

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **POOLE HIGH SCHOOL**

Poole

LEA area: Poole

Unique reference number: 113907

Headteacher: Mr J A Short

Lead inspector: Dr DMJ Benstock

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 259173

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: Foundation  
Age range of students: 12 - 18  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1530

School address: Harbin Campus  
Wimborne Road  
Poole  
Dorset

Postcode: BH15 2BW

Telephone number: 01202 666988

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Jones

Date of previous inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Poole High School is a 12 - 18 mixed comprehensive school and is larger than average in size overall. It is situated in the centre of Poole in Dorset on a large open site and draws students from the immediate locality and surrounding area of the town. The socio-economic background of its intake reflects an average range of family circumstances. In the main wards that the school serves, a smaller than average percentage of families have experience of higher education. The school is very popular and oversubscribed. In Poole there are two selective grammar schools that take approximately 15 per cent of the students, but many choose Poole High School as their first preference. Approximately five per cent of students leave or join the school at other than the usual time. The majority of pupils have white British heritage. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average, and the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is close to the national average. The percentage of students with statements is below the national average. Standards on entry to the school in Year 8 are broadly average. The school has gained recognition as a Designated Recommending Body for graduate teacher training along with an award for achievement in 2003 and the Healthy Schools award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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18967	Ms B Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics (Sixth Form)
12844	M Saunders	Team inspector	English
3958	Ms M Cawdron	Team inspector	English (Sixth Form), Drama. English as an additional language (EAL)
1413	S Khaldi	Team inspector	Science
6432	Dr M Sewter	Team inspector	Biology and Chemistry (Sixth Form)
10941	Miss R Robinson	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
19096	Ms S McClean	Team inspector	Design and technology
18261	A Hill	Team inspector	Art and design
11672	P Harle	Team inspector	Music
25748	R Moyle	Team inspector	Physical Education
15407	Ms M Harrison	Team inspector	Geography and citizenship
19152	R Merryfield	Team inspector	History
2494	M Newton	Team inspector	Religious Education Special Educational Needs (SEN)
11452	Ms R Armistead	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
13122	Ms S Matthews	Team inspector	Business Education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school with a good sixth form.** It gives good value for money. Students achieve well. The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good. The provision for care, especially through the house system, is very good; support and guidance of students is excellent. Links with parents are very good but opportunities to work with the community and other schools are insufficiently developed. The school is very well led and well managed by enthusiastic and effective teams. Governance is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement of students is consistently good across most subjects and is very good in art and design and GCSE results are improving at a rate above the national trend.
- There is a lack of focus within the modern languages department on raising standards and achievement in French.
- The 'house' system provides excellent support and guidance for students, and overall the level of care is very good resulting in very positive relationships.
- Overall leadership of the school by the headteacher and key staff is very good, and has led to steady continuous good improvement in almost all facets of school life.
- The use of assessment data for tracking students' progress and evaluating school performance against national expectation is not consistently developed in all departments and is unsatisfactory in citizenship. The quality of homework is inconsistent in setting and marking.
- Monitoring and evaluation of learning are not sufficiently established in the management of all departments to identify strengths and weaknesses of teaching.
- The high level of commitment and involvement in school by governors provide very good support and challenge.
- The very good focus on spiritual, moral and social development has a marked impact on raising students' personal attitudes and behaviour, although incidents of poor behaviour and occasional bullying occur.
- The school provides a very good programme to support new teachers and those in training.

Since the last inspection the school has continued to improve well. Standards overall are rising at a rate above the national trends. Satisfaction shown by parents of the school has grown. Provision in subjects identified previously as underperforming, namely information and communication technology (ICT) and music has improved and physical education has greatly improved. The balance in the time allocations to subjects of the curriculum has improved but the impact of timetable decisions is not always carefully considered. Departmental planning is more effective, and work by middle managers is more effectively monitored.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**The achievement of students overall in the school is good.** It is consistently good in most subjects throughout the school including the sixth form. Standards seen in lessons and students' written work in Year 11 are above average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement in art and design is very good as a result of very good and enthusiastic teaching. Despite disappointing GCSE results in 2003, standards seen in geography and French are average, and students are making satisfactory progress in these subjects. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. In 2003 the total point score per student at GCSE was close to the national average. It was well above average compared with schools with a similar proportion of students having the same range of attainment in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9. In the sixth form students' attainment varies according to individual ability, but overall their achievement is good.

