

INSPECTION REPORT

HELE'S SCHOOL

Plympton, Devon

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113536

Headteacher: Michael Uglow

Lead inspector: Michael Merchant

Dates of inspection: 13–17 October 2003

Inspection number: 259170

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

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Terms used in this report

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

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

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of students eligible for free school meals.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Hele's School
School category:	Comprehensive
Age range of students:	11–18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1369
School address:	Seymour Road Plympton Plymouth
Postcode:	PL7 4LT
Telephone number:	01752 337193
Fax number:	01752 331460
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gwyn Morgan
Date of previous inspection:	1 December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hele's School is bigger than most other secondary schools and educates students between the ages of 11 and 18. The school is a mixed comprehensive. Most students come from feeder primary schools in the suburb of Plympton on the eastern side of the City of Plymouth. There are 1369 students on roll; last year there were 280 students in the sixth form. The student population has grown steadily since the last inspection. Students are predominantly from White-British backgrounds, although there are also small numbers of students from White-Asian, mixed and Asian-British-Pakistani backgrounds. There are no students for whom English is not their first language. The level of student mobility is average.

The school is a specialist language college and aims to raise standards in modern foreign languages by promoting a culture that is international, technological, enterprising and vocational. The school has been awarded Investors in People and Chartermark status.

The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs, including those with Statements of Special Educational Needs, is below average. Most of these students are on the register for specific learning (dyslexia), moderate learning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; there are six students with physical difficulties, five who are autistic and one student who is dyspraxic. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are broadly average. Standards of attainment on entry in Year 7 are now slightly above average, but in previous years have been average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9214	Janet Garland	Lay inspector	
19135	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music
19015	Gordon Peacock	Team inspector	Science
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
8503	Alfred Alfree	Team inspector	Art and design
32150	Kerrigam Redman	Team inspector	Geography
31772	Alan Kelly	Team inspector	History Citizenship
15221	Dianne Mitchell	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
14790	Robin Schlich	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Business studies Health and social care English as an additional language
2710	David Young	Team inspector	Religious education
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Sociology
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Biology
10391	Valerie du Plergny	Team inspector	Theatre studies
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hele's is a **highly effective school** and provides a **very good quality of education** for its students. It is an exciting place in which to learn because the outstanding leadership by the Principal and other key staff has ensured that all students, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress and achieve very well. Standards are well above average in Years 9, 11 and 13 and the school is highly successful at getting the best out of boys; they achieve much better than boys nationally. Teaching and learning are very good in all years with much that is excellent. The school provides **very good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The energy, purpose and drive of teaching mean that students achieve very well and attain standards that are well above average overall. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school, with much that is excellent.
- The leadership of the Principal is of the highest order and this, together with excellent leadership of other senior managers, has provided the unremitting drive to push up standards.
- The school makes inspired use of assessment information to both evaluate its work and set clear targets for improvement for its students.
- A creative and enterprising curriculum, in which modern languages and independent learning are distinctive features, caters very well for all students and prepares them exceptionally well for life.
- Behaviour is exemplary and the attitudes to learning are excellent because staff give students the confidence to learn. Sensitive individual guidance means that the school turns out mature young adults well placed to take their place in society.
- The school cares for, guides and supports its students very well and does all it can to help students along.
- The school has forged extremely effective partnerships with its parents, other schools and the community, which contributes to its success.
- In a few subjects, old, unsuitable accommodation is preventing standards from being even higher.

Since the last inspection in 1998, the school has made **very good improvement**. Standards in the main school have been maintained at well above average and in the sixth form have improved from average to well above average overall. Teaching is now very good and leadership is excellent. All the key issues from the previous inspection have been fully met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students achieve very well and reach standards that are well above average overall by the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. Students' English language and literacy skills are very good, as is their competence in mathematics. Skills in the use of ICT are above average. Gifted and talented students and those with a special educational need achieve very well.

Students' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Behaviour is exemplary and the attitudes to learning are excellent because staff give students the confidence to learn. Sensitive individual guidance means that the school turns out mature young adults well placed to take their place in society. The school has driven up attendance to well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and learning are very good in all years, with much that is excellent. The use of assessment to help drive up standards is excellent. Teachers' very good subject knowledge results in interesting, imaginative and extremely challenging lessons. Teaching assistants provide very good support for students.

The quality of the curriculum is very good in both the main school and the sixth form. The school has made very good provision to enrich students' learning outside of lessons. The overall quality of accommodation and adequacy of resources is satisfactory.

Support systems work very well. Students have access to very good quality advice based on very good monitoring. Parents show an exemplary degree of commitment and involvement in their children's education. Links with other schools and the local community are very good. The school involves students very well in decisions involving the life of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent and are of the highest order. The governance of the school is very good. The principal provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by his senior staff, who also provide excellent leadership. Together, they ensure that the effectiveness of management is excellent.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are extremely pleased with the work of the school. They have no major criticisms of the school and are particularly pleased with standards, achievement and behaviour. Parents are also complimentary about the quality and responsiveness of communication with the school and the quality of pastoral care students receive. Students are equally positive, although a significant number felt that bullying and behaviour were problems. Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views and found no evidence to confirm the negative opinions of a minority of students.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of accommodation and resources in English, visual and performing arts and design and technology.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a highly effective sixth form, which combines very high standards, very good achievement with cost-effectiveness. The sixth form is entirely successful at creating a community of enthusiastic learners.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards, in this fully inclusive sixth form, are very high and students achieve very highly.
- Exciting teaching and very good learning characterise the sixth form.

- The outstanding leadership of the head of sixth form is driving up standards and achievement and making the sixth form at Hele's so highly effective.
- The Sixth form students are an impressive group of young people. The school has nurtured them into mature, confident and articulate young adults.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of subjects and courses, including those with a vocational bias, caters very well for the vast majority of students and allows effective progression from Year 11.
- Sixth formers have access to very good advice, guidance and support.

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	Provision in English literature is very good . Students achieve very well as a result of dynamic teaching and visionary leadership. Provision in French is good . Students' achievement is good because teachers have an expert command of French and use it skilfully.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is very good . Students achieve very highly because of very good teaching and learning.
Science	Provision in biology is good . Good teaching leads to good achievement in biology. Provision in chemistry is very good . Students achieve very well because of very good, challenging teaching.
Information and communication technology	Provision in information and communication technology is good . Students achieve well and overall teaching is good, but ageing equipment in departments holds back standards across the curriculum.
Humanities	Provision in geography is good . Good teaching and good teacher-student relationships result in good achievement. Provision in history is very good . Teachers' very good knowledge of subject matter fosters very good pupil achievement. Provision in religious studies is very good . Very good teaching stimulates and motivates students to achieve very well. Provision in sociology is very good . Teaching is very good and enables students to make very clear gains in their knowledge and understanding and achieve very well.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is good . Good teaching motivates the students to achieve well.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is good . The good achievement of students reflects the good teaching they receive. Provision in music is very good . Very good teaching leads to very good achievement but accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. Provision in theatre studies is very good . The students attain standards that are above average because the quality of teaching is very good.
Hospitality, sports, leisure	Provision in sports studies / physical education is good . Much good

and travel	teaching leads to good achievement by most students.
Business	Provision in business studies is very good . Very good achievement results from teaching and learning that are very good.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is very good . Teaching and learning are very good, which leads to very good achievement.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Sixth formers have access to **very good advice, guidance and support**. Hardly any students leave the sixth form after the start of their course because students are inducted effectively into the sixth form. Meticulous records are kept of students' progress and how much effort they make.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of this very large sixth form are excellent. There are very good links between the head of sixth form, subject leaders and pastoral staff.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students overwhelmingly enjoy being in the sixth form and feel that teaching is challenging and is helpfully assessed. They also feel they receive good guidance when choosing their course and their progress is well monitored thereafter. Their one area of concern was the range of activities available to them outside lessons. Inspectors agree with students' positive comments but judge that enrichment is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve **very well** and reach standards that are well **above average** overall by the end of years 9, 11 and 13. Students' english language and literacy skills are **very good**, as is their competence in mathematics. Skills in the use of ICT are **above average**. Gifted and talented students and those with a special educational need achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school does well for all its students. Standards and achievement are very high overall.
- The three core subjects of English, mathematics and science are at the forefront of this drive to push up standards.
- The under-achievement of boys, seen nationally, has been completely reversed at Hele's.
- The successful implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the school's highly effective approach to improving literacy skills are having a very positive effect on standards.
- In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because teachers are sensitive and responsive to their needs.
- Standards in this fully inclusive sixth form are very high and students achieve very highly.

Commentary

1. Outstanding leadership has fostered exciting learning which has ensured that standards are very high and students are achieving very well.

Test and examination results

2. Standards in the National Tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average overall, a continuation of the relentless rise in standards driven by the school. They showed an improvement over 2002. Standards were well above average in all of the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
3. Boys did particularly well, a testament to the schools' drive to redress the gender gap between boys and girls. Boys attained well above other boys nationally in English, mathematics and science – a complete reversal of the national trend.
4. Students enter the school with broadly average prior attainment. Their achievement, therefore, is very good overall. Students at Hele's are doing much better than those at similar schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35 (34.9)	33.3 (33)
Mathematics	37.4 (37)	35.3 (34.5)
Science	36.5(35.5)	33.7 (32.9)

There were 217 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. The school does very well by its students by the time they are aged 16 and they achieved very well in 2002. The school has made very good progress with its challenging targets, all of which they have comfortably met over the last three years. Standards by Year 11 are well above average overall. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to A in 2002 was well above average for all and for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to G was even better. It was very high and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools in the country. As in Years 7 to 9, the school has pushed up standards relentlessly and standards have continued to rise year on year. The achievement of students overall was very good.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	65 (70)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	45.1	39.8

There were 206 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards and achievement

6. Work seen confirms the very high standards evidenced in the test and examination results. In Years 7 to 9 standards overall are well above average and students' achievement is very good. The three core subjects of English, mathematics and science are at the forefront of this drive to push up standards and work seen in all three of these subjects was of a very high standard. This is because teaching and learning are consistently very good in these subjects, often with much that is excellent. Moreover, the excellent leadership and management of all three of these subjects have provided an inspirational drive to continuously improve students' achievement. The work that has been done in English to push up the standards of boys is particularly impressive and the national picture of boys under-achieving has been completely reversed at Hele's.
7. These three subjects have also been highly effective at introducing the Key Stage 3 National Strategy into their teaching. The focus on sharp lesson introductions, use of ICT and the implementation of a highly effective whole-school approach to developing students' literacy skills have all helped to drive up standards and achievement.
8. Amongst other subjects, standards are above average in art and design, design and technology, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. In all of these subjects, students, both boys and girls, are achieving well because of the overall good teaching. In music, where teaching is very good, students achieve very well to reach standards that are well above average. Average standards and satisfactory achievement were seen in geography, where not enough attention is always given to the needs of higher-attaining students.
9. The pattern of overall very high standards and achievement is also seen in Years 10 and 11. Very good teaching is fostering exciting learning and rapid gains in knowledge in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, music and religious education. In all other subjects standards and achievement are high with the exception on modern foreign languages. Here, students' average standards and satisfactory achievement is a reflection of the long haul it has taken for the language college to push up standards in this area from a low base. Very good leadership and management in this area, however, are leading to good progress, and standards are improving well.
10. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because teachers are sensitive and responsive to their needs. These students are frequently provided

with very effective support in lessons, which ensures that their progress is very good. It is also very good overall when support is not available as teaching staff are aware of students' needs and work extremely hard to ensure that appropriate strategies and resources are utilised.

11. The students who have Statements of Special Educational Needs also make very good progress. An appropriate mixture of support in lessons and individual help from teaching assistants, plus a very good appreciation of their problems from most teaching staff, are critical factors in their progress.

Sixth form

12. Results in 2002 were above average overall and have improved significantly over the last four years. This represented good achievement for students, given their prior attainment at GCSE. Results in 2003 continue this upward trend.
13. Standards seen are very high in English, chemistry, history, music, sociology, theatre studies, health and social care and business studies. Very good teaching, expertly suited to the needs of these sixth formers, is the driving force behind these high standards. In no subject in the sixth form does achievement fall below good. This is largely because of the truly excellent use of prior attainment both to guide students onto appropriate courses and to carefully monitor their progress thereafter.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.6	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	35	39.4
Average point score per pupil	281	263.3

There were 93 students in the year group.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Behaviour is **exemplary** and the attitudes to learning are **excellent** because staff give students the confidence to learn. Sensitive individual guidance means that the school turns out mature young adults well placed to take their place in society. The school has driven up attendance to **well above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' behaviour is exceptionally good.
- Attitudes are outstanding and produce a secure, motivated and well-balanced community with a thrust to succeed.
- Relationships between staff and students and between students are exceptionally good.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Students are encouraged to care for themselves, their community and the wider world.
- There is a need to increase students' knowledge of multicultural Britain.
- Students are helped to mature and take on responsibilities during their time in school.
- Students in the sixth form are particularly well integrated into the life of the school.

Commentary

14. This is an outstanding area of the school's work, which contributes fundamentally to the high standards achieved and to its unique ethos.
15. Students' attitudes to school are excellent. They have a strong commitment to their school and are determined to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them and to succeed, both academically and personally. The excellent behaviour in and around school results in very good learning in classrooms and an ordered, civilised society where students flourish.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1030	22	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	20	0	0

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

16. There have been no permanent and very few fixed term exclusions. Although a small minority of students mentioned on questionnaires and in conversations that bullying does occur in school, none said that any problems go un-addressed and students said that they felt safe in school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	0.2
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

17. The school has maintained its very good attendance, which is well above the national average. There is virtually no unauthorised absence. Most students arrive on time and ready to work, encouraged by their families, who value education and support their efforts. The ethos of the school promotes high standards and results in a positive environment where all members are valued.

18. Behaviour in areas like the dining room, in assemblies and around the school generally is excellent, with a civilised, well-ordered atmosphere everywhere. Positive behaviour in the classroom ensures that students obtain the maximum benefit from their lessons, resulting in very good learning. They participate in community activities, like drama, music, sport and the cadet force with enthusiasm and in large numbers, showing co-operation and a will to take on responsibilities.
19. Students take a pride in their school and show that they respect the contribution of members past and present. This was very well displayed in a moving public tribute, through music and drama, to a recently deceased deputy principal. There is a strong corporate thrust in the school, led from the top, which is supported by staff, students and their families. The School Council, polling of opinion, roles of mentors and paid positions of responsibility for the sixth form increase a sense of independence and result in a mature approach to the school's society where students feel their opinions are heard.
20. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, with students encouraged to participate in the arts, to play their part in an ordered society and to recognise behaviour which is right and wrong. The language college provides increasing opportunities for students to meet young people and teachers from many other cultures, including China and Eastern Europe, and the growing link with a South African school is opening students' eyes to relative conditions in a third world country. The school recognises that it needs to concentrate on developing further links with communities in this country to enable students in this mostly white area to understand the varied nature of society in Britain today.
21. Students with special educational needs usually have a positive attitude to all lessons but especially when learning support assistants provide support. Here they are confident and will succeed because they have appropriate support and because learning support staff are very aware of students' specific needs. Students' attitudes to work here are enthusiastic and they have good relationships with other students and with members of staff.

