

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE BLANDFORD SCHOOL**

Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113888

Headteacher: Mrs S Wilson

Lead inspector: Paul Cosway

Dates of inspection: 06 – 10 October 2003

Inspection number: 259172

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	13 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	853
School address:	Milldown Road Blandford Forum Dorset
Postcode:	DT11 7SQ
Telephone number:	(01258) 451121
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Bryan Burrows
Date of previous inspection:	27/04/1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average, mixed comprehensive school in a rural area on the outskirts of the small town of Blandford. It achieved specialist technology college status in the September of the term in which it was inspected. During the inspection, the school was undergoing significant refurbishment and new building work – problems with this had delayed the start to the term. There has been significant movement of staff: almost a quarter of the staff was new to the school, having taken up posts just over three weeks before the inspection began.

The pupils are aged from 13 to 18. The school has increased in size by more than a quarter since 1999 and the Sixth Form is now close to average in size, with 186 students. The area that the school serves is socially and economically mixed, with some relatively affluent households and some that are relatively deprived. Almost all the pupils are white. There is a slightly larger proportion than nationally (1.9 per cent) of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs is slightly above the national average and the proportion that is on School Action Plus who have statements of need and the help of outside agencies is close to average. There is a special unit that supports pupils who have been diagnosed as dyslexic and there are three pupils currently on roll. For most of their education, they are integrated into the main school.

The school was last inspected in April 1998.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2734	Paul Cosway	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector	
23413	Robert Allen	Team inspector	English English (Sixth Form)
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	Physical education (Sixth Form)
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Team inspector	Modern foreign language
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Science Biology (Sixth Form)
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Health and social care (Sixth Form)
1845	Robert Tweed	Team inspector	History Special educational needs
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music
19015	Gordon Peacock	Team inspector	Chemistry (Sixth Form)
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography (Sixth Form)
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art
19528	Ronald Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics (Sixth Form)
8503	Alf Allfree	Team inspector	Art and design (Sixth Form)
10029	Hazel Haynes	Team inspector	French (Sixth Form)
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology
28106	Michele Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
15485	Roger Butler	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
32211	Brendan Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (Sixth Form)

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good, in many ways a very good, school.** It gives good value for money and almost all pupils achieve well. The good teaching and the positive learning ethos help pupils to attain above average results in examinations. The new leadership is bringing further improvement, identifying areas that need development and planning very effectively for the future.

The school's **main strengths and weaknesses** are:

- The good progress that pupils make, leading to good test and examination results;
- The good quality of teaching and learning – almost a third of lessons are very good or excellent;
- Very good relationships and behaviour, developed through good care and guidance;
- Very good links with the community that extend the range of learning opportunities;
- Good leadership and management, ensuring that the school continues to develop well;
- Good analysis of assessment data that is helping the school to improve its performance;

However:

- Staff need to ensure that work set is appropriate for pupils of all levels of attainment;
- The curriculum is not fully meeting the needs of those pupils who would benefit from less academic courses and it is under review;
- In accordance with the newly introduced marking policy all staff need to ensure that clear guidance is set on what pupils need to do to improve.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in standards, pupils' spiritual development, teaching and leadership. Key issues have been resolved, except that the governors have not been able to provide a daily act of collective worship for all: this statutory requirement is not met. There are problems with accommodation and access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities in some subject areas, but improvements are on-going.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Although national comparisons were not available at the time of the inspection, these good results were sustained in 2003. In 2002, after pupils in Year 9 had spent less than one year in the school, results in the national tests were above the national average in mathematics and science; they were average in English. Pupils had made good progress from their levels of attainment on entry. Attainment is currently above average in all three subjects, as well as in literacy and numeracy. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results were well above the average nationally and above those in similar schools. This represents good achievement. The best results were in business studies, science, communication studies, French, English literature, history, geography, home economics and drama. There was comparatively weaker performance in design and technology and physical education, although results were close to the national average for these subjects. Overall, standards are now above average: they are below average only in music and religious education.

In the Sixth Form, results in A and AS level and vocational examinations were above the national average in 2001, close to average in 2002, and have improved again in 2003. The best performing subjects in 2003 were biology, English literature, business studies and geography. The lowest performing subjects were mathematics, physical education and art and design.

Pupils' personal development is good. By the time they reach the Sixth Form they are confident, independent, sociable young people. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good.** Pupils' attitudes to school and their work are very good. They behave very well and form very good relationships. Attendance is satisfactory and they are punctual to school and to lessons.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good.** Good teaching to all year groups ensures that pupils learn well in the large majority of lessons. Good planning makes lessons interesting, helping pupils to learn, and the teachers' good subject knowledge and their good relationships with pupils ensure that they concentrate, work hard and learn quickly.

The school has found it difficult, because of its size and location, to provide a broad curriculum that is appropriate to the needs of all, but is reviewing its provision in order to improve it. It has a good partnership with parents and very good links with the community – both contribute to the effectiveness of the education it provides. Marking and assessment are giving very good guidance to pupils in some subjects, but not yet in all. The pastoral system gives good support to pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good** with very good leadership from the new headteacher. She is providing a strong sense of direction to the school and, through the trust and respect she is earning from staff, parents and pupils, she is encouraging all to feel that they have a voice. Senior managers are very effective and have complementary strengths. The school's capacity for future improvement is good, because of good management and high morale. The governing body works hard for the school and monitors its work satisfactorily, although accommodation problems prevent it from being able to meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all: this aspect of governance is unsatisfactory.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Most parents are pleased with the school and believe that it is helping their children to make good progress. Around a quarter of parents were concerned about the communication between school and home, but the inspection found that this is good. Almost all pupils like school, though many were rightly critical of the toilet facilities and would prefer a less strict uniform code. In the questionnaires, some concerns were expressed about behaviour and bullying, but all pupils spoken to agree with the inspection team's findings that behaviour is very good and the few instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Set appropriate work for all pupils in those subjects where this is not current practice;
  - As planned, broaden the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 and the Sixth Form and provide more courses for pupils who would benefit from more vocational, work-related study;
  - Ensure that marking is used effectively in all subjects to help pupils to improve their work;
- and, to meet statutory requirements, ensure all pupils take part in a daily act of collective worship.

## THE BLANDFORD SCHOOL THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective Sixth Form that gives good value for money. Pupils achieve well and receive a good quality of education within strict budgetary limits. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Examination results are above the national average and the pass rate in GCE A level examinations was high in 2003 – almost 100 per cent. The leadership and management are very good and focus on supporting students and helping them to attain well. There is, however, only a limited range of options for those students who would prefer not to follow an academic course.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good, often very good teaching ensures that students learn well and make good progress;
- Very good leadership and management ensure that students are monitored and supported well;
- Good induction to the Sixth Form and very good guidance on university application are examples of how well students are supported;
- Very good, often excellent relationships help students to learn to work well with others;
- There are good opportunities for students to develop into confident, independent young people, through school responsibilities and the Sixth Form Council;
- The assessment data that the school now gathers well is not used effectively in all departments to help students to improve their work.

### 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 is <b>very good</b> and students achieve well in <b>English and English literature</b> . Provision for <b>French</b> is good.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> .
Science	There is <b>good</b> provision in chemistry and physics, <b>and very good</b> provision in biology. Students make good progress, because of skilled teaching.
Information and communication technology	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> and students achieve satisfactorily. Leadership is very good and provision is improving as a result.
Humanities	Provision is <b>very good</b> in geography. Very good teaching and collaborative learning ensure that students attain well.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision is <b>good</b> . Students make good progress and achieve high standards in design and technology.
Visual and performing arts and media	In media studies, provision is <b>very good</b> and students achieve well because of very good teaching. Provision in art is <b>satisfactory</b> . Provision in music is <b>satisfactory</b> ; teaching and learning are very good but accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. Provision is <b>good</b> in physical education.
Business	Provision is <b>good</b> and students achieve well.
Health and social care	Provision is <b>very good</b> and students are achieving well.

*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*



## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Induction to the Sixth Form is good. Students are given good personal support and guidance. They receive very good guidance on university applications and courses and good guidance for future employment. In those subjects in which they attain and achieve most highly, such as English and geography, they are given very good feedback on their work. They can use this assessment information to learn how to improve and so make very good progress.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

The leadership and management are **very good**. The head of Sixth Form has done a very good audit of strengths and weaknesses in provision and formulated an effective development plan. Teaching and learning are monitored and the strategic planning for the future development of the Sixth Form is good. It is planned to increase the focused monitoring of Sixth Form teaching in order to identify the most successful practice and share it more widely. This is an important step forward.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

The inspectors spoke to almost all the Sixth Form students. They explained that they had had little time to complete the questionnaire and that the questions were worded poorly and difficult to answer. They were adamant that this is a good school to be at. Although they had some concerns about dress requirements, they are all happy in the school and value what it does for them. They do not think that there is any significant bullying or inappropriate behaviour, and the inspectors agree with them. Almost all of the students enjoy their time in the Sixth Form and would recommend it to their friends.

In their answers to the questionnaire, they agreed that the teaching is challenging and members of staff are expert in their subjects. More than a third, however, did not think that there is a member of staff who they know well and who they could ask for help. They stated that they believe that there is bullying and racial tension in the school. They did not agree that they get helpful advice on what to study, nor that there is a good range of enrichment courses. Large numbers of Sixth Form students were interviewed by inspectors and they again stated that there were problems with the wording and interpretation of questions in the questionnaire. It had given a false impression of their views, which are actually positive. They find the Sixth Form teachers and tutors very helpful and supportive.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Standards are above average in all subjects at the end of Year 9, except for religious education. In the GCSE examination courses at the end of Year 11, standards are above average overall. In some subjects, such as drama, they are well above average, but they are average or below in physical education and religious education. Standards are above average in the Sixth Form. Across the school, girls attain slightly higher test and examination results, on average, than boys – but the difference is no greater than is the case nationally. Pupils achieve well, overall, throughout the school, because of good teaching and the positive attitudes that the school engenders in them. Achievement is highest in those courses where the teachers motivate the pupils particularly well, set work that is appropriate for all levels of attainment in the class and give pupils very good guidance and help, aimed at examination requirements. It is lower where pupils are taking courses they are not interested in, teachers are setting work that ignores the needs of significant groups in the class and assessment of their work is not helping them to improve.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment in almost all subjects was above the national average in GCSE examinations in 2002: the best results were in business studies, science, communication studies, French, English literature, history, geography, home economics and drama.
- Attainment in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2002 was above the national average in mathematics and science.
- Attainment in Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations has risen broadly in line with the national trend over recent years.
- Pupils make good progress. They achieve well overall in the main school and the Sixth Form.
- Currently, attainment in the Sixth Form could be raised still higher in some subjects, such as physical education, religious education, mathematics and design and technology. High attainment and achievement are linked to good or very good teaching that uses assessment well to help pupils to improve their work, to meet examination requirements.

#### **Commentary**

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school and their achievement is good overall.

#### Performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9

2. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was above the national average in mathematics and science and average in English. Although national comparisons were not available at the time of the inspection, the 2003 results show that this level of performance has been sustained and that attainment is rising in English. Over all three subjects, pupils are achieving well and making good progress.
3. Both boys and girls have attained results that are above the national average in these tests in recent years. Overall, boys have attained slightly less well than girls, as has been the case nationally.

#### Current attainment at the end of Year 9

4. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the age of 14 is currently above the national average overall, but that it varies from subject to subject. This represents good achievement in a number of subjects, in which pupils' standards have risen from below average on entry to the

school at 13 to being above average at 14. The inspection was of standards of pupils in Year 9 in the current year, 2003/4. The findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that pupils are making over the year.

SUBJECT	STANDARD	ACHIEVEMENT	COMMENT
English	Above average	Good	Reading and writing skills are developed well
Mathematics	Above average	Good	Good numeracy skills
Science	Above average	Good	Good work in investigative science
Art	Average	Good	Good observational drawing
Citizenship	Average	Satisfactory	Rising standards
Design and technology	Above average	Good	Particularly good work in textiles
Geography	Above average	Good	Good written work
History	Above average	Good	Good use of source materials
Modern foreign languages	Below average	Good	Good use of the target language
Information and communication technology	Above average	Good	Good development of knowledge and skills
Music	Average	Good	Rapid progress in skills
Physical education	Average	Satisfactory	Skill development is good
Religious education	Below average	Unsatisfactory	Pupils lack knowledge, but standards are rising

**Full details of what pupils do well and what they need to improve can be found in the subject reports in Part C of this report.**

#### Attainment in GCSE examinations

5. Pupils achieve well in GCSE examinations. The high and mid-attainers in particular make good progress from their levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. The lower attainers make satisfactory progress. Overall, the performance of 16 year-olds in GCSE examinations was well above the national average and above that in similar schools. The results of the 2003 examinations show a similarly strong picture. Almost all subjects attain results that are above the national average in GCSE examinations – the exception is design and technology, where results were slightly below average in 2002. The subjects that performed best in the 2002 GCSE examinations, gaining a significantly higher proportion of A\* to C grades than was the case nationally, were business studies, science, communication studies, drama, English literature, French, geography, history, home economics and sociology. The subjects that performed less well in relation to these were physical education, religious education, mathematics and design and technology. (The evidence from the inspection is that standards are rising in these subjects.) The results in the 2003 examinations were broadly similar. Boys and girls attained equally well compared with their peers across the country as a whole. The school just failed to meet its ambitious examination target for 2003.
6. The inspection findings for pupils currently in Year 11 are summarised in the table below. Standards are, overall, above the national average. Almost all pupils are achieving well. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that pupils are making over the two years of the course.

SUBJECT	STANDARD	ACHIEVEMENT	COMMENT
English	Above average	Good	Literary criticism is a strength
Mathematics	Above average	Good	Numeracy skills are developed well
Science	Above average, rising to well above average	Good	Good work in investigative science
Art	Above average	Good	Good independent work
Citizenship	Average	Satisfactory	Pupils show good skills of negotiation and decision making
Drama	Above average	Good	Independence and team work
Design and technology	Above average	Good	Good design and analysis
Geography	Above average, rising to well above average	Good	Good research skills
History	Above average	Good	Good understanding
ICT	Above average for examination groups, average for others	Good	Good knowledge and skills, good use of spreadsheets
Modern foreign languages	Above average for French, below for German	Good	Good listening skills. The high numbers of pupils taking German means that not all are able to reach national averages
Media studies	Above average	Good	Good understanding and analysis
Music	Below average	Satisfactory	Improving from a low starting point
Physical education	Average	Satisfactory	Good skills but pupils are not good at analysing their performance to improve it further
Religious education	Below average	Unsatisfactory	Lack of knowledge and of conceptual understanding

7. Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy are above average by the age of 16. Oracy skills are satisfactory and developed well. Across the school, the large majority of pupils identified as having special educational needs are achieving well, as are the very few for whom English is an additional language. The school's analysis of GCSE results in 2003 suggest that most pupils with special needs achieve well, and their achievement is in line with that of pupils generally. Those pupils who receive support in the learning support base make very good progress, better than that of pupils generally. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are an exception to this and, as the school has identified, their performance indicates that they are underachieving. The Dyslexia Unit has not been running for long enough to establish any reliable data about the performance of its pupils.

### **The school's results and achievements for students in the Sixth Form**

8. Attainment in the GCE A level and AS level examinations has been rising. It was just below the national average in 2000. It was above the national average in 2001, when the average point score in A level and equivalent examinations for all students was 18.1, above the national average score of 17.3. Male students attained best, attaining an average point score of 20.4 (16.9 per cent nationally) against a female students' score of 16.5 per cent (17.9 per cent).

The GCE A level subjects with above average grades in 2001 were biology, English literature, business studies and geography. The weakest subject was art and design. Mathematics attained relatively less well than the other major subjects. In 2002, results dipped slightly, to be average compared with results nationally, but rose again – with an almost 100 per cent pass rate – in 2003. National comparisons were not available at the time of the inspection for the 2003 results. Results in vocational subjects have been above the average nationally in recent years.