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

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

**Students' attitudes, values and personal qualities overall are good.** Attitudes and behaviour are good. Students' personal development especially arising from their spiritual, moral and social awareness is very good. Cultural development is good overall but awareness of multi-cultural issues is more limited. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Punctuality in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Relationships between students and teachers are very secure and contribute significantly to good learning. Incidents of poor behaviour, including minor bullying, occur but are well dealt with through the very effective pastoral support system.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is good.** Teaching and learning are good overall in both the main school and the sixth form. They are very good in art and design and in science in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in French and geography. Assessment and the use of homework are inconsistent between departments. The opportunities for a breadth of experience in the curriculum, including those for extra-curricular activities are good. Vocational courses have become less popular and are few in number, although significant provision for workplace learning is made. Arrangements for the care, support and guidance of students are excellent, and the house system especially is very effective in resolving the personal difficulties that might affect achievement. Links with parents are very good but opportunities to work with the community and the curricular links with other schools, although satisfactory, are insufficiently developed.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management of the school overall are good.** The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is very good and has been a major factor in improvement. Management overall is good but there are inconsistencies in the use of performance data and monitoring of teaching by heads of department. Management of the timetable lacks clarity and has for example affected access to ICT and balance of time allocation in individual subject areas. The governing body provides very good support and commitment. Support for new and training teachers is very good.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school and this is reflected in its popularity. They overwhelmingly feel the teaching and level of care are very good. Students are very happy to be at the school, and feel they are well supported. Some concern is expressed about the behaviour of a minority.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the use of assessment data by heads of department to monitor progress of all students, set targets and evaluate performance against national expectations.
- Improve the extent of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within departments to more rigorously identify strengths and weaknesses in classroom practice.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Further develop strategies to ensure that the school provides a daily act of collective worship, and religious education in the sixth form.
- Eliminate the minor omissions in the governors' annual report to parents.

## OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form is good and is cost effective.** Students' achievement overall is good as a result of good teaching and very good management of this area of the school. The number of students has been consistently high for a number of years and demand for places is high. Results are variable according to the ability of individual students. The overall average point score for advanced level, advanced subsidiary level and vocational qualifications in 2003 was well below the national average, but standards seen in Years 12 and 13 in the focus subjects during inspection are broadly average.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is very good and caring leadership in the sixth form. The support and guidance provided use a very good base of data, assessment records and records.
- The needs of students and the suitability of courses are discussed fully with both parents and prospective student before acceptance.
- Very good and often excellent relationships throughout the sixth form result in a very good learning environment.

## QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well from a low attainment base as a result of good teaching.  Provision in French is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are average. Students are provided with a wealth of authentic materials through contact with native speakers and teaching.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is <b>good</b> . An increasingly popular subject where standards are improving. Teaching is very good from knowledgeable and experienced teachers.
Science	Provision in chemistry is <b>good</b> . Teaching is good and all students gain pass grades at GCE A-level. There is an improving trend, however, few students presently achieve the higher grades.  Provision in biology is <b>good</b> . Teaching is good. Numbers of students are increasing and all students gain pass grades at GCE A-level.
Humanities	Provision in history is <b>very good</b> . Standards are close to but still below average. Students achieve well because of consistently very good teaching.  Provision for the examination course in religious education is <b>good</b> . There is a small but growing number of students who achieve well on courses to GCE AS and A-level. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements to provide religious education for all students.
ICT	Provision in ICT is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well in both Years 12 and 13 because of challenging tasks and good individual guidance.
Business	Provision in business education is <b>good</b> . Students achieve well because teaching is good and they have good access to high quality resources.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is <b>very good</b> . In an increasingly popular and successful course, very good teaching provides a very broad and well-balanced curriculum.