Sixth form

22. Sixth form students are an impressive group of young people. When they reach the sixth form, the school has already nurtured them into mature, confident and articulate young adults who are well motivated, responsive and hard working.
23. The overwhelming majority of students are very positive about what the sixth form offers them, but are also questioning and ready to make suggestions for improvement. The school is highly responsive to these suggestions, as is evidenced by the recent relaxation in the need for sixth formers to wear school uniform, an initiative that originated from the students. Students speak very highly of their courses, the quality of teaching and the guidance they receive.
24. The contribution to school life made by the sixth form is a strength. The school imaginatively employs students in a range of "jobs" around the school, for instance as lunchtime supervisors. This means that, as well as enhancing their own life skills and experience, they are able to help other students.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good** in all years, with much that is excellent. The use of assessment to help drive up standards is **excellent**. This inspired use of assessment information is one reason why students achieve very highly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strength of teaching and learning is a very real reflection of the school's ethos of a relentless drive to push up standards.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan interesting, imaginative and extremely challenging lessons.
- The methods used by teachers are diverse and entirely succeed in retaining students' interests and motivation and thus moving them quickly on.
- Teachers make very good use of the time and the resources available to them, breaking down learning into small, manageable assignments in a very imaginative manner.
- The strong role models of male teachers and an intelligent insight into how boys learn are a contributory factor to boys achieving so well in the school.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support for students and have a significant and very positive impact on the progress of students in many lessons.
- The whole assessment policy is an exemplar of good practice and is consistently implemented across the school.

Commentary

25. The energy, purpose and drive of teaching means that students achieve very well and attain standards that are well above average overall. This is an exciting place to learn because teaching and learning are very good throughout the school with much that is excellent.
26. The school has not only succeeded in maintaining the high quality of teaching and learning seen at the last inspection, it has surpassed it. There are examples of outstanding practice, the overwhelming majority is very good or good and only in a very small number of lessons is teaching and learning unsatisfactory. The consistent strength of teaching and learning is a very real reflection of the school's ethos of a relentless drive to push up standards. Lessons are characterised by a real focus on well-structured planning, pace, challenge and innovation. Students are made to think and learning is exciting. Teaching which is fast, energetic and which encourages all to work at full pace is the norm. In this way, learning is extended and standards driven up significantly.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 186 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (2.7%)	61 (32.8%)	80 (43%)	37 (19.9%)	3 (1.6%)	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.

27. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are very good in English, mathematics, science, music and physical education. They are good in ICT, art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. In geography, teaching and learning are only satisfactory because some teachers give insufficient attention to the needs of higher-attaining students. It is the imaginative and dynamic teaching seen in the three core subjects which excites students to learn and which is the real driving force behind the school's success at reaching such very high standards and achievement. This is complemented by a picture of almost universally good teaching in the foundation¹ subjects, often with much that is very good, which provides the additional push to maintain very high standards.
28. The picture is stronger in Years 10 and 11. Again, teaching and learning are good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but also in design and technology, history, music and religious education. In no subject is teaching or learning less than good. This remarkably consistent pattern of highly effective teaching and learning is down to the

¹ National Curriculum subjects other than English, mathematics and science

outstanding leadership and management of the Principal, his senior team and heads of department. Great care has been taken to put in place and nurture proficient teams of imaginative and energetic teachers who are completely immersed in Hele's ethos of high aspiration and achievement.

29. In English, teachers inspire their students to learn by using exciting activities and visual and oral work to drive students on. The strong role models of male teachers are a contributory factor to boys achieving so well in the subject. In mathematics, students respond very positively and work very well together, as a whole class and particularly in pair work. Regular lessons in the computer suite provide opportunities for students to practise and reinforce the work of previous lessons.
30. In nearly all lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan interesting, imaginative and extremely challenging lessons. Beginning with a strong focus on what students are expected to learn, lessons begin with crisp introductions that set the scene for the learning to come. Students are fired up with enthusiasm as a result of teachers' quick-fire, probing questions and excellent use of current, topical material, which brings the lesson to life. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been put into effect with great success in English, mathematics and science and has done much to structure and refine very effective practice. This is one big reason why standards in these three subjects are forging ahead.
31. The methods used by teachers are imaginative and diverse and entirely succeed in retaining students' interests and motivation and thus moving them quickly on. In many lessons, students easily and readily move into short brainstorming sessions in which individuals shared their ideas and then present these to the class. Teachers of English and of religious education are particularly adept at using methods like these to move learning on at a very quick pace. Students are at ease and confident when working in pairs and co-operate and collaborate when working in small groups. Independent learning has been very effectively fostered by these methods and, as a result, students progress at a very rapid rate. One example of outstanding practice in teaching and learning was seen in a Year 10 English lesson:

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 10 English lesson, containing students of a very wide range of abilities, illustrates very well the key features of **very high quality teaching in English, underpinning very high standards and achievement**.

The lesson focused on Shakespeare's use of linguistic devices in Romeo and Juliet Act 1, Sc1 – metaphor and imagery in characterisation, theme and development. The short starter activity involved students considering their own interpretation of what love is, based on the cartoon **Love is...** This created a buzz. The fast moving activity led to students creating vivid images under: Love is dangerous/wonderful/sad/difficult/deceives you. Teaching emphasised creative and intellectual thinking as students were expected to discuss their images before they were given a succinct definition of 'metaphor'. Throughout the short activity, gifted and talented students were challenged on the spot to give an alternative to the metaphor 'love deceives you'. A very talented boy retorted, 'Love is a chameleon'. The teaching style was almost that of being caught up in a tornado/whirlwind because students were constantly driven to complete the work with phrases such as, 'You should now be on...' Their intellectual creativity was then transferred to developing highly independent visual images on a storyboard, based on the images which they were expected to explain using media terms. Whilst all students were sufficiently challenged, the gifted and talented were interrupted with more advanced work. By taking students through a series of increasingly difficult activities, they grasped the concept of metaphorical images and could apply them to moving images. The lesson was no less than superb because of:

- The unrelenting challenge for all students.
- The skilful handling of the starter using the smart board to illustrate, define terms, and pool ideas.
- The excellent integration of theory and practical application.
- The carefully selected choice of visual, oral and kinaesthetic skills to reinforce linguistic and literary skills.

32. Teachers make very good use of the time and the resources available to them, breaking down learning into small, manageable assignments in a very imaginative manner. In this way students' attention is seized, clear connections made with previous learning and its relevance made clear. Nearly all lessons are characterised by very high levels of challenge, which reflects the teachers' very high expectations. This is a very powerful engine, when linked to the quick-fire methods described above, which propels students forward and feeds their hunger for learning.
33. In the vast majority of lessons where there were students with special educational needs their needs were well known and the class teacher and teaching assistant worked extremely well together. The team of teaching assistants is providing students with special educational needs with very good support in lessons. In some lessons support for these students is not provided but very good classroom teaching involving an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources is compensating to some extent and students progress at the same rate as others in the class.
34. The school makes inspired use of assessment information to both evaluate its work and set clear targets for improvement for its students. Teachers assess the students constructively and thoroughly within their teaching programmes, making use of the data-rich system to support target setting and monitoring requirements. A consistent system of marking students' work is applied and leads to excellent feedback to students about the quality of their work and where they need to make improvements. Teachers' records indicate that there is an excellent tracking of students' progress over time, and this contributes to high standards of achievement.
35. Teachers use the assessment information confidently to support their planning and teaching to respond to individual needs. Students understand how well they are doing and where they need to improve. Teachers give excellent comments and advice about their progress based on an excellent evidence base constructed from previous schools' results and statistics.
36. The Deputy Principal responsible for assessment has, along with other senior colleagues, devised and implemented excellent procedures, which has had a powerful effect on pushing up standards. Assessment information is analysed, disseminated to teachers and used very effectively to both evaluate, and thus improve, subject performance and also set realistic, challenging targets for students. The progress which students make towards these targets is tracked meticulously and staff intercede instantly at the first signs of underachievement. In this way, very few students fail to live up to their potential and standards are thus very high in relation to students' capabilities.

Example of outstanding practice

Whole-school assessment policy – helping the school drive towards higher standards.

This excellent policy is underpinned by a package of material providing objective data to:

- help teachers set targets for students;
- make realistic and challenging expectations of students throughout the school;
- make appropriate setting arrangements;
- satisfy demands of performance management and threshold student progress analysis;

The package contains predictive information, using the school's own data, including charts for interim assessments and reports in every subject, and national tests and GCSE results graphs, including trends in performance. This enables teachers to critically evaluate their work in the light of comparisons with all and similar schools.

Departments, using the mathematical predictions and adding professional judgement and knowledge of each individual as an on-going process, effectively and routinely apply the data. The teachers are very proficient at using this accurate and comprehensive source of information to monitor progress at year, class and individual level. Students can recognise improvement in their own work.

The comprehensive package is supported by staff development exercises built into training days. The teachers value these activities and base their judgements on students using this information. New teachers to the school are provided with excellent workshops to support them in using the system with their own students. **The excellent use of assessment data is a major contributing factor in the very high standards achieved by the students.**

Sixth form

37. Exciting teaching also characterises the overwhelming majority of lessons in the sixth form. Very good teaching and learning were seen in English, business education, chemistry, mathematics, health and social care, history, music, sociology, theatre studies and religious education. In all other subjects teaching and learning are good. In all, just under half of all lessons seen in the sixth form were very good or excellent. This is the motor, fuelled by the outstanding leadership of the head of sixth form, which is driving up standards and achievement and making the sixth form at Hele's so highly effective.
38. As in Years 7 to 11, it is the relentless pace, challenge and imaginative methods that teachers use that are the strong features of teaching. Lessons are very carefully planned to cater for the different needs of young people in the sixth form. There is an appropriate focus on encouraging students to think and learn for themselves and to critically evaluate the information that the teacher provides for them.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **very good** in both the main school and the sixth form. The school has made **very good** provision to enrich student's learning outside of lessons. The overall quality of accommodation and adequacy of resources is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A creative and enterprising curriculum, in which modern languages and independent learning are distinctive features, caters very well for all students and prepares them exceptionally well for life.
- Provision for special educational needs is very good and there is good provision for personal, social and health education.
- Students progress seamlessly from Year 7 to the sixth form because of careful and intelligent curriculum planning.

- Students' experiences are enriched by very good participation in a broad and varied programme of creative, cultural and physical activities.
- There is a very good match of teachers to the curriculum, and very good procedures for the induction and development of all staff.
- The accommodation, although satisfactory overall, constrains curriculum development in art and design and in theatre studies in the sixth form.

Commentary

39. A creative and enterprising curriculum, in which modern languages and independent learning are distinctive features, caters very well for all students and prepares them exceptionally well for life.
40. The curriculum admirably meets the school's aims. This is because it is rich in both the subjects and courses it offers and the out of class experiences that contribute so well to students' capacity to learn well and develop into mature young adults. The school has fully exploited its opportunities as a specialist language college to widen the opportunities available to students and has strengthened the school's links with the local community.
41. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 fully reflects the school's specialist status as a language college. The school has an outward looking, internationalist approach to its curriculum, which is very well expressed in the numerous foreign visits, visitors and exchanges. The obvious emphasis on the teaching of modern foreign languages is not to the detriment of standards in other areas. All statutory requirements are fully met. The school has begun to broaden further its curriculum in Years 10 and 11 by introducing vocational courses in health and social care and in business education. These contribute well to paving the way to further study in these areas in the sixth form. A number of other vocational options are provided by Plymouth College of Further Education.
42. A very wide range of courses is offered in Years 10 and 11, following careful guidance to students as to which particular courses suit their needs. All have to study two modern foreign languages, reflecting the school's language college status. The curriculum is regularly evaluated and the school responds positively to opportunities provided by national initiatives.
43. An innovative feature of the curriculum is that the regular timetable is not continuous throughout the year. For discrete periods of the year, arrangements are flexible to allow for community activities and investigations as well as for tutors to meet with students to set targets and review progress. PSHE² is also taught in a flexible arrangement and occupies a different slot in the timetable each week. This allows a comprehensive programme, including sex education, drugs awareness, alcohol abuse and citizenship to be taught by both specialist tutors and visiting specialists. All students have equal rights of access to each curriculum area, irrespective of physical or academic ability, gender, or ethnic or cultural origins. Provision for citizenship is good because the school has trained and deployed small teams of specialist teachers to co-ordinate its teaching and organise the production of appropriate teaching materials. Careers education is very good overall. Most students have opportunities to consider work-related aspects of their studies.
44. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Students with Statements of Special Educational Needs receive very good support, as do all others on the school register of students with special educational needs. Although support from teaching assistants is not always available, most teachers compensate for any lack of support in lessons by providing extra work and a range of appropriate resources. This ensures that the achievement of these students is very good. All students receive their basic curriculum entitlement and students in Years 10 and 11 have good opportunities to study appropriate vocational courses. Close links with a local special school have also improved curriculum opportunities for students with special needs and there have been improved training opportunities for staff at both schools.

² Personal, social and health education

45. Provision for gifted and talented students is very good. There is a register of all those students who are gifted and talented, with appropriate criteria identified and strategies for developing their progress. All subject staff are aware of these students and in many lessons they are provided with appropriate extension activities. Most attend a series of 'more able' conferences. There is also a very good range of activities after school in many subjects where students have the opportunity to develop and extend their talents.
46. Opportunities for enrichment are very good and are a strength of the school. This is a tangible outcome of the aims of the school and language college to provide enrichment activities to suit all students. Large numbers of students take up the challenges offered by these activities, spurred on by the dedication of staff or external organisers who run the activities, often in their own time. This is one reason why the school turns out such well-rounded young adults, well able to hold their own in the outside world. The enrichment activities fall into three categories: lesson enrichment or school based, those run by or reliant on external expertise, and those in which students make a very valuable contribution to the community. Lesson enrichment or school-based activities include the numerous homework clubs, writers' club, a wide range of sports, fitness and musical activities, field trips, work experience and CCF activities. Activities involving input from the community include workshops run by professionals, visiting speakers, and residential schools. Community related activities include numerous visits to theatres, concerts, museums, foreign trips, charity functions, formal links to local sports clubs and associations, and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme.
47. The curriculum is enriched by very good links with the community and through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Regular musical and drama activities, including productions, involve a wide cross-section of students. There is an impressive range of sporting activities and fixtures. Outdoor pursuits and the development of co-operative working and leadership skills are fostered by the school's Combined Cadet Force and Duke of Edinburgh Award activities. There are regular visits abroad and the school has growing links with its partner in South Africa.
48. Overall, the accommodation provided is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form, although there are significant variations between subjects. The modern foreign language department has a very attractive and efficient learning environment: a product of the schools' special language college status. Accommodation in English and ICT rooms is unsatisfactory. In the case of English this is due to lessons being held in isolated huts which frequently have leaky roofs and are poorly heated. Ventilation is poor in the ICT rooms and there are not enough music practice rooms. However, new buildings are planned in three phases so that English, science, design and technology, performing arts and ICT will benefit. In music, the unsatisfactory accommodation and resources, including ICT, is holding back the standards achieved by a large majority of students. Rooms around the school are so well used that it is not possible to provide adequate student social areas within the buildings.
49. The library is beautifully designed, very well maintained and very well used. A portion is allocated to careers and an ICT section is still being developed. The range of books is sufficient to provide for the needs of all students, including the sixth form and those with special needs. It is particularly active during the lunch break when students study, read and use the computers.
50. Departmental resources are generally good. Most departments have an interactive whiteboard. ICT is being managed by a new network manager and has a separate arrangement due to its high capital cost.

