embedded in what most departments do. Targets for pupils with special educational needs are effectively set and used, though those for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are not specific enough to individual needs. The progress of these pupils is not assessed carefully enough to enable teachers to plan future work or report to parents effectively. There is some good assessment practice, though, especially with younger pupils in history, in part as a result of the successful uptake of the national Key Stage 3 strategy.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 190 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12 (6%)	55 (29%)	81 (43%)	37 (19%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

Sixth form

15. Sixth form teaching is particularly impressive. Students speak very highly of their teachers and of the extra help they receive. Sixth form lessons are interesting and challenging, sharing many of the qualities of lessons in the main school. Teachers are expert in their subjects and employ a range of successful methods. They often ask probing questions which focus students' learning and encourage high aspirations. Students learn very well.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is very good and meets the needs of pupils from a range of backgrounds and with varying needs very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very well planned though religious education does not meet statutory requirements after Year 9.
- There is very good provision in technology.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils outside the time-tabled day.
- Extra-curricular provision in the arts and sport is very good.
- Very good planning for continuity gives all pupils equality of access and opportunity to what the school offers, including those with special educational needs.
- Some parts of the National Curriculum in art are not taught.
- There is not enough time for drama.

Commentary

16. The curriculum is very good. This is because of imaginative and careful planning, attention to the needs of particular groups of pupils and innovations which enrich and extend opportunities.
17. All the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught in Years 7 to 9. The time allocated is generally appropriate. However, in art, difficulty in accessing ICT resources means that it is not possible to meet all National Curriculum requirements. In modern languages, it is not possible for pupils to take two languages in Years 7 to 9 except as extra lessons outside the school day. The time allocated to drama is also very restricted, with some pupils only having eight lessons a year. With the exception of mathematics and science, subjects are taught in mixed-ability groups in Years 7 to 9. Group composition is taken into account by teachers when planning lessons and is one reason why the achievement of most pupils is good.
18. There are some notable features in the curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 which enhance their learning. Very good curriculum provision for ICT is complemented by good access to computer laboratories which many pupils use. The introduction of single-sex science groups in Year 9 has had a positive effect on the achievement of pupils who have difficulties in science. There is good coverage of the programmes of study for music, including “music of the world” in Year 8. Good implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy means that it is well-embedded into practice in the core subjects and is also beginning to have an impact on other subjects, such as improving assessment in history.
19. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 is very well planned with careful attention paid to the particular needs of different groups of pupils. The specialist status of the school as a technology college is reflected in the very good provision in technology. In design and technology very good planning for Years 7 to 9 ensures good continuity in pupils’ learning in Years 10 and 11. Six different courses, leading to accreditation, are open to pupils and there are extra-curricular sessions each evening which have a positive effect on achievement, especially of boys. More vocational subjects are introduced at this stage including business studies at GCSE and business studies and ICT at GNVQ. There is also specific provision, through the “workstart” course, for pupils who benefit from a more vocationally-focused education. An “Endeavour” group which improves pupils’ social skills, and the ASDAN award Scheme, extend the range of opportunities. There is also extra provision outside the timetabled day for a second language, for Urdu, triple science and academic support in English, mathematics and science. All pupils in Year 10 have work experience placements. A life-skills course in Years 10 and 11 promotes pupils’ social education, though the time allocated to religious education is insufficient to meet the statutory requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

20. Opportunities for enrichment beyond the taught courses are very wide and this aspect of provision is very good. There is an extremely good range of extra-curricular activities with particular strengths in the arts and sport. Opportunities in art and music are very good, with many pupils playing in ensembles and involved in a range of art events nationally and in the region and benefiting from working with artists in residence. In addition, in many subjects there are planned extension activities such as visits to theatres, to places of historical interest and residential courses. Special extra activities are organised for gifted and talented pupils in a wide range of areas, in combination with two other schools.
21. Curriculum planning is informed by a clear and coherent curriculum philosophy. This enables the school to respond positively to the changing composition of its population in ways which extend opportunities and enrich the education of all pupils whatever their needs. Pupils with special educational needs are given assistance in their normal subject lessons, whether by teachers or support staff, and the quality of this support is very good. Pupils are also withdrawn from several lessons each week to help their learning by providing extra teaching based on their subject lessons. Thus, pupils having difficulty with their homework have very good opportunities to do their work with teachers and support staff in small groups. They receive very good explanations or extra work so that their understanding becomes more embedded.
22. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are also withdrawn for lessons directly aimed at their main barrier to learning: their difficulty in relating to other people, and their personal and social skills. Staff have very good knowledge of how to approach this aspect of the pupils' learning, and they build up good and positive relationships that boost pupils' learning effectively.
23. Pupils with special educational needs take part in some very good opportunities for work-related activities. These may be in a great variety of settings such as a veterinary surgery, garage, offices, supermarkets and shops, and are generally for a two-week block. Also, some pupils benefit greatly from extended placements as part of their curriculum, perhaps having one day each week in a work-related placement where they have a great interest, are learning well, and may develop the opportunity into future paid employment. The Resource unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder has taken this further, by setting up a charity to develop pupils' work experiences even more, both whilst in school, and when they leave.
24. The school is housed in dilapidated and worn out buildings across two sites separated by a main road. A complete new school is at present under construction. The accommodation for pupils at present, though, is dingy and unappealing. Toilets for pupils and staff on both sites are of unacceptable quality. Teachers and pupils alike make the best of an unsatisfactory situation. The quality of maintenance and cleaning, though, makes for a poor environment in which they have to work. It is greatly to the credit of all concerned that they generally rise above the difficulties. The quality of learning is specifically hindered in art, where accommodation is cramped, in physical education, where there is not enough indoor space and in ICT on one of the sites. Many sixth form lessons take place in poor accommodation. Resources for learning are generally good, though some ICT rooms are badly furnished and there are shortfalls in the equipment available to the art and design department. Staffing, on the other hand, is very good. There are enough well qualified, well trained and expert teachers.

The sixth form

25. The very good curriculum planning for pupils at all stages of their education means that there is a varied programme of academic and vocational courses available for pupils aged 14 to 19. Provision for religious education, however, as at the time of the last report, fails to meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. Though vocational courses attract a relatively small proportion of pupils, provision takes account of the wider educational context in which the school is placed, extends the range of choice and ensures that there is very good access and equality for all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are good. There are high levels of concern for pupils experiencing difficulties or with special educational needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The twice-yearly review day gives all pupils comprehensive guidance about their progress.
- Form tutors have insufficient time and information to enable them to monitor the progress of pupils on a day-to-day basis.
- Vulnerable pupils are well supported though the progress of autistic pupils is not monitored closely enough.
- The induction arrangements for new pupils are very good.
- The careers programme in Years 9 to 11 is highly regarded by pupils.
- The views of the school council are listened to.
- Health and safety audits are thorough and effective.
- Mutual benefit derives from the mentoring of younger pupils by sixth formers but opportunities are limited.
- Careers guidance in the sixth form does not cater for the needs of all students.

Commentary

26. Tutors move with their forms through the school and so get to know their pupils well. The time tutors spend with pupils has increased since the previous inspection but remains less effective than it could be. This is partly because of the time lost in moving between the sites but also because tutors are not well enough equipped to provide regular advice and guidance to pupils. Pupils look to subject teachers for this support. They all have a personal mentor. An overview comes through the annual interview all pupils have with senior staff and by the recently introduced review. Two days each year are being set aside for tutors and other staff to review the progress of all pupils. Conduct logs help heads of year track trends in pupil behaviour. Not all departments as yet use assessment data effectively to monitor pupils' individual progress.
27. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported by effective child protection and "at risk" procedures. Strong links with key outside agencies add to their effectiveness. The child protection officer now receives regular training and attends update sessions. The modified timetable for Endeavour, the academic support programme and other initiatives helps the school to extend its duty of care to pupils who might otherwise absent themselves or fail to make adequate progress. Heads of year and others, including the newly appointed Inclusion Manager, monitor the welfare of pupil groups including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language.
28. All pupils with special educational needs have someone in school who knows them well, and whom they can turn to for help. This may take the form of contact several times a day with staff in the pupil support base or the resource for autistic pupils, or it may be a focused period of help with a particular need such as lagging behind on reading skills, or with anger management. Planning does not, however, include clear checking of the progress that pupils are making in the main area of teaching undertaken by staff in the resource for autistic pupils – their personal, social, communications and life skills. Staff in the unit currently have no way of knowing how effective they may be in this core area, or what they should be doing about it.
29. Parents confirm that the arrangements for helping new pupils settle into the school are very effective. Year 7 pupils are drawn from a higher number of primary schools than is usual but the transition is helped by the strong links the school has forged with them. A very effective careers education programme smoothes progress into Year 10 and the sixth form. Heads of year ensure that pupils are well informed about choice of subjects and that parents are closely involved. The strong, impartial, contribution of Connexions advisors is acknowledged by the school and its pupils.

30. A large number of the pupils who completed the questionnaire feel that the school is interested in their views. The school uses similar approaches to gauge pupils' views. The Head and his deputies are highly visible and readily approachable. The voice of the school council which draws its representatives from all tutor groups is heard. Pupils with special educational needs are involved in the annual review of their needs. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of pupils are good. Pupils act responsibly in their regular movement between the buildings, often without supervision, but the unmarked road crossing is a potential hazard.

Sixth form

31. Overall, sixth form students have satisfactory access to guidance and most are satisfied with the current provision. Subject teachers are largely responsible for reviewing progress on an individual basis and are generally well informed to do so. Students are involved in the Progress Review Day but the day-to-day role of tutors is unclear and their contribution in supporting students is limited. Subject teachers accept their role in giving guidance about university courses. Independent careers advice is available through Connexions. Some students, especially those who are not intending to move into higher education, feel that the school could do more to help them plan their future. Students have their own council which deals with social matters. A small number of Year 12 students have been trained to act as mentors and work with lower school tutor groups in Years 7 and 8. This and other involvement with younger pupils works to the mutual benefit of all involved and could usefully be extended.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Community links are good and steadily improving; links with parents, pupils and other schools are very good. As a result pupils' educational experience is both enriched and extended.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Developing effective partnerships is a clear priority.
 - Views of parents and pupils are regularly sought.
 - Pupils with special educational needs, including autistic children, benefit particularly from the partnerships the school has established.
 - The school is popular and over-subscribed. Many pupils travel a considerable distance to attend.
 - There are strong links with primary schools and local colleges.
 - There is an effective parents' association and school council.
 - Links with enterprise and commerce are being strengthened.
 - Reports for parents have been improved.
 - In spite of considerable efforts the school has not been able to form productive relationships with some distant parents, especially some of ethnic minority heritage.
32. Involving parents in the life of the school can sometimes be difficult as pupils come from 41 different primary schools in the area. The school works hard to overcome geographic and cultural barriers. They have, for example, held meetings in the community to make contact and seek ideas for improvement.
33. Contact with parents of pupils with special educational needs is exceptionally good. It may begin several years before pupils actually come to the school, when parents come to look round, and to prepare their children for their arrival. Staff from the two support units may be in daily contact with parents, perhaps through email between pupils' homes and the department, or often to teachers' homes, or using Dictaphones as a daily diary, or over the telephone. Reviews of progress are very often attended by parents. Each year, staff from both units also attend the parents' evenings.
34. A newsletter written in a lively newspaper style gives information and reports achievements, and is valued by parents and pupils. Each term parents receive a letter from the headteacher

by post, and contacts by telephone, visit or “pupil post” as necessary. Pupils’ planners work well to record homework and pass messages between parents and tutors. Parents report that they feel welcome in and are able to contact the school.