9. The finding of the inspection is that attainment in the Sixth Form is above average, overall, and that almost all students achieve well. As with the main school, attainment is highest in those subjects where teachers are particularly skilled at motivating and interesting the students and develop their independence and research skills. Achievement is best where work is tailored to the needs of the students and assessment is giving them very good guidance on how to improve their work. In the table below, the subjects in bold are those inspected in depth. Other subjects were sampled.

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ATTAINMENT</b>	<b>ACHIEVEMENT</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
English	Well above average	Good	Good development of literacy and writing skills
Mathematics	Average	Satisfactory	Satisfactory range of skills, weakness in independent study
Chemistry	Average	Good	Good knowledge and skills
Biology	Above average	Good	Good skills, but written work not always strong
Information and communication technology	Average	Satisfactory	Good project work
Design and technology	Above average	Good	Good design and evaluating skills
Art	Average	Satisfactory	Restricted opportunities for independent development of ideas
French	Above average	Good	Good listening skills and good extended writing
Geography	Above average	Good	Independent and good research skills
Health and Social Care GNVQ	Above average	Good	Good knowledge and skills
Physical education	Average	Satisfactory	Good research skills
<b>SAMPLED SUBJECTS</b>			
History	Above average	Good	Good knowledge and understanding
Sociology	Above average	Good	Good knowledge and understanding
Business studies	Above average	Good	Good knowledge and understanding
Media studies	Above average	Good	Good skills of analysis
Music	Average	Good	Catching up rapidly from a low base

Psychology	Above average	Good	Good understanding of concepts.
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10. Literacy and numeracy standards are above average. Information and communication technology (ICT) standards in the Sixth Form are average. There is a good, compulsory programme for developing key skills and standards are above average overall as a result.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	70 (70)	66 (64)
Mathematics	74 (66)	67 (66)
Science	69 (66)	66 (66)

*There were 221 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	57 (61)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45	39.8

*There were 198 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2001**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	93 per cent	89.9 per cent
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	31 per cent	35.6 per cent
Average point score per pupil	18.1	17.4

*There were 54 pupils in the year group.*

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and their behaviour is very good, the result of the very effective systems within the school to ensure good behaviour. Students in the sixth form demonstrate very mature attitudes in their work and behaviour, because of the adult way in which they are treated. The emphasis given to personal development leads to relationships across the school being very good. There is a good response to the opportunities presented to undertake roles of responsibility or to develop initiative. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and levels of attendance and punctuality are satisfactory; in line with national averages.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good attitudes and good behaviour of both pupils and students enables them to make good progress because they are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good, helping to promote a sense of community and creating a productive working environment.
- The school provides valuable opportunities to help pupils and students develop their confidence and self-esteem and to undertake roles of responsibility.

- Pupils and students generally enjoy school, they attend regularly and arrive on time.

## Commentary

11. Both pupils and parents have very positive views about the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the way that the school encourages their children to work hard and to achieve their best. The positive partnership that results between home and school is a factor in the good progress that their children make.
12. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour were singled out as strengths at the time of the last report, and they have been sustained. Pupils are enthusiastic and spoke of their interest in lessons, their willingness to learn and keenness to participate in all the school offers. Behaviour of almost all pupils is good, both in lessons and around the school. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils can learn without being disturbed by other pupils. Major building and refurbishment work was being done in the school during the inspection period. The inspection team was particularly impressed by the way large numbers of pupils sensibly negotiated the tight spaces caused by the building work during changes of lessons or break times. Pupils are well aware of the system of merits and demerits and value the certificates and commendations, feeling these motivate them to do well. The school has an appropriate focus on the promotion of good behaviour and the provision of support for those individuals who find it difficult to behave well. There is a good behaviour policy; implementing behaviour support plans where necessary. The school only applies exclusions as a last resort as part of its behaviour management system. The level of short fixed-term exclusions has increased since the last inspection, but the level of permanent exclusions has remained at the same low level.
13. Relationships between both staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves, are very good. There are few incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour and when incidents do occur they are taken seriously and dealt with promptly and effectively. Overall, pupils and parents do not feel that bullying or racism is a problem in the school. Pupils were eager to correct any misconceptions raised through their answers to the questionnaire. They thought that the questions identifying issues to do with behaviour and bullying were badly phrased, leading to misleading answers.
14. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities presented to take responsibility and contribute to activities around school. School and Year Council representatives undertake their responsibilities conscientiously and the peer mentors offer a valuable service for their peers. In assemblies, the focus of the inspection week was on the celebration of 'gifts and talents'. Talented individuals contributed enthusiastically to the year assemblies. The musicians, footballers and those reading aloud all showed great confidence and self-esteem as they played or performed to their classmates.
15. Pupils with special educational needs appreciate the additional support they receive, and their attitude to their work in lessons is as good as that of pupils generally. They show a capacity for sustained hard work and take a pride in what they produce.
16. **Pupils across the school are generally happy to come to school and eager to learn. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. There is little evidence of truancy and most pupils attend school regularly. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good. The heads of year and form tutors monitor pupils' attendance effectively, regularly following up any issues of poor attendance with the educational social worker.**
17. Much of the school's success in promoting good attitudes and behaviour is the result of its good provision for the **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** of pupils all the way through the school, including the Sixth Form. Assemblies, for example, are used very well as

opportunities to establish a corporate identity, as an institution that believes in respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. There is a good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions, fostered in personal and social education lessons, religious education and in subjects such as art, music and English. Individual pupils took trouble to ensure that they talked to inspectors privately about the ways that they were welcomed and included in the school community. Their differences, of ethnic background, beliefs, ability or sexual orientation, were not a barrier. The principles that distinguish right from wrong are clearly understood by all pupils. The fact that they have a voice in the school encourages them to be part of the process that decides what is, and what is not, acceptable within the school community. In this way, they learn the responsibilities of living within a close group of people. The social and moral development of pupils and students is very good, as the very positive outcomes prove. Their cultural development is good. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils, which was unsatisfactory in the last report, is now good and there has been significant improvement.

## Post 16 provision

18. **Students value the very good and often excellent relationships fostered in the sixth form. They feel they are treated like adults and this encourages them to act accordingly. The students have very mature attitudes to learning and this promotes a good level of debate and a productive working environment. The behaviour of students in the Sixth Form is also very good. Students contribute well to the school by helping out and supporting a number of school activities including managing the stationery shop, involvement in peer mentoring and the Student Council. They develop into confident and independent young people providing stability to the upper school and act as good role models to the other pupils.**
19. Sixth Form students show levels of attendance that are similar to that of the rest of the school. There are clear systems in place for them to self-register as well as take pre-arranged study leave. This appears to work well, and unexplained absences are usually followed up by telephone on the first day that they occur. There are good procedures for checking and maintaining good attendance.

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence	
School data	8.0
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.7
National data	1.2

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

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
724	58	1
8	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
9	2	0



Black or Black British – any other Black background	9	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good, overall. Some aspects are very good, but the use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils are set appropriate work, although very good in some subject areas, is not consistently good. Teaching, links with parents and the community and the school's care for pupils are all strong features and they contribute to the pupils' good standards of work. The curriculum caters well for the needs of the majority, but there is not a wide enough range of courses to meet the needs of those in the main school and in the Sixth Form who would benefit from vocational (work related) study.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good across the school. In almost a third of lessons observed, the teaching and learning were very good or excellent. There has been good improvement since the last inspection – the result of the good monitoring and support of teaching by the present headteacher and the acting headteacher before her.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, with a good variety of activities to interest the pupils.
- Pupils are told what they are to learn at the start of the lesson, so that they are clear about what is expected of them.
- Relationships are very good, so that in almost all lessons pupils are willing to learn.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and praise them when they do well. Pupils respond well to this – working hard, concentrating and trying to succeed.

#### However:

- Teachers do not always plan work that is appropriate for the full range of ability in the class, so that some pupils are not challenged enough, or find the work too difficult.
- On rare occasions, the work is not interesting enough, nor taught well enough, to interest the pupils and so they make little progress.

#### One of the examples of outstanding practice observed in the school:

Excellent teaching led to excellent learning in a Year 10 German class. The teacher set a most challenging task, expecting pupils to pick out errors in their work using all that they had learnt of the German language. His high expectations were fully justified as all the pupils in the mixed ability class concentrated hard and came to a deeper understanding of linguistic rules. His own enthusiasm for his subject made a difficult task enjoyable. All the pupils were involved and very interested. All achieved highly because the tasks were devised to be appropriately challenging to pupils of different attainment levels. The planning and preparation were excellent. Very good use was made of multi-media presentations using information and communication technology, overhead transparencies, educational games, whole class teaching and pair work, resulting in a very stimulating, highly enjoyable lesson.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 147 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (3 per cent)	42 (28 per cent)	70 (47 per cent)	27 (18 per cent)	4 (3 per cent)	0 (0 per cent)	0 (0 per cent)

*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.*

## **Commentary**

20. Teaching is good, overall, for Year 9 and for Years 10 and 11. This leads to most pupils achieving well, because they make good progress, are interested in their studies and develop good learning skills. Only four unsatisfactory lessons were observed, out of well over a hundred. Almost a third of the teaching observed in the school was very good or excellent, with good teaching in almost all other lessons. As a result of the professional development of teachers and the effective monitoring of lessons by the school's senior management, teaching is very consistent in its quality. The school has based its work on the three-part lesson plan set out in the national literacy and numeracy strategies to good effect. The proportions of lessons deemed to show excellent, very good, good or satisfactory teaching were almost identical for each year group in the school, though not from department to department. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
21. The teachers are generally enthusiastic and very knowledgeable in their subject areas. They share their enthusiasm well with their pupils, who are motivated and interested as a result. Teachers' planning is detailed and provides for a good range of activities in the hour long lessons, which means that the pupils generally learn better because they are making their lessons varied and interesting. They enjoy good relationships with their classes, which leads to pupils enjoying the lessons and working hard to please their teachers. Teachers use praise well to motivate and encourage their pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to help pupils to learn where it is available. Some teachers find it difficult to obtain access to computer suites. This is affecting the quality of education in some subjects – such as art and music – but it is a temporary problem. New ICT suites were being built at the time of the inspection.
22. Examples of very good teaching were observed in almost all subject areas, across all year groups. The very good lessons are very well prepared to offer an interesting and appropriate range of activities to interest and motivate pupils. A good beginning to the lesson introduces the work in an exciting way and makes expectations clear. The result is that pupils know what is expected of them and are enthusiastic. The teachers' high expectations, very good relationships and management of pupils mean that no time is wasted and pupils respond very well to the work that is set. The work is reviewed towards the end of the lesson to consolidate learning. For example, in a very good information and communication technology lesson for Year 9 pupils, the teacher used questioning very well at the start to recap on previous learning and establish the aims of the lesson. Excellent use was made of multimedia presentation – on information systems – in order to make clear to the pupils the teacher's very high expectations of what they were expected to do and to give them an example so that they would understand the task fully. The inspector was particularly impressed by the teacher's preparation for the lesson, subject expertise, the lesson structure and pace. The pupils responded well, were excited by the task, understood the concepts that were being explained and learned quickly – making very good progress.
23. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, many of the characteristics of good teaching are still present. Relationships are strong and positive. Lessons are well planned and prepared and this planning takes broad account of the needs of the whole class, though not always of all individuals within it. In the very few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher spent too long talking to the class and failed to involve the pupils sufficiently, leaving them bored and restless.
24. Teaching is generally good for pupils with special educational needs, although there are times when the tasks that the teachers set are not adapted to their needs. Teaching is good in the learning support base. Work in the base is appropriately demanding, and combines high expectations of pupils with supportive encouragement. Opportunities for role-play and

discussion make a valuable contribution to pupils' oral skills. Pupils participate very willingly in these sessions and clearly find them rewarding.

25. In-class support is sometimes effective in helping pupils take advantage of the mainstream curriculum. Where it works well, teachers and support assistants work closely together to plan and teach activities, and pupils are supported sensitively. In some lessons teaching assistants are not as fully involved as they could be, but half of the force had only just taken up their posts at the time of the inspection and systems were still being put in place.

## Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form

26. The quality of teaching is a significant factor in the good progress that students make. In the Sixth Form, teaching was good or better in most of the lessons observed. Almost a third were very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the Sixth Form. The students are mature and responsible learners as a result of the generally very good provision. The best teaching is helping students to develop independent learning and research skills.
27. Expectations are high. In almost all lessons, students are challenged and expected to make significant gains in learning. Most teachers structure the work and offer individual support and guidance so as to ensure that students make progress in their learning. There is a good pace to the teaching, which ensures that students work hard and cover considerable amounts in each session. All teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they are teaching, and this enthusiasm motivates and interests their students. This increases their commitment, ensures their concentration and encourages them to work hard. In a geography lesson taught to Year 12 students who had only just begun their course, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge was obvious in her teaching and the respect she earned from her students. A key factor in the lesson's success, however, was her excellent knowledge of each student. She had high expectations, and these were different according to the individual qualities of the young people involved. As they developed their environmental investigations, based on the recently completed residential field trip, she gave each of them attention, helping them to develop their skills and knowledge. As a result, the learners grew in confidence, achieving well in the lesson, learning to research and organise information, and they had made very good progress in a very short time. There was an excellent ethos for learning – the result of the teacher's excellent class management, the excellent attitudes to work she had instilled in the students and the way that she had involved and appropriately challenged every student. Many other examples were seen of very good and excellent teaching across almost all subjects.
28. In the relatively few lessons where teaching was satisfactory rather than good or better, good qualities were apparent in the teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge was good and their management of the students was good or very good. The teachers did not, however, set work that was equally appropriate to all, based on their assessment of students' previous work. The pace of these lessons was slower and the students were less involved, because the tasks were not set in a way that would enthuse them.

The table below shows the findings of the inspection. It indicates the overall quality of teaching in the main subject areas, for the different year groups in the school.

SUBJECT	YEAR 9	YEARS 10 AND 11	SIXTH FORM	COMMENT
English	very good	very good	very good	Often inspired teaching that also covers very well the basic skills required for the subject
Mathematics	good	good	good	Knowledgeable and enthusiastic
Science	good	good	good	Good teaching of scientific concepts
ICT	good	good	satisfactory	Good coverage of the skills and knowledge the courses require
Art	very good	very good	satisfactory	Mainly very good, but more development of independence needed at Sixth Form level
Design and technology	good	good	good	Good progressive development of skills
Geography	good	good, often very good	very good	Teaching links well to the requirements of the examination courses

SUBJECT	YEAR 9	YEARS 10 AND 11	SIXTH FORM	COMMENT
History	good	good	N/a	Very good subject knowledge helps pupils to understand and learn
Modern foreign languages	good	good	good	Good use of the target language to build pupils' confidence
Music	good	good	Very good	New teachers are beginning to raise standards through well planned lessons
Physical education	good	good	good	Committed and experienced teachers cover skills well, but written work needs further development
Religious education	Not observed	satisfactory	Not observed	New teachers are using their knowledge and enthusiasm to raise standards
Vocational subjects	good	good	good	Good teaching of the knowledge and skills required

### The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, although there are few courses for those who prefer not to take a GCSE route.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of academic courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students in the Sixth Form.
- The new accommodation is supporting effective teaching and learning although a few areas are still poor, awaiting refurbishment and extension.
- The provision for personal and social development is good.
- The range of courses is narrow for those of lower attainment.
- The provision for religious education is unsatisfactory, but is improving under the direction of the head of department and the head of faculty.