Sixth Form

51. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of subjects and courses, including those with a vocational bias. It caters very well for the vast majority of students and allows effective progression from Year 11. Very few students leave the school before finishing their studies and this is a testament to the breadth, range and relevance that the school provides. There is a good match of provision to individual needs, which is reflected in the high proportion (about 75 per cent) of students entering the sixth form from Year 11.
52. The school offers a good range of advanced courses including AS and A-levels and AVCEs. In addition a one-year course gives students the opportunity to acquire nationally recognised vocational qualifications to NVQ level II in an extensive range of areas, widening their employment and further education choices. Alongside this it is possible for students to add to their GCSE portfolio. All students follow an examination course in general studies alongside aspects of key skills and a programme of personal development activities. Although access to some courses will be dependent upon prior attainment, the sixth form is open and fully inclusive. All students have equal rights of access in terms of physical ability, gender, and ethnic and cultural origins.
53. A comprehensive enrichment programme is offered to sixth formers, including opportunities for paid employment in the school. The community aspects of enrichment are often linked to subject expectations. For example, geography students are supported by staff from Plymouth University whilst undertaking assignments on Global Futures, speakers from Carlton TV and Radio Devon contribute to media studies and an acupuncturist talks to chemistry students about alternative medicine.
54. Within overall pleasant accommodation that is conducive to good learning are areas where inappropriate facilities are holding back standards. In art, the large number of students on the course creates significant pressures on space, because there is no dedicated sixth form. Students are therefore unable to work over extended periods of time, and this inhibits the raising of standards. In theatre studies, high standards have been achieved despite there being no suitable space in which to teach the subject, and very few resources to support its work.

Care, guidance and support

Child protection and health and safety questions are **very well** addressed. Support systems work **very well** and students have access to very good quality advice and academic information based on very good monitoring and excellent assessment. The school involves students **very well** in decisions involving the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' physical health and safety are very well addressed.
- Child protection is secure and the school works effectively to eliminate risk.
- Individuals are very well monitored, both socially and academically.
- Behaviour management and attendance are very well addressed.
- Students have very good support from staff.
- Underachieving students are identified at an early stage.

Commentary

55. The school cares for, guides and supports its students very well and does all it can to help students along.

56. There are good systems in place to ensure child protection and the health and safety of students. Risks are minimised and procedures and protocols are well known. Healthy, tasty food is on offer daily and contributes to a calm civilised lunchtime.
57. There is a very good system of support for students through their year groups on both an academic and personal level. The year group and tutor systems are based on a coherent approach where students are monitored in a systematic way so that any underachievement or unhappiness, whether academic or social, is picked up at an early stage.
58. Very good induction procedures mean that students settle quickly and easily into school, helped by very good support, which often involves older students as mentors. Individuals are monitored, from the very early days when they join the school, on a formal and informal basis. This works very well to chart progress, identify those who need help and acknowledge the success of those who have done well, and let their families know. The recent appointment of a student liaison officer is making such contacts easier and extending their scope.
59. Behaviour management results in an excellent outcome, and there is great consistency of approach throughout the school. Students know whom to approach if they are troubled and all said that bullying is always tackled.
60. The school is not slow to approach specialist agencies for advice, whether on health or academic matters, and uses these sources of advice very well, from both inside and outside school. Students who have special educational needs, including those who are physically disabled, feel secure and safe in school and participate in all areas of school life.
61. Students are increasingly asked for their opinions in polls and invited to make their views known through media such as the School Council. There is very good interaction with Sixth formers, where views are acted upon and students can see the outcome of discussions. Support for careers and advice for next steps is enhanced by growing and good use of connexions, outside agencies and in-school expertise.
62. Links between departments in the school and the learning support department are good, are developing and are effective in ensuring that most staff have an appropriate understanding of the specific learning needs of those students with special educational needs. Liaison with primary schools is very good and involves a range of visits to the primary schools by staff at Hele's and visits by all primary school pupils to their new school. This forms the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through extensive testing of students on entry and in subsequent years. This provides relevant information which helps the school to make decisions about the level of support necessary for all students.
63. This is a very inclusive school and every effort is made to ensure that all students make appropriate progress. For those with special educational needs, several strategies are employed to promote inclusion. For those students who are seriously underachieving for a variety of reasons special support has been provided. Some examples of this highly effective support are:
 - Some students in Year 7, who have not reached an appropriate National Curriculum level at their primary school, are withdrawn from some tutor periods for support and development of their literacy skills, which is beginning to help them access all subjects at an appropriate level.
 - Students who are experiencing serious problems with development of literacy skills are also receiving very good support either in their lessons or occasionally through withdrawal from some English lessons.
 - For physically disabled students access to most areas of the schools is now very good and continues to improve. There were many examples of these students being very well integrated in lessons and making very good progress.

Sixth form

64. Sixth formers feel they have access to very good advice, guidance and support. This is entirely endorsed by the inspection team and borne out by the remarkable fact that hardly any students leave the sixth form after the start of their course. This is because students are inducted effectively into the sixth form. Meticulous records are kept of students' progress and how much effort they make. Year tutors and subject departments liaise very well in this monitoring with the result that any underachievement is caught early and redressed. This is one reason why standards and achievement in the sixth form are very high.
65. Target setting, based on good information on prior attainment, is another reason for the sixth form's high standards. Students are highly motivated by this process and this regular review helps to keep them focused on their studies and raises their expectations.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents show an **exemplary** degree of commitment and involvement in their children's education and feel that they are very well informed about progress and achievement. Links with other schools and the local community are **very good** and are highly productive, especially those made by the language college with primary schools and people in the city.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An excellent partnership with parents leads to a high degree of satisfaction and excellent working relationships.
- Parents are very well involved in their children's work and progress.
- Their views are regularly asked for and acted upon.
- Parents support the school by attending academic and social events in large numbers.
- Links made with the community and local schools by the language college and other departments extend students' horizons and are mutually beneficial.

Commentary

66. The school has forged extremely effective partnerships with its parents, other schools and the community, which contributes to its success.
67. The school makes partnership with parents one of its highest priorities from the moment students are to join the school. Parents are well informed in many different ways about their children's progress and almost 100 per cent of them attend feedback meetings during the year. The school contacts parents as soon as problems arise and keeps them well involved in any action to support underachieving students as well as congratulating them on success.
68. Parents indicated that they have a very good relationship with teachers and other staff and feel they can contact the school easily. They are asked their views on matters of importance and there was a very high return of positive questionnaires. They are fully involved in school initiatives. Parents come into school for celebrations and performances in large numbers, and they fund-raise very effectively, often organising events to support the school.
69. Curricular links to primary schools are very well developed, particularly in languages, and many younger students benefit from the language college expertise, as well as from well established links in other subjects. An increasing array of classes for community members in foreign languages is forging links outside the school.

70. Links to colleges and other schools are many, with a large array of sporting and other activities, which provide opportunities for students of all ages. Links to schools in Europe, by means of overseas visits and email contact, and to a school in South Africa are extending the horizons of students and staff. The cadet force is very well supported by students and parents and forms a strong, traditional link to the community which contributes to the strong personal development in the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is **very good**. The Principal provides **excellent** leadership and is very well supported by his senior staff, who also provide **excellent** leadership. Together, they ensure that the effectiveness of management is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Principal, senior colleagues and governors have created an extremely clear vision for the school, with a strong focus on high quality teaching and learning.
- Under the leadership of the Principal, highly effective, cohesive teams have been built at all levels in the school.
- The governing body has made a very strong contribution to the success of the school by fully carrying out its role as a critical friend.
- Middle managers are highly effective and have created a strong ethos for sustained improvement in their subjects.
- There is a highly effective improvement plan, the key focus of which is to nurture high standards.
- The highly effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and intelligent use of assessment information have contributed greatly to the school's very high standards.
- The very strong linkage between the school's development plan and its financial planning enables the school to fully evaluate its spending.

Commentary

71. At the heart of the outstanding leadership of the Principal and his senior team is an unremitting drive to push up standards.
72. The quality of leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The principal and his highly effective team of senior managers, with very good critical support from a well-informed governing body, have been highly effective at developing an extremely clear vision for the school. This vision is driven by a clear focus on the individual student and an appreciation of the pivotal importance of teaching and learning as the motor that drives up standards. The principal has succeeded entirely in sharing this vision with the entire school community and has won their total support in helping him realise it. The school's vision is very well expressed in the school's improvement plan, which is entirely appropriate with its key focus on nurturing teaching and learning as a means of sustaining high standards.
73. Under the leadership of the Principal, the school has developed into an ambitious, open, yet self-critical institution. It is completely devoid of complacency and sets itself adventurous targets. As a result of the Principal's superb inter-personal and coaching skills, staff have a great belief in themselves and what they can achieve for the school. One of the great skills of the Principal is his ability to build highly effective teams, delegating real authority to them and so empowering them to reach their goals. The senior management team is one such example. Their skills complement each other's perfectly and they have proved to be highly influential and effective. For instance, through their lead on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and their exemplary use of assessment, they have played a significant part at contributing to the school's very high standards.

74. Middle managers are a highly effective group. Leadership and management are excellent in English, mathematics, science and religious education; very good in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education and good in all other subjects. These highly effective subject leaders have taken their lead from the Principal and created a very real ethos for improvement in their subjects. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics, science and religious education. These departments have led the way in developing innovative approaches to teaching and learning, imaginative use of assessment data and sensitive yet highly effective methods of ensuring high quality in their subject areas. Such visionary work, for instance, has resulted in the school completely reversing the picture of boys' underachievement, which is seen nationally.
75. The head of supportive education provides very good leadership and leads a large team of teaching assistants. She has a clear vision for support in the school and has managed a range of systems and procedures very effectively and very imaginatively, to ensure that all those students with special educational needs receive the best possible support. There is a clear policy and a good and developing range of information for staff. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and their deployment is very effective. Procedures for the recording, monitoring and review of the progress of individual students is good and an important factor in the very good progress made by these students. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory requirements.
76. The governing body, well informed by the senior managers, is highly supportive, but also asks the critical questions and so holds the school to account. Its committee structure works well and governors have developed very strong links with individual departments in the school and so are well aware of the school's strengths and any areas that need improvement. They have made a very strong contribution to the success of the school by playing a central role in shaping the overall strategic direction that the school has taken. For instance, they have been fully involved in the school's decision to become a language college and are very active at formulating and reviewing the school's improvement plan and financial planning.
77. One of the strengths of the school is the way it manages its financial resources. The real strength lies in the linkage between the school's development plan and its financial planning. With a strong focus on developing high quality learning programmes, the school's development plan looks forward to identify future priorities, which are carefully costed and presented to the governing body for scrutiny. In this way, the school is able to allocate its resources in a way that has the most direct bearing on pupils' achievement and also to evaluate how effective those spending decisions have been. The school has a complete understanding of the principles of best value.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,814,442	Balance from previous year	113,608
Total expenditure	4,713,281	Balance carried forward to the next year	101,161
Expenditure per pupil	3,435		

Sixth form

78. The very large sixth form is managed and led outstandingly well, with great energy and attention to detail. There are very good links between the head of sixth form, subject leaders and pastoral staff. This facilitates an excellent use of assessment data which carefully tracks pupils' progress and greatly reduces underachievement.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Community education is a **very good** area of the school's work.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- The language college is taking the lead in forging very effective links with the community and encouraging the use of the school's facilities by the community.

Commentary

79. Community use of the school's resources is greatly facilitated by the language college. Staff expertise is used to persuade members of the community, local businesses and school members to take advantage of opportunities to learn a language. Recently Spanish classes at beginner and GCSE level have been boosted by a new popularity of the language and the school has reacted by laying on extra facilities.
80. The very good resources which the school possesses in this area, including computers and white boards, are used to extend opportunities for the latest language learning techniques to come into play.
81. Primary schools and a special school benefit from being able to access French classes from Year 5 upwards, given in their own schools. These prove popular with parents and children, who value them as giving them an enriched education. ICT equipment and support is provided for these schools.
82. There are dynamic links with the College of St Mark and St John (Marjon) which sends trainee teachers, often from many different countries, work at the school.
83. The wider international community is included in community education through the Comenius project which brings groups of students into school to learn English, often staying with students' families, enabling a two way exchange of culture and language. Groups of students from Western and Eastern Europe and farther afield have been welcomed into school. Links to a school in South Africa have started and development is under active discussion.
84. The language college is the lead school for the Key Stage 3 Modern Foreign Language Strategy and the school also been awarded Regional CPD (Continuing Professional Development) status for cascade training to local information technology centres and fee paying delegates, thus increasing its liaison with training for professionals in a wide geographical area.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In this curriculum area, English and French and German were inspected in detail and Spanish sampled. All students now learn two languages up to the end of Year 11; in 2004 there will be almost equal numbers taking French or German as their first language. In addition, an impressive number have opted to take a full GCSE course in the other language, and there are groups working in Years 10 and 11 for GCSE in Spanish. One lesson of Spanish was seen in Year 10. Standards are above average and students achieving very well because of very good teaching and learning.

English

Provision for English is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievements	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well year on year because of the very good teaching, which contributes to sustaining very high standards.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very strong. Leadership is underpinned by vision. Clarity of ideas has sustained the very high standards and given students the most appropriate curriculum that is matched to their needs.
- The present accommodation is poor and severely hinders access to the use of ICT in the teaching of English. Despite this, teachers and students are very focused on teaching and learning.
- Marking and assessment data are used thoroughly to sustain and raise standards further.

Commentary

Test and Examination results

85. Results in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE English examination have been consistently high since the last inspection, with a rising trend in performance. The high results were maintained in the 2003 tests and GCSE examinations. Similarly, high results have been obtained in media studies and communication studies over a number of years. In 2002, two boys achieved the accolade of being among the top five students nationally to gain the highest marks in communication studies. Boys achieve well above average for boys nationally; however, more girls than boys achieve the higher grades.