35. The content and depth of information in reports on pupils’ progress is now satisfactory, and has improved since the last inspection. Parents’ evenings are well attended; use of questionnaires has improved contact and understanding of needs.
36. The school collaborates with other education providers:
 - there are very good links with five main partner primary schools, pupils and staff regularly visit and are visited for:
 - ; lessons in a range of subjects such as technology, science and sport
 - ; sharing of specialist equipment and facilities;
 - ; staff training especially in technology subjects;
 - ; provision of technical support and expertise.
 - there are excellent transition arrangements for Year 7 pupils; parents and teachers make early contact;
 - there are effective working relationships with local colleges who receive pupils on both full and part time courses.
37. A variety of community contacts enable valuable experience and resources to be tapped:
 - educational networks particularly those relating to technology college status;
 - developing partnerships with local enterprise and business;
 - liaison with ethnic and religious groups across Sheffield;
 - use of school resources and expertise by others such as pupils from other schools, ICT lessons for the community.
38. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from many very good links with other establishments, from early contact with the schools they attended previously (twenty-three separate schools last year), to close links with the colleges, schools and places of employment that they may go to when they leave the school. The school organises a very good range and level of support through various outside connections such as the Health Service, Social Services and several employment agencies.
39. The school is clearly committed to working as a partner and draws from and contributes to a wide educational and social community, enriching the educational experience for all.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are very good. The head teacher’s excellent leadership, along with very strong support from governors and key staff, has ensured the continued direction and improvement of this very effective school. Management is good. In most ways governors are very effective. However, in respect of provision for religious education after Year 9 and collective worship the governing body is not fulfilling its statutory duties and governance is therefore unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher’s vision, energy and ambition for the school, shared by others, has helped bring about a very well balanced community that is both happy and high-achieving.
- The governing body is very effective at holding the school to account and in shaping its direction.
- Senior staff and those in other key positions work very well as a team and make a very strong contribution to the school’s leadership.
- Leadership is very successful at ensuring that all pupils are well integrated and fully included, and that staff are nurtured in their professional development.

- Governors have not yet fulfilled their duty to ensure that pupils of 14 to 18 receive the recommended time for religious education, or that the school carries out a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

40. The head teacher provides excellent leadership. His energy and drive, coupled with a clear, ambitious vision for the school, have helped bring about further improvements to a school that, at the time of the previous inspection, was already deemed to be good. There are several measures of this success. The school is unusual in having three key departments with lead department status, supporting other schools in the city. The exacting process of planning, funding and now carrying out the building of a brand-new school has been in large measure due to the head teacher's energy, amply shared and ably supported by the governors. Even more important than this, however, is the conviction that staff and pupils flourish best and achieve to their potential when they are happy, nurtured and well integrated. The year-on-year sustaining of good teaching by staff and high achievement by pupils, in spite of changes in their backgrounds and levels of attainment, testify to the success of this conviction. Relationships are excellent. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the school's leadership is that, in spite of pressures from many directions, these high standards have not been bought at the expense of good humour, mutual respect and a calm, balanced community. It is an enabling culture that builds confidence and self-esteem and in which learning flourishes.
41. The senior management team is a very effective body that shares the head teacher's vision and provides him with strong support. They are very good role models for both staff and pupils and have a strong approachable presence around the school. Close links between senior staff and middle managers are well established and ensure frequent dialogue between them. Heads of subject departments and pastoral leaders, too, provide very good leadership, reflecting and sharing the vision from the top. Through training and support from their "link" senior staff, these managers have become increasingly accountable for the performance of their areas of responsibility and the welfare of the staff they lead.
42. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. The leaders of each unit are very capable and effective and have clear views of what they are providing and how they would like it to develop. The long term planning for the pupil support base is very relevant to the needs of the pupils, and is very practical and well organised. For the resource for autistic pupils, the planning is more outward-looking to what pupils will be moving on to when they leave school into employment and perhaps into residential accommodation.
43. The governing body takes a very active role in the leadership of the school. Through the expert guidance they have given in planning the new school, and the strategic vision they bring to the school's financial and curricular development, governors have got to know the school well. As a result they are able to challenge as well as support senior managers. Relationships between them are very good. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, governors have not ensured that pupils from 14 to 18 receive the recommended time for religious education, or that the school carries out a daily act of collective worship. Governors take the view that collective worship is difficult to organize in a school where pupils are from such diverse religious backgrounds and staff are unwilling to participate themselves. They further feel that the part played by religious education in the personal and social education programme is sufficient. Inspectors had some sympathy with their views about worship given the high degree of inter-ethnic harmony they have achieved, but feel that it is within the school's capability to meet the requirements for religious education.
44. The school is well managed and runs efficiently. Particularly strong is the commitment of leadership to the training and professional development of staff. At the time of the inspection, for example, twelve staff in middle management posts were doing a two-year course in education management. The school has gained competence in analysing data and evaluating

its own performance. However, this expertise has not yet reached all heads of department and in some areas there is a lack of rigour in taking action on the strength of analysis of, for example, examination results. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress through the school and comparing their progress with their previous attainment are recent and not yet fully in place. The thorough review by senior staff of each subject area that takes place every other year is rigorous in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. In between these reviews, however, there is inconsistency of practice and all departments are not equally effective in their observation of teaching. It is now necessary to build on these strengths by encouraging heads of department to play a greater formal role in checking on the quality of teaching in their departments.

45. The school's finances are very well planned and controlled. Priorities for expenditure are closely related to educational objectives and bear directly on teaching and learning. There is, for example, much effective use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. Best value is properly sought in the purchase of goods and services. The school has accumulated a large reserve to fund the smooth transfer to a complete new building in the next financial year.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4117183	Balance from previous year	126478
Total expenditure	3879910	Balance carried forward to the next	237273
Expenditure per pupil	3257		

Sixth form

46. The success of the sixth form is in great part due to the excellent leadership and good management of senior staff. The expansion of the sixth form and the inclusion of courses to meet the changing intake to the school have been handled well. More vocational courses have been introduced. Day-to-day management is good.

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

GCSE **drama** was sampled. A very good lesson was seen with a large mixed ability Year 11 group. Pupils demonstrated above average skills that sprang from their excellent concentration. It is unfortunate that the state of the drama space, in particular the dirty floor, places a constraint on activity.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good overall. It engages pupils and ensures very good learning so that by Year 11 achievement is very good.
- Overall standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes are very good.
- A strong team of teachers with consistently high expectations and good knowledge of individuals ensures that pupils flourish in mixed ability classes.
- GCSE examination performance of boys in English and English literature, particularly in the higher grades of A* and A, is well above average.
- A number of department policies and attendant practices need updating to reflect the current composition of the school.
- Day-to-day monitoring of lessons is inadequate.
- Interpretation of test and examination data to analyse performance, inform practice and raise standards further is at an early stage of development and employment.
- Shortage of time for drama in Years 7 to 9 impedes learning.

Commentary

47. Standards in English are above average. This is reflected in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Standards on entry to Year 7 are broadly average though there are more pupils of well-above and well-below average standards and fewer of middle ability than is usual. This is evident in Year 7, but work seen throughout the school shows a gradual improvement. This is particularly noticeable in Years 10 and 11 and represents very good achievement. 2003 figures for GCSE English and literature indicate a steep fall in girls' attainment, particularly at grade B, but this is not borne out in current work and reflects the relative standards of boys and girls in that year when they entered the school.
48. Pupils listen very well. They are keen to answer questions and seek clarification. As they progress through the school they handle difficult concepts in literature with increasing confidence and many employ above-average analytical skills. In their writing pupils demonstrate increasing enjoyment of language and the confidence to experiment.
49. The quality of teaching is a great strength of a department that caters well for pupils with a wide range of abilities, backgrounds and needs. Relationships are very good. Teachers display very good subject knowledge. They are ambitious for their pupils who progress well in the supportive atmosphere. Pupils are appropriately challenged, made to think deeply and to justify their ideas. Lessons are characterised by planning which consolidates previous learning and tests understanding. Timing is taut and the range of activities engaging. Resources, many devised by the teachers, are imaginative and enable pupils to grapple with difficult concepts and emerge triumphant at the end of lessons.

50. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour, particularly in Years 10 and 11, contribute to their very good achievement. In the work seen there was no evidence of different standards between boys and girls. Classroom organisation and the style of teaching results in pupils being engrossed in their work and allows boys to flourish alongside girls. A number of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue spoke of their progress with pride. At its best marking is detailed, encouraging, supportive, probing and challenging. It is one of the factors that contribute to the very good achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Although pupils are aware of their current standards and targets they have insufficient understanding of what the actual grades and levels mean.
51. Leadership and management in English are satisfactory. The department functions well as a team. Much good practice stems from the implementation of the Literacy Strategy. To ensure further progress the head of department must address some fundamental issues. Many policies date from 1998 when the intake of the school was very different. Systematic use of assessment data is yet to be embedded into practice. Procedures are needed to monitor day-to-day classroom practice (for example homework and individual reading in Year 7).
52. Problems of access restrict the use of ICT. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from good teaching by specialist drama teachers. They achieve well in drama but timetable constraints result in large gaps of time between blocks of lessons and the consequent need to relearn skills.
53. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. There was a sharp fall in the 1999 National Curriculum tests followed by a gradual climb that has always been above the national trend. With the exception of the proportion of A-C literature grades in 2003 results at GCSE have continued above or broadly in line with the national average. Many of the problems noted in the last inspection report have been addressed but there is still need for improvement in some areas of leadership and management.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. The provision to support and develop literacy and language skills across the curriculum is good. It will be very good once the policies and procedures that are in various stages of trial and development are thoroughly embedded. Co-ordination is very effective and dynamic. There is a strong and supportive cross curricular working party which has set itself challenging, but achievable, medium and long term aims. Its impact and influence are obvious in a number of subject areas. Of particular note is geography where much good practice is in evidence. Other areas, which make good contributions to literacy and language development are science, design technology and PE where particular attention is paid to subject-specific vocabulary.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory** overall. In French, provision is satisfactory; in German it is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of younger pupils are very well behaved and enjoy learning a language because of strong lively teaching.
- Standards at GCSE, especially in German, have been too low in past years.
- A significant amount of teaching in Years 10 and 11 lacks challenge and pace. As a result too many pupils are underachieving.
- The department currently lacks vision and unity of purpose.