### Commentary

29. The curriculum offers a good range of courses leading to entry for GCSE examinations, but fewer vocational courses than pupils need. Senior managers recognised this and a review has begun with the aim of broadening choice in September next year. The review takes good account of the needs of pupils in the school and of new guidance about the 14 to 19 curriculum. The draft document was discussed with the senior team in the week of the inspection. The senior managers plan to use each faculty's audit of provision at the next stage of discussions with staff. The provision for religious education is currently unsatisfactory as the subject is taught as part of personal and social education and so has not always been taught in sufficient depth. This provision is part of the review of the curriculum and the head of department knows where improvements need to be made. There is much good practice across the school in teaching citizenship and senior members of staff are aware that this needs extending and consolidating across the school. The overall provision at this stage is satisfactory. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements except for the act of collective worship. Governors are of the opinion that they cannot meet this requirement because the school hall is too small to allow for more than one year group at a time to assemble.
30. Many faculties and departments take good account of the range of abilities in the school, but this is not consistent. Some are using the analysis of data about pupils' achievement to plan a curriculum that takes account of their different needs, but other subjects are just beginning to

use it. As a result, there are pockets in the school where higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged. Senior managers are working with all staff to increase their proficiency in using the information. The school has identified a gender gap between boys and girls and some departments are developing different teaching styles to take account of this. National guidance for raising standards in Year 9 is part of this move and is used very well by the English faculty and is beginning to be used by modern foreign languages. There are few pupils from backgrounds other than white British, but these pupils do as well as other groups as there is strong concern and action to value all pupils equally. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is good support, based on good assessment of their needs. Key to this success is the confidence that pupils with special needs develop, based on the quality of support that they receive. The school's decision to disapply some pupils with special educational needs from modern foreign languages enables them to receive extra targeted support in the learning base. Pupils clearly value this support, and acknowledge that it is helping them to improve basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

31. The work of the Dyslexia Unit is valuable in providing highly specialist small steps tuition, although as yet it benefits only a small number of pupils. Pupils identified as having specific learning difficulties, both from within the school's own population and those from other schools whose places are funded by the LEA, receive very structured tuition which combines phonic work in small steps with word recognition skills, including graded computer-based exercises and text reading. Pupils respond well to this provision, working with sustained effort and concentration. Exceptionally able pupils have been identified and faculties and departments are expected to take account of their needs when planning a curriculum. The provision is variable across the school.
32. The provision for personal and social development is good and is a major reason for the very good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils. Tutorial groups are used for this purpose and many of the sessions involve pupils well to provoke thought about their actions and those of others. Many pupils are thoughtful and caring as a result and are prepared well for going on to the Sixth Form or other colleges and for employment.
33. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory for a small rural school. They include sports and arts activities along with trips to places of educational interest in this country and abroad. Pupils have visited Russia and the modern languages department runs exchange programmes with Preetz in Germany and Lausanne. There have also been short residential visits to France in 2002 and to Germany in 2003.
34. There is a good number of clubs and societies, including a new and interesting one that is investigating and promoting fair trade with Third World countries. Pupils take part in a number of productions during the course of the school year and two of the school's very professional 'pop' groups contributed very well to the assemblies held during the inspection week.
35. The school is adequately staffed to cover the curriculum. One reason for the consistently good quality of teaching observed during the inspection is the quality of teachers that the school has employed; another is the very good system for professional development, linking the training needs of staff well to the requirements of the school development plan. Almost a quarter of the teachers were new to the school in the term that the inspection was held and they were quick to praise the high quality of the induction processes that had supported them very well in their first weeks. The accommodation is being extended and refurbished. Where this is finished the accommodation is good. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory, as are the resources. This is adversely affecting the achievement of pupils. Other areas, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, have little storage space and some of the rooms are small. The new science laboratories provide good accommodation and there are very good sports facilities. The school library is an attractive and well-stocked educational resource, which is kept in very good order by the school librarian.

## The Sixth Form

The curriculum in the Sixth Form is good in relation to advanced level GCE courses, but there is a limited range of GNVQ courses for those who would prefer different types of study. This is also part of the review of provision that is taking place. The school is rightly proud of its foundation course that provides a strong element of work-related learning. Most students taking this course are achieving well. The opportunities for enrichment are concentrated in the very well-run Key Skills programme that is a compulsory and very successful part of the Sixth Form curriculum. Staff in the sixth form are very sensitive to individual students and their personal needs and offer valuable guidance and support to all students, whatever their background. Students receive good guidance in preparation for university and work and are pleased with how the staff prepare them for this. This preparation and their personal development are supported by the tutorial sessions. All tutors have been recently trained to make them more effective; the head of the Sixth Form reviews them as part of her monitoring role.

### Care, guidance and support

Systems to ensure pupils' and students' support, guidance and welfare are being implemented well, and pupils and students are well cared for during their time at school. Procedures to monitor and support their personal and academic development are effectively developed through tutor groups and the pastoral programme. The pupils feel it is a very safe and secure school. Almost all think that they are consulted and that their views are taken into consideration.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to support pupils' personal development and monitor their progress are very good and help to promote good achievement.
- Very effective guidance offered to support pupils and students as they move through the school enables them to make well-informed choices.
- Pupils and students think the school supports and consults with them effectively, but feel the uniform policy is too strict and they are very critical of the toilets.

### Commentary

36. The overall provision for pupils' care and welfare is very good and they feel *'it is a good school to be at'*. Induction processes to the school and support for new pupils are very well developed, enabling them to settle into school quickly. This level of care is continued as they progress through the school, with information readily available to help pupils make important decisions. The well thought out pastoral system, delivered through tutors and the Heads of year, provides a sense of stability and ensures pupils have members of staff they can turn to if needed. Specialist advice and additional support is provided through 'drop in' sessions in the 'chat room', consultations with the youth worker or time at the youth centre. This helps those who may be having difficulties, as well as contributing to the well-rounded development of pupils in the school. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal and academic development and progress are well developed through a range of initiatives, including the twice yearly academic tutorial days. Individual targets are set in all subjects and shared with pupils. This helps them to be aware of how they are doing, pinpoints what they need to do to improve, and contributes very effectively to their learning, promoting good achievement.
37. The year tutors deliver a very good programme of careers education and advice as part of the pastoral system with good resources and support from Connexions. This includes self-evaluation and regular one-to-one consultations with tutors at key points of transition, such as Year 9 option choices, work experience placements in Year 10 and decisions about post-16 courses. Interviews with Connexions advisers are available to all on request, but advisers particularly target pupils who may be uncertain about future pathways. The school has good systems in place for offering support and guidance for those pupils with special education needs. Arrangements for child protection and procedures relating to health and safety are

securely in place with risk assessments regularly undertaken. Links are formed between Year 11 and Year 13 students, with shared interests, as part of the higher education liaison programme – another example of the depth of support and guidance that the school provides.

38. **Parents spoke very positively about the school and feel it treats pupils fairly. Almost all pupils like the school. They value the education they receive; feel they are taught well, expected to work hard and are trusted to do things on their own. Although the pupil questionnaires indicated some concerns regarding behaviour and bullying, the very many pupils interviewed or questioned by inspectors felt that this was not a major concern and that any problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. They generally feel they are well consulted with their views taken into consideration. Pupils are currently involved in decision-making through the Year Council representatives and a number of issues have been addressed following their interventions. Although a significant number of pupils dislike the strict uniform code, parents spoken to during the inspection welcomed it. However, the inspection team agreed with their criticisms of the toilet facilities in the school. The school is aware of these concerns and will be addressing them shortly.**

#### **Post 16 provision**

39. **Students are happy at school and have very positive views about the Sixth Form. The feel they are helped and encouraged to work and study independently yet teachers are always there if they have a problem or encounter difficulties with their work. They value the good rapport established with their teachers and feel they are regularly consulted and listened to. The links between pastoral and careers education are continued into the Sixth Form. Regular one-to-one reviews take place between tutors and students. Students applying for university receive very good, intensive help with their applications and all students who leave for work or for alternative courses have to see a Connexions adviser before they make their final decisions. Group tuition is available to help with the preparation of curricula vitae and the choice of non-university career routes. It is recognised that this part of the provision could be strengthened and this is currently a target for the Connexions partnership.**

#### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The partnership with parents, the local community, and other schools is very good and continues to be one of the major strengths of the school.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has developed a strong supportive parent body and actively consults with them.
- Parents generally have very positive views about the school.
- There are very good links with the local community and partner institutions.

#### **Commentary**

40. The school's close liaison with parents keeps them fully informed and provides them with many opportunities to become involved in their child's education. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning and their levels of achievement, throughout the school, from those beginning their time in Year 9 to those who are in the Sixth Form. Information booklets go home each year, keeping parents suitably informed about all stages of progress through the school. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction about the work of the school. They feel the school is well led and managed and find the headteacher and staff very approachable. The school actively consults with parents via informal discussions and written questionnaires. Good home/school links are maintained with the tutorial staff, and parents are contacted both



when there are problems as well as informed if their child has done well. The homework diary provides a very good day-to-day contact between home and school, and curriculum information is regularly shared with parents so they are aware of what work is being done. Parents are kept fully informed about the progress of their child through regular consultation and review meetings. The termly progress reports and the annual report to parents clearly identifies what their child has covered and how well they are doing, identifying targets for improvement. Meetings are also held at strategic points during the course of the year to keep parents duly informed of relevant activities and events relating to their children such as option choices, career guidance, transition to the Sixth Form and progression to further education.

41. Links with the local community are very good and are being developed further following the school's award of specialist technology college status. Local businesses provide valuable support for the school both through financial sponsorship as well as offering a wide range of work placement opportunities. Local groups use the school's premises in the evenings and weekends and members of the community support the school. The school has very effective links with the middle and first schools in Blandford, which help to ensure curriculum continuity as well as aiding the transition process in Year 9. The school's vocational courses have forged very productive links with the local community that are giving invaluable background experience to pupils and helping them to attain high standards. There is close liaison, for example, between the teachers and pupils connected with the health and social care course and the caring professions in Blandford and district.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Since the last report, the headteacher left to work more closely with the local education authority. At first this was to be a temporary arrangement, but it has become permanent. In the two years that it took to appoint a new headteacher, one of the deputy headteachers took temporary charge of the school. The quality of the senior managers is such that the school continued to develop and prosper during this period of transition. The new headteacher has restructured the senior management team and made judicious changes, whilst retaining the strengths of the school's ethos. Leadership and management are good overall and at this exciting period in the school's development, with new building being completed, the quality of leadership is resulting in high staff morale. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership from the new headteacher
- Good management and leadership overall, from all those with senior responsibility
- Very good financial planning and controls
  
- Very good long term-strategic planning for the future development of the school
- The governors have not yet found a way to meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils

### Commentary

42. **The new headteacher** is giving very good leadership. She has drawn wisely on the detailed knowledge and experience of the school and of her senior managers, including one of her deputy headteachers who had been acting headteacher for a long period before her appointment and had successfully carried the school forward. She has restructured the senior team, creating a management and leadership group with a very good range of complementary skills – in professional development, pastoral work, curriculum development, finance and data analysis. This group has a key role in preserving the good ethos for learning that pervades the site. Along with their insights, her own experience and perception has enabled her to identify key priorities for development in the school and incorporate these into a new school development plan. This is of high quality and it identifies all of the issues for action that the inspection findings have highlighted. She also has excellent skills of people management.

She has further strengthened the already corporate feel of the school, making everyone feel that they have a positive part to play in the process for change. Governors,

parents, members of staff and members of the local community – including the staff of partner schools – hold her in high regard. This is again the result of her skill in interacting with people and it is raising still further the reputation of the school with in the community.

43. The very effective monitoring of the school that the senior managers carry out ensures that they are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and can take effective action to rectify any problems that may arise. For example, analysis of data revealed that standards in mathematics are high at the end of Year 9, but disappointing results in mathematics at AS Level in 2001 resulted in extra observation of lessons. The resulting programme of self-review along with the help of an outside consultant has begun to raise standards, as the finding of the inspection has confirmed.
44. Overall, management is good in the school. Performance management is at an advanced stage of implementation. The work in subject areas is regularly monitored. Heads of subject have been trained in their role. Most are very effective. They fulfil the expectations of the school well; to be leaders, managers and role models. There are particular strengths in the leadership of English and geography, amongst others. In other subjects, such as religious education, management and leadership are satisfactory and improving, as subject leaders gain in experience and in their understanding of how to make effective use of data to identify weaknesses and improve the performance of their departments. The management of year groups is strong, the year heads giving good guidance to form tutors and counselling pupils well. This contributes to the quality of the provision for care and guidance in the school.
45. Special needs provision in the school is very ably led and managed by an enthusiastic and committed co-ordinator. The importance of her role is fully recognised by the school's senior managers in that she is a member of the senior staff group. Parents have a high level of confidence in the school's arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. At the time of the last inspection, provision for pupils with special educational needs was judged to be of high quality and the school has maintained this standard. The dyslexia unit is led and managed well.
46. Many governors visit regularly to monitor and support the school. They have considerable professional expertise outside of education that they bring to their role for the benefit of the school – in finance, for example, or local government. They take their role seriously and are effective as critical friends of the school, questioning and testing in a number of areas, such as performance in national tests, budgeting and health and safety. There have been a number of debates over the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all. They have decided, reluctantly, that the accommodation available in the school – especially the very small hall – prevents them from doing so. Their work is therefore unsatisfactory in this regard.
47. **New technology is used very well, both to assist in the administration of the school and to help in teaching. For example, assessment data are kept on computer files and are accessible and easy to use as a result. Attendance data is readily available and easy to analyse. Very good use of computers was seen in lessons, especially information and communication technology and history lessons, but some subjects, such as art, have not yet begun to make full use of the facilities available.**
48. **The administrative and clerical staff and the classroom assistants are deployed very effectively and support the teachers very well to ensure that they can concentrate on their primary roles. The site manager, the groundsman and cleaning staff work effectively to ensure that the school buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and attractive.**

## THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

49. The leadership of the Sixth Form is very good and it is managed well. The head of the Sixth Form has a clear view of the strengths and knows where it needs to improve. Her leadership is ensuring that the provision is good. She is working towards reviewing the quality of provision from a Sixth Form perspective, to support the review by subject specialists that is currently undertaken. As there are a number of new tutors, all were trained at the beginning of term to ensure that their tutorial skills were competent and consistent. The provision of tutorial materials is going to be reviewed later in the term, in partnership with the Connexions team. Governors have a satisfactory role in the leadership and forward planning of the Sixth Form.

### Financial information

#### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,631,655	Balance from previous year	- 6,926
Total expenditure	2,631,655	Balance carried forward to the next	0
Expenditure per pupil	3085		

50. The management of the school's finances is very good. All the necessary controls are in place, and the school has received a favourable audit report. Governors' expertise, and the knowledge and insights provided by the bursar, ensure that the school makes very good use of its resources. For example, the school has set up its own cleaning contract and by subcontracting this to another client has reduced its costs to a sixth of the previous amount. The school was forced to operate with a large budget deficit from 1998/9 because of a temporary fall in pupil numbers. The local authority allowed it until 2006 to pay back the shortfall in stages. Careful purchasing has allowed it to pay back the £135,000 deficit in full in March 2003, without any detrimental effect on the quality of education it has provided. The principles of best value are applied very well.
51. Income and expenditure per pupil is around the national average. Pupils achieve well in terms of both academic and personal development, and the school is providing good value for money.

### OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

#### What is the effectiveness of community provision?

Links with the local community are **very good**. The school is promoting its new specialist technology college status effectively to offer an extensive range of courses and support programmes, drawing upon national funding opportunities and local provision. This plays a vital contribution towards the inclusion of different groups within the local community and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- New specialist technology college status has brought in funding opportunities and new partnerships.
- Family learning schemes, adult education and projects provide well for the wider community.
- Joint initiatives with the leisure centre and youth groups provide valuable resources for the pupils.
- The involvement of outside specialists is used well to meet the needs of pupils who have extreme difficulties with education.

## Commentary

52. With the recent award of specialist technology school status, the school is seeking to establish new initiatives, strengthen its links with its funding partners and foster good community relationships. A large number of community-based programmes and schemes are currently being developed with the expertise of the school's information and communication technology staff. These programmes are being run both out in the community such as the website design programme at Durweston Village Hall, or within the school, with the University of the Third Age having access to computers each week. The co-ordinator for community aspects has been very successful in accessing funds to run these various initiatives, with the school's premises being used to facilitate some of these schemes. Programmes are being carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure they meet the needs of the community as well as having a direct impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
53. There is good provision for the local community through dual use of the leisure centre and adult education sessions run at the school three nights a week. The local education authority promotes adult education links through the school, particularly focusing on family learning projects, basic skills training, languages and art classes (such as silver-smithing). The onsite community leisure centre is a valuable joint initiative with the school having preferential access during the day and pupils getting reduced rates in the evenings. The youth centre is popular and busy at lunchtimes and in the evenings, providing a safe place for young people to 'chill out and enjoy themselves'. Sports clubs and a film society make use of the premises in the evenings and weekends and provide good income generation opportunities for the school.
54. A 'core allocation group' meets regularly, bringing together local key agencies such as the school nurse, social services and the Blandford Youth Trust. This group is working as creatively as possible both inside and outside the school to meet the needs of some pupils who are experiencing difficulties. They are successfully drawing upon local businesses and college provision to provide an alternative curriculum for these young people involving various work placement schemes. The arrangements are working well to retain these pupils in school. 'Relate Dorset' trains students as peer mentors and also uses sixth formers from the school as receptionists, providing valuable educational enrichment opportunities.
55. A local firm – Hospital Metalcraft is a major sponsor enabling their specialist status as a technology college. Local companies offer good support by offering work placements to a few older pupils, Year 11 and Sixth Form students, who are receiving an alternative curriculum.