Other subjects in the school were sampled including drama, communication studies, psychology, physics, sociology, music, geography, design technology, health and social care, travel and tourism and physical education. The quality of teaching and learning in all these lessons was generally good.

*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Care and welfare for students are very good. The dedicated pastoral team have excellent relationships with the students, which, together with the very good assessment systems, enable them to provide excellent support, advice and guidance. Students' progress is monitored carefully in relation to their targets and where necessary appropriate support provided. They receive very good preparation for and information about later stages of education.

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

The leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. The students' interests are central to the aims of the sixth form where they are encouraged to study appropriate courses. The day-to-day management of the sixth form is very good with very good communications between all staff and students. The current accommodation is well managed but at times is crowded in social areas – proposed building work should improve facilities. Finances are well managed and as a result the sixth form is cost effective.

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

Students are generally very supportive of the sixth form and the opportunities it is able to offer. They enjoy being in the sixth form, which they think is very well run. They find the teachers very accessible and helpful and they are treated fairly and with respect. A minority of students have concerns over the advice they receive about careers and some think there are insufficient enrichment activities and insufficient methods for them to express their views about issues within the school – very few students had strong disagreements with any of the questions asked on the questionnaire.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards are broadly average in Year 9 and Year 11. They are average in the sixth form. Achievement is good from entry into the school in Year 8.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement in art and design results from very good teaching and students' enthusiasm for the subject.
- The achievement of students is consistently good in the majority of subjects
- Standards seen are above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Year 9 and Year 11.
- Standards seen are below average in geography in Year 11 and French in Year 9, although achievement is satisfactory.
- Results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average compared with schools having students with a similar prior attainment in Year 6.
- GCSE results in 2003 were well above average compared with schools with a similar prior attainment in Year 9.

#### Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003, the overall performance of students, as measured by their average point score, was close to the national average. The percentage of students gaining target level five or higher, was average in English and science, and well above average in mathematics. The 'value added' score, which is a measure of progress from the end of Year 6 in primary schools, was well above average compared with all schools. The average point scores in English, mathematics and science were all broadly in line with the national averages.
2. The performance of Year 9 students in 2003 was well above average compared with schools where the attainment in national tests taken in Year 6 was at a similar level. In mathematics, the performance of students was very high compared with such similar schools.
3. Overall, the attainment in the Year 9 tests has risen at a rate higher than the national trend. The results of both boys and girls have nevertheless remained close to the respective averages over the past three years. Boys' performance has been slightly greater than that of the girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.7(32.7)	33.4(33.3)
mathematics	36.1(34.1)	35.4(34.7)
science	34.4(33.7)	33.6(33.3)

*There were 312 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the total point score per student and the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* - C grades, was broadly in line compared with all schools, and well above average compared with schools where the prior attainment at Year 9 is similar.

The value added from Year 9 to Year 11 in 2003, was above average compared with other schools.

5. Results in GCSE have risen significantly over recent years and at a rate above the national trend. Variations in the performance of boys and girls occur from year to year, but no significant pattern of difference in the level of performance is found.
6. In GCSE subjects in 2003, above average attainment was reached in mathematics, science, religious education, physical education, art and design, drama and home economics. Results were below average in ICT, geography, French and business studies. Other subjects were broadly average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	51(52)	52(50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91(93)	91(91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96(100)	96(96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	33.6(34.7)	34.3(34.7)

*There were 330 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. In the work seen in lessons and in the evidence of students' writing, standards overall are broadly average throughout the school. Achievement overall from entry in Year 8 is good. Achievement is very good in art and design, where the teaching is particularly stimulating and successful. It is good in most subjects. Standards are below average in French in Years 8 and 9, and in geography in Years 10 and 11, but achievement of students in both areas is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory in the relatively new subject of citizenship. There is little variation in the observed achievement of boys and girls. Higher and lower attaining students achieve well because of the good additional challenge or support that is provided to match their needs.
8. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as other students relative to their ability. Gifted and talented students have developing opportunities to extend their learning outside school, and their progress is good. Despite the lack of formal identification, most gifted and talented students achieve well, particularly in music, art, physical education and science.
9. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is low. The majority of these are achieving well, in line with their peers. The few very early stage learners receive only fragmented support, but are also achieving well, helped by the school's welcoming approach and by their own positive attitudes.
10. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall, with work sometimes compromised by uncertain spelling and expression. Mathematical skills across the curriculum are good. Good examples of the use of graphs, charts and diagrams are evident in science and geography. Overall competence in the use of ICT in subjects is good. Students apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers. This is done well in art and design, geography, history, ICT discrete courses, mathematics and religious education.