Commentary

55. In 2003 GCSE results in French were equal to the national average and a little better than in 2002. High-attaining pupils, as many boys as girls, gained an above-average number of grades A* and A. Results in German were very low and reflected the disappointing performance of pupils in German over the past few years.
56. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are similar to the national average in French and German. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Most pupils are good at listening and understand the language well because they hear it spoken frequently in the classroom. Where teaching is engaging and encourages pupils to practise speaking, many speak with unusually good accent and pronunciation. However, higher-attainers in French are not as far forward in speaking and writing as they should be. They are not yet confident in using both past and future tenses and the teaching they receive does not challenge them enough. Pupils with learning needs and those from homes where English is an additional language achieve as well as the others.
57. In Year 11, standards are in line with the average in French and below in German. Too many pupils, especially those of average attainment, are underachieving because they have lost interest. This applies more to boys than to girls. These pupils have too little opportunity to be active in their learning and as a result their capacity to speak the language, particularly German, is limited. By contrast, higher-attaining pupils are achieving satisfactorily in German as well as in French. Their written coursework shows signs of a mature grasp of the language and an understanding of grammar and word order. At their best a few of these pupils are on track for high grades and their achievement reflects the more rigorous teaching they receive.
58. Teaching and learning overall are unsatisfactory, though better in the younger years than in Years 10 and 11. Half of the teaching, however, is good, occasionally excellent. Teachers speak their language very well and use it nearly all the time and some with real sensitivity. The best teaching is planned to give pupils every opportunity to practise their French or German through repetition and pair-work. In this context the electronic whiteboard is used to very colourful effect. In such lessons pupils learn well and with real enjoyment because their interest is caught and they are active in their learning. Too much of the teaching is lacklustre and slow moving with little variety of method or change of pace. In these lessons pupils lose interest and are quietly inattentive. They learn too little because they are passive and unengaged. Marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging, but is not always rigorous in insisting on correction or pointing pupils towards how they can improve. Homework, also, is too often unspecific or undemanding for pupils who work fast.
59. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. Over the past years the school has made a number of attempts to halt the decline in the department's effectiveness. Most notably, the recent promotion of a teacher to the post of second in the department is beginning to bear fruit. The very good links between the head of department and senior staff ensure frequent communication and support. At the heart of the department's under-performance, however, is a lack of unity and teamwork, which has eroded morale and prevented the whole-hearted tackling of important initiatives aimed at raising standards. The location of a single teacher on a different site undermines the head of department's ability to draw staff together.
60. For these reasons the department has not done enough to check that teaching is effective, or to enrich and extend pupils' experience of languages through the use of ICT, reading for pleasure and extra-curricular activities. As a result, inadequate teaching goes unchallenged and languages are not seen by many older pupils as important or enjoyable. These factors have all contributed to a relative decline in modern languages since the previous inspection. However, the good work happening in the younger years and the determination of key staff to reverse this decline bode well for the department's potential to improve in the future.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Very strong relationships between teachers and pupils create a strong learning ethos.
- The mathematics department is a cohesive and strong team and is very well led.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.

Commentary

61. Test results in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were well above average and the examination results at the end of Year 11 were above average. Examples of work seen in the classroom and in exercise books were well above average. Boys' attainment is higher than girls' attainment and has been for the past few years. In the 2003 GCSE examinations the gap between boys' results and girls' results was very clear. Predictions based on mock examinations show that the gap is likely to narrow in this year's examinations but that boys' results are still likely to exceed girls' results.
62. All pupils achieve very well. The significant difference between boys' and girls' performances in 2003 reflects the difference in standards between boys and girls on entry to the school five years earlier. At that time, boys had already reached a higher standard than girls. This gap in attainment widened considerably over the five years at the school but girls still achieved well. Boys' achievement was very good. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve similarly to others. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as all other pupils, due to very good teaching in Years 9 to 11 where class sizes are small. Gifted and talented pupils are also helped by the effective setting arrangements, allowing for strong top sets, especially in Years 9 to 11. Their achievement is also very good.
63. The high quality of teaching is a major strength of the department. High expectations of pupils and high intellectual help create a very strong work ethos. Teachers use very effective question and answer sessions to draw all pupils into the lesson, allowing them to show their learning. Lessons are well planned and proceed at a good pace. Pupils are stimulated by this effective and involving teaching and they develop very good relationships with teachers. As a result, their attitudes to learning are very strong, and learning in most lessons is very good. Learning is reinforced effectively by homework.
64. The leadership of the department is very good. The recent focus of staff development has been on the spread of best practice throughout the department, with teachers working in pairs observing each other's lessons. This allows for discussion about effective teaching strategies and aids development of teaching. The effect has been to create a strong and cohesive department, whose members are confident classroom performers. In this respect the head of department is a very good role model for other staff.
65. The management of the department is good, with routine administration and organisation handled well. The development plan is appropriate and the schemes of work are clear. The monitoring, assessment and tracking of pupils needs to be improved. Currently, the assessment of pupils is no better than satisfactory and the provision of a central records system that allows the effective tracking of pupils' progress is at an early stage of development. Marking of work, whilst thorough, is routine and does not relate to National Curriculum levels. The use of key mathematical words needs to be improved. Key words are displayed on only a few classroom walls and scant reference is made to them in lessons. There is little use of computers in mathematics lessons and this situation is unsatisfactory. However, the use of calculators in lessons is appropriate and good use is made of electronic whiteboards in the classrooms where they are installed. Reports to parents, although thorough, need sharper targets to help pupils to improve.
66. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has maintained high standards in examination results and has made considerable improvements to teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. The use of mathematics and numeracy in other departments is good. There is a cross-curricular numeracy policy in place, instigated two years ago, and it is having a positive effect on learning. The development work in those departments where numeracy is a necessary part of the curriculum is good. In geography pupils analyse and display data correctly and they confidently use map scales and co-ordinates. In science, numeracy is well structured; pupils display data in different ways and they rearrange formulae. In business studies pupils are confident in the appropriate use of percentages. In ICT there has been development work in spreadsheets and the subsequent use of data display for younger pupils. Older pupils confidently use more advanced formulae for example, in profit and loss calculations.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress.
- Very good enthusiastic teaching results in very good learning.
- Pupils' positive attitude to work makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- Leadership of the subject is excellent.
- Teaching methods do not always meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Marking of written work in Years 10 and 11 does not give pupils sufficient information on how to improve their work.

Commentary

68. Results in both the national tests at age 14 and GCSE have steadily improved over the last few years. Standards at age 14 are well above the national average and when compared to similar schools, pupils' achievement is excellent. Pupils' overall standard at GCSE is above average and their achievement is very good when compared to similar schools. Standards seen during the inspection reflect these results.
69. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the age range. Teaching is particularly good in Years 7 to 9 and three excellent lessons were observed with these pupils. The new national teaching and learning initiative in Years 7 to 9 is being implemented very effectively and is stimulating pupils to work hard. Lessons are imaginative and focused. Teachers' explanations are clear and lessons are well planned with a variety of practical activities so that pupils' concentration is maintained.
70. Pupils are generally challenged to think about their science. In an excellent Year 9 lesson in which pupils were doing research projects on the environment the teacher constantly questioned pupils on the meaning and reliability of their evidence stimulating them to a deeper understanding of the scientific method of working.
71. Teachers manage their classes very well and pupils' behaviour is good. Good opportunities are provided to develop pupils' independent learning skills. Pupils are very positive about science and want to do well. In spite of teachers' encouragement and support, however, pupils are not as responsive as they could be in volunteering answers to teachers' questions. This has a negative effect on their progress and is particularly true of girls in mixed classes. The department has recognised this and has introduced separate boys' and girls' groups in Year 9 to raise achievement.
72. In a few lessons in the lower school, teachers do not match resources and activities well enough to meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Where tasks are the same for

pupils of all attainment levels, the higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and, in consequence, make insufficient progress. Opportunities are sometimes missed to review the lesson aims at the end of the lesson to give both teacher and pupils an assessment of what has been learnt. Marking of written work in Years 10 and 11 does not motivate pupils since there are few comments that show pupils how to improve by indicating where more depth or detail is necessary.

73. Pupils' investigative skills are good and are developed in a systematic way. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 can describe and interpret patterns in their results and evaluate their reliability. Lower-attaining pupils find it difficult to use their scientific knowledge to explain the patterns and lack accuracy when recording measurements. Literacy skills are developed well in science with good stress on the correct use of scientific terminology and opportunities for creative extended writing. Numeracy skills are well taught with the structured development of graphical skills. ICT is used effectively to motivate pupils and whiteboard technology is being well developed to enhance learning.
74. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from the integrated resource centre, receive good support. When learning support assistants are present these pupils make the same progress as other pupils. In some lessons in Year 7 and 8 when there was no extra support pupils struggled to keep up with the rest of the class. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils. A wide variety of teaching styles is used and this results in boys and girls achieving equally. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with a wealth of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities, and are well challenged in lessons.
75. A policy of continual improvement has resulted in very good progress since the last inspection. Assessment is used effectively to monitor and improve pupil achievement. Curriculum leadership is excellent and often inspirational. The head of department has a very clear vision of making science enjoyable, which is communicated with enthusiasm. As a result a very high proportion of pupils choose to study science courses in the sixth form. She has an excellent understanding of teaching and learning and has used innovative strategies to raise standards. Results are analysed and then appropriate steps are taken to improve achievement. Management of the subject is very good. More sharing of good practice would provide greater consistency across the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**. The use of ICT to promote learning across the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality of teaching combines with pupils' excellent attitudes and motivation to sustain good levels of achievement.
- There is good measured achievement at the end of Year 9, while GCSE results are well above national averages.
- Good implementation of the national Key Stage 3 strategy is laying a strong skill foundation and has led to demonstrable improvement in the quality of work.
- This is a well-managed department, where teachers work co-operatively and supportively - making also a strong contribution to ICT work and technical support in partner primary schools.
- In some lessons, there is a need to strike a better balance between teachers' input and pupils' engagement.
- There is extensive use of ICT across the curriculum (particularly interactive whiteboards), which contributes to children's learning and achievement.
- The systematic analysis of data does not yet adequately contribute to evaluation, planning or target setting.
- Teaching accommodation is generally unsatisfactory, and that on one site is squalid.