## What is the effectiveness of the Dyslexia Unit?

The effectiveness of the Dyslexia Unit is **good**. It is providing valuable support, not only for the pupils directly in its care, but also for other pupils in the school who benefit from the expertise it brings to the staff. The teaching makes use of a good and appropriate range of methods to help pupils to make progress. These methods are effective in helping pupils to overcome their difficulties. The pupils are almost fully integrated into the school. This makes an important contribution towards the inclusion of different groups and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with dyslexia are almost fully integrated into the school curriculum.
- Activities are appropriately broken down into small steps, which enables pupils to make good progress.
- The unit is led well, by an experienced tutor.
- Her expertise is enhanced by her ability to develop supportive working relationships with pupils.
- Pupils respond well - they value the impact that improvement in basic skills makes on their classroom learning.

## Commentary

56. The school hosts provision for pupils with dyslexia from across Dorset and it is funded by the local education authority. At present there are three pupils with statements for dyslexia. The school makes good use of this shortfall by using the resource for some of its own pupils who are not statemented.
57. Pupils with dyslexia are fully integrated into the school curriculum, with the exception of modern foreign languages. They receive additional class-based support, and attend the unit for two one hour sessions a week, where they follow very specialised, structured literacy programmes focusing on phonic skills and careful sequencing. These activities are appropriately broken down into small steps and this enables pupils to make good progress. Kinaesthetic teaching methods are also used to reinforce pupils' understanding of letters and sounds. These methods are effective in helping pupils to overcome their difficulties.
58. The school employs a specialist tutor who has been trained by the British Dyslexia Institute. Her expertise is enhanced by her ability to develop supportive working relationships with pupils. Teaching assistants make good use of the specialised programmes that she develops. She works under the overall guidance of the school's special needs co-ordinator, who monitors and supports the work of the unit very effectively. Detailed and valuable guidance on teaching techniques for pupils with specific learning difficulties is appended to the special needs register, of which all staff have a copy.
59. **Pupils respond well to this provision. They work with sustained effort and concentration, both in one-to-one tasks with the tutor, and on specialised computer programmes. They enjoy the success that they achieve in the learning tasks and value the impact that improvement in basic skills makes on their classroom learning. They do not experience any discrimination within the school community. Pupils with dyslexia develop good social relationships with their peers and are helped in this respect by the school's peer mentoring and paired reading activities. When pupils transfer from middle schools in other areas of the county into the dyslexia base, they initially feel some sense of loneliness, and the school needs to ensure that they are integrated more quickly. However, the other pupils soon show positive attitudes towards those peers who have special needs and the school provides an inclusive and supportive environment.**

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- **Standards are above average, and pupils achieve well.**
- **Teaching is very good.**
- Leadership is very good.
- Pupils - especially boys in Years 10 and 11 - have limited formal speaking skills.
- There is a need for an increased emphasis on reading for pleasure and for an enhancement of relevant resources.

#### Commentary

60. The standards in Year 9 and in Year 11 are above average. This judgement coincides with examination results, which show a general upward trend in line with the national pattern. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment about in line with national averages and, as a result of their own good motivation and the very good teaching they receive, the great majority achieve well - including those with special educational needs, or who are gifted or talented. Improvement has been good since the last inspection, principally in teaching, and almost all the lessons observed were good or very good. A highly effective feature of teachers' success is their collaborative style and their readiness to share their enthusiasm for their subject with their pupils: this results in highly positive outcomes in terms of both achievement and enjoyment. Curriculum leadership of very high quality is also a driving factor. The head of department sets out his expectations of his teachers clearly in his well-organised subject documentation and sets them a fine example in his own teaching. The teachers of the department are a strong and able team, who share a vision - focused upon excellence - in what they offer to pupils. Lessons are well planned and as a result they have pace and structure. Learning support assistants are not incorporated into this planning and, as a result, are not well used while the teacher occupies the attention of the whole class. However, half of the assistants were newly in post at the time of the inspection and systems for incorporating them into lessons had not been finalised.
60. Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 write well, and their presentation is often good. They read aloud competently, and listen carefully to their teachers and their peers. They respond to teachers' questions fluently, but they are not well skilled in formal speaking, and will present what they have to say in a confused way, often with many fillers. For example, a pupil intending to say "He was innocent", said "Well, he sort of like didn't do it like you know like". Nevertheless, many pupils are very sensitive to writing by other people, such as the many poems that appeared all over the school on National Poetry Day. This was a result of a close partnership between the English department, the librarian and the literacy co-ordinator. Greater advantage could be taken of pupils' capacity to read, with more positive measures to promote reading for pleasure.
61. Another factor in the very good quality of teaching and learning has been the National Literacy Strategy. Its influence now permeates teaching provision throughout the school. Teachers share their lesson aims with pupils, and they explain lesson structures, so that all can work together to achieve common objectives. At the ends of the lessons, however, the opportunity to share judgements about the quality of the learning is often missed, and this means that

pupils do not get the chance to evaluate how well they are progressing. Teachers try in their marking to be evaluative and to suggest ways of improvement, but systematic short-term target-setting is only now developing.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

62. Literacy is promoted well in subjects other than English, particularly in the other two subjects in the English faculty: drama and media studies, both of which extend pupils' understanding of how people communicate through speech and writing. The majority of subjects ensure that their own subject-specific vocabulary is well known and understood, and pupils are encouraged to write and speak in a variety of ways. In science, particularly lively and entertaining writing was seen in Year 10, where pupils wrote imaginatively about the passage of food through the digestive system - one, for example, about the journey of a breadcrumb, and another, about the voyage of a futuristic spacecraft! All members of staff have been trained in effective marking techniques, but some use them better than others. In some subjects, technical errors are not picked up.

### **French and German**

Provision in French and German is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement of pupils in French and German.
- Effective leadership and management.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Good behaviour of pupils and good relationships.
- Results from pupils' assessments not used by all teachers to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Many pupils not using French or German when asking questions or speaking in the classroom.

#### **Commentary**

63. All pupils study German in Year 9, most also study French. The large majority then chooses one or both languages in Year 10.

#### **French**

64. Standards in French have risen steadily over the last ten years and in 2002 were above average at the end of Year 11. Boys did better than boys in most schools and significantly more girls gained A\* to C grades than nationally. French also did relatively better than other subjects in the school. The provisional results for 2003 suggest that standards were higher than nationally, but the figures need to be confirmed.
65. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average, but many pupils enter with below average attainment and by the end of the year, have not made up the shortfall. Many pupils achieve very well to reach above average standards by the end of Year 11.
66. The inspection found that standards at the end of Year 9 are below average, but pupils achieve well. The achievement of many pupils throughout Years 10 and 11 is good, for many very good, and many reach above average standards. This is because of skilled teaching by staff with considerable expertise. Girls do better than boys in the examination; there are twice as many girls in the top set than boys, for example, but boys also do better than boys nationally. A few more able pupils and some in the middle ability range could do better. In some lessons, work does not challenge all pupils adequately which is one reason for this. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily and some achieve well. Pupils from cultures other than English achieve as well as their peers. Standards of listening and reading are higher than

in speaking and listening. Many pupils are reluctant to speak French in class so they do not become proficient in key phrases. This affects their ability to write as they do not have a wide repertoire of vocabulary. However, when they read and speak French, their accents are good.

## **German**

67. Standards of German have fluctuated over the past ten years and there is no discernable pattern. In 2002, standards were marginally higher than nationally, but there were far fewer higher grades than in most schools. More boys take German than in most schools and they do better than boys nationally, whereas girls did not do as well as girls nationally. Provisional results for 2003 suggest that standards were below average. There are two reasons for these differences; many more pupils take German in Years 10 and 11 than nationally and all pupils begin German in Year 9, so have three years of the course before taking the examination, instead of five. This also explains why standards at the end of Year 9 are below average.
68. The inspection found that standards are similar to the last two years and that achievement between Years 9 and 11 is generally good. Many boys enjoy the sound of the language, often relishing it as was seen when a boy greeted a teacher in German. As in French, the faculty has the benefit of male and female role models, all of whom are skilled teachers; this is the reason why achievement is good. There are some differences in achievement; sometimes more able pupils could do more, although this is not a consistent pattern across the faculty. As in French, standards of listening and reading are higher than in speaking and writing. The reasons are the same.

## **French and German**

69. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good or excellent. Subject expertise is very good and the teachers use it well to build up pupils' learning. All teachers encourage pupils to speak French or German in class by using the language themselves, spoken at normal speed, but with much repetition, especially for those who are slower to pick up the languages. This is why listening skills and the accents of pupils in both subjects are good. The faculty is working to improve pupils' use of languages in the lesson, appropriately starting with Year 9. Key phrases are displayed in classrooms for reference and sometimes in pupils' books. A few pupils, both boys and girls of higher and lower abilities, are willing to try to use the target language, but the majority do not. The faculty recognises that their efforts need to continue if standards of speaking and writing are to be even higher.
70. Relationships throughout the faculty are very good and so pupils are confident to try, even though they sometimes have to be pressed! A Year 10 boy was struggling to respond to a question in German and the sense of support from the class was palpable. Each teacher has their own style of managing behaviour, often based on humour, and all are highly successful. One of the keys to this is conveying a strong sense of caring for the pupils and wanting them to do well. As a result, behaviour of all classes is very good so that all can listen and learn. This is another reason why listening skills are good.
71. Pupils with special educational needs are taught effectively, so achieve well from their starting point. Pupils from cultural groups other than English achieve as well as their peers because of the ethos of the classrooms. The department is starting to set targets for pupils, based on information from assessment that has recently been collated. This is a relatively new venture for the faculty and staff know that more needs to be done, so that the progress of individual pupils can be monitored to ensure they are on track to attain the standards that are predicted for them.
72. The accommodation was being refurbished during the inspection and staff and pupils coped exceptionally well with workmen walking past their rooms on the scaffolding, and with limited access to the building and rooms. The way in which pupils entered the building was exemplary. Despite the problems caused by the work, the classrooms were made inviting with



display. In a Year 9 class, pupils were asked to add and subtract in German. A few pupils used the display for reference during the task which effectively consolidated their learning. Teachers take pupils to the ICT suite and the faculty has recently bought resources to extend the learning of pupils that are planned to be used when the building is complete. Pupils often use the word processor to present their work but otherwise, do not use much ICT to broaden their knowledge of the languages and cultures.

73. The faculty is looking to introduce ideas from the national Key Stage 3 initiative to raise standards in Year 9. Some ideas are already being used, such as telling pupils the focus of the lesson so they are clear about what they are expected to learn. This worked well, although sometimes the aims of the lesson are a list of activities, rather than what pupils should know at the end of the lesson.
74. Another reason for the good achievement in both subjects is the wide range of activities that take place in all the lessons, thoughtfully planned to extend and consolidate pupils' learning. Units of work ensure that listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught equally and reinforce each other. Time in the hour-long lessons is used well so that pupils remain motivated. Some of the resources are past their best, such as the dictionaries that pupils use and there are few reading books in the faculty or the library.
75. The features of good teaching are in all lessons; in some, many came together to create very good and excellent lessons. In one example, pupils in Year 10 were studying a unit describing a past holiday. The focus for the lesson was the perfect tense. The lesson began with a quick activity in which pupils were asked to use their knowledge of grammar to pick out errors in a number of phrases and sentences; this was challenging but every pupil wanted to have a go, some craning their necks to look more closely. One who got it wrong wanted to know exactly why and others asked questions, showing their eagerness to learn. The lesson continued with a range of stimulating activities, deeply involving all pupils at a level that challenged their different abilities. The teacher was explicit about how he would know when pupils met the aim of the lesson which successfully focused them on their learning. When a boy suggested that weather was *schade*, the teacher paused, reflected on the word so the class could see his thought processes, suggested that it was an interesting idea but maybe there were other words, and asked for other suggestions. This was excellent handling of an adolescent boy and a very good model of how adults need to think about language. When the pupils moved to the writing task, the teacher clearly and briskly went over the main points of grammar and spelling as a reminder. In this lesson, achievement was very high because all pupils were involved in challenging activities; the pace was brisk; pupils understood what they were expected to learn; the lesson was exceptionally well planned to take account of the different learning styles in the class and the teaching was lively and enthusiastic.
76. The faculty is well led and managed. As the staff are so experienced, the head of faculty has changed the way in which he monitors the work of colleagues from observation to discussing work with pupils. This is a good move, which although recent, gives good information about the progress of pupils. Taking this to the next stage, focusing monitoring on the priorities of the action plan would help to move the faculty forward. The action plan has come from a very good and perceptive audit of the faculty's work carried out by the staff. The current version would be more effective if it included details of how the priority is to be achieved, of success criteria, the timescale or who is responsible.
77. This is an effective faculty that is poised to become even more effective as systems of management are being refined to focus even more upon the progress of individual pupils and the standards that they attain.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average results in Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations
- Good teaching that develops good learning
- The positive, hard working attitudes of pupils to mathematics
- A highly committed and enthusiastic team of mutually supportive teachers

### Commentary

78. Pupils' standards when they enter the school are average. When compared to all schools and similar schools in the 2002 tests, results in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. This means that pupils make very good progress. This good rate of progress continues to GCSE level and all pupils who complete the course pass with a grade between A\* and G. The proportion who pass at the higher grades, A\* to C, is above average. There are more A\* and A grades, but fewer C grades, than might be expected. Recent analysis of results has highlighted this and the department is actively seeking ways to improve the results of pupils who ought to be attaining C grades but are not doing so. There are marginal differences between boys and girls. Pupils' current work reflects these high standards, with higher attaining pupils in Year 9 confidently analysing data and using their results to display their conclusions in a variety of ways. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 use a wide range of algebraic skills to form and solve linear and quadratic equations. Lower attaining pupils can be overly reliant on a calculator, even when their number skills are good.
79. These good results are a result of several factors. Teaching to all year groups is good, with some very good features. Teachers use the well-documented scheme of work to plan lessons well, so that there is a range of activities to enthuse pupils. The National Numeracy Strategy is firmly in place. All attainment targets receive appropriate coverage, although greater depth in using and applying mathematics would help pupils to develop further their capacity as independent learners. The three-part lesson is effective in strengthening number work, but teachers realise that the plenary sessions at the ends of lessons need further development. The best lessons have a brisk pace and continually challenge pupils to achieve well.
80. Teachers use an open questioning style, which is characterised by phrases such as "What do you notice?" or "Can you explain?" This encourages pupils to think and give reasons for their answers. In the best lessons, pupils participate well by working answers on the board for the rest of the class. Where seen, this was very effective as the response from the rest of the class was supportive and encouraging. When closed questions were used, the class was less inclined to respond or even to offer answers. Another factor is the pupils' response to good teaching they receive. Pupils arrive at lessons promptly, behave well and work hard. They annotate notes given by their teacher to confirm their own understanding and highlight important facts to help revision. Pupils co-operate well in lessons, they issue and collect equipment with minimal fuss and are mutually supportive in explaining work to their neighbour when required. Pupils' work is marked in accordance with the revised school policy and they receive written comments on their work and targets for improvement. Pupils respond well to this.
81. Underpinning and supporting this is a very effective head of department. He leads a mutually supportive, very committed team of enthusiastic teachers who all have a desire to progress and raise standards even further. The vision for improvement is encapsulated in the department development plan; this includes a development of the computer facilities that are at present missing from classrooms. There is some monitoring of teaching and learning and the effects of this enable teachers to share good practice. The classrooms are in a poor

decorative condition and are small for the size of the classes, restricting opportunities for practical work.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

82. **Pupils' competence in mathematics allows them to access the whole curriculum. A co-ordinator for mathematical skills across the curriculum has been appointed. There are variations in the application of number skills in other subjects. Many departments do not have a policy for the integration of number skills into their schemes of work, but there are some good examples. Good use, for example, of graphs, charts and diagrams in geography in both the main school and the sixth form, where pupils and students use spreadsheets well to collect and analyse data. Pupils also use these skills in design and technology, where accurate measurement - including work on tolerances - is taught. Pupils use formulae in information and communications technology when using spreadsheets and show good appreciation of the correct graph or chart for different situations.**

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement leading to good test and examination results.
- Good teacher knowledge.
- A good team of teachers with the will and capacity to improve.
- Co-operative pupils.
- Very good accommodation.
- Inconsistent methods of marking.
- Literacy and numeracy policies not yet in place.