Standards and achievement

86. Inspection evidence confirms that standards achieved in lessons and over time reflect the test and examination results. Given their starting point on entry, which is broadly average, achievement is very good, with higher-attaining students making rapid progress in all areas of the English curriculum. This is because of:
- consistently very good teaching;
 - the very strong emphasis teachers place on writing skills;
 - the use of assessment data to monitor progress, set targets and inform teaching and learning;
87. Standards in speaking are good and listening skills are very good. Students are alert, confident speakers, who use clear communication skills to explain their ideas. Whereas girls tend to be more retiring, boys are very quick and responsive during all oral forms of work. Students reach good standards in reading and interpreting literary and non-literary texts critically because of the emphasis teachers place on analysing language and style. By Year 9, critical interpretation is perceptive. Towards the end of Year 11, appreciation and understanding of a writer's style is evident in their response to a range of genres as students confidently explore the use of language and complex issues. Lower-attaining students use background information very well but there is little analysis of their detailed knowledge of texts. Writing skills are good overall with higher-attaining students reaching very good standards. Students have a good facility with writing. Work is carefully structured and middle and higher-attaining students use a wide range of punctuation marks accurately. The work of the higher-attaining students is well crafted; they use a range of sentences and draw on a wide vocabulary to create vivid images. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

88. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all year groups. Teachers inspire their students to learn. The pace of lessons is often very fast and challenging, leading to all students, including the gifted and talented and those with a special educational need, being sufficiently challenged because stimulating resources, methodologies and questioning techniques are well matched to their needs. Teachers use exciting activities and visual and oral work to drive students. Students learn quickly and display a large capacity for learning because they are taken through a series of activities before applying them. The immediacy of applying the taught skills gives rapid feedback, enabling teachers to assess students' grasp of concepts. Teacher's summaries at the end of a lesson is reflective and evaluative, with students indicating their understanding of the work. The strong role models of male teachers are a contributory factor to boys achieving so well in the subject.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. Leadership is visionary and provides a very clear direction by assessing the needs of students and taking radical direction to ensure that they are given the most appropriate curriculum to realise their potential. The curriculum is innovative, with students at Key Stage 4 having a wider choice of options. The department is well monitored; the rich body of assessment data is used extensively and integrated into the day-to-day management, teaching and learning. Leadership and management, along with a committed and dedicated team, have sustained the high results over a number of years. Despite being in poor buildings and having limited access to ICT, the department has not lost its main focus: very high quality and teaching, and exciting learning. The department is a strength of the school and has made very good progress since the last inspection.

Literacy across the curriculum

90. Students enter the school with average literacy skills but achieve very good standards by the end of Year 9. This is because of the strong emphasis the English department places on using grammatical features accurately and its dissemination across the school. A striking feature of this aspect of students' work is the relentless attention all teachers give to embedding literacy targets in their planning and day-to-day teaching. This is having a significant impact on the high standards students reach in different subjects. Students use good oral skills to explore their work and they listen attentively. The high profile given to independent research, and their good use of specialist vocabulary contribute to students becoming analytical readers with a good command and understanding of key concepts in different subjects. The librarian plays a pivotal role in promoting independent research and reading; the library is inviting and very well organised. The literacy co-ordinator is very proactive and has used survey, monitoring and reviews findings, as well as in-service training to increase teachers' awareness of developing all aspects of literacy in particular, reading and writing. Departments have therefore been very inventive and instructive in developing writing skills across the curriculum. As a result, students structure extended writing expertly. They write for different purposes with understanding, paying attention to using a range of sentences and punctuation marks accurately.

Modern Foreign Languages

Overall the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's status as a language college has been a key factor in raising standards of attainment.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the future.
- Students are encouraged to have high expectations and to help each other to achieve them.
- The teaching of writing skills is very good.
- Students' speaking skills are weak.

Commentary

91. In 2002, GCSE results were a little below average and also below those of other subjects in the school. However, since the school became a language college, results have risen steadily and rose again in 2003, with more grades at A* and A. This is particularly impressive as all students are candidates in French, a policy very different from that of many other schools. Since 2001 the pass rate at grades A*-G has been 100 per cent. Most students in 2002 achieved satisfactorily. Boys have not done as well as girls, but the difference has not been as great as is found nationally. The small number of students taking German as a second language attained good results.

Standards and achievement

92. Standards in Year 7 are above average. Students use French and German with greater confidence, and have made more progress in written work, than is usual at this stage. This is because students now begin their study of languages in primary school as a result of the partnership between these schools and the Language college. There is a wide range of attainment in Year 9, but overall students show a good understanding of written and spoken language and standards are above average. Students have a good grasp of how to use different tenses and how to make their work more varied and interesting. The work of middle and lower attainers is more limited in scope, but is mostly careful and well presented. Overall standards of spoken language are disappointing. Students answer questions competently and work well with each other in pairs, but many lack the confidence to speak without the help of a written stimulus. In a lesson with higher-attaining students, a very good range of language was used, and some humour and imagination, when writing and speaking in French about themselves. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is good.
93. In Years 10 and 11 overall standards in French are broadly average and students are achieving satisfactorily. Students are familiar with a good variety of vocabulary and structures, indicating at least a satisfactory level of understanding of written and spoken language, though little formal comprehension work was seen during the inspection. A high priority is given to writing, as a basis for both coursework and the GCSE speaking test. There is some excellent work in books and in coursework, showing a good awareness of what is needed to raise standards to a higher level. Speaking skills are weak and there is little evidence of language being used in authentic conversation. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is good.

Teaching and learning

94. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach. Lessons have clear objectives and a variety of activities to keep students interested and involved. Students respond very positively and work very well together, as a whole class and particularly in pair work. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers do not manage time well: too much is spent on one aspect, so that students begin to lose concentration and may become restless. There is sometimes insufficient use of foreign languages by teachers, which leads in turn to under use of the language by students. Regular lessons in the computer suite provide opportunities for students to practise and reinforce the work of previous lessons. ICT is also used by teachers to create a range of stimulating resources and by students to produce attractive written work, some of which is on display in classrooms and corridors. A strong feature of students' learning is the advice given by teachers to enable them to raise the standard of their work. Students with special educational needs receive good attention from teachers and very good support from specialist staff, so that they are able to achieve as well as other students.

Leadership and management

95. The department is very well managed, with responsibilities shared by the principal of the language college and the head of department, who started in post in September after five years at the school. Both are to be congratulated on the improvements that have been achieved since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very good	Very good
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since last inspection	Excellent

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management of mathematics is exemplary and a very effective team of mathematics teachers has been created.
- Students achieve very well because of the very high quality of the teaching and learning.
- Teachers foster very good behaviour in their classes and so students' attitudes to learning are almost always very good or excellent.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- The quality and thoroughness of marking are very good, which means that students are clear about their levels of attainment.
- Good use is made of ICT in developing mathematical concepts.
- Occasionally, not enough time is set aside at the end of lessons for a high quality summary of the lesson.

Commentary

Test and examination results

96. Results at the end of Year 9 were well above average compared to those in all and also to those in similar schools. There was little difference in the results of boys and girls. These results represent very good achievement as students enter Hele's with average standards. Test results are increasing at about the same rate as the national average, although higher-attaining students performed especially well in 2003, with the numbers who reached the extremely high Level 8 doubling compared to the previous year. This is a significant improvement on the results at the time of the last report.
97. GCSE results were well above average in 2002. Boys did better girls. Overall, students achieved very well. This is a significant improvement on standards at the time of the last inspection. A very high proportion of students now attain the highest grades at GCSE; girls attained just above the national average at grades A* and A and the boys well above at these highest levels.

Standards and achievement

98. Students entered the school with average levels of attainment in mathematics. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen are well above national averages, showing that very good achievement is taking place due to very good teaching. Higher-attaining students understand how to calculate an estimated median for continuous data. Other students solve simultaneous equations with good confidence.

99. Standards in Year 11 are also well above average and students are achieving very well. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 differentiate functions, showing very good understanding of the rules involved. Lower-attaining students have satisfactory numeracy skills and interpret statistical information correctly. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

100. Teaching and learning in mathematics are very good. Teachers show a very good command of mathematics and make learning exciting. Learning objectives are clearly specified to students at the beginning of most lessons so that they know what they will be able to do at the end of the lesson. Teachers are making very good use of the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy, especially the quick-fire mental arithmetic “starter” session, which puts students in the right frame of mind for the main part of the lesson. Teachers’ expectations of students are always very high and teachers expect students to work hard and make very good progress. Students respond very well to these challenges and work very enthusiastically. They make very good gains in knowledge and skills.
101. Much modern technology is very well used, by teachers both to enhance students’ learning and stimulate students’ interest in mathematics. Students confidently and appropriately use computers and scientific calculators efficiently to show reflections in axes. All teachers emphasise the new school literacy policy and in most lessons the key words used in mathematics are very well stressed and written on a separate white board. Teachers foster very high standards of behaviour in lessons, encouraging all students to concentrate hard and make very good progress. Teachers set sensible amounts of homework to extend and confirm knowledge learned in the classroom. Assessment of students’ work is very thorough and detailed comments are made which help students to learn. Targets are set and students know what they must do to improve their mathematics.

Leadership and management

102. The leadership of the department is excellent. The head of department clearly identifies objectives for continual improvement. The schemes of work have been totally revised, which was a key point for action in the last report, and they now contain very detailed information and help all mathematics teachers to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are taught well. The department knows exactly the way in which it should move forward because an excellent department handbook, which is contained on a compact disc, is circulated to all mathematics staff. The detail in all these department documents shows outstanding vision.
103. The management of the department is also excellent. The head of department analyses students’ exercise books, and produces comprehensive reports on improvements to be made. He also observes teachers in the classroom and makes recommendations for further approaches to enhance students’ learning. The department organises and uses data very sensibly, and rigorous self-examination takes place. Planning and organisation within the department are excellent.
104. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent, and a very professional team of highly motivated teachers has been built. It is clear that standards will continue to rise from their already very high level.

Mathematics across the curriculum

105. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented across the school. A whole-school policy on the use of mathematics across the curriculum has been introduced, and development of the Strategy is well advanced. This has helped drive up standards in mathematics. The three-part lesson is used frequently in mathematics, and works well in most lessons. The ideas in the National Numeracy Strategy are also extended into lessons for students up to and including the sixth form.

106. Most departments have careful and effective plans for the use of numeracy in their subjects. In science, graphs, measurements in various units and calculations are all completed very competently. Spreadsheets are a significant part of the curriculum in ICT, and much of this is taught by members of the mathematics department, thus establishing a strong link. In design and technology, students complete graphs and very competently choose their own scale. A variety of graphs are extensively used in geography. The use of mathematics is clearly mentioned in the department's handbook, and statistics and the analysis of data from fieldwork investigations are completed to a good level.
107. There are good displays of numeracy ideas in the school corridors. An advertisement in the library encourages the students to use practice tests in the mathematics department. Students then sit an examination and are awarded certificates in numeracy. The mathematics department runs a numeracy club after school and organises a weekly numeracy challenge, which helps to reinforce the ways in which numeracy is used within the school.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision in science is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Well above average	Well above average
Teaching and learning	Well above average	Well above average

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Excellent assessment processes ensure that students know exactly what to do to improve their work.
- Excellent leadership and management foster very good teamwork.
- There is limited development of students' ICT skills in interpreting and handling scientific information.

Commentary

Test and examination results

108. The test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average, compared both with those of all schools and with those of similar schools. Students' achievement overall was very good. There has been a continuing, improving trend over time, and science results are higher than those of English but below those of mathematics. Boys' performance has exceeded the national average by a greater amount than girls', a trend that is more pronounced than the national trend. One factor that has contributed to this improved performance of boys is the increasing use of role-play, which makes learning exciting for boys.
109. The GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were well above the national average and students achieve very well because of consistently very good teaching. This has been a continuing trend and these results are now only slightly lower in comparison with those of both English and mathematics. Boys achieve higher results than girls, which is different to the national trend.

Standards and achievement

110. The students enter the school with average standards in science. Their work in Year 9 shows that they are well above average at this stage, with boys and girls having comparable standards. This represents very good achievement. All groups of students show this improvement as they move through the school. Students understand the level of work they are tackling, where their strengths lie, and where they need to improve. They are confident in applying the principles they have learned to new situations, for example, in energy transformations where they interpret practical findings and work out the significant energy changes that are taking place.
111. The work in Year 11 shows that there is continuing improvement, and is well above average. Boys and girls are working at the same levels, and all groups of students show similar rates of improvement as they work through the school. As in the lower school, students' achievement is very good. Students are confident about the levels they are working at, and know where they need to improve. In studying respiration they use scientific knowledge and understanding to draw conclusions from their evidence, and decide what data has to be collected to enable them to test relationships between variables. They have very good practical skills. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

112. Teaching and learning are very good in all years and it is this that is leading to students' very good achievement. They learn very well and achieve improvements as they move through the school. Major factors that contribute to the very good learning are the very good marking and feedback on performance to students, using the excellent assessment system to monitor progress; very good support by teachers for those students who experience difficulties; very good relationships between teachers and students; teaching that challenges students at appropriate levels, and demanding work that motivates students to achieve higher goals.

Leadership and management

113. The leadership in the department is excellent, which is successfully driving up standards through the creation of a supportive team of teachers and technicians. The teachers share their skills effectively with each other and so ensure that successful, challenging approaches to learning are spread. There is excellent management, with very good schemes of work, consistent departmental policies that are implemented, very good monitoring systems using data, and good monitoring of staff and professional development. There is very good planning and contribution to whole-school plans. There is very good improvement since the last inspection because standards have continued to improve rapidly.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good technical support is managing to keep computer suites running but resources, quality, quantity and accessibility are stopping the students from achieving higher standards in their work.
- Teaching is mainly good in the lessons seen but monitoring and evaluation has yet to take place to ensure that the large number of teachers teaching the subject provide a consistent experience for students in and between year groups.

Commentary

Examination results

114. By the end of Year 11 standards and achievement in ICT are above average. Results in the GNVQ examinations in 2002 were above average and continue year on year to rise. More boys took the subject than girls, but girls performed much better than boys did overall.

Standards and achievement

115. By the end of Year 9 students' standards and their achievement are average. Students' combine ICT tools to produce a magazine or to prepare a spreadsheet. Students critically evaluate their work as it progresses.
116. By the end of Year 11 standards and achievement are good. The work seen is characterised by increased integration and efficiency in the use of ICT tools. In addition, a greater range and complexity of information is considered. An example of this is when students use a programming language to design their own web site for a particular audience in business studies or as part of a half GCSE. They produce a project plan to develop a small business, create business cards and headed paper and merge data for the sending of letters. They make informed use of animated features to present to a different audience and they test and refine their work using the school intranet. At present the intranet is slow and there is little space available for students working at higher levels to save their work. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is good.