Commentary

76. Standards are very good. GCSE results are well above national averages, both in pass rates and the number of high grades achieved. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11 the percentage of high grades suggests gifted and talented pupils are reaching their potential. There is good achievement at the end of Year 9 as measured by teachers' assessments. However, there is some disparity in the most recent year between results for boys and girls, with boys' grades substantially above average.
77. Achievement is good and improving at all levels. Pupils enter school with a wide variety of prior attainment: by the end of Year 9, results in ICT are in line with their other subjects, and well above national averages - representing very good achievement. The accumulated work stored electronically is good, combining input from core subjects with strong ICT and presentational skills. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties. Some of the coursework folders for younger pupils, however, (particularly Year 8) suggest a lack of productivity by some pupils in earlier parts of the course.
78. Teaching and learning are good in all years. This effective learning derives from teaching that is well prepared, uses imaginatively developed materials and creates opportunities to develop higher order skills of research, hypothesising, analysis, interpretation and debate. Increasingly good implementation of the national Key Stage Three strategy has underpinned a strong foundation of achievement. Pupils respond well to their teachers' obvious respect and affection for them, while staff commitment extends to having ICT rooms open at lunchtimes and after school on both sites, either for drop in sessions or for extension activities with more able pupils. Staff have worked very hard to make deplorably bad accommodation as welcoming and attractive as possible. Good curriculum planning pays attention to the needs of different groups (boys and girls, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, children with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented) to ensure that materials meet the needs of those diverse groups. In some lessons, however, there is a need to strike a better balance between teachers' input and pupils' own initiative. Practice in assessment is satisfactory.
79. Leadership and management are good. This is a well-managed department. Individual teachers work extremely hard in the production of materials, which are generously shared among colleagues and create a strong common foundation. Close attention is given to legal, health and safety and procedural aspects of ICT use, with protocols to ensure safe use of the system. The departmental development plan is strongly focused on achievement and professional development. Systems are underdeveloped for monitoring performance data, reviewing patterns and taking action. Teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory and classroom seating (plastic laboratory stools) is unsuitable for children spending extended periods at computer terminals.
80. Progress since the previous inspection is good and standards have improved. Other features of the department include strong community provision, with primary schools using computer suites during the summer external examination period, and King Ecgbert staff involved during the year both in technical and curriculum support. As a regional training centre for ICT, the school has now moved on to the next phase of training teachers in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. The use of ICT to promote learning across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils use computers in word processing, presentation, the design and making of artefacts, manipulation of sounds or data and for analysis of information. In science spreadsheets are used to analyse information from data capture and data logging. The school has invested extensively in whiteboard technology, both in hardware and in staff training. The laptops for teachers scheme has been effectively used, and many staff use them in lesson preparation, notes, schemes of work, PowerPoint presentations and internet based research. The school recognises a number of departments are short of workstations and staff report difficulty in gaining access to bookable ICT rooms. Provision for ICT in art is poor because of difficulties of access to enough computers.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good** and improving rapidly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9, currently average, are rising.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of boys in the most recent GCSE examination was very good.
- Leadership is very strong and new management systems are being put in place.
- Good teaching catches pupils' interest. Well-planned lessons drive learning.
- The needs of the least able pupils in some Year 7 to 9 classes are not always met.

Commentary

82. Map skills and an understanding of where places are, are revisited early in Year 7 to fill any gaps in previous learning. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average. Enquiry exercises, often involving ICT for research, enable a number to reach Level 8. These pupils have achieved very well. Pupils have a good understanding of place and use terminology appropriately. They can explain, for example, why earthquakes occur and why their effects are often more serious in underdeveloped countries.
83. GCSE pupils achieve well. Standards generally are rising. The 2002 results were average. In the most recent year, nearly a fifth achieved A* grades. Boys, who make up the majority of the GCSE entry, do better than girls reflecting, to some extent, their higher attainment on entry. The small number of low grades points to the effectiveness of strategies for accommodating the least able and those with special needs.
84. Pupils enjoy geography and contribute readily in lessons because they find them interesting. Teachers make good use of local examples, case studies and short video extracts. Lessons move at a brisk pace. Learning is driven both by the high expectations of teachers and the relaxed and often humorous atmosphere which prevails. Teachers and pupils get on well together.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, where there is the widest range of ability, some teaching has not yet fully come to terms with meeting the needs of all pupils especially where the teacher leads the learning. Most lessons, however, are well planned with sufficient variety and opportunity for pupils to think for themselves. Members of a Year 8 class, for example, became newspaper reporters and devised their own questions so they knew what they were looking for in a video clip of favelas. As a result, their subsequent writing was well informed. They posed eagerly for the "press photographer" assuming roles with conviction, revealing the extent to which their knowledge of life in Rio de Janeiro had been enhanced. The key to very effective learning here was the planning behind the lesson and its structure. The open-ended tasks served the needs of all pupils and the teacher had the time to focus his support. A Year 10 lesson comparing third world cities drew on the knowledge of a pupil recently arrived from Islamabad and gave him confidence as well as help in making his contribution in English.
86. Leadership is very strong. A new leader has brought drive and commitment. His enthusiasm and eagerness to drive up standards are bringing the teaching staff together as a team. He is putting in place the management structures which will help him achieve his aim. In Year 7, for example, new assessment procedures are giving pupils a clear idea of how well they are doing and how to improve. Elsewhere, pupils are not always sure about their progress and targets. The link between marking and National Curriculum levels is vague. Attractive and stimulating

displays, largely of pupils' work, brighten the tired but well equipped accommodation. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and often very good teaching leads to good achievement by pupils.
- Boys' performance at GCSE is very good.
- The subject is a very popular option choice at GCSE.
- Innovation has significantly improved assessment.
- Pupils' speaking skills are not systematically developed.
- Hurried conclusions to some lessons do not effectively reinforce what has been learned.
- Boys are sometimes allowed to dominate question and answer sessions.

Commentary

87. The standard reached by most pupils towards the end of Year 11 is above average. Overall boys do better than girls. In the most recent GCSE examination, girls' results were lower than in previous years but boys' results were better than girls' and well above the national average for boys. These are particularly commendable results since the proportion of the year group entered for the examination is significantly higher than the national average. These better-than-average standards are attained by a combination of good teaching and pupils' enthusiasm and commitment. Well-planned examination preparation is particularly helpful to boys and is one reason why their results are so good.
88. Most pupils are able to write clearly and with confidence about historical events and can analyse historical sources. Boys are generally more confident than girls in forming and expressing judgements, both in writing and orally. Girls are not as confident as boys in answering questions in lessons though the responses of both boys and girls are often brief and lack detail.
89. The achievement of most pupils is good. Well-planned lessons, adapted materials and study aids help pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language to make progress and their achievement is good. The tasks that are set challenge higher attaining pupils to draw on a wide range of information in their answers and their achievement is good.
90. The standard reached by most pupils in Year 9 is above the national average. This is because good and often very good teaching helps them to evaluate sources critically, and organise and present information with clarity. In written work the standard reached by girls is generally higher than boys because of more careful attention to detail and presentation.
91. Good lesson planning and effective support for individuals encourages pupils who have English as a second language and those who have special educational needs to play a full part in lessons and their achievement is good. Higher-attaining pupils produce work of an appropriate standard and their achievement is satisfactory.
92. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge; lessons engage pupils' interest and challenge them to think historically. Careful attention is paid to individual needs in planning lessons and, when available, good use made of teaching assistants. This helps pupils who have difficulties in reading and writing to participate fully in lessons and is why they make better-than-expected progress. In some lessons pupils' responses are brief and teachers do not always take advantage of pupils' good subject knowledge to develop their speaking skills; fewer girls than boys respond in question-and-

answer sessions and teachers do not always compensate for this. The plenary session at the close of lessons is often too brief to be effective.

93. Leadership is very good. Development targets focus on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Enthusiastic involvement in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has focused on assessment and assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Management is good. There has been improvement since the last inspection in planning for Years 7 to 9, assessment and the use of information technology.

Religious education

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 and in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.
- Standards reached by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well below average.
- Achievement by most pupils in Years 10 and 11 is poor.
- Assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 does not set clear targets for improvement.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 provides good opportunities for pupils to respond to religion.
- The subject makes a distinctive contribution to pupils' development in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

94. The standard reached by a majority of pupils in Year 11 is well below average. This is because insufficient time is allocated to the subject for them to meet the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. A small number of pupils are entered for the GCSE. Results are well below the national average for both boys and girls, though girls' results are better than boys'. The achievement of these pupils, however, is good, many of them doing better in religious studies than in most of their other subjects.
95. The standard attained by most pupils in Year 9 meets the expectations of the agreed syllabus. This is because good teaching gives them a basic knowledge of the key features of the religions they study. Though many have difficulties with explaining some of the ideas they discuss in written form, in oral and creative responses they show good understanding. They respond particularly well when required to express their response to religion in imaginative ways. For example, board games which explore Hindu beliefs and group projects on belief in life after death stimulate high levels of interest and application by pupils and enhance their understanding of religion. The standard reached by girls is generally higher than that of boys and this is particularly the case in the examination groups. This is because girls' written work is more detailed and better presented than boys'.
96. Pupils' prior knowledge of religion is very varied. Most make clear progress in their knowledge of religion during Years 7 to 9 and their achievement is satisfactory. Well-planned lessons and the use of adapted learning materials help pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language to make progress and their achievement is good. Many of the tasks set enable higher-attaining pupils to work at a faster pace and their achievement is satisfactory.
97. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Lessons are planned well and teachers use a variety of methods to engage pupils' interest and help them make progress in their understanding of religion. Pupils' written work is regularly checked, but the quality of marking is inconsistent and pupils are not always given clear guidance on how to improve. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the examination groups. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but occasional boisterous behaviour by boys reduces the effectiveness of lessons. Assessment in the examination groups is good and clearly indicates how pupils may improve. Teaching in non-examination groups is good,

though pupils are hindered from making the progress of which they are capable because of insufficient background knowledge of the issues raised.

98. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 meets statutory requirements. Too little time is allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form for it to meet statutory requirements. Overall the subject makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils aged 11 to 14. Unsatisfactory provision prevents it from making a significant contribution to the development of older pupils. Leadership is good and focused on developing the subject within current constraints of time. Management is good. Good support is given by the head of department to other teachers of the subject and the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is well-planned.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in Design and Technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average and pupils achieve well.
- There are weaknesses in pupils' understanding of materials in the resistant materials course in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality of teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Pupils do not use computers enough in presenting their work.
- Very good use is made of computers for teaching and learning in electronics lessons.

Commentary

99. Standards of attainment are above average by Year 9 and Year 11. GCSE results have been consistently above average over the last three years. This is a consequence of good teaching and of pupils' interest and willingness to learn. The attainment of girls is well above the national average for grades A* to C in GCSE examinations and for boys is above average. In relation to their prior attainment pupils' achievement is good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 learn to follow the design process rigorously and use a wide range of tools and materials. They are now learning about the materials used and so understand the work better. This helps them to make informed decisions when planning their work. Pupils develop good drawing skills which enable them to communicate ideas effectively and efficiently. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well in most materials areas because teachers plan work to match the needs of different pupils. In resistant materials lessons, however, older pupils do not know enough about the materials they use or associated environmental issues. This makes them more dependent on the teacher for guidance when planning their work and restricts opportunities for them to work independently. In electronics lessons, pupils achieve very highly and have very good problem-solving skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all materials areas because they are well supported by teachers and learning support assistants and work is planned to match their needs. In a textiles lesson, pupils from the autistic unit were very well integrated and achieving highly because of their own high levels of motivation and the support of staff and pupils.
100. The quality of teaching is mostly good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and have kept up to date with developments in the subject. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and despite the uninspiring accommodation, particularly in product design and graphics, they excite and motivate pupils when they are designing.