#### **Commentary**

83. The ability of pupils entering Year 9 is broadly in line with that found nationally. By the end of the year, pupils' attainment is above that found nationally and above that of similar schools. There has been a rising year-on-year trend in science – always above national standards. Pupils are achieving well.
84. GCSE results in 2002 were well above national figures with twice as many pupils gaining A\*/A grades than seen nationally and almost all pupils gaining above E grade. Boys and girls attained equally well. Science achieves better results, overall, than many other subjects – including mathematics and English. School data indicate that pupils achieve just above expectations making good progress from Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress.
85. Pupils' work in Year 9 shows logical progression and some worksheets are used to help less able pupils to make progress. More able pupils showed good understanding of leaf structure, photosynthesis and how to test leaves for starch. Pupils showed skills in interpreting graphs of distance and time but some insecurity in use of units and basic mental arithmetic. Able pupils showed some lack of precision in the use of terms. It is important that teachers correctly use terms themselves and carefully correct pupils when their comments lack precision. In Years 10 and 11, pupils show an increasingly good grasp of scientific principles and their knowledge base is good. The higher attainers write and present their work particularly well.

86. The main reason for these good results is that teaching is good. Teachers have a good command of their subject and teaching techniques have improved as the Key Stage 3 science strategy is adopted. Some good examples of lively starter sessions were seen, for example; pupils were set time limits showing an awareness of pace and in several lessons teachers made good use of logical, progressive question techniques.
87. At GCSE level, very good teaching was seen in a lesson about digestion. A good range of teaching strategies was used (definition writing, card sorting, group discussion and mind mapping) each reinforcing and extending learning for pupils. As a result, they applied themselves unhesitatingly and enthusiastically to their work. In this lesson, pupils showed very good understanding of principles of digestion, being able to explain clearly the difference between the mode of action of bile and lipase. The work of lower attaining GCSE pupils shows logical teaching progression but some work is incomplete. Able pupils showed good understanding, reflecting good learning from good teaching. Some lesson planning resulted in fragmented lessons – too much material was planned for the lesson. This indicates a need for careful matching of learning objectives with both the prior knowledge and ability of pupils and the time available.
88. Another reason for the good achievement in science is the very good ethos for learning. The very positive attitude of pupils to their work, their teachers and to each other is strength of the school and the science department in particular. This supports the effective teaching and learning. Self motivation is high and, even where teaching is uninspiring, pupils comply with teacher instructions, showing a very good level of co-operation, respect for the school and self discipline.
89. Whilst approaches to literacy and numeracy have yet to be formulated into policies, the department is beginning to make use of key words. Outstanding creative writing was seen from higher attaining GCSE pupils about a journey through the digestive system. This work demonstrated top grade understanding of science, very good written communication skills and a lively sense of humour. The departmental approaches to numeracy require development. Some pupils show a lack of confidence in use of units, some approaches to graph drawing are prescriptive rather than thoughtful and some students show a tendency to rely on the use of calculators for basic calculations. Higher attaining pupils show well developed skills in the use and transposition of formulae – for example in the calculation of gravitational potential energy.
90. The use of information and communication technology is evident in lesson and poster work. Schemes of work are in place, but the identification of information and communication technology opportunities should be more prevalent than it is at present.
91. Overall the management of the science department is good. The science team is well motivated and has the capacity and will to improve on their already good position. Since the last inspection, progress has been good. Standards have risen consistently. Pupils still show good knowledge and understanding overall – especially the most able. In only one lesson observed was progress unsatisfactory and this was linked to unsatisfactory teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

**The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and there has been a good improvement since the last inspection. However, the improvement is very recent. There is a very effective development plan, incorporated in the successful bid for technology college status. Standards in ICT are good in discrete lessons and satisfactory when used in other curriculum areas.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Progress and achievement are good.
- Leadership and management are very good and show commitment to improvement.
- The attitudes and response of pupils are good, often very good.

- Teaching and learning are good overall and members of staff have good relationships with the pupils.
- There is very good technical support from the network manager.
- Teachers need to provide appropriate work in lessons for lower and higher attaining pupils.
- The development of ICT across the curriculum needs to be strengthened further.
- Examination courses are not available for all levels of ability.

## **Commentary**

92. Pupils in Year 9 are achieving above national expectations. The new scheme of work, based on the Key Stage 3 strategy, is very well planned. In addition, the school has provided the necessary resources and support for the two feeder middle schools, so that Years 7 and 8 will be following the same curriculum. This is an innovative measure, which should ensure that pupils enter the school with the skills necessary to follow the Year 9 programme successfully. Pupils have learned how to access the network with usernames and passwords and to find and save to their own folder. In a very good lesson, the enthusiasm of the teacher and the challenging material enabled pupils to identify and display information systems. They were able to complete a Gantt chart in a spreadsheet program and assess how well they had done with reference to a display on the interactive whiteboard.
93. Pupils in Year 10 who have just begun their GCSE course are making good progress, achieving above national expectations. They are very enthusiastic and work with concentration. Pupils in Year 11 who are taking the GNVQ (intermediate) course are making good progress overall. They are producing well-organised files, with work regularly annotated. All are able to apply their skills in word-processing, spreadsheets and databases and higher attaining pupils evaluate their work well, showing the effect of different types of presentation and an awareness of audience. Pupils are able to fill in their detailed portfolio checklist and know how to improve their work to obtain a merit or distinction. Pupils in both years respond to the very good relationships with staff and achieve well. They are able to work independently. However, pupils who are not following an examination course are at present only having access to ICT in other subject areas and the school needs to ensure that they are receiving their full entitlement. Pupils in all year groups are enthusiastic about ICT and appreciate the open access to computers during most lunchtimes.
94. It is the leadership and management of ICT and the good quality of the teaching that is bringing about these good results. The leadership and management are very good and the co-ordinator has a clear vision of improvements necessary. In this, he is well supported by senior management. Innovative new assessment procedures have been introduced, but as yet, the data provided has not been used to ensure that work is planned for all levels of ability. However, on-going assessment takes place in lessons and pupils in Years 10 and 11 know the examination criteria. One Year 11 pupil could point out what he needed to do to achieve a distinction in GNVQ.
95. The school has employed a network manager who has made extensive improvements to the school's networking, which is now running more efficiently and reliably and is enabling ICT to be taught more effectively. The new ICT facilities will soon be available and the improvements in the curriculum are becoming more embedded. Teaching is good overall with very well planned lessons, very good individual support given to pupils and tasks are challenging. Pupils are generally managed very well and attitudes are very good. These facts, together with the higher status of ICT within the school and the commitment to funding will result in it being an improving subject.

## **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

96. The use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. In some subjects, such as design and technology (DT), physical education (PE) and geography, ICT is used well. For example, in

DT there is good use of design based software and the Internet for research and the department fulfils the requirements of the programme of study in the use of control technology. The use of computers is built into the schemes of work and lesson plans. Tables, charts and graphs are used in food technology to present information and computer controlled sewing machines are used in textiles. The contribution of ICT is good in PE, where videos in lessons are used for self-evaluation of performance. In science, there is limited use of data loggers and sensors, but this should improve when the new science-dedicated computer suite is in use. Pupils use spreadsheets in mathematics and a number of departments use the Internet for research and some teachers are using presentation software effectively in lessons.

97. ICT is used insufficiently in a significant number of subjects of the curriculum, partly because building work was incomplete at the time of the inspection. Many members of staff are eager to use the ICT facilities, but find that access can be difficult. In some subjects, such as English and history, the use of computers is limited to basic word processing to copy out the final draft of work. There is little use of graphic software in art and although the use of information technology in music has improved, there are insufficient resources to allow it to become an integral part of the music lesson. The ICT department is currently encouraging other subject areas to build up a resource base that pupils can access on the school network. This, together with the new ICT suites will improve access by giving other departments the opportunity to use ICT to enrich pupils' learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment are above average because most pupils achieve well
- Good standards of teaching lead to good learning
- Very good assessment procedures, particularly in Year 9, enable pupils to take control of their own learning
- Very good pupil attitudes lead to a good atmosphere for learning
- Leadership and management are very good

#### **Commentary**

98. Standards of attainment are above average in all year groups and pupils achieve well, making good progress.
99. In 2002 GCSE results at all levels were above the national average, and were significantly above the results in other subjects in the school. Results fell slightly in 2003, but two pupils were amongst the highest 10 per cent in the country. Girls' results are consistently higher than boys'. Work seen during the inspection suggests above average standards of attainment and good achievement. By the end of Year 11, pupils can work independently and have developed good enquiry skills.
100. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with national expectations. The trend is one of improvement in 2003. The gap between girls' and boys' results has narrowed in 2003. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average overall, which represents good achievement. Year 9 pupils have good investigational skills that enable them to prepare and present enquiries at a range of levels. For example, lower attaining pupils could describe the effects of volcanoes; the higher attaining pupils could explain the reasons behind these effects and some were able to use a range of examples world-wide to support their assertions.
101. Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are good – across all years - with no unsatisfactory lessons observed. The teachers are experienced, skilful and dedicated. The

best lessons seen were based on skilled questioning and exposition that made the best possible use of pupils' own experiences and encouraged them to think for themselves about, for example, the relationships between flooding and human influences on the landscape. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will achieve well and they assess learning effectively through plenary questioning and through regular assessment projects based on National Curriculum levels. Year 9 pupils can take control of their own progress because they know the criteria for moving from one level to the next and can apply these to their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good; disruption is rarely attempted and never tolerated. In some lessons there was a tendency for the teacher to talk for too long, giving the pupils too little time to work. However, teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the good use of information and communication technology is a regular feature of their work.

102. The leadership and management of the department are very good and have made a significant contribution to the good standards and the improvements that have taken place. New curriculum arrangements that provide both a short course and a full course at GCSE are soon to be reviewed to determine whether the short course will detract from overall performance at GCSE because it does not allow sufficient time for pupils to develop high level skills. Improvement since the previous report has been good.

### Religious education

Provision in Religious education is **unsatisfactory**, but is improving under the guidance of the head of faculty.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some lessons make a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
  - Standards are below those expected by the local agreed syllabus.
  - Whilst individual lessons are sometimes good, or very good, the programme of lessons fails to ensure satisfactory learning and progress.
  - Assessment is not used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
  - Planning has serious deficiencies and does not provide for the learning needs of all pupils.
103. Attainment on entry is well below average. Pupils arrive from their middle schools having varied experiences of religious education. Many of these pupils can name several religions they have studied but their knowledge and understanding are sketchy and when questioned they are unable, for example, to match religions with the names of their places of worship. Because of timetable constraints, it was not possible to see any Year 9 lessons during the inspection and because it was early in the school year there was little work to look at in Year 9 books. It was therefore impossible to make a judgement about the quality of learning of these pupils.
104. Pupils in Year 11 in 2002 / 2003 followed a GCSE short course in religious education. Achievement is satisfactory from their levels of attainment on entry to the school, but they were below the national average. Nationally, 51 per cent of pupils entered for this examination obtained grades A\* to C. At this school, 45 per cent of pupils entered obtained these higher grades, although the total entry was high compared with many other secondary schools.
105. Lessons and work seen during the inspection suggest that the results of pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 are likely to be below average overall, without significant changes being made to teaching methods to make the work both more interesting and more relevant to the lives of pupils.
106. Teaching was satisfactory overall. Some good and very good teaching and learning was seen in individual lessons. In these lessons the teaching was making an important contribution to pupils' personal development, but these were lessons where the specifically religious component was not highlighted. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, teaching did not engage

pupils' interest or provide them with meaningful and interesting activities, or account for their individual learning needs.

107. There are weaknesses in planning and assessment in all year groups. As the school has identified, poor use of assessment means that some pupils have little understanding of the standard of their work or what they need to do to improve. Written work is generally of an unsatisfactory quality both in content and presentation. Too much work seen had been copied, whilst other work consisted of either short answers to simple questions or unsupported statements of opinion. Very little opportunity is given for extended writing. Marking often ignores failures to write in complete sentences and this is particularly problematic for pupils preparing for examinations, some of whose work is unusable for revision purposes.
108. In most lessons pupils are well behaved and many have a good attitude to the subject. Several said that they enjoyed some of the topics studied and the opportunities lessons provide to discuss important contemporary issues.
109. Leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The head of department has succeeded in making progress in some areas since his appointment. There has been progress on several of the key issues highlighted by the previous inspection report. However, there is more to do before progress since the last inspection report is satisfactory.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**. Good teaching and a willingness to learn enable pupils to achieve well and reach good standards.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards
- The good progress they make is the result of good, sometimes very good, teaching
- Pupils produce extended written work of a good quality
- Leadership of the subject is very good
- The pupils' access to information and communication technology, both to research and present historical facts and opinions, is too restricted

### Commentary

110. Teachers' assessments indicate that pupils' standards are above average at the end of Year 9. Pupils' written work, for instance in their understanding of the growth of population and industrialisation in nineteenth-century Britain, suggests that more able pupils are well above average. Overall, standards seen were above average but close to being well above. Girls and boys perform equally well at this age.
111. By the age of sixteen, pupils reach good standards. The school has produced a long-term analysis of GCSE results in history, which shows clearly that its results have improved significantly faster than those for pupils nationally. The impact of the recent decline in pupils taking the full course, and the corresponding rise in entries for the short course needs to be monitored. Pupils' written work demonstrates that they use and interpret source material to a good standard, and arrive at balanced judgements of historical events. They understand how there can be different perspectives on the same event, as evidenced by the German attitude to the Treaty of Versailles. The syllabus studied, which focuses very strongly on modern international relations and in particular the major twentieth century conflicts, captures the interest of some boys more than of girls. Pupils study history in a strong context of moral and social values. Their work on the Slave Trade, for example, shows a clear moral sense of how degrading it was, both to the slaves and to the traders. Similarly, they study the First World War and, through its art and poetry, they appreciate its effect on people's lives and feelings.
112. Pupils produce extended written work of a good quality, and in a variety of styles. Their writing, as well as extending and demonstrating their historical understanding, makes a very good contribution to the development of their literacy skills. Similarly, group discussion in lessons shows how well pupils can debate and argue points of view constructively. Their use of information and communication technology, both to research and present historical facts and opinions, is restricted by the current problems with



access to information and communication technology equipment. The completion of new building work, leading to improved information and communication technology facilities, should rectify this.

113. Pupils' good achievements in history are mainly the result of good, and in some cases very good, teaching. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and pupils are challenged to think critically, for instance in their understanding of the reasons for the American withdrawal from Vietnam. Computer presentations such as that used to illustrate the Berlin Blockade make a powerful impact, and in the same lesson video was used very effectively in short sections to reinforce learning points. In a lesson on the conditions on slave ships on the Middle Passage, the teacher made very good use of discussion in groups according to ability to encourage pupils' understanding. Less able pupils in this lesson benefited from support from a well-prepared teaching assistant. In some lessons, pupils with special educational needs use simplified text sheets that help them to follow the lesson. Pupils are shown how to improve by well-judged teacher comments on their written work.
114. The quality of teaching in the history department is the result of very good leadership. Support for non-specialist colleagues is strong, and pupils' achievements are systematically assessed and analysed in detail as part of the planning process. There is a strong focus in the work of the department on continually improving standards, for instance in ensuring that fieldwork activities are thoughtfully planned to achieve the maximum impact.
115. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in its provision for history. Results have steadily improved over the last six years, and the range of teaching activities has been broadened so as to increase the active participation of pupils. In particular, pupils are encouraged to discuss ideas and the range of oral work has improved.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well, reaching above average standards.
- The good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning.
- Teaching and learning is good.
- New technology for design and manufacturing is well used.
- The work set is not always appropriate for all.
- The attainment of boys is lower than that of girls.
- The use of assessment to help pupils to improve their work is underdeveloped in Year 9.