**Sixth Form**

11. In the most recent GCE Advanced level examinations in 2003, the average point score per student was well below average. Boys, overall, attained higher than girls. The percentage of A to E grades has improved however, at a rate above the national trend. Similarly the percentages of higher grades A and B, has improved significantly from 2002 to 2003.

12. Small group sizes prevent meaningful comparisons for performance in the A-level or vocational examinations. In 2003, students' performance, in subjects where more than ten candidates were entered, was above the national average in ICT, health and social care and travel and tourism but below average in chemistry. However, all groups are relatively small and the range of grades from year to year reflects the ability and aptitude of individual students.
13. Standards seen in the sixth form, mainly in the nine subjects focused upon during the inspection, are broadly average, and students' achievement from entry into the sixth form overall, is good.
14. Sixth form students on the SEN register are confident with their studies and are achieving well. Past students have also achieved well. Sixth form students have generally satisfactory language, literacy skills and mathematical skills.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	93.5(87.2)	91.5(90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20.4(15.9)	36.1(35.5)
Average point score per student	178.8(192.7)	253.1(254.5)

*There were 81 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

#### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

**Students' attitudes and behaviour are good.** Attendance is satisfactory, with punctuality being satisfactory in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Students' personal development is very good; moral, spiritual and social development is very good whilst cultural development is good.

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

- There are very good relationships throughout the school.
- Students' personal development is very good.
- Sixth form students have very good attitudes to learning.
- There is general good behaviour around the school.
- Punctuality at school in the sixth form is unsatisfactory
- There is some bullying in a minority of lessons.

#### **Commentary**

15. Students' attendance at school is close to, but slightly below, the national average. The school monitors reasons for absence very well and has good systems in place to encourage improved attendance. Punctuality of students in the main school is also satisfactory. Students like coming to school and are very supportive of it. Students have very good attitudes to learning and are keen to work and participate fully in lessons and to benefit from the high quality teaching.
16. Within lessons students co-operated well, are well motivated and show a high level of concentration. Behaviour is generally good and often very good within lessons. A few students lose concentration during lessons and this is usually during extended activity sessions. Very occasionally some bullying takes place. This is well dealt with if staff become aware of it but sometimes they do not notice it. The number of exclusions is high but most of these are for single days when students test how far they can go and then do not re-offend – of the remainder the majority are due to repeated offences by students who eventually have been permanently excluded. Whilst students say there is some bullying and some poor behaviour in

the school they say it is always dealt with very well. The high expectations of behaviour are well understood by students and the behaviour management is firm but fair.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.6	School data	1.3
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

#### Ethnic background of students

#### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1453	392	5
Mixed – White and Black African	2	5	0
Mixed – Any other mixed background	1	12	0
Black or Black British – African	2	5	0

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

17. The school is committed to developing all students' qualities and the very good relationships and support systems result in students becoming mature and confident. There are good opportunities for them to take on responsibilities within class and to be involved in the running of the school through the school council.
18. Overall SEN students show a positive attitude to school. Those with individual support work well with their Learning Support Assistant showing respect and gratitude. Their personal development is in line with that of other students. Those with behavioural problems have a limited concentration span and lack motivation creating some challenge to teachers.
19. The spiritual development of students is very well supported through a good range of activities designed to promote self-awareness and understanding of the world around them. The innovative 'Diary of Reflection' requires students in Years 8 and 9 to reflect on important personal, social and political questions during one or two tutorial lessons each week. Students discuss and reflect on their feelings about personal issues, and about global issues as they may arise. Opportunities to discuss and celebrate the multi-faith dimension in our society are missed in this nonetheless very worthwhile and interesting curricular innovation. Students are confident in expressing their views and develop tolerance of other viewpoints through discussion in which teachers foster self-expression and independence.
20. Although the school does not fully meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, it makes every effort, through the 'Diary of Reflection' and the regular house assemblies, to provide opportunities to reflect on some of the fundamental questions about life today, and to encourage students to understand the challenges that face them as individuals and as social beings. The religious education department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Opportunities for reflection are key elements in most lessons.
21. Subject departments are mostly very good at developing independence and a sense of personal and social responsibility amongst students. Their personal growth through the school is clearly marked in their evolving awareness of themselves, their raised awareness of