Teaching and Learning

117. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in discrete lessons is good. In Years 7 to 9 students benefit from an hour a week of timetabled lessons. Enthusiastic teachers use sample teaching units well with a view to ensuring the raising of students' attainment. In Years 10 to 11 teaching is effective, teachers have high expectations and students are keen to learn as they see the importance of ICT in their everyday lives. Teachers manage the resources well, particularly the new overhead projectors, which ensure that illustrated technical points are understood by all.

Leadership and Management

118. Leadership and management have improved since the appointment of an acting head of ICT this year because there are now a clear vision and direction provided. A strategic plan is in place to secure improvements. Coverage of the subject is better and assessment moderation is planned to ensure higher standards for students. The school benefits from very good technical support.

Information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum

119. Co-ordination, vision and leadership of the subject developed by the new acting co-ordinator are clear but have yet to impact on ICT across the curriculum. The planned monitoring and evaluation of ICT to ensure better standards in all subject areas are not yet in place. The focus on ICT as part of the award of language college status has resulted in more emphasis on ICT in the subjects of the curriculum and, as a result, students' skills, knowledge and understanding of ICT are better than those reported in the previous inspection. Students are achieving high standards in ICT in modern foreign languages, geography, design and technology and mathematics. The physical education department uses a digital camera to good effect to improve the technical capability of students in dance and gymnastics. Students achieve high standards in business studies. Other subjects plan to use ICT and there is some evidence of students work in subject areas but this is less clear. Students use the library to gain access to the Internet for their homework and the suites are used well before, during and after school to help with homework projects. Access to the ICT suite and ageing unreliable servers are skilfully kept going by very good technical support.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Overall the quality of provision in geography is **good**

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have established a clear vision and high expectations for the department.
- Standards and achievement by Year 9 are only average because teaching and learning are not fully developed to sufficiently challenge students of all abilities.
- Good teaching and constructive teacher-student relationships have resulted in GCSE results that are well above average.
- In Years 10 and 11 good fieldwork provision has encouraged the development of independent learning and research skills.
- The development of literacy skills has had a positive impact on attainment and achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Although much progress has been made, the use of statistically-based target setting and monitoring to raise standards is not fully developed, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

Examination results

120. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average and students achieved very well. Geography was amongst the highest performing subjects in the school. Overall, girls performed better than boys. However, results fell in 2003 and are likely to be above average overall when compared with those of all schools.

Standards and achievement

121. By the end of Year 9, students' standards are average and their achievement satisfactory. They can recognise, describe and explain geographical patterns such as population distribution, climate and vegetation and use a variety of maps, diagrams and graphs to illustrate their work. However, work is not always carefully designed by some teachers to allow higher-attaining students to develop and demonstrate their ability across the full range of levels. There is evidence of teachers using target setting to help raise standards, but there is some inconsistency in practice.
122. In Year 11, students' standards are above average and they are achieving well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of a range of physical and human geography topics, and are able to write about them in detail. They use technical terms competently, are able to analyse and evaluate evidence, to draw and justify conclusions and to present information through a range of maps, diagrams and graphs. They are still developing their skills in answering examination questions and have yet to complete their coursework, which has a significant impact on GCSE outcomes.
123. The attainment and achievement of girls are higher than those of boys both at Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. In all years the attainment and achievement of students with special educational needs are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

124. Overall, teaching and learning are good. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Through careful planning teachers maintain students' interest and enthusiasm by providing stimulating resources, engaging them in a variety of tasks, actively involving them in their own learning and ensuring a brisk pace in lessons. Every opportunity is taken to develop students' literacy skills and to extend their geographical vocabulary. Students have good relationships with each other and with their teachers and demonstrate the ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully in a variety of situations. They regularly use humour and praise to motivate students and make them feel valued. However, in Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are not fully developed to sufficiently challenge students of all abilities. This is recognised in the department development plan.

Leadership and management

125. The department is well led and managed. Substantial progress has been made since the last inspection. Schemes of work are imaginative and detailed and there is a range of effective policies and good forward planning. There is a good team spirit in the department. Accommodation and resources are good.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision, focused on high standards.
- Assessment allows teachers to focus on strengths and weaknesses in students' work, so driving up standards.
- Well-informed planning provides a variety of innovative learning for students of all abilities.
- The development of literacy across the curriculum enables students to produce well-structured extended writing.
- The use of ICT is not yet fully developed.

Commentary

Test and examination results

126. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average and the proportion of students gaining the highest grades was very high. This represents very good achievement. There was little difference in the standards of boys and girls. Students did better in history than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

127. Student attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. By the end of Year 9, standards observed in lessons are clearly above average and so students are achieving well. Lower-attaining students and those with a special educational need are well supported and make particularly good progress. Students are encouraged to become independent learners and to justify judgements they make. These may be concerned with the causes of events or the acceptability of different historical interpretations, for example of the relative benefits of empire for mother country and colonies.
128. By the end of Year 11, the standards of students of all abilities are well above average. The achievement of these students is very good because teaching is carefully matched to their needs and leads to exciting learning. In a very good Year 11 lesson, students showed impressive understanding of different levels of source analysis in a task requiring them to assess examples of written work using a GCSE mark scheme. Average and lower-attaining students are able to do this well because of the skilful structuring of the task by the teacher. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because teachers are sensitive and responsive to their needs.

Teaching and learning

129. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Effective learning occurs in classes containing students of widely differing prior attainment because teaching is well organised to meet the learning needs of all students. Teaching provides learning activities that are varied, rigorous and interesting. However, misjudgements of pace can occasionally undermine the effectiveness of otherwise well organised teaching. Assessment practice is very good. Students of all ages and abilities know exactly how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

130. The department is very well managed. Leadership is characterised by clear vision that places the welfare of students and the standards they attain at the centre of all activities undertaken. Planning of teaching and assessment is particularly well informed and systems for the monitoring of teaching and of students' progress are well established.

Religious education

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' learning and achievement overall are very good as a result of good teaching.
- The quality of leadership in the subject is excellent because it provides a clearly focused drive to push up standards.
- All students are engaged and motivated to learn, by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers.
- Examination results are above the national average and compare favourably with results in other subjects in the school.
- The quality of teaching is less consistent in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Examination results

131. Results in the GCSE examinations were above the national average for the subject demonstrating a trend of improvement. The results compare favourably with results achieved, by these students in their other subjects. All students achieved well and there was no significant difference between the results for boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

132. By the end of Year 9 students are achieving well and demonstrate above average standards. The standard of work seen confirms the value-added data provided by the local authority. Only one lesson of core religious education, within the social education course, was observed and so it is not possible to make any judgement about standards. By the end of Year 11 most students demonstrate very good achievement in examination courses, with boys, in particular, exceeding national expectations. Standards are above average. Students of all levels of prior attainment make, at least, good progress; high-attaining students are enabled to make very good progress. Students show good knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and how these influence behaviour. They are able to use correct religious terminology to explain their understanding of religious ideas. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good in Year 9 and very good in Year 11. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because teachers are sensitive and responsive to their needs.

Teaching and learning

133. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In Years 7 to 9 they are good and in Years 10 and 11 they are very good. In all years, teachers demonstrate enthusiasm and create an environment in which learning flourishes. Students are very interested in their work and respond well to challenging activities well matched to their abilities. In occasional lessons in Years 7 to 9, the brisk pace is not maintained and students fail to achieve the usual depth of learning.

134. In Years 10 and 11, teachers make learning exciting as a result of a high level of challenge and the use of effective methods which take good account of students' preferred learning styles. The quality of teachers' questioning is a particularly strong feature and in the best practice students are encouraged to develop their ideas at increasing levels of sophistication.
135. The assessment of students' learning and the quality of feedback by teachers ensure that students have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. During Years 10 and 11, students are encouraged to work with increasing independence within well-structured activities which ensure that all can succeed.

Leadership and management

136. The quality of leadership in the department is excellent. There is a clarity of vision about what constitutes effective teaching and learning, and teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practice and seek continuous improvement. The management of the departmental development plan, the identification and implementation of targets for improvement, and the related attention to the professional development of the teachers create a model of very good practice. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in enhanced provision for higher-attaining students and in motivating students to continue their study of the subject into the sixth form.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Very good leadership in both subject areas contributes to structured learning.
- An efficient and active assessment system enables students to achieve very well overall.
- Students have very good attitudes because they know what is expected of them.
- Technician time is insufficient to provide for the needs of the curriculum.

Commentary

Examination results

137. Overall, GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. Students' achievement was very good. Results were particularly good in textiles and food technology and were good in resistant materials and graphics. Boys and girls have similarly good results when compared with national averages, although in the 2003 results for resistant materials, boys were much better than girls. Good results have been maintained over several years.

Standards and achievement

138. Students' design and technical skills are near average on entry to the school but, by the end of Year 9, they are above average and achievement is good. This is due to well-organised and enthusiastic teaching. In classes which have students of very varied prior attainment, students are given work that is appropriate for their skills and are encouraged to improve it whenever possible. Literacy is encouraged by the use of key word lists and numeracy develops well owing to the frequent use of graphs, tables and charts.
139. In Year 11, standards seen are well above average and achievement overall is very good. All parts of the design process are thoroughly addressed. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good because teachers are sensitive and responsive to their needs. Some of the work in textiles and systems and control is particularly innovative. By the end of Year 11, students have become very skilled in the use of ICT. They use design packages for electronic circuits and are able to use computer-controlled machines to manufacture items. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

140. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are better in Years 10 and 11 where they are very good and it is here that students make rapid gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. In Years 7 to 9, students are given challenging tasks that develop their designing techniques and improve their skills. Homework very effectively extends students' knowledge and provides training in time management but few opportunities are given to students to design their own projects. Lesson summaries sometimes lack focus. During Years 10 and 11 teachers demonstrate their complete command of their subject by using a variety of teaching methods which push students to learn at full pace. The assessment system provides students with a clear idea of their progress – a distinct improvement since the last inspection.

Leadership and management

141. The management of the department is very good. It demonstrates clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations that are apparent to the students. Comprehensive documentation has been prepared, with clear policies and time limits for each section of work. The use of the departmental computers with up-to-date software is a particularly effective feature of the curriculum. Some of the rooms are in need of refurbishment, but a new building is planned to provide alternative accommodation.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Overall quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an improving trend in GCSE results which is the result of good teaching.
- Leadership and management are good, which has ensured that all students have sketch and work books.
- There are stimulating visits in Years 10 and 11, which provide students with good first hand experiences and improve standards of visual research.
- Students in Years 7 and 9 make insufficient use computers.

Commentary

Examination results

142. In relation to their capability students achieved well at GCSE, although results were below average. Overall, girls did better than boys but boys gained more A grades than girls. Over recent years the trend has been an improving one and the most recent results show this to be continuing.

Standards and achievement

143. As students approach the end of Year 9 standards are above average and students are achieving well. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is good because teachers are sensitive and responsive to their needs. Students routinely collect visual information from a variety of sources in their sketchbooks. These are used well to refine their ideas before embarking on unfinished work. The increasing complexity evident in their work shows that they have made good progress since they started the school, indicating good achievement.
144. By the end of Year 11 students are achieving well and standards seen are above average. They have broadened their understanding of the processes of making art, using different media and they make good connections between their own work and that of artists they have studied.

Teaching and learning

145. The good achievement of all students is the result of good teaching, which leads to good learning. In Years 7 to 9 lessons are well structured and teachers set clear targets and expectations. Teachers stress the importance of first-hand experience and frequently ask students to respond directly to the visual world. This improves standards and good learning. This approach continues into Years 10 and 11 and teachers take the trouble to inspire students by visits to museums galleries and visually stimulating places such as the Eden Project, so that, as a result of the drawings they make, a range of work develops which is well matched to the requirement of the examination. Sketchbooks are a strong feature of students' work and make a significant contribution to success at GCSE.

Leadership and management

146. Students also achieve well because of the good leadership and management by the head of department. This is particularly evident in the care taken to ensure that the art studios are interesting and inviting places to be; and also in the response made to the last inspection, which identified the need to improve the quality of students' preliminary studies. Now all students have their own sketch and workbooks and standards of preliminary studies have improved. The curriculum provides a good range of both two and three-dimensional activities, but students in Years 7 to 9 do not have an opportunity to make art using computers during art and design lessons.

Music

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm of the teachers and their unstinting efforts to provide students with worthwhile musical experiences leads to above average examination results.
- Leadership and management are very good, which results in very good overall provision.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation and resources, including those for ICT, which are holding back the standards achieved by a large majority of students.
- The continuing commitment of the governing body to subsidise the very good instrumental lessons, thereby offering further challenge for the more musically able students.
- There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities, which offer performing opportunities ranging from rock bands to steel pans.

Commentary

Examination results

147. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average. Results for the last three years have been consistently high, representing very good achievement. There are no significant differences between boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

148. By the end of Year 9 standards in music are well above average. As standards on entry in Year 7 are slightly below average, this represents very good achievement. Students in Years 7 to 9 experience music from a variety of cultures and styles through listening, analysis, composing and performing. They are also able to use pitch and rhythmic notation with varying degrees of confidence. Lack of regular access to computers is having a negative impact on standards in composition, especially by students who do not have instrumental skills. By the end of Year 11 students' skills in composition listening and performing enable them to achieve above average grades or better at GCSE. Compositions are well structured and performances are musical and well prepared, and the wide range of music experienced over the five years at the school provides a secure foundation for tackling the demands of the listening paper. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

149. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is very good. Students are actively engaged in a series of well-organised closely related activities brought about by very good lesson planning. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students' musical abilities, which contributes to suitably challenging tasks being set that cater for all students. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good. Students benefit from the teachers' excellent knowledge of both the subject and the requirements of the GCSE course. The teachers' drive, enthusiasm and excellent lesson preparation ensure that time is well used and consequently the students make good progress.

Strategies to further develop students' independent learning skills will enable more time in class to be spent involved in music making.

Leadership and management

150. The department is led and managed with vision and clear direction. Good progress has been made since the last inspection; assessment is now excellent, and the curriculum is very good. Lack of improvement of access to ICT still impacts negatively on the standards achieved by a large majority of students. Instrumental tuition is thriving thanks to the continued subsidy by the school governors, whose welcome contribution enables students to partake of the vital instrumental tuition which would otherwise be too expensive.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good	Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is often very good and is a significant factor in the good progress made by students.
- Students' attitudes to learning and their relationships with teaching staff are consistently very good.
- Assessment of GCSE theory work is not providing appropriate guidance for students.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the department .
- Opportunities for students to develop analysis and evaluation skills are very good and are a factor in improving performance.