## Commentary

116. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show that pupils' performance was above average. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were above average when compared to the national standard. Girls performed much better than boys and better than the national average. The results in textiles were much higher than the results in other aspects of the subject. There has been a significant increase in results for 2003.
117. In work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards of work at the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils join the school with below average levels of attainment in the subject. They make very good progress. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 they have knowledge of the essential nutritional value of foods and can cook simple dishes. Pupils have developed skills to cut, shape and join so that they can make a range of articles in different materials, including wood, metal and plastic. All pupils are introduced to the techniques of drawing so that they can communicate their design ideas, but many boys lack the necessary skills to attain higher levels in their design work. Pupils have good making skills. Girls better understand the process of design. In lessons, teachers provide planned opportunities for all pupils to reach higher levels expected by the National Curriculum. The highest attaining pupils produce articles of good quality and express their ideas well. Lower attaining pupils, mainly boys, can make items of acceptable quality but lack the ability to communicate their ideas clearly.
118. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average. Standards are very high in textiles but lower in resistant materials. Pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. They can specify a design brief and develop and express their ideas in a way that results in a finished product in their chosen subject. Pupils of all levels of attainment manufacture products. Pupils are capable of high quality work, as can be seen, for example, in the detailed and well-presented design folders of higher attaining pupils in graphics and textiles. Where pupils use information and communication technology, their quality of work is improved. Pupils are helped and challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, pupils understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades.
119. Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and this generally leads to good learning. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are interested and involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding. The objectives are shared with the pupils in good introductions to lessons, which help and motivate pupils to learn, and plenary sessions are used to prepare pupils for the next lesson. The teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engages the vast majority of pupils and relationships are good, leading to pupils working hard within a good learning ethos. There is an emphasis on literacy skills and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their own vocabulary. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs, and are aware of targets in individual education plans. Teachers' work is made more effective by very good technician support.
120. Pupils work is marked regularly and teachers generally provide encouraging and motivating comments. In Year 11 the quality marking provides a commentary that shows pupils how to improve their work.
121. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has established a clear direction for development and a programme for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. The assessment system is used well to make predictions of grades at GCSE, but the process used for assessment of pupils' attainment at age 14 is not rigorous enough - assessment results are not used effectively in planning or teaching to ensure that all pupils are set appropriate work. There have been good improvements since the last inspection.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

## Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to above average standards of work
- The use of display in classrooms inspires and celebrates achievement
- Links to mainstream and world art are especially strong in the GCSE course
- Aspects of the curriculum concerned with three dimensional art, ceramics and print-making require further development
- Information and communication technology is underused in the department.

### Commentary

122. **Attainment at the beginning of Year 9 is above the national average, with girls performing better than boys. By the end of Year 9, assessment records show that standards are consistently above the national average. Examination results at GCSE level have been steadily and significantly improving since 1993. The proportion gaining grades A\*/C was above the national average in 2002, and has significantly improved in 2003. The results from girls are well above the national average and the difference between boys' and girls' grades is wider than nationally.**
123. Standards seen in lessons and work seen was at the national average in Year 9, but likely to be above average at the end of the year because the pupils are achieving well, making good progress. Standards are above average in Years 10 and 11. Work on display and in sketch books often shows attention to detail and fluency in the application of skills. Work is firmly based on direct observational drawing, and a good range of media are in use. Girls show better use of sketch books and their attention to detail is an important factor in their success.
124. Achievement is good at all levels. Girls are better at using teacher and self assessment within lessons to refine their work, and this inevitably leads to the raising of the quality of work in progress.
125. Teaching and learning are both very good at all levels, based on very good relationships where pupils feel secure enough to take risks. The teachers' expertise and enthusiasm are clear, and linked to appropriate skill development. Planning, preparation and target setting are all very good and links to National Curriculum and GCSE criteria are clear. There is a good assessment system, which includes pupil self-assessment. The pupils who take the most note of their teachers' comments are making the best progress, these pupils – mainly girls - are learning particularly well because they are constantly refining their skills.
126. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is managed jointly with the middle schools and is broad and balanced. However lack of space inhibits large scale three-dimensional work and print making and there is little use of information and communication technology. Links to mainstream and world art are very good - especially in Years 10 and 11. Display is used well both to celebrate success and to inspire others.
127. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Examination results show consistent improvement and some issues have been addressed. However, boys still attain at a lower level than girls at all stages and the use of information and communication technology is still underdeveloped.

## Music

Provision in music is now **satisfactory**, having been unsatisfactory in previous years.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm of the new head of department and his assistant is improving the work of the department.
- The teachers' very good knowledge and good or better standard of teaching are helping to raise achievement.
- The growth in numbers of pupils taking instrumental lessons and the growth of extra-curricular activities show growing enthusiasm for the subject.
- There is a lack of assessment data from previous years.
- There is insufficient access to information and communication technology, which is having an impact on standards.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation and resources limit achievement.

128. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well above the national average. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below those of the previous year for pupils achieving A\*-C grades, but all pupils achieved A\*-G grades.
129. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average overall. The majority of pupils enter the school in Year 9 with varying degrees of musical experiences, depending on the strengths of their previous teachers. Consequently standards at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement in most aspects of the subject. The pupils did not receive sufficient opportunities to compose in earlier years. The lack of work with computers, both prior to coming to this school and in Year 9 itself, is having an impact on the achievements of many of the musically less able pupils, especially if they decide to take GCSE.
130. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are at present below average. They are better in Year 10 where the pupils' positive attitudes are helping them to overcome the disadvantage of making up time. Year 10 pupils did not cover some aspects of the course that should have been included in Year 9 - for example, structured composition work and the use of information and communication technology. Written work from last year is mostly unmarked, and a large proportion of it is incomplete. No evidence of pupils' compositions is available and there are no assessment results apart from the teachers' assessments for the end of the year. In Year 11, there is very little work or marks from the previous year and consequently many pupils are behind with their course work. Many Year 11 pupils do not display the motivation apparent in Year 10 and their lack of skills, which should have been developed in Year 9, is having a severe effect on their ability to produce work of the required standard. The teachers, newly appointed, are currently working hard to remedy this deficit.
131. Teaching overall is good. In some lessons it is very good. Both teachers, who have joined the school staff this term, have a very good knowledge of the subject and use it well to enable the pupils to discover their own learning. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and resourced to cater for pupils of all musical abilities. This is particularly the case with pupils with special educational needs, who are taught in the same classes as the remainder of their forms, and very often make good progress. More specific challenge is required in class for the more musically able. Very good use is made of time in all lessons and learning is continually reinforced by good use of questioning. This would be more effective if responses were expected from all the class rather than, in the case of Year 11, from the few who put their hands up. Further opportunities for the more musically able are offered in the form of instrumental tuition provided by a group of external teachers from both Dorset Music Service and the private sector. The quality of lessons provided is inconsistent. Some teachers motivate the pupils and students to achieve beyond expectations, but this is not true of all. Homework is successfully used to develop pupils' research skills and give them responsibility for furthering their own knowledge. Continuous assessment alongside helpful comments and

appropriate encouragement and praise feature in all lessons and make an important contribution to pupils' progress.

132. **Leadership and management are already satisfactory, after a very short time in post, and are improving rapidly. Since the last inspection there have been two changes in head of department. Consequently few of the issues from the last two inspections have been addressed. This situation is now being rectified by the present head of department, who, assisted by an experienced part-time teacher, has already started to bring the department into order. Regular formal assessment is taking place and a new curriculum is beginning to emerge. However for the assessment to enable teachers to monitor pupils' progress, set targets and influence curriculum planning, firm starting points still need to be established at the beginning of Year 9 to allow progress to be tracked. The department is making a good contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.**
133. The accommodation available for music is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient practice rooms and when instrumental lessons are taking place, the results filter into the main classroom. The main teaching room is in need of decoration and new displays. Present resources are unsatisfactory as there are insufficient computers to enable information and communication technology to become an integral part of the Year 9 music curriculum. These issues are being addressed as the new building and the increased resourcing of the school begins to take effect.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average in Year 11.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 9 to 11.
- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership is very good.
- Opportunities to share with pupils evaluations of their achievements are sometimes missed.
- There is a need for a focus on formal speaking in Years 10 and 11.

## **Commentary**

134. In Year 9, pupils are new to the school, and do not yet understand that drama is a serious subject, with its own skills, conventions and body of knowledge. Nevertheless, their own basically good motivation and the expectations implicit in the school's ethos ensured a positive response to the teaching. In a well-directed lesson about mime, pupils were observed performing at levels which were already in line with expectations. This steep curve of progress continues in Years 10 and 11, when the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE is well above the national average. Standards are average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11.
135. Very good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well, and build upon that achievement both over time and in lessons. This includes students with special educational needs, who are enabled to make similar progress with their peers because teachers provide them with the right opportunities. Subject leadership is very good, and very good schemes of work are in place. As a result, lessons are varied, well structured, and packed with activities, so much so that there sometimes is not time for the shared evaluation that would consolidate and enhance learning. While standards of acting and interpretation are high, pupils still need to learn some of the conventions of formal speaking.

136. Drama provides a very good additional enrichment to the school's curriculum - and particularly to the pupils' personal, social and moral development - through its focus upon interactions between people and the collaboration which is part of every lesson.

### **Media studies**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils do not routinely share in evaluations of the quality of their learning.

#### **Commentary**

137. Pupils are very positive in their attitudes to media studies. This new approach to aspects of the world which surrounds them is very engaging, and it is well promoted by the very good teaching which provides pupils with a clear framework and criteria against which to analyse and evaluate many aspects of the media. The result is standards well above average. In Year 10, although they had only recently started a new course, pupils were observed analysing posters skilfully and carefully. By Year 11, studies are quite sophisticated, and pupils handle a wide variety of daily newspapers knowledgeably and with the right degree of scepticism. They support their judgements with well ordered, clear arguments. However, pupils do not routinely share in evaluations of the quality of their learning.

138. The very good teaching follows a clear scheme of work that gives coherence to what pupils do, and develops a pattern of progressive improvement. Resources are used particularly well, so that each medium studied receives the right focus in vision and in sound as well as in written material. Teaching is by members of the English department, and the good principles and practices established there are also to be seen in media studies. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is well supported as they explore the contemporary significance of the media upon all our lives.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education (PE) is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good.
- Good relationships help to create a good ethos for learning.
- There is very good accommodation for physical education lessons.
- There is a need to develop programmes of study to show progression for pupils of different abilities.
- The time devoted to physical education is below national recommendations.
- There are some aspects of management that need to develop further.

#### **Commentary**

139. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, and standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Pupils develop their skills satisfactorily, but although they do evaluate performance, the depth of analysis requires development. Teacher assessments indicate that standards are

improving over time. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 11 their standards remain overall in line with national expectations. Good teaching and the very effective use of teacher interventions help to ensure that this includes those pupils with special educational needs. Year 11 observations show a significant number of pupils having below average knowledge about tactics and the use of space in games such as badminton and football. Generally pupils' attitudes are good, although there is some resistance to physical education amongst older girls, of which the PE teachers are aware.

140. 2002 GCSE results show that the majority of pupils reach standards typical of those nationally, and achieve satisfactorily. 2003 GCSE results indicate that the standards have fallen at the higher grades. The subject has identified, and inspection confirms, that pupils achieve better in practical activities than in theory. Good, new teaching booklets have been introduced to address this and underachieving pupils have additional support.
141. Overall the quality of teaching is good, with a wide spread from excellent to satisfactory teaching. In the best lessons strong subject knowledge enables teachers to design a good variety of activities that motivate and constantly challenge pupils. Relationships are good. Pupils work well together and are confident enough to make valuable contributions. Some inconsistencies exist, for not all lessons start with a clear focus, or have a sense of urgency and rigour. Planning work for pupils of different attainment levels is inconsistently carried out, and the setting of short-term targets for pupils requires further development.
142. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. There is a shared vision for the subject, and satisfactory development plans reflect this. The on-site leisure centre provides very good facilities and is at the core of good links with the community. However there are some unsatisfactory aspects to management. The head of subject, being the only full time member of the department has little opportunity to delegate and carry out the necessary strategic planning for the subject. Programmes of study need to show more clearly the progression of skills and knowledge for pupils of different attainment levels. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. A good well-planned curriculum, ensuring a smooth transition from the middle school is now in place. The school has yet to address the issue of curriculum time which remains below the national recommendation of two hours a week, and which limits the depth of curriculum that can be taught.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

The provision in business studies is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good, sometimes very good, teaching.
- High standards are being attained.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to the subject.

### **Commentary**

143. It was only possible to sample the provision for business studies. Results in the GCSE examination in 2002 were significantly above the average nationally. There was a high entry for a small school - 49 pupils. Over 70 per cent of these gained a grade between A\* and C, compared with only 54 per cent nationally. It was a very successful subject. Overall, the pupils who took it did better in business studies than in the other subjects that they took. The results for 2003 were similarly impressive, although national comparison figures were not available at the time of the writing of this report.

144. **Pupils take their work in the subject very seriously and work conscientiously. Teaching is good, sometimes very good and it is this fact combined with the pupils' very good attitudes that explain the good results. Teachers focus well on the skills and knowledge that pupils need to succeed in the examination and pupils follow their advice carefully and thoroughly. The subject is led well and both resources and accommodation are good.**

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The well-established citizenship days provided for pupils in Year 9 are well-organised, effective and popular.
- The science department contributes well to the citizenship course.
- In a design and technology unit of work, pupils thoroughly research the work of a charity before designing and making an artefact for that charity.
- Good opportunities are provided for some pupils to have experience of negotiation and decision-making prior to participation in a wide range of community activities.
- The school's citizenship work is well led and managed.
  
- Some departments have failed to realise that their contributions to citizenship education require them to re-focus some of their usual work so that citizenship objectives are highlighted.
- There needs to be further development of opportunities for participation in community activity to ensure that every pupil has such experiences at least twice during his / her school career (this will involve negotiation with local middle schools).
- Assessment is still at an early stage of development.

#### **Commentary**

145. The current Year 9 pupils are awaiting their portfolios of citizenship work to be forwarded from middle schools. It is planned that these will be kept by tutors and pupils will add to them citizenship work completed in this and future years. This portfolio will become central to the school's assessment of pupils' achievement in their citizenship work.
146. As yet there has been no formal assessment of the work of pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, on the basis of work seen, and discussions with pupils during the inspection, it is judged that standards in citizenship are satisfactory. Many pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about political parties and the criminal justice system. Other pupils can describe work that involved the acquisition of skills of enquiry and communication about the work of a national or international charity. Many pupils have benefited from such community activities as performing a play in a first school or participating in charitable events. The last school drama production involved nearly one hundred and fifty pupils and it was so organised as to maximise pupils' opportunities to contribute. Significant numbers of Sixth Form students are involved with the LEPRA charity.
147. The subject is taught through a wide variety of subject areas. Discrete citizenship units have been added to the school's personal, social and religious education work to ensure coverage of all the areas of the knowledge and understanding possessed by informed citizens. Further work is done in tutor-time. This is less successful as pupils are sometimes left to learn through worksheets that teachers do not always have time to go through or explain fully.