Example of outstanding practice

A class of higher-attaining Year 9 pupils achieved exceptionally well in an excellent lesson that combined product analysis with learning about design history. By studying the historical development of table lamp design pupils were steered away from imagery common to their peer group, such as mobile phones, football and flowers. This resulted in significantly increased creativity when they began to design their own products. Pupils worked in small groups to discuss images of design classics in terms of when they were made, what materials were used and why. Each group then arranged a series of photographs of table lamps in date order, ranging from 1910 to 1992. During the whole-class discussion that followed, pupils made excellent progress with learning about the work of famous designers and the properties and use of old and current materials and design concepts. The teacher then led the class to consider modern designs and demonstrated the use of polypropylene to create simple and unique styles. In pairs, pupils then began work on their own table lamp designs. Throughout the lesson pupils were completely absorbed in the work. Information on lighting was from the design museum and images were downloaded from the Internet.

101. Pupils learn effectively because new work is clearly explained and techniques for practical work are effectively demonstrated. In the best lessons, teachers integrate theory and practical work so that pupils understand the work better and remember it. Teachers plan lessons with time targets so that no time is wasted. Pupils respond by working hard and maintaining good levels of concentration.
102. ICT is not used enough elsewhere because there are not enough computers. A consequence of this is that pupils do not have enough opportunities to research and present information at times most appropriate to enhance their learning. In some lessons, work for different groups of pupils could be more precisely targeted. Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts teaching and learning styles in some rooms.
103. The department is well led and managed jointly by two temporary heads of department. They have earned the respect and co-operation of teachers in the department. The good quality of technician support in both the food and textiles and the resistant materials areas, helps with the smooth running of the department. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Good standards have been maintained with more pupils now achieving higher grades in tests and examinations. Courses and planned work have kept pace with developments in the subject and match pupils' needs and interests.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving.
- Teaching of drawing and painting is good in Years 7 to 9 and achievement is very good.
- The leadership of the department is good.
- ICT is used well.
- Sketchbooks are not used to develop ideas and pupils are not taught to draw for different purposes.

Commentary

104. GCSE results are average. In the most recent year girls' results were well below average while boys' were well above. Few gained the highest grades. These results were similar to those at the last inspection.
105. Current work is good and improving. Year 8 portraits from photographs of themselves, painted in the manner of Seurat, and Year 9 drawings and mono-prints of fruit are well above average.

Sketchbooks are mainly used for finished work rather than to investigate methods and materials. There is no evidence of computer generated imagery. Recognising the pupils' previous experiences of art and their impressive response to the challenging work, achievements by the end of Year 9 are very good. The work in Year 11 is average. Year 11 pupils rely on their teachers for guidance more than is usual. Most drawing is seen as another way of making a picture rather than to record particular information. What little annotation is in the pupils' work is usually descriptive rather than evaluative. This inability to draw well or evaluate their work is limiting achievement. The most able use sketchbooks well and employ a variety of materials for different solutions in their work. The achievement of these pupils is good. Teachers know their pupils well and those who are least able, or those of minority ethnic heritage, also make satisfactory progress. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys' and girls' work.

106. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good and often very good, especially the teaching of basic skills. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory and often good. There are inconsistencies and some classes prefer imagery taken from books rather than from first-hand observations. Attitudes are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and link pupils' work with that of famous artists and the ancient Inca gods or Remembrance Day demonstrating the artist's capacity to portray emotion. Pupils and lessons are very well managed and planned. Lesson endings are sometimes hurried without any review of learning. Too many lessons are marked by pupils without sketchbooks.
107. The head of department has been in post for a short time but his leadership has resulted in strong teamwork and quickly-rising standards. Management is satisfactory and the monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour. Departmental planning requires further detail. The use of assessment to set targets and drive progress forward is not yet effective. There are very good extra-curricular opportunities, including a project with an artist-in-residence to design a stained glass window. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory. The difficulty accessing computers makes delivery of the National Curriculum impossible for Years 7 to 9. The lack of equipment for processes such as printmaking is slowing pupils' learning. Two of the rooms are cramped and display space is scarce.
108. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards are rising while the more able now attain well in Years 7 to 9. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement has closed and attitudes are now good. Extra-curricular opportunities are now very good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and very good teaching and learning are leading to good achievement.
- Pupils enjoy practical music making.
- Extra-curricular work enhances school life and trips abroad enrich pupils' social and cultural experience.
- Leadership of the department and the commitment of teachers are very good.
- Analysing results and using this information is not rigorously applied yet to help raise standards further.

Commentary

109. Pupils enjoy music. They like playing the keyboards and other instruments in lessons and are vocal about wanting to do this. Pupils are studying GCSE music in good numbers. About 150 pupils learn instruments. Pupils take part in extra-curricular music and are highly committed. They have played in Paris and Barcelona. Music plays an important role in the life of the school, due to very energetic and dynamic leadership of the department. The department has experienced a turbulent time since the last inspection because of several changes in teaching

personnel. Although most judgements made this time match the judgements at the last inspection there has been good recent improvement, ensured by the current leadership and commitment of both teachers. Departmental management is good. Analysing information from assessment and from results is beginning to have an effect for GCSE music and standards are rising well. Standards need to be analysed and reviewed in Years 7 to 9 to enable teachers to plan for improvements here also.

110. Standards in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. Performance is the strongest component. Students also compose well and their listening skills are improving with regular practice. Examinations results are improving. Standards in Year 9 are average. Most pupils at this stage play keyboards and other instruments confidently. When they play together in small groups most pupils listen carefully with good awareness of each other. A few really listen well and with a natural sense of rhythm play musically together.
111. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. When the emphasis is on practical work learning is particularly good. Pupils receive very good support from teachers when playing instruments. Those with special needs and those whose first language is not English are provided with very good materials to ensure they learn. Their understanding is regularly checked. Those who are more able and gifted in music are also given work which challenges them. Teachers use good question and answer sessions to check on understanding. Questions are often directed at particular pupils to enable teachers to reinforce information. All pupils' needs are catered for. During the inspection pupils in Years 7 to 9 were starting new topics. In these lessons pupils spent a long time on desk-bound activities. Although behaviour was very good, and the teacher's explanations very clear, concentration flagged, only to revive again when practical work started.
112. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work hard because of well-established routines. The lessons are conducted at a very good pace. Pupils listen attentively and teachers' directed questions assist this. Pupils trust their teachers' evident expertise and know they will be well supported in lessons. Teaching and directing in choirs, bands and the orchestra are highly proficient and challenging. Pupils rise to the challenge and learn very well.
113. Pupils are able to quote their National Curriculum levels with targets for future work. Some are unclear what these mean and discussion about the quality of their work is not apparent during, or at the conclusion of lessons. Pupils need to become familiar with what is required of them through regular discussion and listening to others' performances.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards achieved in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Teachers are specialists, are very competent in their areas of work and develop positive and respectful relationships with pupils.
- There is a strong extra - curricular programme, including links to local clubs, facilities and use of external coaches.
- Lessons are carefully planned and tailored to match pupils' learning needs.
- There is not always sufficient challenge in all core practical lessons for more able pupils.
- There is not always joint planning of lessons delivered by outside coaches.
- Pupils' targets, linked to National Curriculum levels and to learning outcomes, need to be better developed.
- Listening skills of mainly younger pupils need further development..

Commentary

114. Standards reached in physical education are above those expected nationally by the end of Years 9 and 11. There is a good number of gifted and talented pupils who achieve county, regional or national recognition. In 2003, GCSE results were well above the national average. A high percentage of pupils attained higher grades. Achievement is good.
115. Pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in lessons but the inadequate number of specialist teaching areas does impact negatively on pupils' progress and standards. Pupils with different needs and from different backgrounds make similar progress. A dance session challenged Year 9 girls to produce work of a very good standard and a health-related fitness session challenged Year 11 girls to develop their aerobic fitness. The use of external coaches complements the work of teachers and raises motivation, engagement and achievement. Pupils are given very good opportunities to undertake evaluating, coaching and officiating roles from an early age.
116. Teaching and learning is good overall with some very good and excellent teaching. All teachers are specialists and are well deployed to deliver to their strengths. Lessons, with a few exceptions, are well planned and structured but lessons delivered by outside coaches are not jointly planned with the class teacher. Learning objectives are important, pupils are well organised between the different lesson phases and time is well used. Teachers have positive but respectful relationships with pupils, who are, in the main, self-regulating with kit, self-disciplined and want to learn and enjoy lessons. However, sometimes pupils are too noisy whilst working in practical areas and the listening skills of some pupils needs further work. Pupils are helped very well to improve and to know how to improve skills through progressive practises, for example, dodging and tackling in hockey. Developing pupils' knowledge and understanding is a very strong feature of teaching; Year 11 pupils learn about sponsorship and the media and all skills-teaching includes tactics and rules. Teachers' expectations of the level of pupils' work is consistently high but in a few lessons, basketball for example, more able pupils do not make sufficient progress because work is insufficiently challenging. In examination theory lessons teachers are skilled at questioning pupils to challenge passive learners and promote thinking.
117. Leadership and management are very good. Staff are ambitious for the subject and there is a clear vision and focus on teaching and learning. The department is very efficiently and effectively managed with the help of the wider PE staff. New units of work need to be written and updated in content and format as the curriculum is further developed. Monitoring of lessons is established but there is insufficient opportunity to share good practice. Assessment is well used to inform curriculum planning but pupil targets linked to levels and learning outcomes require further development. The department makes effective use of ICT, especially digital video for movement analysis and PowerPoint presentations.
118. The school provides an excellent programme of extra – curricular activities, including outdoor and adventurous activities, skiing and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. A significant number of staff give freely of their time. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and standards achieved. There are good links with local clubs and facilities and the school has a full complement of sports teams. Accommodation for the subject is poor in every respect. Since the last inspection standards have improved at both key stages and GCSE has been successfully established.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and help pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils are caring and empathetic and very good relationships are evident in lessons.
- The scheme of work is interesting and challenging.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in school activities, but insufficient to help them develop their skills of involvement and participation.
- The assessment strategy is not formulated sufficiently well to help pupils know their strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