Commentary

Examination Results

151. There were no examination results for physical education last year.

Standards and achievement

152. Standards of students on entry to the school are slightly below average. Standards attained by students approaching the end of Year 9 are above average and this represents very good achievement. Year 9 students have good basic skills in football. They are able to apply these skills successfully to a game situation and have good tactical awareness and understanding.
153. Standards seen in classes up to Year 11 are above average overall and students are achieving well. Students on the GCSE short course have a sound understanding of the principles of training but the standards for the theory element of this course are below expectations. By the end of Year 11 higher-attaining girls have good netball skills and pass with accuracy. They have good tactical awareness and all are able to apply this to a competitive game of netball. They also have a very good understanding of the importance of exercise to a

healthy lifestyle. In all years the achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

154. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with students, who respond with enthusiasm to their teaching. Most lessons contain a good range of activities and are well planned. Extension activities for the higher-attaining students are invariably provided. In Years 10 and 11, teachers ensure that students follow a range of interesting and challenging activities, so that they acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to develop their sporting interests when they leave school. Many students follow a GCSE short course in physical education. Assessment of the theory work for this course is not providing appropriate information to enable students to improve and staff expectations of students in this area are not high enough. Overall, however, students in all year groups achieve very well because of the consistently effective teaching over a long period of time.

Leadership and management

155. Students also achieve well because the department is very well led. There is a clear vision for the department, which is based on continuous improvement. This is successfully conveyed to all staff and communication within the department, whose members work very well as a team, is very effective. They are all involved in an extensive range of activities for students after school which provide very good opportunities for all students including the gifted and talented to excel in their chosen sports both in school and beyond.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management of the development of citizenship as a new subject within the school's Professional Development programme.
- A co-ordinator for citizenship has been newly appointed.
- The training and deployment of small teams of specialist teachers to co-ordinate the delivery of citizenship and organise the production of appropriate teaching materials.
- The provision of practical, participative projects enables students to apply their knowledge and understanding of citizenship in real situations.
- The uneven development and delivery of citizenship in different subject areas of the curriculum.

Standards and achievement

156. Overall, students reach above average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 and are achieving well. Students of all abilities make best use of opportunities offered by citizenship and respond positively to well-organised teaching. Those with a special educational need enjoy well-targeted support and also achieve well. Students in Years 7 to 9 demonstrate good knowledge of the institutions and functions of local and national government and clear awareness of their rights and responsibilities as young citizens. Students in Years 10 and 11 can conduct effective surveys into types of youth crime and solve problems connected with the management of money.

Teaching and learning

157. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are very well planned and tightly linked to syllabus and assessment objectives, enabling students, through small group presentations, opinion surveys and problem-solving activities, to demonstrate an appropriate range of knowledge, understanding and skills. In addition, students have opportunities to participate in community-based activities, interact with local government agencies and represent their views through an active school forum. The combination of tight planning, good teaching and a stimulating range of activities attracts the interest and involvement of the majority of students. However, where teaching is either teacher-dominant or hesitant, students' attitudes are less positive, as observed in a small minority of students in Year 10.

Leadership and management

158. The quality of leadership and management of the citizenship programme is very good. The high priority attached to its development by senior management reflects the aim of the school to educate its students as widely as possible. The key management decision has been to claim ownership of the initiative by making resources available for the professional development of key staff and by appointing a member of staff to co-ordinate the development of a high quality teaching programme and the production of appropriate resource materials. Developments have also occurred in the teaching of citizenship through curriculum subjects. An extensive audit has been completed and opportunities for delivering elements of citizenship have been identified in all schemes of work. However, implementation is as yet uneven: in some subjects, such as religious studies, it permeates the curriculum, in others it is relatively undeveloped.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 17 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: 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	15	93.3	Na	33	Na	33.2	Na
Biology	7	57.1	81.6	0	33.2	17.1	33.2
Chemistry	15	80	Na	33	na	19.3	Na
Communication Studies	10	70	94.2	30	36.1	30	38.5
Drama	14	93	Na	7	Na	20	Na
Economics	11	9	Na	27.3	Na	25.5	Na
English Literature	8	100	94.4	50	37.	43.8	38.9
French	9	77.7	Na	22.2	Na	21.1	Na
German	4	75	Na	25	Na	20	Na
Geography	8	75	88.3	0	36.4	20	36.3
History	5	80	91.8	0	37.2	26	37.8
Mathematics	15	40	74.2	6.7	34.3	15.3	31.3
Media Studies	28	67.8	Na	7	Na	12.5	Na
Physical Education	18	94.4	Na	16.6	Na	24.4	Na
Physics	18	94.4	Na	11	Na	23.9	Na
Sociology	10	10	33.6	90	83.7	29	33.8
total	276	75.3	86	16.9	33.6	26.7	34.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses: 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
VCE Courses:							
Business	17	100	87.1	14.7	16.5	64.7	60.1
Health and Social Care	20	100	90.1	35	16.3	83	62.5
Information Technology	20	97.5	84.3	25	24.5	68	64.3
Leisure and Recreation	8	75	86.9	12.5	12.7	47.5	58.3
Travel and Tourism	7	100	88.1	0	15.7	48.6	61.4

Total	72	96.5	87.4	21.5	18.5	67.2	62.1
A Level courses:							
Art and Design	13	100	96.1	38.5	48.7	84.6	85.1
Biology	9	100	91.6	22.2	36.3	73.3	74.1
Chemistry	9	100	94	33.3	45.9	75.6	81.1
Communication Studies	19	100	98.3	52.6	36.8	92.6	81.1
Economics	13	100	96.2	30.8	45.8	73.8	83.1
English Literature	15	100	98.5	53.3	43.7	92	84.3
Design and Technology	12	100	95.3	41.7	35.5	85	76.5
General Studies	99	99	90.1	30.3	29.1	74.5	69.3
Geography	30	100	97.1	46.7	40.5	83.3	80.9
German	6	100	96.3	50	44.3	76.7	82.1
History	6	100	97.1	66.7	41	90	81.2
Mathematics	19	94.7	93.3	36.8	52.2	77.9	84.7
Physics	15	100	92.8	46.7	42.8	85.3	78.6
Religious Studies	10	100	96.3	40	44	80	82.2
Sociology	31	96.8	95.4	25.8	96.8	71	79.1
Sports / PE Studies	11	100	95.4	9.1	29.5	69.1	73.2
Total	326	99.1	94.8	35.6	39.4	78.6	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

159. The school offers two discreet subjects – English literature and communication studies. These subjects attract one third of sixth form students. They build very successfully on students' achievement in the GCSE examinations. Many move on to pursue degree courses at university. There has been an upward trend in examination results in all three subjects. Whereas English literature was inspected in depth, communication studies lessons were sampled. Provision for students re-sitting GCSE English was not inspected.

English

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

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievements	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students reach high standards in the AS-level and A2-level English literature course.
- The scholarly teaching makes a significant contribution to students achieving well.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form courses in English are excellent.
- Relationships are very good. Students place a high value on their teachers' experience and support, and for passion of the subjects.
- There are limited enrichment activities.

Commentary

Examination results

160. Standards are well above average. In the 2002 A2 English literature examination, over half of all students obtained the higher grades, A or B and no student obtained a grade lower than grade D. The 2003 A2-level results were much higher, with seven out of every ten students gaining the top grades. The AS-level results indicate a very good pass rate, with over half of all students gaining grades A or B. Although results have fluctuated over a number of years, high standards have been sustained over the last two years.

Standards and achievement

161. Students are achieving well on the advanced course in English. There is little difference in the achievement of male and female students. The retention rate is high and few leave the course at the end of Year 12. They achieve well because of their diligence and application to their work based on the way in which they are driven to apply themselves, whether in lessons or as part of their preparation and independent study. The standard of work seen in lessons and in their folders confirms very good achievement. They reach good standards in evaluating their work and communicating their ideas during discussion and feedback, though at times those who are more vocal overshadow some of the quieter students. Students begin the AS-level course with a strong foundation in applying critical interpretation of a wide range of literary texts as a result of the earlier teaching in Year 11. By Year 13, students read widely and make good use of critical essays to develop their reading and interpretation. Higher-attaining students show mastery in arguing their views and giving a sophisticated response to literary texts in different styles, from Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* or Blake's *Songs of Innocence* to Shakespearean plays and Dickens's *A Christmas Story* or when dealing with the Theatre of the Absurd in Becket's *Waiting for Godot*. Essays are well structured and, overall, writing skills are good.

Teaching and learning

162. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The scholarly approach and command of the subject are used to develop students' knowledge and understanding of literary texts and examination requirements. As such, the teacher uses his expertise to lead students through a range of literary texts and develop their autonomy as readers. Students are encouraged to develop their personal response through discussion, group work and feedback so that they can demonstrate their grasp of a writer's use of structure, language and form. Teaching ensures that students adopt a critical stance when doing a comparative study or a focused essay on a given text. Students' confidence and ability to work independently increase when their teacher through model writing, leads discussion and uses a running commentary during feedback.

Leadership and management

163. The English department's provision for advanced level English, media and communication studies is very well managed. The head of department leads a team of committed and experienced teachers whose skills are used to maximum effect. The department uses assessment records analytically to set targets, support students and guide them through the courses. Forward planning underpins the way in which the department is run. There is, however, scope for improvement in relation to developing an induction programme for Year 12 and providing more enrichment activities.
164. Standards have been sustained since the last inspection. There is now a wider range of provision that gives students the opportunity to have the foundation on which to study English at higher education. Over the years, the department has successfully prepared students to read English at the University of Oxford, a testimony to the high quality teaching, and leadership and management of the subject.

Literacy in other subjects across the curriculum

165. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are very good and contribute to students achieving well. They are developing independent research and thinking skills through the very good access to the availability of academic resource materials and the research programme, which the librarian provides. Students are expected to read widely to improve their understanding of course materials. For instance, departments such as English and geography promote reading and research, with students reading academic papers and using the Internet and secondary source materials such as textbooks. In information and communication technology, they use various programs to extend their research skills and present reports. Oral skills are used well to explore their work. For instance, in science, they demonstrate a good capacity to argue a case based on research findings and practical experiences. Thinking skills are well promoted in science through the choice of course, which broadens students' understanding of the application of scientific ideas in developing countries. Overall, writing skills are good.

Communication Studies

166. Standards seen in lessons were above average. Students enter the course without prior experience of the subject because it is not now offered as a GCSE subject. However, they achieve very well throughout the course because of the intensive teaching. Standards were well above average in 2002 for the higher grades A or B. Over half of the candidates obtained these higher grades. The 2003 results mirrored the previous year's results, with most students exceeding their target grade. Males and females are fully represented on the course, though more females gain a higher proportion of the top grades. Teaching in both year groups is very good and makes very good use of visual, oral and kinaesthetic methods to develop students' understanding of the theoretical and practical application of the work.

Modern Foreign Languages

The focus of the inspection was on French, but German was also sampled.

French

The quality of provision in French is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievements	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The success of the language college initiative is seen in the increasing number of students learning French.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students work very well with their teachers and with each other.

Commentary**Examination results**

167. The number of students taking French in recent years has been too small for meaningful comparisons with national figures. Numbers have now risen encouragingly, with seven students in Year 13 and 22 in Year 12. In each year there are two students from a neighbouring school – an innovation arising from the school's status as a language college.

Standards and achievement

168. Standards are now above average and students achieving well because of the clear focus of the subject managers to raise standards. There is little difference in the achievement of male and female students. In the lesson observed with Year 13, the electronic whiteboard was well used by the teacher and the students to highlight words and make changes to them; group learning is an important feature of work in the sixth form. Students are using a good variety of language and expressing themselves quite effectively, but there are significant weaknesses in their grasp of grammar.
169. Students divided their time between two rooms. In one an entertaining television sketch was followed by language work on computer. In the other students worked together preparing an argumentative role-play on a related topic. They were all together in the second lesson seen, which used a variety of activities to practise and extend their vocabulary and understanding of grammar. Students worked with interest and enthusiasm and used the opportunities for learning very well. Their written work shows that they have made a lot of progress already in bridging the gap between GCSE and AS-level work.

Teaching and learning

170. The quality of teaching is very good. All the lessons seen were interesting and imaginative. Teachers have an excellent command of French and use it skilfully. They are offering students a challenging range of language work, with high expectations and opportunities for all to raise their attainment both independently and by helping each other. Relations between teachers and students are very good. The picture is very encouraging in Year 12, which suggests that it is at least satisfactory in Year 13, on a better day.

Leadership and management

171. Arrangements for the teaching of modern languages are very good. The department is now ready to receive the increased numbers poised to study one or more languages.

German

172. There are two students in Year 13, but none in Year 12. This is likely to change next year as almost half Year 11 is now learning German as their first language. Work seen shows that a good range of language has been covered, much of which is stimulating and challenging. Teachers' comments are helpful and supportive.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics in the sixth form is **very good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management of mathematics in the sixth form is excellent and is helping to drive up standards.
- The organisation and planning of the courses is meticulously completed by a very effective team of teachers, which means that students are clear about what is expected of them.
- Students achieve very well because of the very high quality of the teaching.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, planning of lessons and management of students are very good, leading to very good learning opportunities.
- The quality and thoroughness of marking are very good, which means that students are clear about their levels of attainment.
- Good use is made of new technologies in developing mathematical concepts.

Commentary

Examination results

173. Results at GCE A level have been about the same as the national average. Most students attained less well in mathematics than in their other examinations, but overall, students achieved satisfactorily. A very small number of students study further mathematics; these courses are taught in conjunction with the University of Plymouth.
174. Larger numbers of students study for AS-level qualifications. Results were above average and most students do better in mathematics than their other subjects. Retention rates are good and almost all the students continue their studies in mathematics into Year 13.

Standards and achievement

175. Standards seen were above average and most students are achieving very well. There is little difference in the achievement of male and female students. Students take a good pride in their work, and organise their folders methodically. Progression in mathematical topics is good, with new modules building on work previously covered. Students' understanding of calculus involving exponential functions and knowledge of the product and quotient rules are good. Students in Year 12 build well on their GCSE results and are settling quickly to the increased demands of the AS-level course. Students have a confident knowledge of the number of turning points for polynomials and know how to find these. Students use the new technologies of computers and interactive white boards very confidently to demonstrate their solutions of problems to the rest of the group.

Teaching and learning

176. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good and it is this that is leading to students' very good achievement. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the mathematics and the requirements of the various courses are very good. Teachers present their lessons extremely

fluently; they show a very high command of the subject, and are able to deal very confidently with students' questions. They help students in a caring manner, building strong, working rapport with their groups. Teachers plan very carefully, and lessons have clear objectives, which are explained to students at the beginning of each lesson. Teachers' lesson plans show how new work is built on what students already know. Students' achievement is high owing to the group work that teachers organise so well, and students present their final solutions at the white board so that all students appreciate the correct and logical manner of the presentations. Teachers' expectations of students are very high.