injustice and inequality around them and their determination to take on responsibility in the increasingly complex and difficult world they are entering. There are many opportunities to work together and collaborate in all areas of the school life, including day trips and residential visits and through involvement in fund raising and a wide range of group and team activities. The staff provide very good models for moral development, ensuring that students develop an increasing awareness of right and wrong behaviour.

22. There are ample opportunities to study other cultures in the majority of departments, notably English, art, geography, history and music. However, the opportunities to develop greater tolerance and understanding of multi-cultural issues are limited because the school is not a multi-cultural community. The school offers little evidence of multi-faith celebration and multi-cultural awareness through displays of artefacts or students' work. Shortcomings in this aspect were noted in the last inspection.

### **Sixth Form**

23. Students in the sixth form are very supportive of the school and especially of the teaching and of the leadership. Whilst attendance levels are satisfactory the punctuality at school is unsatisfactory, which reduces the effectiveness of the morning tutor time. The behaviour and attitudes to learning in the sixth form are good overall and in many lessons are very good or excellent.
24. Students' personal development is very good and they are mature and sensible. The sixth form students have their own sixth form council, which mainly organises social events, but they are not directly involved in the main school council. As part of their enrichment activities many students support students in the lower school.
25. Students with SEN are grateful for the support available to them and show a similar attitude to study as their peers.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. The quality and range of the curriculum are good. There are very good arrangements for care, support and guidance. Links with parents are very good and links with the community and other schools are satisfactory.

#### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good throughout the school. Assessment is well used to support learning in Years 8-11, and procedures are very good in the sixth form. There is inconsistency in the use of assessment data in departments to track students' progress, and practices in citizenship are not yet developed to a satisfactory standard.

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

- Very good teaching and learning take place in art and design and science.
- Use of assessment is inconsistent: it is unsatisfactory in citizenship but is very good in science and religious education.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good in the majority of subjects, with the exceptions being French and citizenship, where they are nevertheless satisfactory.
- Teachers, learning mentors and the senior management team make good use of data to identify support for students with special educational needs.
- School procedures for tracking achievement in Years 10 and 11 are good, but the assessment data provided to departments by the senior management team, to help them set targets, is not easy to use.

- In many GCSE subjects students get good support to reach their predicted grades and get clear information about their progress.
- Homework and marking are inconsistent between departments.

### Commentary

26. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers make a positive commitment to inclusion, supporting all students irrespective of their ability or background.
27. During the inspection, 204 lessons were observed. Approximately three quarters were good or better, and one third were very good or excellent. Only four lessons were unsatisfactory, and these were for a variety of minor reasons.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 204 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6(3)	63(31)	87(43)	44(21)	4(2)	0	0