119. Pupils are reaching average standards in Year 9 and Year 11. Their achievement is good. In Year 9 pupils know and understand what punishment is for and how it aims to deter and reform offenders. In Year 10 pupils show some understanding of the legal system. They talk knowledgeably about the age that certain activities become legal. They question the fairness and appropriateness of these, sometimes with considerable insight and where appropriate good humour. Very good relationships between pupils and with their teachers shine through such moments. Year 11 understand how the environment should be cared for to conserve resources and how pollution can start a chain of events which ultimately damage the ecosystem. Year 11 also have a shrewd idea of themselves and their attitudes to money. Pupils are caring and empathise with others who are in different circumstances to themselves. All pupils in the school take part in a sponsored walk and in a 'Charity Week'. All Year 7 to 9 pupils participate in 'Christmas Cracker', a school-based activity. All these events raise money for a variety of charities.
120. Teaching and learning in lessons are good overall. The best lessons are enjoyable, informative, challenging and entertaining, particularly debates and discussions. Pupils are fully engaged. They hold firm opinions which most are anxious to express articulately. Pupils are skilfully handled by the teachers, who steer and guide discussions with considerable skill in order to help pupils reflect and empathise with others. Teachers challenge pupils with ideas, promoting different points of view and helping them to clarify their attitudes. They skilfully draw in pupils who are not particularly vocal. In all cases such actions produced worthwhile comments and observations from the pupils. Teachers know their subject well and some teachers enhance their lessons with good presentations using white board technology. There are good opportunities for individual work such as research using a variety of sources. In group work pupils bring their own experience and ideas to bear on the discussion but admit that they are frequently prompted to adjust their own opinions in the light of what is said.
121. The leadership of the department is very good. It is innovative and creative. Pupils now have dedicated citizenship lessons in rotation with PSHE. There are organised opportunities for pupils to hear from members of the police, fire service, local clergy and other community based institutions. The management of the department is currently satisfactory. The co-ordinator is responsible for a good and very comprehensive scheme of work which is interesting and challenging. The strategy for assessing pupils' work is not yet sufficiently developed to be totally effective in informing them of their strengths and weaknesses. More opportunities need to be planned for involving pupils in their own research and appropriate class or school based activities. There are however, extra-curricular activities in addition to these. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is very popular and involves very good numbers of pupils. Pupils in the school take the Sports Leadership Award. There is also a school council.

Personal social and health education (PSHE)

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the programme generally meets requirements, lack of time means that the religious education part of the curriculum receives too little time in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good so pupils take the programme seriously and learning is enhanced.
- There are useful contacts with outside agencies who contribute to the programme.
- The programme makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development.

Commentary

122. Since the last inspection the PSHE programme has been reviewed and improved. There is good planning which takes in the required components of health, sex and drugs education as well as careers and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
123. A strong team of experienced teachers lead the programme and teaching is good. In a Year 11 lesson on financial management, for example, the teacher skilfully used pupils' own experience to develop ideas. The pupils responded well, participating readily and learning effectively. There is training for teachers about drugs and sex education and relationships.
124. In various parts of the programme there is good use of contributors from outside agencies who make a valuable contribution with their expertise and enthusiasm. Contributors from the police, fire service, youth clinic and drugs agencies raise important social issues and present new information. Learning is good and the programme successfully promotes personal and social development.
125. Although the programme is generally successful and well taught, there is not enough time overall to cover the issues which could be raised. Religious education is part of the programme for Years 10 and 11 and there is not enough time to do adequate justice to the demands of the local agreed syllabus for religious education.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	10	80.0	81.6	30.0	33.2	32.0	33.2
English language	7	85.7	92.0	28.6	29.9	32.9	35.7
Geography	7	100	88.3	71.4	36.4	45.7	36.3
Mathematics	18	88.9	74.2	44.4	34.3	38.9	31.3
Sociology	5	50.0	83.7	0	33.6	20.0	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	7	100	96.1	28.6	48.7	77.1	85.1
Biology	16	100	91.6	37.5	36.3	83.8	74.1
Business Studies	9	100	96.4	11.1	32.8	64.4	76.5
Chemistry	8	100	94.0	37.5	45.9	90.0	81.1
Drama	5	100	98.1	0	41.5	64.0	82.9
Economics	5	100	96.2	20.0	45.8	68.0	83.1
English language	19	94.7	98.3	36.8	36.5	71.6	80.1
English literature	5	100	84.3	60.0	43.7	100.0	84.3
French	5	100	98.5	20.0	46.1	68.0	83.0
Design and technology	9	100	96.2	55.6	35.5	88.9	76.5
Geography	17	100	97.1	41.2	40.5	81.2	80.9
History	9	100	97.1	44.4	41.0	84.4	81.2
Information technology	17	100	89.1	58.8	22.4	90.6	64.1
Mathematics	19	94.7	93.3	52.6	52.2	85.3	84.7
Other sciences	20	95.0	94.7	60.0	40.1	93.0	78.7
Physics	17	100	92.8	29.4	42.8	72.9	78.6
Sociology	7	100	95.4	57.1	39.6	91.4	79.1
Sport studies	8	100	95.4	87.5	29.5	110.0	73.2
Science VCE	14	71.4	90.1	110.1	18.5	42.9	58.4

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate science GNVQ	7	71.4	N/A	14.3	N/A	0	N/A

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English Literature. Theatre studies and English language were sampled. Small numbers of students take theatre studies at A level. In the 2002 A level examination all students were successful although none achieved the higher grades. No students were entered for the examination in 2003. Teaching in the lesson seen was good and as a result students achieved well and worked hard in rehearsing a scene from a Berkoff play. Their performance skills were lively and entertaining but the standard of written work was below average. Accommodation for the subject is very poor. English language is a popular option at A Level. In 2002, 19 students were entered for the examination. Over 90 per cent were successful although overall standards were below the national average. A smaller group was entered the following year – of these students a third gained the higher grades at A level. Teaching was good in the Year 12 lesson seen and, given students' starting point, they achieved well. Students' response is lively and interested. Written work at this stage of the course is below average.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in recent years has been well above average and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good, expectations of students are high and they respond very well.
- Lessons are planned and resourced very well and are intellectually challenging.
- Leadership of the course is excellent so teachers are able to give of their best.

Commentary

126. Students achieve very well in English literature because teaching is very good – some is outstanding. They are very positive about the subject and recognise and value the high quality of teaching. They say teaching is always enthusiastic and, although the work is sometimes difficult, it is stimulating. Students are encouraged to express their own views and enjoy the exchange of ideas in discussion. Many students are articulate and express perceptive, sophisticated responses. By exchanging ideas in pairs or groups followed by presentations to the class they increase confidence as well as skills and understanding. There is a strong focus on the close analysis of text and students learn to support their ideas by the use of quotation. Very good knowledge of the subject enables teachers to present it with enthusiasm and energy. Excellent planning and very carefully structured lessons sustain interest and pace really well. Teachers use a wide range of resources which are very well designed to present innovative tasks; for example, in a lesson on *Hamlet* students had to match extracts from the soliloquies to statements about themes in the play. They are given carefully prepared glossaries to reinforce their knowledge of technical terms. Relationships are very positive and mature. They have to work hard and at some pace. They have a clear idea of the course assessment objectives in their written work. Assessment is accurate and students have a good idea of the level at which they are working, know the grades predicted for them and value discussing their work in depth with their teacher. They are given very useful targets to help them improve their work. Over the course, students develop higher order skills such as understanding structure, language, and style in poetry and prose. In Year 13, for example, students were able to explore and compare the role of the protagonist in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

127. Standards in the 2002 A level examinations were well above average. Two thirds of students attained the higher grades. Results at A level in 2003 were even better. Overall standards in the current Year 13 are not quite as strong as the previous year. These results represent very good achievement by students who come into sixth form work broadly average.
128. Leadership of the course is excellent. A member of the department has delegated responsibility for both leadership and the day-to-day running of the course. Her strong and sensitive skills have created a very productive and enthusiastic team where there is much discussion, sharing of expertise and support. Teachers work closely together to plan approaches to teaching, to make sure that the examination syllabus is covered well, and to discuss students' progress. Very good use is made of the assessment data now available on the school's network so that teachers have up-to-date information and are able to use this in setting targets. Departmental leadership as a whole, however, does not build on the excellent practice in this course to ensure that approaches across the department are consistent.
129. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have improved and the quality of teaching is better than before. Students' performance is now more rigorously tracked and there is some checking on the quality of sixth form teaching. The use of assessment data is much better developed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

130. Students have good skills in literacy which adequately support their work in other subjects. The school makes provision for students to improve their literacy skills and many departments such as history focus specific work on raising levels of skill.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Very strong relationships between teachers and pupils create a strong learning ethos.
- Students' attitudes to A level mathematics are very positive.
- There needs to be a more efficient process for tracking students' progress.

Commentary

131. Post 16 students have the opportunity to study A level mathematics, A level further mathematics, key skills of numeracy or to resit GCSE mathematics. As well as these courses the department runs an effective but non-examination mathematics for scientists course, supporting students with their science A levels. Within A level mathematics there is good flexibility for students – in Year 13, for example, there is a choice of modules between statistics and mechanics. Some Year 13 students have the opportunity to re-sit a module in Year 12 if occasion demands.
132. Results in A level mathematics in 2002 were broadly in line with national averages, breaking a sequence of results over the past few years when A level results have been well above average. The 2003 A level results showed an improvement on the 2002 results, re-asserting the trend. The subject has proved more attractive to boys than girls with about twice as many boys studying the subject. The results in 2002 showed boys' attainment to be slightly higher than girls' attainment, although in previous years the attainment of boys and girls has been equal.
133. The achievement of A level students is very good. Despite the dip in the results in 2002 students were still achieving well in that year and they are achieving very well in the current Years 12 and 13. Work seen during the inspection showed high standards with a confident

use of essential algebraic skills. The handful of students who sit further mathematics also achieve well. The success rate for students who retake GCSE mathematics is low, in that few obtain grade C. However, most students do improve on their Year 11 GCSE grade.

134. Teaching of all post 16 courses is at least good. The teaching in A level mathematics and further mathematics is very good. There are very good teacher-student relationships that allow students to discuss their work and to ask pertinent questions, which promotes very good learning. High expectations of students, well-thought-out lessons and a refreshing tendency not to rely too heavily on textbooks allow students to develop secure knowledge and skills. Highly effective question and answer sessions ensure that all students participate in lessons and make the most of them. Students work well either singly or in groups. When working in groups or in class students are supportive of each other. Very few students who start the AS level mathematics course leave before attempting the examination. Students are strongly appreciative of the teaching that they get and value the approachability and availability of staff away from the classroom.
135. Leadership of the department is very good and this successfully promotes very good teaching. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and can deliver the syllabus very well. There has been effective staff development in this area. The deployment of staff teaching A level mathematics is very effective. The management of the subject is good. The organisation of the sixth form subjects is good as is the routine administration. However, procedures for monitoring and tracking students' progress are in an early stage of development and need further improvement.
136. With high standards of attainment being maintained and the improvements in teaching the improvement since the last report is very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

137. The development work in departments where mathematics is a necessary part of the curriculum is good. Students are well prepared for their post 16 courses, and very few are held back by insufficient skills in mathematics. In geography, students analyse and display data correctly and they confidently use measure correlation. In physics, all students can cope with the level of mathematics, such as work on formulae, necessary for the course. In business studies students are confident and competent in numerical methods. In GNVQ science, students are well prepared even if some mathematics (for example calculation of moles in chemistry) needs to be taught within the course. In ICT students work with spreadsheets and successfully analyse the data.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **outstanding**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is excellent overall, and this leads to excellent learning and examination results.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good; they say that they work hard because all lessons are interesting and make them want to be involved and to learn more.
- The new course in biology is of excellent quality and promotes the development of key skills to a high degree as well as helping students to become mature and effective biologists.
- Support for students' learning is excellent, including those with special educational needs and those who are very able.