148. Pupils develop skills of enquiry and communication in many areas of school life, including the preparation and delivery of assemblies. The work experience programme makes a valuable contribution. Pupils are required to research areas of work that they might wish to seek placements in, before producing letters to employers explaining the purposes of work-experience and asking to be offered placements. Some departments, however, have not realised that to count as contributing to the citizenship programme the skills of enquiry and communication need to be developed in the context of gaining the knowledge and understanding expected of informed citizens.
149. Developing the skills of participation and responsible action in school and community life are generally well provided for. However, because the provision is sometimes dependent on the subject options chosen, or the extra-curricular activities pursued, it is possible that at the moment not all pupils have similar high quality opportunities for such experiences and this is something for the school to address.
150. The school's citizenship work is led by the school librarian. Whilst unusual, this works well, with definite advantages deriving from her ability to be more flexible with her time when liaising with outside agencies than would be possible for a teacher with classroom responsibilities. Also, as the librarian she has a good over-view of the work of the different departments in the school. Given the good level of support she enjoys from the school's senior management team, which has taken on the job of monitoring the classroom delivery of citizenship lessons, the current arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject are a strength.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	11	63.6	74.2	0	34.3	17.3	31.3
Business studies	5	100	89.1	0	31.7	34.0	35.4

### *Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Information technology VQ	15	93.3	87.4	0	24.5	54.5	64.3
Art and design	9	100	96.1	30.0	48.7	71.1	85.1
Biology	10	100	91.6	30.0	36.3	74.0	74.1
Chemistry	8	87.5	94.0	37.5	45.9	70.0	81.1
English literature	8	100	98.5	50.0	43.7	90.0	84.3
Design and technology	8	100	95.3	87.5	35.5	100	76.5
Geography	9	100	97.1	22.2	40.5	77.8	80.9
History	9	100	97.1	44.4	41.0	80.0	81.2

Mathematics	11	63.6	93.3	27.3	52.2	54.5	84.7
Physics	8	100	92.8	12.3	42.8	72.5	78.6
Total	101	94.1	94.8	38.6	39.4	78.0	78.6

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above to well above average and improving.
- Students are well motivated and achieve well.
- Teaching is very good, and promotes effective learning.

#### Commentary

151. The majority of students take the AS and A level courses in English, while a smaller proportion take the English literature course. All make good progress, and by the end of Year 13, results in English literature are above average and in English well above.
152. Textual work on both courses is particularly good, with students showing a mature and sensitive understanding of authors' intentions, critical appreciation of a rich range of writing and a good understanding of how language may carry meaning. Teachers lead students through texts particularly well, very effectively drawing upon other aspects of our culture. Whether or not the lesson is designated language or literature, no opportunity is lost to enrich understanding and to broaden horizons. An outstanding example was seen in a Year 12 lesson, which sought to show students how artists communicate through symbols. It sampled a very wide range of symbols, from road traffic and map signs to the enormous complexity of Holbein's *Ambassadors*, viewed and analysed in depth.
153. Students work hard, showing increasing understanding of the demands made upon them. They learn how to balance analysis and response, and become more confident and independent in their learning, as a result of well-structured and lively teaching, which provides them with the necessary skills. Much more than this, however, the collaborative style of teachers means that each lesson is a shared and mutually enjoyed experience. Marking is very good. It is painstaking and detailed, even with larger than usual numbers of students, and always incorporates good advice and suggestions for development.

#### Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. **Language and literacy across the curriculum are promoted well, largely through the very good Key Skills courses. These are taken very seriously by the school and the students. The quality of teaching is good to very good and students' attitudes are very good. Literacy skills are reinforced in subjects, with teachers taking pains to develop the correct subject specific vocabulary. Written work is carefully marked, again paying due attention to spelling and grammatical errors where these occur.**

### French

Provision in French is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good knowledge of their subject and considerable expertise.

- Students are motivated and work hard.
- Higher attaining students achieve well.
- The recruitment of students is low.
- More targeted support is needed for lower attaining students.
- There is a need to encourage more spontaneous use of spoken French.

### **Commentary**

155. On the basis of relatively small cohorts studying French in the Sixth Form in recent years, attainment at AS and A levels has overall been in line with expectations. In 2003 the only A level candidate obtained a grade C. In Year 12 all 6 students gained a pass at AS level with three students gaining A-B grades. Most of the Year 12 students decided to continue with French into Year 13.
156. Standards seen in lessons were good, with students generally making sound progress as a consequence of good teaching. Teachers use French for all aspects of the lesson and listening skills are well developed. Students understand instructions given in French and Year 13 students demonstrated they could follow and respond to grammatical explanations concerning use of the subjunctive. Students prepare homework tasks thoroughly and in Year 13 some were able to give class presentations on a recent controversial case in France concerning euthanasia confidently and clearly using specialist vocabulary and a range of tenses. Lower attaining students tended to rely more on their prepared notes. Students in Year 12 were able to talk readily about role-plays which they were preparing for a debate concerning a drug rehabilitation centre, but some were less confident answering unexpected questions about their own attitudes and later in discussing aspects of their course. There were some interesting examples of creative, imaginative extended writing - such as poems written at the end of Year 12 in the style of Jacques Prévert, showing a feeling for language and a sense of rhythm. In Year 13, students discussed perceptively family relationships in the book they were studying *Des Cornichons au Chocolat*, written by a French teenager. In the diaries that students had prepared as a parallel exercise, the highest attaining students were able to write sensitively and fluently using a range of tenses of their own feelings and experiences. Lower attaining students wrote shorter pieces, using basic language referring to past events, but made more errors of tense and agreements. Year 12 students showed that they were able to identify key information and understood the relevant vocabulary in written texts on prepared topics. Since the last inspection, more opportunities have been taken to develop independent learning skills. Year 13 students enrich their knowledge by visiting French websites on the Internet to help in their preparation of topics.
157. Teaching is consistently good and promotes good learning. Lessons are very well prepared, with a suitable variety of activities engaging the attention of the learners. All teachers have good subject knowledge and present a good model of French. The relaxed atmosphere apparent in most classes creates an ambience where students feel confident to ask for help when necessary. Teachers know their students well, respond warmly to them and in both Year 12 and 13 adjust questions to the level of each student - enabling all to participate. Sometimes, however, lower attaining students would benefit from more targeted support in their preparation of written and oral activities. In the best lessons, the work was made relevant to students' personal interests. Work is thoroughly marked and students are made aware of what they must do to improve. There was little evidence, however, of redrafting. This was criticised in the last report.
158. Students respond to the high expectations of their teachers by showing positive attitudes and carefully preparing set work. They discuss socio-cultural topics in a mature manner, carry out peer assessment attentively and work co-operatively together, although they still tend to speak in English to each other rather than French. Many students show enthusiasm for their work and are willing to persevere even when a task is difficult. Some students in Year 12 said they felt least confident in oral work, but believed that they were improving.

159. The department is effectively managed. Assessment is regularly carried out and the subject is taught in a positive atmosphere. Teachers work together well and individual lessons are carefully planned, but the scheme of work for the department lacks any detail and would not provide sufficient guidance to new teachers. Book resources in the library to help with research projects have been extended but are still limited. Timetabled lesson time available in Year 12 is relatively low, limiting opportunities for further development of speaking skills.
160. Since the last inspection students now take more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies, but there is still scope for the development of the spontaneous use of French.
161. In 2002 two Year 13 students completed a week's work experience in France and two of the current Year 13 visited the European Commission in Brussels, one already having done work experience in Brussels.

## **MATHEMATICS**

### **Sixth Form mathematics**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very knowledgeable teachers teach well.
- The positive attitudes of students to the subject helps them to achieve well.

#### **Commentary**

162. The standards in Advanced Level examinations have varied over recent years. Only a few students have completed the course and therefore comparisons with national figures are not relevant. To start the course, students have to gain a GCSE grade in the range A\*-B at higher level. Students who start with less than this generally only complete one year as the demands of the full course are very high. Achievement is satisfactory. The final levels they reach are in line with the expectations of students with similar entry levels. The modules studied are suitable for students' needs; typically, students who study physics follow the mechanics option. The most able students also study further mathematics. There is a numeracy course for all students, as part of the Key Skills programme. Students' standards on this course are in line with requirements and they achieve well as they apply their knowledge to different projects.
163. Teaching is good with some very good features. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to explain the topics covered in detail, building upon prior understanding. Lessons have good pace but there is ample time for reflection and discussion. In one lesson, there was constant revision of GCSE algebra during development to more advanced topics in co-ordinate geometry. Students appreciate the different, informal approach of their teachers and do not take advantage of this informality. They concentrate well and work hard. Students are mutually supportive and readily discuss their work with each other and their teachers. Because mathematics is a difficult subject at this level, students take the opportunity to attend short lunchtime groups and a timetabled support lesson if they require additional help.
164. At present, there is a lack in students' development for personal study in mathematics, especially in the use of computers for investigation and analysing data. The departmental development plan recognises that this is an area for development when all the other current building changes in the school are complete.
165. The leadership and management are good and there is much reflection on the curriculum to seek ways to improve standards further. The present course is suited to students' needs - offering a range of modules for study. This adds interest and motivation, because teachers

are also working with their own interests and experience. There is a suggestion under consideration to initiate an induction course to consolidate prior knowledge and understanding of students who wish to start the A level course. Apart from the lack of computers, resources are sufficient for the modules studied.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

166. **Students are generally competent in mathematics and they are numerate. In the main, this allows them to access the whole curriculum. There are variations in the application of number skills in other subjects. Most pay due regard to them, but in science there are occasions when achievement is affected by a lack of mathematical skills. There is a good Key Skills course in numeracy that almost all students attend and this is raising their confidence and their levels of skill. Sixth Form students are involved in the UK Maths Challenge and in events organised by the local pyramid of schools.**

## SCIENCE

**All three sciences are taught. There was an inspection focus on chemistry and biology. Physics lessons were sampled. The latest GCE A level results for physics are likely to be broadly in line with the average nationally. The teaching observed was good and the students responded well to the opportunities offered, achieving well.**

### Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- There is good added value in progression from Key Stage 4 results.
- The additional specific support offered to individual students is good.
- Links to chemical based industry should be developed to enhance the curriculum.
- Planned staff development to enhance standards in chemistry should be implemented.
- More activities should be planned to ensure more effective learning outcomes for all students.

### Commentary

167. **A level and AS level results are slightly below the national averages and have been maintained consistently over time with an 100 per cent success rate. Small group sizes do not make statistical comparisons reliable, but the results at higher grades [A/B] have generally been below those in physics and biology. Students make good progress from Year 11 and achieve well over the course.**

168. **Year 13 students are confident in their knowledge of organic mechanisms and can apply their knowledge to new situations. For example, they can predict accurately the behaviour of carbonyl compounds in reactions, having learned previously about the oxidation products of alcohols. They have good practical skills and can analyse their findings and relate to organic mechanisms. A further example of good practical skills is demonstrated in a successful exercise of determining the entropy changes in reactions. The students make observations and form conclusions about the type of entropy changes experienced. This shows that they can apply previous knowledge to new situations and form conclusions successfully. These Year 13 students are working at levels expected for them at this stage, with some members working at higher levels. They are well motivated to complete the course at a high level, with some students improving their AS results by retaking some modules later in the year. Year 12 students demonstrate good practical skills and the ability to calculate and analyse results. They are secure in their understanding of molar calculations.**

169. Teaching is good because there is a good pace to lessons offering appropriate challenge to students. Lesson objectives are shared with students. The teachers are confident in their own knowledge and have good relations with the students. There are high expectations of the students and they respond positively and learn well in this encouraging environment. There is good additional support for those individual students who need extra support to help them understand a difficult concept or specific process. Some examples occur frequently in supporting students with mathematically based processes. Teachers are keen to find extra time outside lessons to support students in overcoming these difficulties. Within lessons more activities designed to challenge students at different levels, specifically those of higher ability, would lead to even higher standards.
170. The department is well led and managed. Recent changes in the curriculum and assessment processes have been agreed and implemented by the teachers following extensive consultations and investigations into alternatives. The pairing of teachers to share a group of students uses the teachers' expertise to the full and offers the student a wider range of teaching styles.
171. Resource levels appear to be adequate and health and safety requirements are met in the storage of chemicals, with an outside store for hazardous chemicals. There is good quality technician support within a strong team. There is good use of information and communication technology applications in chemistry with examples of spreadsheets, graphical plotting, data logging, and multi-media presentations recorded in students' previous work.
172. The department has gained newly refurbished accommodation since the last inspection and this has addressed the issues of inadequate teaching rooms. Standards have been maintained, and teaching and learning have improved. There has been satisfactory improvement.

## **Biology**

Provision in biology is very **good**.

Skilled teachers deliver an appropriate curriculum to able pupils who want to learn.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are skilled and have good subject knowledge.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning.
- Students make good progress.
- The new laboratories provide good accommodation.
- There is a need to ensure students maintain well developed notes.
- The provision for and use of information and communication technology need to be developed further.
- The range and quality of biological apparatus is too small.

### **Commentary**

173. In the 2001 A level GCE examination, students' average point score was above the national average. Overall, students' achievements in biology were similar to that in other subjects. In 2002 attainment was in line with that achieved nationally and with 100 per cent A-E grades. All students gained A-E grades in 2003 with achievement better than was predicted from their prior attainment. Progress from AS to A2 is good. Since 2001, standards have improved for AS students, currently they perform in line with expectations showing satisfactory progress from GCSE. Overall, standards are slightly above average.

179. Year 13 students show good attitudes to their work. In a topic about respiration, they followed the stages of glycolysis well, discussing the role of ATP and ADP. In genetics they showed a good command of di-hybrid inheritance and could extend this to an understanding of epistasis. Folders, whilst organised into topics with appropriate support materials, would benefit from the inclusion of better developed notes or essays to develop ideas and help students to learn.
180. Students in Year 12 were able to identify cell organelles, showing good learning. They had made good quality, well-presented posters about cell organelles. AS coursework about the effectiveness of biological detergents, showed good planning and conclusions based on consistent results were supported by good AS level science. Files show logical sequencing and are of an appropriate standard. The work on cells and genetics was clearly structured from basic to more complex ideas including a consideration of the social and moral implications of genetic engineering.
181. Teaching overall is good. Teachers have very good command of the subject and are confident. Lessons are appropriately challenging. Students have confidence in their teachers and respond well to their suggestions and ideas, leading to good progress. There are some areas for improvement. There is a tendency for some lessons to be over-directed, with too much talk from the teacher, restricting the time that students can work independently. There is a need to stress more often the correct and precise use of terms. Practical work is introduced and explained well. Examination questions consolidate learning and the students' use of marking schemes gives them insight into how to present answers. Information and communication technology is being used for multimedia presentation of lesson materials and spreadsheets are used to display, record and process class data. Numeracy skills are not always developed sufficiently. Students should be encouraged to routinely consider the common sense value of measured or calculated values.
182. Teachers apply the new school policy of marking by correcting errors and using comments to explain how to improve. Teachers maintain records of their marking using their own codes. Mark books also show predicted and target grades.
183. Students chose biology because they enjoyed it at GCSE level and wanted to follow a career in science. AS students are happy with their new course and this continues into A2, students finding the biochemistry unit particularly interesting. Teachers are seen as being good, very helpful and approachable. All students show interest in their work and maintain concentration over extended periods. Year 12 students' work is of a high standard of presentation. They are able to answer questions from the teacher well. Some are hesitant in asking questions. Year 13 students work well with each other and present their findings well to the whole class.
184. The last inspection identified biology results as being well below the national average. In 2002, results improved to become in line with national standards. There has been good improvement.
185. Departmental management is good. Standards are improving and numbers increasing. Schemes of work are developing well. Information and communication technology is used well in teaching and students use it effectively, though data - logging is not well evidenced. A database is being developed to monitor student progress and departmental effectiveness. Whilst teaching has been monitored, this should become more formalised and targeted. The curriculum could be enhanced by wider considerations of applications of biology and more extensive contact with external bodies such as industry, visiting speakers and visits.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**



- Students show good independence and have attitudes and behaviour that are very good.
- Better use could be made of prior learning and other student information to provide enough challenge to all students.
- Resources available in the library for independent study are under-developed.
- Students need to improve their approach to the evaluation aspects of projects.
- Teachers have good relationships with the students, showing good technical competence and give good support to students.
- More frequent use of questioning is required to test the learning of students.