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

28. Teaching and learning in art and design and science in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Teachers in these subjects have a high level of expertise, plan the lessons with great care and engage students in interesting activities so that they thoroughly enjoy the experience. There is a high level of challenge for the more talented and the range of tasks motivates students very well.
29. In the great majority of subjects, the teaching method supports the needs of all students well. It is particularly good in history, where topics are carefully chosen and students encouraged to participate in discussion. Teaching and learning are less successful in modern languages. Although teachers in French have a very good level of knowledge, their planning, engagement of students, challenge and teaching methods are only satisfactory, as on occasion they fail to motivate students. The use of homework is unsatisfactory, with opportunities frequently lost to reinforce and extend learning.
30. Relationships with students are very good and contribute to the good achievement and progress made. In all subjects, the management of students' behaviour in lessons is at least good and often very good. Lessons are normally brisk and involve a good variety of activity that maintains the students' interest and enthusiasm. ICT is used well in many subjects. The use of homework is inconsistent. Where some subjects such as science, are very constructive in their use of homework, in others, such as ICT and citizenship, opportunities are not taken. Uncertainties in the timetabling of homework contribute to the lack of effectiveness.
31. There is generally a good awareness among staff of the needs of SEN students and good support is given by way of adapted worksheets and tasks. Teachers are aware of the individual education plans (IEPs) and help students to reach their targets. Good use is made of learning support assistants (LSA) when they are available and they give good support. Gifted and talented students generally receive help and opportunities to extend their learning. The few very early stage learners with EAL receive only fragmented support, but are achieving well, helped by the school's welcoming approach and by their own positive attitudes.
32. Assessment overall is satisfactory. The school has already recognised this as an area for improvement in the school development plan. The quality of assessment of students' work and the constructive use of data to set targets and improve learning are satisfactory. Procedures operate inconsistently within and between departments and are wide ranging in their quality. There are good procedures for tracking students who are identified as

underachieving when working towards their examination potential. Marking and feedback to students are of good quality in religious education, history, English, ICT, physical education and science, and for those students with special education needs. General procedures for assessing students' progress are underdeveloped in music, citizenship, and modern languages.

33. The school currently uses data from national tests and advice from the local education authority to set targets and to predict attainment by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. However, these data are not yet provided in a way that all departments and individual teachers can readily use. Involving students in self-assessment and setting targets is generally underdeveloped but especially in Years 8 and 9. There are notable exceptions in history, science, physical education, information technology and design and technology. In Years 10 and 11, through the use of examination criteria, regular tests and predicted grades, students generally get better support for understanding their progress and how to improve. Students with special educational needs experience good target setting in their individual education plans and review procedures are secure. In general there is a lack of rigour and consistency with assessment across the curriculum and the current school policy does not provide comprehensive and concise advice for departments to follow.

### **Sixth Form**

34. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning found in the main school extends into the sixth form. Of the 55 lessons observed in the sixth form, approximately two fifths were judged to be very good or excellent, and approximately four fifths were at least good. No lessons were unsatisfactory. In almost all cases good learning resulted from the good teaching.
35. The strongest teaching and learning in the sixth form are in art and design, where almost every aspect is very good. Teaching and learning were very good also in history, although only seen in Year 12, with homework being a relative weakness. Business studies is taught well and in particular, very good planning and use is made of resources.
36. Teaching and learning in French are satisfactory. The involvement of students and teaching methods do not always inspire good learning. In the majority of subjects, students are encouraged to work independently but in French, insufficient attention is paid to independent learning. Independence of learning is also a relative weakness in business studies.
37. Assessment overall in the sixth form is good. Performance data are more readily analysed and achievement of students tracked.

### **The curriculum**

The quality and range of the curriculum are good overall. Careers education is good but vocational courses have decreased. Workplace learning is available only to lower attaining students. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is supported well by good accommodation and resources.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The breadth and balance of the curriculum is good overall and caters well for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of its students.
  - The range of sixth form vocational courses available is good, but in Years 10 and 11 there are no applied vocational GCSE courses at present and no links with college or training providers.
  - The curriculum is supported well by good quality accommodation and resources.
  - Careers education is very well planned and taught; careers guidance is managed very well.
- 
- The curriculum is enriched through a good range of extra-curricular activities.

- Timetabling problems limit learning opportunities for a minority of students, in modern languages, physical education and religious education.