Commentary

138. When they come into the sixth form, students' attainment in science is typical. Some students have awards at the highest level in GCSE science double award or in separate sciences: others' attainment is much more modest. Although examination results have varied from year to year, they have been consistently either above or well above average for several years.
139. Work seen in lessons and in students' folders supports the judgement that attainment is very good. Within a very short period of starting the course, students have learned to think as biologists think, and to use the language of the subject fluently and accurately. They are learning the common practical techniques used in biology, and how to carry out procedures safely and swiftly. They analyse results critically, evaluating their experimental technique and making realistic estimates of the levels of accuracy to be expected. Supported by excellent teaching, they continue to learn very well throughout the course so that in some lessons their work is truly stunning. For example, in a lesson on muscle contraction with Year 13, students learned to describe the process in correct biological terms, they understood the ways in which muscle contraction occurs, and they were able to translate their understanding into a series of models on which they worked collaboratively. As a result of their excellent involvement, outstanding motivation and attitude to their studies, their achievement in so short a space of time was very good.
140. Taking into account students' prior attainment, their rate of progress in biology, study skills, and personal development, students' achievement overall is very good.
141. Teaching and learning are excellent. An outstanding variety of activities, involving practical work with biological specimens, data retrieval and analysis, evaluation, and role play stimulates students to take a quite exceptional interest in the subject. They learn to weigh evidence, to combine it with their own knowledge and information from literature sources, and to present it publicly and convincingly. They also learn more traditional biological skills. In a Year 12 practical investigation, students prepared and examined cell from root tips as part of an investigation into mitosis. They followed it up with sophisticated analysis, led by the teacher, who made excellent use of the newly installed ICT resources in the department. Teaching of this quality not only helps students to learn about biology, but makes them confident in using computers and fluent in writing accurate correct prose. A major factor in this excellent teaching is the new course which the school has recently adopted. Superb activities and excellent use of information and communication technology lead to progress of exceptional quality. All students achieve very well.
142. The leadership and management of the course is very good. The head of department has a very good vision for the progress of the subject and leads a team of committed biologists whose enthusiasm and expertise have enabled them to make the very best use of their chosen course. All routine documentation is in place, and he and his colleagues are committed to an excellent system for monitoring the success of its implementation.
143. Since the time of the last inspection, the subject has made considerable advances. The introduction of AS examinations has prompted the adoption of a new course, which presents students with exciting opportunities which have made the subject one of the most popular in the school. Results in examinations have improved and are now consistently very good. The progress seen in lessons and the excitement with which students and teachers have embraced the new course indicate that improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject are shown in clear explanations of physical concepts.
- Students have a positive attitude to the subject as shown in the large uptake in Year 12.
- Standards are not high enough.
- Students' progress is not monitored closely enough to identify underachievement at an early stage.

Commentary

144. Results in the A level examination have declined in the last two years. All students who were entered passed the exam but the small percentage achieving the high grades A and B brought the overall standard down to below the national average. There was underachievement in these years with results lower than those expected from students' GCSE performance. However, the achievement of students seen during the inspection was satisfactory because of satisfactory teaching and learning.
145. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good lessons. In the more effective lessons teachers clearly focus students' learning on the lesson objectives and how they fit in with previous and future work. The integration of practical work with theory aids students' understanding. Teachers' very good subject knowledge allows them to explain new topics clearly to develop students' understanding.
146. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers' encouraging and supportive attitudes boost students' confidence and build on students' previous knowledge so that they are able to make satisfactory progress. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are socially well integrated and they achieve as well as other students. Homework is well used to reinforce learning, giving students practice in applying what they have learnt in class to examination questions. Students tackle practical work confidently and sensibly, although some need to pay greater attention to the accuracy of measurements.
147. Sometimes, teachers do not involve the students enough during the lessons; they provide them with the required knowledge and skills but their questioning does not always allow students to contribute to the development of the lesson. In these lessons higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged. Marking of work is regular but does not give students an indication of the standard of their work. There are few teachers' comments showing where more depth or detail is required and so it does not increase students' knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. In some lessons teachers fail to set crisp objectives or to test students' attainment at the end of the lesson. There are not enough opportunities for the development of independent learning skills and some students are too reliant on their teachers.
148. A new head of department has made a sound start in providing leadership by reviewing and improving the department's procedures. There is a strong commitment to improve standards and the capability of doing so.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching means students are challenged, productive and motivated.
- A Level results are well above average, with consistent 100% pass rate.

- Very good feedback to students encourages them to improve their work.
- The classwork and coursework seen during the inspection was of high quality.
- Sixth form students have good personal access to ICT resources.

Commentary

149. The standard of work seen in the sixth form is high and represents good achievement. There is some outstanding performance at A Level, and Year 13 coursework is exceptionally good. Over the last several years, there has been a 100% pass rate at A Level, while results at both AS Level and A Level show a skew towards the upper end of achievement.
150. Teaching and learning are both good. Teaching is strongly focused on the needs of individuals, particularly at times of year when students are working towards coursework deadlines and being supervised in the completion of their projects. In respect of their learning, students have made good use of database software to respond to the scenarios set for them in the coursework requirements. Where spreadsheets have been used (for example in the calculation of hours worked, wages and tax paid) students have made use of complex formulae including relative and absolute cell references and IF statements. Some of the projects have made good use of the software's graphical functions to derive charts and graphs from the tables of data, which are well annotated. Students make sophisticated evaluation and annotation of their work.
151. Leadership and management of sixth form ICT are both good. The allocation of staff is structured in such a way that teaching is spread across the department, each of the four groups being shared between two teachers who bring relevant expertise to different parts of the course. Assignments are well planned and assiduously matched against the requirements of the examination. Criteria for assessment are clearly shared with students, who understand both how their work is graded and how it might be improved. This careful attention to the management of the programme leads to very effective teaching and strong academic achievement. Teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory, while classroom seating (plastic laboratory stools) is unsuitable for older students spending extended periods at computer terminals. At present there are no vocational ICT opportunities for sixth form students.
152. Progress since the previous inspection is good. That report noted that sixth form attainment was very good. In that respect - as in all others - the school has maintained and developed its standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

153. Sixth form students make skilful use of ICT in their other subjects. They have good access to computers for personal use. Much work is word processed and there is sensible use of internet sources where appropriate, in subjects such as business education.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and psychology. History was sampled. Two lessons were observed, students' written work scrutinised, examination data analysed and discussions held with students in Year 13 and members of staff. Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good. The achievement of students is good. They have a positive attitude and enjoy the subject. Standards reached in examinations in recent years have been above the national average.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy geography and achieve well.
- Teachers use their specialist interests well.
- Residential fieldwork brings reality to the subject and strengthens the bond between students and teachers.
- Relationships are relaxed and positive and stem from mutual respect.
- Very strong leadership is committed to raising standards.
- Monitoring of teaching by the head of department would foster the spread of best practice.

Commentary

154. Standards are above average. The number of pupils who continue geography into the sixth form varies but the subject generally recruits well. More boys than girls are attracted with very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. AS results in 2002 were well above average. They were better than the most recent results. Students invariably complete the course. No pupil who continues to A2 has failed in recent years. In 2003, achievement was very good. Two thirds of pupils gained grade B. There is no distinction between the performance of boys and girls. Several of the current sixth form geographers intend to pursue the subject in higher education.
155. Students speak highly of their experience in the subject. They enjoy geography. They know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and how to improve. They use ICT confidently both as a research tool and for presenting work. They quickly make the transition from GCSE to GCE and apply terminology accurately.
156. The quality of teaching is good, often very good. The four teachers involved have specialist interests which complement each other. Increasingly, they work as a team. They use different teaching methods which give variety and help to sustain interest. In some classes, teachers lead the learning and there is limited challenge especially for the most able. The use of cramped, non-specialist accommodation is not helpful in this respect. However, the mature attitude of students and the relaxed and often humorous content within such lessons ensures that knowledge is conveyed. Probing question and answer sessions tease out the understanding behind that knowledge.
157. The best teaching expects students to think for themselves. A Year 12 group, for example, settled quickly to apply the knowledge they had gained from contrasting case studies of the Black Country and Cambridge Technology Park. In groups they developed models of industrial change, sharing ideas and drawing from other areas of knowledge before presenting their ideas to the rest of the class. What drove learning here was the students' willingness to rise to the teacher's high expectations of them. They collaborated willingly and were helped to reach and justify decisions.
158. Geography has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The recently appointed head of department is enthusiastic and a very good leader though he has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching. Development plans are appropriate. Management, currently good, is improving because both students and staff are highly motivated and are increasingly contributing to the means to drive up standards. Fieldwork is strong and well integrated into the taught curriculum. Shared residential experiences go some way to explaining the easy yet purposeful relationships which exist between students and their teachers.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-qualified teachers carefully plan stimulating lessons, in which learning is consistently very good.
- Standards in A2 level examinations are well above the national average and demonstrate good achievement by all students.
- All aspects of work within the subject are led and managed very well.
- The position of this subject within the school's curricular and management structures is limiting aspects of development.
- Lack of dedicated equipment and access to computers is limiting the use of ICT to enrich learning opportunities.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

159. In 2002, twenty-two students took A level. Twenty-one passed and 65% gained a higher grade (A or B). This standard of attainment was well above the national averages. In 2003, the results were even better. All nineteen candidates passed and nearly 70% gained a higher grade. This level of attainment has been maintained over recent years. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including students' records of work, internal test results and performance in lessons, showed a similarly high standard. When students' results are compared to their average attainment in GCSE examinations, most exceed expectations. This shows good achievement and is shared by boys, girls, students from ethnic minority groups and students with special educational needs.
160. Overall, results in the AS level examinations taken by most students at the end of Year 12 are close to the national averages. A majority match or exceed expectations based on their GCSE performance, but a small minority show unsatisfactory achievement. For most of these students, psychology was the "fourth" subject and not critical to career ambitions, resulting in less motivation. Students who take AS level in Year 13, consistently achieve well.
161. Teaching and learning are very good. The two teachers, who share all the classes, have excellent mastery of both the subject and the requirements of the examinations. They use this knowledge well to prepare effective lessons that are stimulating, full of interest and which encourage students to learn independently. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, with respect and affection evident in the mature way lessons are conducted. Students' files are exceptionally well organised and teachers' marking of each piece of work is detailed and helpful. Over time, assessment of attainment and progress is used well to set ambitious targets for students and to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. The enthusiasm and commitment that students bring to their work is exemplified in the very high quality course work they accomplish.
162. Both teachers, who are part-time, work as a very close team. They share all the teaching and other responsibilities effectively. All aspects of work are well organised and lessons are well resourced with up-to-date published material and high quality guidance papers, which the teachers write themselves. The subject is not formally recognised as a "department", there is no post of head of department and the subject is not attached to another curricular area. However, the teachers are well supported by a senior line-manager. Nevertheless, the subject has a somewhat peripheral position in the school's management and curricular structures. Several consequences, although not critical at the present time, are likely to compromise future development. Neither teacher is in a position to contribute directly to groups formulating policies, for example, on the criteria for admission to courses nor the associated activities designed to inform students about the post-16 curriculum to ensure enlightened choice.