## Commentary

186. Results in AVCE examinations in 2002 were the first available for this course and have not yet been validated and compared with national averages. In 2003 results are in line with those of 2002. There is a good retention rate for this course.
187. Standards for students following the AVCE course are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement when students' average ICT capability at the end of Year 11 is considered, and for a small number of students who did not follow an ICT course in Years 10 and 11 it represents good achievement. Students take responsibility for their learning and show good independence. However, resources available in the library for independent study require development. Students structure projects well and use annotation but there is a need to improve their approach to the evaluation aspects of projects throughout. Students show a good degree of skill and capability in the development of website, spreadsheets and presenting information solutions.
188. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The study requirements and activities for the course are well presented and available to students on the school Intranet. Students can access these outside the classroom and at home. Teachers have good relationships with the students, showing good technical competence and give good support to students as they move around the class to monitor progress. Teachers also use assessment criteria well to help students understand the coursework requirements but more frequent use of questioning is required to test learning and time targets could be used better to maintain lesson pace. Some good links have been established with external companies to emphasise the vocational aspects of the course. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
189. The leadership is good. Students now have access to a suitable course of study and good support resources including teaching staff, computers and Intranet resources. This represents satisfactory improvement. Management is satisfactory, the course is well planned and there are established management systems to support students well with their studies. However, better use could be made of prior learning and other student information to provide enough challenge to all students.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

190. **Students are generally competent in information and communication technology. In the main, this allows them to access the whole curriculum and in many cases to present their work attractively and clearly. There are variations in the use of information and communication technology in other subjects. Most pay due regard to them, but in art there is a lack of opportunity to use information and communication technology for graphics work. There is a good key skills course in information and communication technology that almost all students attend and this is raising their confidence and their levels of skill. It is taught well.**

## HUMANITIES

Geography, history, law, sociology, philosophy and ethics and psychology are taught. The inspection focus was on geography. Standards in history are good. A level GCE results in 2002 were slightly above average, with a higher proportion of students than nationally reaching the higher – A and B - grades. In the lesson seen, teaching was very good and the students were achieving well. It was not possible to sample a lesson in law. Psychology is a successful subject. Examination results are above average and the lessons sampled were taught very well. The students were very interested and achieved well in the session. Sociology is also successful, with

good standards in A level examinations. The lesson sampled was taught very well, as was the lesson in philosophy and ethics. Very good learning resulted from very good and stimulating teaching. Relationships were excellent.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- AS and A level pass rates are above average.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Excellent student attitudes and work ethic lead to good achievement.
- Students have developed independent learning skills.
- There is a need to raise the numbers taking the subject in the Sixth Form.

## **Commentary**

191. The provision in geography caters for eleven students at AS level and seven at A level. Retention rates are high, with most students who started the course in Year 12 going on to Year 13.
192. Standards overall are above average. Numbers entered for the examinations were too small for reliable statistical comparison with national figures. However, A level results in 2002 were in line with the national average. In 2003, 80 percent of candidates achieved grades A and B in AS level, while all gained grades of C or above. One student gained full marks in her AS level papers. Standards seen during the inspection were above average, which indicates good achievement and good improvement since the previous inspection report. There are no overall differences between the attainment of girls and boys.
193. Students are extremely well motivated and work hard at their studies. This led to a very good atmosphere for learning in all the lessons that were seen. They have all developed independent study skills, as was seen in a Year 12 lesson where students were preparing their AS level coursework based on environmental investigations in Swanage. In a Year 13 lesson students were assessing the causes and effects of severe weather for a case study. They were able to formulate their own questions for further investigation, for example determining the relationship between pressure and wind speed.
194. Teaching and learning were consistently very good. Teachers have an excellent command of the subject matter and plan very well, using effective and stimulating resources and conducting lessons at a brisk pace. Expectations are high and very good questioning skills elicit high level responses from students. Assessment through questioning and discussion is a regular part of the lessons and enables students to understand what they need to do to complete their work to a high standard. Excellent relationships between teachers and students make the learning a collaborative venture.
195. The course is very well managed by a head of department who has a detailed understanding of the requirements of the exam board. However, numbers opting for geography are low and in order to secure what is a very good course, more ways should be explored of attracting more students.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students make good progress and achieve well.
- Standards of work are good.
- Teaching is good and students learn well as a result.

#### **Commentary**

196. There is good provision for the subject. Students study textiles and product design at AS and A level. Students make good progress and their achievement is very good.
197. The GCE A/S and A level results are above average. All students who took the examination gained a grade.
198. The standards of work of current students are good. Students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE results. They are doing well as a result of effective teaching that demands much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it in a range of contexts, their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their class work.
199. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in questioning and in the setting of tasks. The lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and their skills and techniques improve as the lessons progress. Students have opportunities to carry out detailed research working as individuals to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. The teachers draw together their ideas and provided explanations. Students respond confidently to the activities.
200. Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. They rise to the challenge of being asked to research and work independently particularly well.
201. The department is led and managed well. Teaching is monitored and department documentation gives guidance and support to teachers. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

**The art and design course was inspected in depth. Music and media studies were sampled sufficiently for short reports on them to be included below.**

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Sound methodology provides a good structure for the course.
- Relationships with students are very good.

- Single periods for art means that lessons are too short for sustained working - this has a negative effect on standards.
- Teachers do not harness the enthusiasms of students enough to help raise standards.
- A and AS level results need to improve further.

## Commentary

202. Over the past four years results have improved steadily. In 2002 in both A and AS level examinations, results were below average but in 2003 improvements were evident. This was seen in the work inspected where standards are currently close to average. Over this period, however, when the students' results in art are compared with their results in their other subjects, they have done less well in art. Also, when comparing the results gained with the potential of the students, a significant number has underachieved. Again, current achievement shows an improvement on this – the result of improvements in teaching – and achievement is now close to satisfactory.
203. The development of ideas through visual research is a strength of the course. This was seen in the work of an A level student who, exploring a theme of structures, has developed interesting studies based on close up observation of flowers. These provide a good starting point for a series of paintings of a satisfactory standard. The work of those who have just started the AS level course shows similar emphasis as they do media and drawing experiments based on a still-life theme. This work is of an appropriate standard for students who have just started the course. The achievement of these students is satisfactory, with their work reflecting their capabilities and the satisfactory teaching they have received. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory, the good methodology of research and ideas development being strongly evident. Teachers, however, do not capitalise enough on the personal interests and enthusiasms of their students, particularly the more able, and do not harness the potential of these interests to raise standards.
204. The stimulation provided to students by visits to cultural centres such as London, Paris, St Petersburg (a cross-curricular link with history) and local galleries and artists is another strength of the department, and provides students with good first-hand information to help with their personal studies. These are of a good standard, and in both discussion and written work, students show a capacity to analyse the work of others and to make connections with what they do.
205. The courses offered in the Sixth Form are well managed, with teachers having a satisfactory overview of course requirements. There is a development plan in place, which has identified appropriate areas for improvement. The results students gain in examinations are not analysed in enough detail, so that possible weakness in teaching and learning are not being identified. The amount of time devoted to the subject is satisfactory; however the way the time is structured is not. All A level lessons are single periods. This means that students do not have long enough to sustain work over a reasonable period of time. This has a negative impact on standards. In addition to this, the small studios provide limited accommodation for Sixth Form students to work in when lower school groups are being taught.
206. At the time of the last inspection, results at A level were stagnant. In the past four years there has been some improvement. The breadth of resources available to students was a weakness at the last inspection and this continues to be true. Plans are in hand to provide better accommodation and this should help in the drive to raise standards. A GNVQ in art and design is also taught at Sixth Form level and results are in line with the average nationally.

## Music

207. During the course of the inspection, GCE AS level and A level music lessons were sampled.
208. Standards in Years 12 to 13 are average. Students in Year 12 are consolidating learning from last year to meet the demands of the AS music course. The lack of listening experience and history-related knowledge, which should have been acquired during the GCSE course, is resulting in the need for extra work to provide a sound foundation for their new studies. In Year 13, a student who achieved an A grade at AS level in the summer of 2003 despite irregular lessons is tackling the advanced requirements for her present course with admirable determination. Teaching is of a very good standard, with staff enabling students to develop skills that will prove invaluable in their future studies. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, as lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms (new accommodation is planned). At present, this means that all resources to be brought over in advance, with no access to extra resources if the direction of the lesson demand them. There are no properly equipped study areas for sixth formers and resources are unsatisfactory.. Whilst all students are making every effort to acquire the skills necessary for the courses on offer, the small number of options restricts choice regardless of interest. The addition of AS music technology, or the BTec music course, would broaden opportunities and enable students to choose courses more appropriate to their levels of attainment and their interests.

## Media Studies

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work hard and reach good standards.
- Teaching is very good.

### Commentary

209. Most students have established a good foundation in media studies in Years 10 and 11, but a small number are new to it in the Sixth Form. All make good progress, and the newcomers settle in fast, with the result that 75 per cent of students attained A-C grades at AS level at the end of Year 12 in 2003.
210. A variety of media is studied in some depth. Students write well about them as teachers provide advice on how to structure and present their thoughts, and about the criteria to apply in their judgements. There is very thorough coverage of the range of genre, topics and techniques within the subject syllabus.
211. Learning is very good, largely because of well-organised and very effective teaching and of students' very engaged response. They are given clear guidance, but within this context they think increasingly independently, having acquired the skills with which to make and justify their own evaluations.
212. Teaching is consistently very good. It is carefully planned, and every lesson is supported with vivid and appropriate illustrations of the topics studied. Analytic criticisms are clearly directed, but they are also shared, so that students and teachers are part of the same developmental process. Topics refer back constantly to contemporary life and students' own experience, so that relevance and interest are maintained throughout the course. Good, detailed and thorough

marking means that students' work is continuously under review and that they are given ongoing advice about ways to improve.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Physical education

Provision in physical education and sports studies is **good**. A good curriculum and good teaching helps students to achieve satisfactorily.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, with examples of very good teaching, helps students to achieve well.
- A good curriculum presents a mix of new and familiar experiences.
- Very good relationships and positive student attitudes create a good ethos for learning.
- There are very good facilities for teaching the subject.
  
- There is a need to develop programmes of study to show progression for pupils of different abilities.
- There is a need to share good practice so as to ensure a consistency of challenge in lessons.

### Commentary

213. The small size of the examination groups makes direct comparisons with national data invalid. 2001 results show all Year 12 students gaining at least a minimum pass grade, although no candidate obtained a high (A or B) grade. Some Year 13 students did gain the higher grades, although the overall performance of the subject was below that of other subjects in the school. The 2003 results show further improvement in the proportion of students obtaining the higher grades. Work seen during the inspection shows that most students in Years 12 and 13 now are achieving satisfactorily and are in line with national standards.
214. Students' written work reflects good preparation and research by most pupils, often making use of the Internet. In particular, high attainers write very well structured, analytical essays, and make use of a good range of subject-specific vocabulary. This is apparent in discussions about the muscles and ligaments involved in the movement of joints. Most students handle proficiently the difficult task of balancing different opinions in order to help them to answer the question set. They achieve well when they consider the relevance to sport of the theories of Pavlov, Skinner and Thorndike about how humans learn. Students with average attainment levels often describe rather than analyse in essays, and there is a reluctance to use relevant quotations to back up their arguments.
215. Teaching is good overall, although it ranges from satisfactory to very good. Very good subject knowledge is at the core of the best lessons. Teachers plan a good range of challenging activities, and give good written reinforcement of key learning points. Teachers are confident enough to extend students learning to include subject study skills and key skills such as communication. In one lesson, very good use was made of a computer presentation about an analysis of the movement of the knee joint. Very good relationships exist in lessons, and students react positively when asked questions. In some lessons the work set, together with the levels of questioning, resulted in students not being sufficiently challenged. Teachers also adopt an inconsistent approach towards developing work for students of differing attainment levels. Students speak highly of their teachers, and are pleased with the support that is given to them during their courses. Arrangements for the sharing of good teaching practice would encourage a more consistent approach to teaching, and in particular the level of challenge in lessons.
216. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of subject is the only full-time member of the department and, because of factors beyond his control, delegation is difficult, and there is limited long-term planning. The curriculum is good, with a mix of familiar and new experiences for students making good use of the very good facilities on site. An exciting recent initiative is the

appointment of a School sports co-ordinator who works with other schools in the local area as part of the Youth Sport Trust Initiative.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well and attain good standards
- Good teaching
- Students' attitudes are good
- The subject is led well

#### **Commentary**

217. This was not a focus subject, but one lesson was sampled. Results in examinations have been above the national average. In AS level in 2002, there was a 100 per cent pass rate, compared with 89 per cent nationally. Of the 15 A level candidates in 2003, all gained at least A to E grades and six passed with A or B grades.

218. The teaching observed was of a good, well-structured Year 13 lesson that helped the students to make good progress and achieve well. The lesson was conducted at a fast pace so that much was covered. The teacher's good use of questioning was a strength, he drew from them what they knew and tested and extended their understanding. Some students struggled to understand the more demanding concepts, but the teacher's very sensitive interventions gave them all the support they needed. The students' attitudes were good – they concentrated and worked hard to succeed.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good; as a result students achieve very well and standards are above average overall.
- Assessment is used very effectively to show students how to improve their work.
- Very good relationships and teachers' high expectations encourage students to work at full capacity.

#### **Commentary**

219. Results for students taking the AVCE course were well above average in 2003, with more than two-thirds gaining A or B grades. Students taking the GNVQ (intermediate) course also did well; all passed and almost all gained Merit or Distinction. Very few students fail to complete the courses they begin and some progress from GNVQ in Year 12 to AVCE in Year 13. Above average standards represent very good progress for students, bearing in mind their earlier GCSE results. During the inspection, it was not possible to observe any AVCE lessons, but the written work of previous students is well above average, matching recent results. Although current standards in GNVQ lessons are a little below those suggested by recent results, students have only just started the course and more than half already show the potential to gain Merit or Distinction.



220. Teachers know their students well, tailoring encouragement and praise effectively to individual students. As a result, students do their best for the teacher, achieving very well because they work to full capacity throughout lessons. Although several found difficulty in devising a healthy diet for their chosen clients, they rose to the challenge because the teacher intervened to praise their progress and show them how to apply earlier learning. Overall, learning was very good because higher attaining students realised that clients' circumstances and food manufacturers' vested interests are often unhelpful in promoting healthy diet. However, one or two could still have achieved more by addressing some of the higher level criteria at an early stage, for example beginning to predict how planned change for an individual might have social and emotional (as well as physical) effects. Lessons are very well planned to include a variety of activities that engage students' interest, for example using packaging from breakfast cereals to emphasise that foods may not always contain what is expected. Students say that they enjoy health and social care lessons, citing clear explanations and one-to-one support from teachers whenever it is needed. Teachers mark students' portfolio work thoroughly and indicate clearly what students need to do to improve their work; subsequent reviews show that advice is usually heeded.
221. Health and social care courses are very well managed and structured, key features in students' very good progress because they understand clearly what they must do to meet requirements at their target level. Although teachers work very well as a team, there is no overall leader. As a result, there are limited long-term strategies for the development of the subject within an overall vision for vocational education.
222. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are higher now and the strengths identified then remain in place.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

### **Key Skills**

Provision in Key Skills is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good curricular provision.
- This is a well planned course.
- Students have very positive attitudes and achieve well.
- There is good and very good teaching.

### **Commentary**

223. The provision for Key Skills in the Sixth Form is good, with a carefully thought out programme. Whereas in many Sixth Forms, the Key Skills provision is little valued by students and attendance at sessions can be patchy, at this school it has a high priority. The school takes it very seriously and the positive attitude of staff leads to all students valuing the contribution that the good teaching can make to their studies in their other Sixth Form subjects. All Year 12 students must opt for two of the three areas - communication, numeracy and information and communication technology. In the sessions observed, teaching was never less than good and the students concentrated hard, making good progress in class. Standards are good with the majority of students succeeding at the end of the course. Some high quality portfolios were seen containing excellent work.
224. The course in ICT key skills for students in Years 12 and 13 is very well managed and organised. The lesson seen was very effective and students were all engrossed in their work and making very good progress. They were able to work independently and the teacher gave

valuable support when needed. Students find the work challenging and are appreciative of the skills learned as they are aware that they may be important for them in the future. Similarly, the communication (literacy) and numeracy courses are taught well and students work diligently and well at their studies. Much of their work is of good quality.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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