Students concentrate very intently in lessons and always show a very high level of interest in developing their mathematics. They know their abilities in the courses and have good knowledge of their target grades. The marking of students' work is completed very regularly; there are many helpful comments by teachers on how to improve.

Leadership and management

177. Leadership and management of mathematics are excellent. The teachers are very enthusiastic and work extremely well together, showing an extremely high team ethos. Ideas and resources are energetically shared among members of the department. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning take place regularly. Good analysis of examination results has taken place, including value-added calculations.

Mathematics across the curriculum

178. Students in the sixth form are generally well qualified to cope well with the mathematics in their chosen courses. The majority of students have studied mathematics at this school, and about two-thirds pass the GCSE at grades A*-C. There is thus no requirement to provide a course in basic mathematics for sixth form students. A repeat course is offered to students by the mathematics department for the students who wish to attain an improved grade at GCSE. This runs at two levels and has enough students to provide viable courses. Demands for mathematics in other subject areas are generally covered by the qualifications which students obtained in Year 11. The 'mathematics across the curriculum' policy group has considered the development of the subject across the sixth form. Subjects which use mathematics regularly, for example science, geography and design and technology, are satisfied that students arrive in their courses with enough mathematical knowledge to cope with the demands of the individual areas of learning.

SCIENCE

Biology and chemistry were the focus subjects in this area.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is improved motivation through innovative leadership of the subject.
- The planning and pace of lessons, supported by focussed work out of lesson time.
- The quality of technical support, allowing the teachers to concentrate more on teaching.
- Detailed moment-to-moment knowledge of individual students' progress and problems to allow extra consolidation as appropriate
- Greater use by students and staff of ICT as a tool for more effective teaching and learning

Commentary

Examination results

179. Results in 2002 were average, which represented good achievement for most students, given their prior attainment at GCSE. In recent years, the results have almost always been at least average and often above average or well above in comparison with those of other schools in the country.

Standards and achievement

180. The students' work as seen in the inspection (in lessons, in looking at their files and folders, and in talking with them) is better than last year's examination results and is above average. Most students are achieving well in relation to their capabilities. There is little difference in the achievement of male and female students. Practical skills (especially the planning) and their knowledge of the subject are well developed. However, not all gain as deep an understanding of biological basics as they could, and a few struggle with even simple specialist vocabulary.

Teaching and learning

181. Teaching and learning are good. Students gain knowledge and skills at a high rate because:
- Teachers have a deep knowledge of, and love for, their subject, which encourages the students to work at their own learning in a focused way.
 - Teachers plan their lessons with great care, and, in particular, draw on a wide range of methods and resources.
 - Lessons are fast moving, keeping the students on their toes.
 - The careful use of homework tasks reinforces the students' learning.

Leadership and management

182. Sixth-form biology at Hele's School is well led and managed, under the general direction of the head of the science faculty. The head of biology started work at the school only a few weeks before the inspection, but had already instituted some important changes and had lots of innovative ideas about how to improve the quality of students' learning – for instance, more visits and visitors, field work and integration of ICT.

Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **very good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Progress since last inspection	Very good
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Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear sighted leadership and management has selected a very good course (Salters Science), which is entirely appropriate for Hele's students
- A very strong group of teachers, working effectively as a team, has been created and is pushing up standards.
- Excellent assessment processes are in place that inform teaching.
- There is too little emphasis on encouraging students to learn independently.

Test and examination results

183. Above average results have been maintained consistently over time with students achieving very well. These results have been lower than those of the other sciences, but only small numbers of students are involved.

Standards and achievement

184. Students are achieving high standards and are successful in bridging the gap between GCSE and AS/A2. There is little difference in the achievement of male and female students. The Salters Science course makes this transition easier, building on chemistry in context and encouraging the students to build up a profile of knowledge and understanding over time. Year 13 students know clearly and accurately about their own progress, expectations, and where they need to improve.

Teaching and learning

185. Consistently very good teaching and learning characterises all chemistry lessons. A very good teaching team use their complementary skills to challenge and stimulate the students. The students respond well to the challenge of the course and improve their knowledge and understanding over time. The students understand how functional groups work in organic chemistry, working out from practical results what has happened structurally to the chemicals. They can apply previous learning to new situations and make accurate predictions about the expected outcomes from reactions. They take accurate measurements in enthalpy reactions, making a risk analysis, estimating the heat losses in the practical exercise and suggesting ways of reducing these losses.

Leadership and management

186. Very good leadership in the department, backed by very good use of resources and a variety of teaching approaches, creates a successful learning environment in which the students make good progress. Excellent monitoring of students' performance ensures that they are achieving at high levels.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 13
Standards	Good Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and work from students seen both in the AVCE course and in subjects of the curriculum show that standards are high overall.
- Resources in the sixth form centre are good and improvements are planned, but the lack of ICT space for individual students to save their work impacts on the quality of provision, particularly for higher-attaining students.

Commentary

Examination results

187. Results in the VCE examinations were above average in 2002 and continue year on year to rise. More students took the examination as it rose in popularity. More boys took the subject than girls but all achieved high standards in their work in line with achievements in most other subjects.

Standards and Achievement

188. Students' standards are above average in the subject particularly as some have had few experiences of using ICT in previous years unless they have studied a discrete course. Girls achieve higher standards and better results than boys overall.
189. By the end of Year 13 students show increasing confidence with a range of software.. They work increasingly independently and understand technical issues relating to hardware, software and particularly communications. They analyse systems well and create their own solutions, applying knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar situations. They explain clearly systems they have designed and can evaluate their work and that of others effectively. They are clear about the effects and benefits of ICT on society, particularly in their own region. They talk knowledgeably about the importance of ICT in their daily lives. Most students have written a course that they will teach to a class later in the term. The user guides created are of professional quality and are clearly presented and appropriate for the age group chosen.

Teaching and Learning

190. Overall teaching and learning in the subject are good. Clear aims ensure students develop their ICT skills and the application of those skills in other ways. Lessons are managed well to ensure that students of differing abilities achieve high standards in their work. The lessons seen where students have to train others to use ICT hardware and software ensure that their understanding is well developed and not just a 'painting by numbers' approach'. Teachers enthusiastically teach their subject and plan well to ensure students are immersed in their understanding of the applications of ICT by arranging visits and experiences in the technological world. Some students use ICT at home to extend their work, others limited to the facilities available experience some difficulty in the amount of space available to save their work. Assessment is effective and students benefit from ongoing feedback about their work. They are keen to do well and insist on clarity about how to achieve the higher grades essential for their university choices.

Leadership and Management

191. Leadership and management in the subject area are satisfactory overall. The teachers meet to plan their work well and there is effective analysis of results and monitoring of students' progress, but the unreliability of the computers and lack of resources, which impact on the quality of work, have yet to be addressed by the school. Some students have to take their work home to achieve better results. Very good technical support ensures that students achieve the best results from the ageing equipment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

192. Provision for ICT in subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory. Accessibility to ICT facilities in the sixth form centre is good. The subject areas suffer from ageing specialist resources, which impact on accessibility and standards for higher attainers. There is increased expectation that students work independently and work seen during the week shows that students take full advantage of the facilities available to them. They show confident use of the software available to them and understand technical issues related to hardware, software and communications. They use the internet well in most subjects to research information for projects and analyse and plan appropriate solutions to problems. Students in geography independently research information on Japan as part of an overall theme, and in design and technology the software is used well to develop a research project. An example of this is where a student is developing a DJ case suitable to travel on an airplane. There are many examples of developing web sites using at least two programming languages, and increasingly new technologies like a digital camera are used well to include pictures in their projects. The library and computer suites are used to great effect before, during and after school to improve presentation in projects.

HUMANITIES

Four subjects were inspected in depth in this curriculum area: geography, history, sociology and religious studies.

Geography

Overall the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership, management and teamwork result in well-planned and diverse learning.
- Good teaching and good teacher–student relationships result in above average A Level results.
- Students' learning and experience are enhanced by the Year 13 enrichment day and the developing links with Plymouth University.
- There are good assessment procedures, with joint target setting between staff and students based on prior attainment.
- Standards are enhanced by the support given to students in organising their work and developing their literacy skills and examination techniques.
- Fieldwork opportunities and extended assignments develop research and independent learning skills and give students wide opportunities for the use of ICT.

Commentary

Examination results

193. Results in the A-level examinations in 2002 were well above the national average. This represented good achievement. Males' results are higher than those of females.

Standards and achievement

194. In Year 13, students' standards are above average. Their achievement is good. They are able to describe and account for a range of human and physical environment systems, processes and patterns. They have developed the skill of independent study, researching global features such as wilderness environments, feeding the world's people, and development and disparity. In undertaking this work and local fieldwork they have learnt to identify, select and collect statistical and non-statistical evidence from primary and secondary sources, to evaluate it and draw conclusions. It has given them the opportunity to use information and communication technology. Their skills are well developed.

Teaching and learning

195. Teaching and learning are good and, along with good teacher-student relationships result in above average A-level results. Teachers have good subject knowledge, set clear objectives at the start of lessons, are generous with their praise and demonstrate a good sense of humour. There is a strong emphasis on the development of geographical vocabulary and general literacy skills, which has a significant impact on examination success. Lessons proceed with a good pace and embody a good range of teaching techniques. Pair and group work aid the development of oral skills. Sixth form students state that their teachers:-

- have very good relationships with them—there is a 'relaxed family atmosphere';
- teach at an appropriate level in 'digestible chunks';
- provide a good balance of teaching styles;
- have good personal experience of other countries and use a wide range of teaching resources;
- provide strong support through their questioning, support of independent learning, and use thorough assessment procedures;
- provide them with ample opportunities to use ICT.

Leadership and management

196. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong focus on raising standards. The head of department sets high expectations; individual teachers are clear about their roles and are responsible for specific areas of learning within a common, agreed framework. Target setting and the monitoring of achievement are well established for individual students. There is a good development plan with clear success criteria. Progress has been made in developing links with Plymouth University in support of students' work on global features.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of subject matter and understanding of the processes of historical enquiry at this level.
- Teachers' questioning which constantly challenges students and provides a high level of debate in sixth form lessons.
- Students' ability to make critical use of complex historical sources.
- Students' ability to organise material into well-structured historical essays.

Commentary

Examination results

197. Results in 2002 were well above average and represented very good achievement. Over two-thirds of all students gained the higher grades A and B at A level.

Standards and achievement

198. The standards achieved by students in Year 13 are well above average and achievement is very good, building on attainment on entry to the sixth form that was itself above average. There is little difference in the achievement of male and female students. Students show extensive subject knowledge and deploy this to good effect in causal analysis; for example, when explaining why dissatisfaction with the 1832 Reform Act produced demands for further reform of parliament in the 1860s, or when considering the influence of events in other countries, such as the American Civil War, on demands for further reform. Through careful teaching, students in Year 12 have gained a mature understanding of the nature of historical evidence and demonstrate impressive source evaluation techniques. A noticeable feature of the high standards achieved by students of all abilities is the quality of their written essay work. This is invariably well structured – a reflection of the emphasis placed on literacy throughout the work of the department.

Teaching and learning

199. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching is well planned and well informed. Two factors in particular contribute to the high levels of student engagement observed in lessons: one is the quality of teachers' questioning, which is both challenging and inclusive; the other, the design of learning activities, which are essentially problem-solving and empowering. Assessment practice is very good and students know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

200. History in the sixth form is very well led and managed. The head of department provides expert subject leadership, and teaching is driven by a desire to promote independent learning within an inclusive ethos. Systems are well established and understood, so that there is a consistent approach to teaching, learning and assessment, including the monitoring of teaching.

Religious studies

Overall, the quality of provision in religious studies is **very good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are in line with national expectations, and improving.
- The majority of students achieve or exceed their predicted examination grades.
- There has been very good improvement in provision since the last inspection.
- Very good teaching stimulates and motivates students to learn successfully.
- Topics with a religious theme are included in general studies courses for all students.

Examination results

201. A-level results were in line with national expectations at both A-B and A-E grades. These results compare favourably with students' results in other subjects. Males and females achieve equally well. AS and A2 courses are proving increasingly popular with students and meeting their expectations.

Standards and achievement

202. Students embark on sixth form religious education courses with a wide range of previous attainment. The majority of students achieve, and in many cases exceed, their predicted grades based on their attainment at GCSE. Students at all levels of prior attainment are supported and encouraged to make appropriate progress. Higher-attaining students make very good progress and current standards in the A-level course predict an increase in the number of A and B grades. Many students study AS level successfully in Year 12 making good progress from their previous GCSE results.
203. Students build effectively on the knowledge and understanding gained at GCSE and respond well to the increased challenge presented by original sources of information and the increased complexity of ideas studied. They have a good understanding of a diversity of traditions and belief systems. Students in Year 13 develop strongly the ability to interpret, analyse and compare a variety of contrasting viewpoints and to formulate their own opinions appropriately.

Teaching and learning

204. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. There are examples of excellence, particularly in the management of questioning and discussion. Students are increasingly encouraged to explore and evaluate the teachings and views of a variety of scholars and traditions. Excellent dialogue and the ability to justify reasoned conclusions characterise the best practice. Students in a Year 13 lesson, for example, grappled successfully with traditional and contemporary teachings about human sexuality, and were able to support with evidence their personal conclusions.
205. Teachers, in their planning and implementation of lessons, combine high quality structure and support with opportunities for students to develop independence of research and opinion. Students respond with confidence and success in this secure environment. Essays are well structured, demonstrate maturity of understanding and respond well to the expectations of the examination rubric.

Leadership and management

206. The excellent quality of leadership in the department is demonstrated through the way in which major advances in the sixth form curriculum have been implemented in recent years. AS and A2 courses are heavily subscribed and a variety of enrichment activities is offered. The head of department, ably supported by a team of effective teachers, has created conditions in which the status of the subject is justifiably popular and well respected.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and are above the national average, particularly at A2 level.
- Teaching is very good and enables students to make very clear gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision.
- Students enjoy their lessons and clearly feel valued.
- The department should continue to work on increasing students' levels of confidence and independence so that the number of U grades at AS level decreases.

Commentary

Examination results

207. Although the 2002 examination results were below the national averages for A and B grades, in 2003 all students got at least a D grade, and the number who gained the highest grades was well above average. This represented good achievement for most students given their prior attainment.

Standards and achievement

208. The standards observed during the inspection were above average overall and students are now achieving very well. The work of Year 13 is at a level above the standards expected, while that of the Year 12 students also represents above average attainment for the stage of the course they have reached. Students write well and are given regular opportunities to research topics on the Internet. Year 12 students have made a good start to their course. Their achievement is very good – they have not previously studied this subject and they have already made clear and rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding. Year 13 students build well on what they learnt in Year 12. Coursework planning is very thorough and students show a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodologies they are planning to use.