Present arrangements also dictate timetabling three lessons consecutively. Careful planning is making the most of these very long periods of time, but they are not ideal. Numbers in Year 12 are rising; there are currently 37 students in two classes, many intending to continue on to A2 level. There is little capacity for further expansion.

163. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is a dedicated classroom, but timetable considerations mean that half the lessons have to be taken in a variety of spare rooms. Lack of software, such as the statistics packages, and difficulties in obtaining convenient access to computers is limiting the use of ICT to improve learning.
164. Since the time of the last inspection, there has been very good improvement in the provision for this relatively new subject. Psychology is now an important and successful part of the post-16 curriculum. There is good potential for further improvement, but significant development requires rationalisation of the management and curricular arrangements.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology.

Design and Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject knowledge of the teaching team is very good.
- Higher attaining students are well catered for.
- There is an absence of computer generated images in coursework.
- There is limited use of outside agencies to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

165. The provision available to students includes graphic products, textiles and systems and control. The latter subject was added by the school in response to a request by parents. The main focus of the inspection was work in graphic products.
166. Standards overall are good. Results in both the AS and A2 examinations in 2002 were good. A significant proportion of students in Year 12 were awarded grades in the range of A to C. In Year 13 grades were evenly distributed between B and D. The achievement of the majority was good because all students increasingly demonstrated that they could cope with additional demands made on them by advanced level study, and maintain progress
167. The standard of work seen is broadly average. A very strong work ethic is apparent in all folders. However, there is a marked contrast between quality of projects at AS and A2 level, which is not readily explained by the difference between the two examinations. Despite undertaking all parts of the design process, product evaluations in Year 12 folders are superficial and fail to adequately capture the thoughts of the principal client. In contrast, one outstanding folder from a 2002 Year 13 student contained work of great maturity and confidence. It represented a genuine attempt to explore the issues raised by the design brief and present them in accessible form.
168. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Impressive subject knowledge enables the team to switch between one technology and another with ease. This, combined with the extensive preparation undertaken for all sixth form teaching, is a powerful mixture. In a Year 13 graphic products lesson on how to estimate production costs, students were able to maintain high concentration levels for two hours partly because of a wide range of material which had been acquired from the internet by the teacher prior to the lesson. Students were conscientious and unfailingly polite throughout, although reluctant to engage freely in open discussion.

169. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The team has a clear sense of how to improve the quality of learning experience for students. One of their most immediate actions, increasing the number of teachers contributing to the sixth form programme, has already had a positive impact in changing the ethos within the department. However, other key practical measures, such as closer monitoring of provision and student performance and an insistence on the use of computer generated images, have not yet been fully implemented.
170. Textiles was sampled; standards are average and students are making good progress with their practical coursework projects. They have a good knowledge of construction methods for the garments they are making and test their ideas for surface decoration by making samples before applying them. Students have a sound knowledge of fibres and fabrics. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers successfully encourage students to work creatively and independently. In consequence, students gain confidence and are inspired to work on ambitious designs. Achievement is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of achievement are not high enough.
- The department is well led and very well staffed.
- Sketchbooks are not used well enough.
- Teaching of drawing for different purposes is not sufficiently encouraged.
- The department requires considerable investment in resources for learning.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

171. The GCE results in 2002 were well below average. The results in 2003 were very similar to the 2002 results. Standards of achievement are satisfactory although for the small number of students in Year 13, standards are unsatisfactory. Their work suffers from a lack of research through drawing, reading and use of sketchbooks. They do not have the developed personal view of art and artists so necessary at this level. Alarming these students often arrive for lessons without sketchbooks. Year 12 students are beginning to use their sketchbooks for experimentation and investigation with paint and mixed media, including digital photography, or to collect visually stimulating imagery. They are adept at linking their work to artists as diverse as da Vinci, Giacometti and Auerbach and are more able to discuss their work than are Year 13 students. Few students appreciate the possibilities offered by drawing to gather particular information and drawing skills are less good than designing and compositional skills.
172. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory. The current Year 13 students do not work hard enough and their work progresses little between lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, are well qualified and include a successful practising artist. While Year 13 students' attitudes are disappointing, Year 12 students are more ambitious, engaged and extended in their studies, willing to accept the challenge of involving themselves in personal research. They have an open-minded approach and are receptive to new ideas when teachers engage them in discussion.
173. The head of department has been in post for four terms. His vision has generated strong teamwork and a considerable capacity to improve. The management of the department is satisfactory. The use of assessment data to raise standards, set targets and improve the curriculum is not yet embedded in routine departmental practice. There are very good extra-curricular opportunities to visit galleries, work with artists-in-residence and exhibit work in

public spaces and local schools. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory. The department is short of easels and equipment common enough in art education to allow activities such as sophisticated printmaking and computer graphics. The sixth formers are without a dedicated sixth form studio in which they might work independently. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved in Year 12 although there are too few top GCE grades. Extra-curricular opportunities are now very good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 12 and in both years students are achieving well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students are assessed well and this gives real direction for improvement.
- Years 12 and 13 are taught together which means that students do not always have sufficient time to establish particular skills and knowledge.
- Activities outside lessons provide additional learning and opportunities for personal development.

Commentary

174. Standards of work in Year 12 are above average. Students are very strong performers on their respective instruments and this has a direct influence on other aspects of their work such as listening and composition. Their study of harmony is improving, although there is some lack of confidence with the multiplicity of rules and conventions associated with part-writing. Some theoretical knowledge of keys is shaky. Overall though achievement is good. In Year 13, although the student is not such a strong performer, harmony is improving. Essay writing shows clear progress with good use of technical language and a developing and organised essay style.
175. There is good achievement because teaching and learning are good. Some features of teaching and learning are very good. For instance, marking of essays and other written work is extensive, honest and very informative in helping students to make improvements to their work. This is enabled by teachers' very good command of their subject both theoretical and practical, and from their knowledge of how students learn at this stage. Teaching is highly organised and proficient. It has to be to cope with Years 12 and 13 being taught at the same time. In spite of the teachers' very good planning the different years require discrete time with support from the teacher so that they develop their respective musical skills more proficiently. The teachers sometimes feel under pressure to move to the next examination requirement in both years, before students' knowledge and skills are sufficiently established.
176. When aural work is done interactively students are really well focused on specific elements of the music. Students' discussion of the methods they use to recognise these features is also helpful. Good do-it-yourself' exercises, which can be practised away from the classroom, would provide further methods of improving their aural skills. Lessons are set at a challenging pace and students work hard with excellent attitudes. They love this subject. Their commitment to it extends beyond the classroom into very good extra-curricular bands and the orchestra which add a further dimension to their learning. They have been well advised by the teachers before embarking on the course and continue to receive good advice about their work and future intentions as the course proceeds. All students wish to study performing arts or music further at the conclusion of their school career.

177. The leadership of the sixth form courses is very good. It has been dynamic and energetic in getting the courses introduced into the sixth form curriculum. Management is good. Teachers are responsive to the needs of individual students when assessing their work and providing remedial help. The courses are too new to provide information from assessment to plan for raising standards further.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports studies

178. The sports studies course was sampled. Standards in A level examinations are consistently above average and achievement is good. A high proportion of students achieve A and B grades. Teaching is effective and often innovative and there are high expectations.

BUSINESS

Business Education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are currently below average in examinations though these results represent good achievement given students' prior attainment.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

179. In 2002 standards at GCE A2 level were well below average, with only one candidate gaining grade B or above. The 2003 results were similar, but in both years all candidates gained a pass. Results in AVCE were below average in 2002 and 2003, and average in GNVQ intermediate level. Numbers in the groups were in single figures, and results from previous years have shown significant variations. Numbers have since increased, and retention rates are good.

180. In the GCE level 3 courses standards are average. The work of the present Year 13 students reflects their good achievement in the way they match independent research skills with a thorough understanding of the different aspects of business. Their level of attainment is influenced by how well they apply analytical skills, their ability to illustrate theory with practical examples, and their grasp of technique in answering fully questions which carry high marks. In Year 12 there is good progress in acquiring the skills to provide precise information in completing set tasks, and, in class, to apply new theoretical knowledge and key concepts to practical situations. In the mixed Year 12 and 13 AVCE group standards are average and achievement satisfactory. There is a wide range of attainment, and some of the newer students are still struggling to acquire the organisational and interpretation skills which the course demands. Since the imposition of a minimum entry requirement, the GNVQ intermediate course is attracting more capable students. Standards are above average and achievement good. Some higher-attaining students are already satisfying distinction criteria, and the general literacy and the quality of note-taking and of re-drafting assignment work is good. Indeed, the standard of English of all business students, irrespective of ability and background, is good overall.

181. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a profound knowledge of their subject, and constantly challenge students to express and develop their ideas through discussion of the current topics. This has a good impact on their learning, as they begin to work independently, to collaborate responsibly and profitably in pairs and groups, and to apply their theoretical

knowledge to practical situations. In this way they learn to analyse, support and justify their arguments, and raise their communication skills and achievement to higher levels. Marking and assessment is regular and consistent. Students are always aware of their level of attainment, and of what criteria to satisfy, in order to progress to a higher level. The use of assessment to inform target setting is satisfactory, if rudimentary.

182. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is clear vision of how the department can improve and many new strategies and initiatives are in place. Closer links with industry have been and are still being established to enrich the curriculum and enhance students' learning. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching takes place regularly under the school's professional management system, but there is no opportunity for colleagues to observe each other and share good practice. The department's use of ICT is satisfactory. Students have few problems with access to computers, and there is good exploitation of materials from the internet, and a developing use of interactive whiteboards in the presentation of lessons, which is very effective.
183. Apart from the fluctuation in standards in examinations, the department has continued to develop those aspects which received favourable comment in the previous report. With the direction proposed by the relatively new head of vocational education, improvement has been satisfactory.

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

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