Teaching and learning

209. The teaching of sociology is very good and this fosters very good learning. Teachers use their expertise as examiners to good effect, providing effective support and clear guidance to students. Lessons are challenging and well planned. Teachers make very good use of questioning to reinforce and clarify students' knowledge and understanding. Marking of students' work is thorough, with very clear guidance on what has been done well and what needs to be done in order to improve. The teaching is very enthusiastic and good humoured: students react positively to this and show good levels of concentration and perseverance.
210. As a result of the teaching, students show enthusiasm for the subject. Sociology is an increasingly popular option with both males and females, and it recruits the widest range of ability. Although less able students are somewhat lacking in confidence, teachers work hard to improve this and ensure that all students feel valued. There is scope, however, to particularly target the weakest students so that the number who achieve U grades decreases.

Leadership and management

211. Leadership is very good, with very clear vision and direction. Management is also very good; planning for improvement is strong. Teachers work very well together as a team and students particularly enjoy being taught by all three, benefiting from their different styles and approaches.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

AS and A-level design and technology was the focus subject in this curriculum area.

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Good teaching motivates the students to achieve well, given their modest GCSE background.
- Assessment processes provide students with a very effective knowledge of how they are progressing.

Commentary

Examination results

212. GSE A-level design and technology results have, overall, made steady improvement in recent years. In 2002, A, B, and C grades were obtained thus giving a high points score; however, this was not maintained in 2003 when results were disappointing. However, this represents good achievement, given the GCSE grades students attained before entering Year 12.

Standards and achievement

213. Standards seen are above average and students are achieving well owing to consistently good teaching. All are competent users of information and communication technology. They are becoming enthusiastic and proficient users of graphic design program aided by a very professional instruction booklet with extension work devised by the co-ordinator. Manufacturing skills are also continuing to develop as they learn further techniques for shaping a variety of materials. Coursework pages being developed at the time of the inspection were often of high quality.

Teaching and learning

214. Teaching and learning are good. Three teachers share the sixth form teaching so that the students benefit from their combined expertise. Each section of the course is thoroughly planned and very well assessed so that students are in no doubt about their progress in relation to the examination grades. The students and teachers work well together. Teachers carefully plan work to meet the needs of each student so that all make good progress. Teachers provide exemplar work and encourage students to choose projects of which the students have some knowledge so that an in-depth consideration of the implications can result.

Leadership and management

215. The course is well led and managed by three teachers, who meet regularly on a formal and informal basis. Careful planning and a clear focus on raising standards ensure that there are very few students who fail to finish either the A/S or the A2 course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subjects in this curriculum area were: AS/A-level art and design, AS/A-level music and AS/A-level theatre studies. A-level media studies was sampled

Art and design

Overall quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Broadening the appeal of the subject has significantly improved recruitment.
- The good achievement of students reflects the good teaching they receive.
- The lack of a dedicated sixth form studio is having an adverse impact on standards.
- The teaching of the basic skills of drawing does not have a high priority.

Commentary

Examination results

216. Results at both AS and A level were average. When prior attainment is taken into account students are achieving mostly above or in line with expectations. Female students tend to do better than males but the gap is not huge. Over time, the trend is a declining one, which reflects the broader range of ability of the students who now follow an art course in the sixth form.

Standards and achievement

217. Standards seen are broadly average, but this represents good achievement given the GCSE results of most students. Skills of visual research and media exploration are well developed as students enter Year 13. Personal investigative skills are well used to draw on the work of other artists as sources of information and inspiration. Drawing skills are less well developed and students rely less on this basic skill than they should. Students begin the course with varied abilities and the standards evident in their work confirm this breadth. For the majority of those who complete the course average standards represent good achievement.

Teaching and learning

218. Because teaching and learning are good students achieve well. Teachers provide a good balance in Year 12 between strong guidance and encouraging students to develop independent lines of enquiry, thus promoting good learning. In Year 13 much more freedom is given and students respond well to these opportunities by making ambitious work in a range of media. Teachers widen the learning of students by visits to major art collections such as the Hepworth museum and London galleries; these enrich students' understanding of art and foster links with their own work. This helps to raise standards. Teachers are good at ensuring students meet assessment deadlines, but such time pressures should not be allowed to reduce the time spent on teaching the essential skill of drawing.

Leadership and management

219. The success the department has had in recruiting a large number of students to do the A-Level course reflects the good management of the course and the department. This broadening of the appeal of art and design as a sixth form option represents satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The large number of students creates significant pressures on space, because there is no dedicated sixth form studio. As a result, students are unable to work over extended periods of time, and this inhibits the raising of standards, particularly in Year 13.

Media Studies

220. The A2 examination was taken for the first time in 2003. Results were lower than expected, with no student gaining the higher grades, A or B. However, most gained a grade. The lower than expected results are attributed to the under-resourcing of the course in terms of staffing, equipment and good quality facilities. The situation is now set to improve with the building of a new, well-equipped multi-media centre, which the present Year 13 students acknowledge will assist future year groups. Standards and achievement in the lesson seen were good because of the very good quality teaching and practical way in which the teacher captured students' creative and intellectual thinking through demonstrations, questioning and discussion. This led to students confidently using literary skills to begin reading a film in detail, demonstrating a good grasp of technical visual language and the way in which technical aspects of film lighting are used creatively.

Music

Overall the quality of provision in music in the sixth form is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is continuing enthusiasm of the teachers and their unstinting efforts to provide students with worthwhile musical experiences, which leads to above average examination results.
- There is unsatisfactory accommodation and resources, including ICT, which has a negative impact on the quality of facilities and courses available for sixth form study.
- There is very good leadership and management, which enable students to benefit from the very good extra-curricular enrichment.

Commentary

Examination results

221. Results in the 2002 A2 and AS-level examinations were above average, but owing to the small numbers entered statistical comparison with national figures is not viable.

Standards and achievement

222. In Year 13 standards in music are well above average. Students in Year 12 prepare for the AS-level music examination, and students in Year 13 take the A2 examination. All students who start the courses complete them by sitting the examinations. The gap in requirements between GCSE and the sixth form examinations is such that the results at the end of Year 12 and 13 represent very good achievement.

Teaching and learning

223. Teaching and learning in Years 12 to 13 are very good. In Year 12 the teachers structure the lessons so that the learning which takes place at the beginning can be reinforced at the end by exercises of a similar nature to those found in the examination paper. Students study a prescribed set of songs chosen from all periods of music and discover composing techniques which are relevant to questions in other papers. Students in Year 13 develop these composing techniques further, for example to complete a melody over a figured bass, and use their growing knowledge of musical techniques to analyse a movement from Haydn's Nelson Mass.

Leadership and management

224. Leadership and management are very good. The vision and clear direction mentioned in the main school extends to the sixth form where the very good curriculum is designed to overcome the hurdles which exist in the change from GCSE to A level. However, these good intentions are hampered by unsatisfactory accommodation: many lessons have to be taught in a non specialist room which is badly heated and has no resources available, and there is a lack of

study areas where students can have access to a keyboard or a computer to complete homework. Whilst AS and A2 courses may suit some students, the lack of ICT is preventing the department from offering any of the other courses available for post-16 students, for example AS music technology.

Theatre studies

Overall the quality of provision in subject is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students attain above average standards because the quality of teaching is very good.
- The quality of leadership is very good, and has already provided a secure basis for rapid and extensive development.
- Standards of attainment and achievement are greatly enhanced by the residential trip made at the outset of the academic year.

Commentary

Examination Results

225. Results in the AS and A2 examinations were above average, maintaining the trend achieved by the department.

Standards and Achievement

226. In lessons seen, standards are above average. Students show good skills of stagecraft and interpretation of character. Their ability to interpret sound and lighting within different types of productions is very good, and shows great ingenuity, as does their ability to work in substandard accommodation with inadequate equipment. Written work shows real insight into the business of realising text on stage.

Teaching and learning

227. Teaching and learning are very good, characterised by the excellent subject knowledge achieved between the two main teachers. Teachers and students work hard and effectively, together, to make productions for the benefit of the whole-school, as well for the specific examination requirements. The students gain a great deal of insight and experience on their residential trip at the beginning of the academic year. The enormous value achieved here is strongly reflected in their group work. They are very efficient learners.

Leadership and management

228. Leadership within the department is very strong. There are now very good schemes of work, an ethos of hard work and commitment, rising standards, a powerfully effective residential scheme and excellent subject knowledge. This represents excellent improvement since the last inspection. These crucial aspects applauded above have been achieved with no suitable space in which to teach the subject, and very few resources to support its work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

AS/A-level sports studies/physical education was the focus subject in this curriculum area.

Overall, provision in sports studies/physical education is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership and management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is much good teaching which leads to good progress being made by most students
- The GCE A-level examination results are above average.
- There is very good leadership and management, which ensure that all students are well known and their progress carefully monitored.
- Students are not consistently required to take enough responsibility for their own learning.

Commentary

Examination results

229. The 2002 GCE A-level results were above the national average and have been since the course started at the school two years ago. Students achieved or exceeded predicted grades. In the GCE AS-level examination this year students achieved slightly below their predicted grades.

Standards and achievement

230. In Year 13 students have a good understanding of physiology and anatomy and most have been able to apply this knowledge to develop a very good understanding of the principles of training and the effects of exercise. Their knowledge and use of subject specific vocabulary is also good. Much of this is applied very effectively to the production of very good personal exercise plans. These plans display a consistently high standard of work from most students and also illustrate evidence of good research skills and very good use and interpretation of a range of data. Given the students' lack of knowledge at the beginning of the course this represents good progress.

Teaching and learning

231. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students benefit from the good knowledge and understanding of teaching staff, who structure lessons very well and frequently use a good range of appropriate teaching methods. They know the students very well and relationships between students and staff are very good, creating an environment conducive to learning. Teachers make imaginative use of a very good range of activities. In the most effective lessons, teachers provide students with good background information and encourage all to research a linked topic and make individual presentations to the whole group.

Leadership and management

232. The course is very well managed and a clear vision for teaching the course is conveyed to all staff. This is only the third year that the course has been available for students but all staff have a very clear idea of course requirements and of targets for individual students. Communication between staff who teach the course is very good and all have a clear role in the monitoring of individual students' progress. These are significant factors in the good progress made by students.

BUSINESS

The VCE course in business education was the focus in this curriculum area.

Business education

Overall, provision in business education is **very good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good achievement, particularly by the current Year 13.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- Students link their experience from visits and research very well into their assignments.
- There is very good leadership and management of the subject, including at school level, to resolve the challenge posed by very large take-up in the current Year 12.
- More speakers and visitors from business organisations would help students even more.

Commentary

Examination results

233. 2002 Business Studies AVCE results were above average for both six and 12 unit awards. The majority of students were females, whose results were well above average. These results were much better than previous years' and females did better than their predictions. In 2003, all students took the six unit (one A2 level equivalent) award, with all achieving results in line with their individual predictions.

Standards and achievement

234. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above average, particularly amongst males. Almost all students are achieving above, or well above, the grades they were predicted when they started the course, both in assignment work and in their examinations. Year 12 has presented the school with a challenge because 34 students enrolled for Business Studies in September. This unexpectedly large take-up has been very well managed, with a very recently appointed teacher now taking half the group. Their first few weeks have included much individual and group work, involving research and visits outside the school, which have provided rich experience for students' portfolios and assignments. Standards amongst this group match the range expected nationally, but they have now settled and are starting to achieve well.

Teaching and learning

235. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The enlarged teaching team is gelling well, and individual lessons show staff challenging and stretching students very effectively. Feedback about students' performance on assignments is very good, enabling them to understand exactly what to do to access higher marks in their work. The current Year 13 respond very effectively to all such advice and are very good partners in their own learning experience. They are determined to do as well as they can, valuing the very good relationships they enjoy with staff. Students develop very high levels of independent working because staff have very high expectations of this element of their performance. Year 12 are starting to understand this aspect of vocational courses, after their unusual start. External visits such as that to Cadbury Schweppes recently, help students to contextualise their learning well, and more speakers and visitors from organisations would enhance their experience further.

Leadership and management

236. The department is very well led and managed. Vocational courses such as this enjoy parity of esteem in the school with their academic counterparts. Data are used effectively and students' performance monitored very closely, so teachers and students themselves negotiate targets together. As the language college progresses, the department could usefully consider the addition of vocationally oriented, business-related language provision into its curriculum.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The VCE course in health and social care was the subject inspected in detail in this curriculum area.

Health and Social Care

The quality of provision in Health and Social Care is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good, which leads to very good achievement.
- Very good use of workplace learning is evident in students' portfolio work.
- Excellent assessment and feedback inform students very effectively about how to improve.
- Leadership and management are very good, with extremely flexible arrangements for access to courses.
- Most students are under-confident about examinations.

Commentary

Examination results

237. Students' standards in the last two years' Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) results have been very high compared with the national average. Most students achieved grades higher, often much higher, than were predicted when they started their courses. This applied equally to those studying for the six unit (one A2 level equivalent) and 12 unit (2 A2 level equivalent) awards. Students are almost always females and their achievements have been very good.

Standards and achievement

238. Standards in the current Year 13 are also high, again higher than expected given most students' entry levels. The mix of students in Year 13 is very complex because the department operates a highly successful policy of flexible inclusion into its courses. As well as very good provision for students with special educational needs, many in Year 13 are welcomed back into the school after a year or more studying elsewhere. These and others undertake one or two years to do either six or 12 unit qualifications. The usual rate of progress through these courses is of three units in a year, but some students have done, and are currently successfully doing, six units in one year. Across all this range of Year 13 students, attainment is naturally mixed, but above average overall, with little portfolio assignment work currently falling below C grade. Students admit their weaker areas to be the externally tested units, where they have to sit formal examinations. This has more to do with under-confidence in their attitudes rather than in their subject competence. Year 13 students' other weaker areas, identified by themselves and the department, relate to the anatomical and physiological areas of their course. These are improving quickly this year. The Year 12 group is large and standards match the range expected at this early stage in their course. These students are beginning to achieve well.

Teaching and learning

239. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The quality of students' assignments shows the excellent quality of teachers' marking and assessment, which has a direct impact on students' understanding of what is required to improve their submissions. Students' attitudes towards their work are extremely positive, so they relish the opportunities they find in the new approach to vocational learning. They rapidly learn how to respond effectively to teachers' very high expectations that they can, and will, operate independently so they become highly autonomous learners as they progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, as is their understanding of vocational learning. The provision of work experience in highly relevant workplaces is excellent, and students' integration of their learning from these experiences into their assignments is very good. They also show an unusually high degree of reflection and evaluation of this experiential learning in their portfolio work.

Leadership and management

240. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The teaching team work very effectively together, promoting a strong sense of lifelong, vocationally-related learning which influences students very strongly. The department relates closely to sociology and there is a strong social science ethos where students are very well prepared for Higher Education and career paths, usually into medicine, nursing and early years education.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No subjects or courses were sampled in this curriculum area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