### **Commentary**

38. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good; it caters well for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of its students. The management of the curriculum is good, with strong support from the governors. Curricular planning is based on regular review processes, including thorough analysis of performance data. Equality of access to the curriculum and opportunity are very good.
39. Students in Years 8 and 9 study all the National Curriculum subjects, together with religious education and personal, social and health education. There is an opportunity to study a second language for those who show a particular aptitude, although timetable constraints limit this to a weekly period. In addition, the school's special music course is available to students gifted in music; in order to participate, they miss a physical education lesson. Teaching groups are mostly organised in sets according to ability within a curriculum area, and some students are placed in a smaller teaching group designed to provide additional support for their special needs.
40. The curriculum in Year 10 and 11 is good overall. The school offers a wide range of GCSE subjects in Years 10 and 11, with some students following twelve examination courses. The most able students in science study three separate GCSE courses in biology, chemistry and physics. An additional religious education GCSE course is available for students; this limits their opportunities in physical education, because they miss a weekly double lesson. Drama, dance and physical education may be taken to GCSE level. Work-related and vocational options have been reduced since the previous inspection, because the school population has changed and most students choose academic courses. The school has identified vocational education as an area for redevelopment.
41. For a small number of students who require an alternative and more flexible approach to learning, there is an effective work-related programme, which results in more positive attitudes to learning. These students take units of the Certificate for Preparation for Working Life course and they have a day or half-day work placement. No work-related courses are available for middle or higher attaining students. There are no applied vocational GCSE courses at present and no links with college or training providers and although students acquire skills in the workplace these are not accredited through vocational qualifications. Overall the provision is satisfactory.
42. Careers education is very well planned and taught through the PSHE programme and in tutor sessions as well as through specific events such as the Year 9 skills festival. Year 10 students participate in a well-managed work experience programme. Students in Year 11 are made very clear about courses in the sixth form, alternative college courses, modern apprenticeships and employment linked with training. Advice and guidance about careers and higher education are very good in the sixth form and is highly valued by students.
43. Students with special educational needs (SEN) have full access to the curriculum. The organisation of teaching groups helps teachers to structure work to suit students' needs. In Years 10 and 11 the range of options available helps meet the needs and aspirations of all students. Their progress is carefully monitored and recorded, and individual education plans (IEP) are regularly reviewed and amended. Specific SEN resources are limited and there is no dedicated resource base open to students. Provision for gifted and talented students is being developed, but as yet such students are not clearly identified.
44. Extra-curricular provision is good and many students of all ages attend the good range of activities. Provision for sport and the arts is good. Significant numbers of students, across all

years, are involved in concerts and productions. Students are successful in a wide range of sporting activities; sometimes at national level. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to galleries, theatres, exhibitions and other outside places to support learning. Students participate in a range of foreign visits to improve linguistic skills; for example, exchange trips are made to Germany and France.

45. The curriculum is supported well by good accommodation. There have been major new developments which have resulted in very good provision for art and physical education and good facilities for business studies, design technology, history, mathematics and music. There are, however, serious inadequacies currently in geography, with rooms spread across the site and adverse implications for management and efficiency. New accommodation for geography is due to be commissioned in the near future. Resources are good and meet the needs of the curriculum well. They are very good in art and modern foreign languages and good in almost all other areas of the curriculum. Although ICT resources are appropriate, access to them is not always satisfactory.
46. There is a very good match between the expertise of staff and the demands of the curriculum. There are particular strengths in mathematics, physical education and art and design, where a wide range of expertise and subject specialisms enhance learning. Staffing is good across the other areas of the curriculum with the exception of citizenship, where more training is required. The school benefits from its links with an Initial Teacher Training institution and its involvement in the Graduate Training Programme, as a high proportion of trainees subsequently join the staff. The school has recently been accredited as a Designated Recommending Body (DRB) for graduate training. The match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is a small number of learning support assistants, most of whom are accredited and support the learning of students with special educational needs well.

### **Sixth form**

47. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses, which prepare students very well for employment or further study. It is an inclusive sixth form and one in which curricular provision is good. The school offers 23 GCSE AS and A-level courses, including psychology, the three sciences, drama and theatre studies and religious studies. A good range of vocational courses is available in the sixth form. In business studies, students can take the intermediate GNVQ or advanced courses. AVCE courses are also available in ICT, travel and tourism and health and social care; there is also a Certificate of Achievement in Childcare (CACHE) course.
48. Learning is sometimes affected by the small size of groups as fewer students are now recruited to vocational courses. Personal, social and health education is compulsory for all students.
49. A short religious education course is available in the sixth form but owing to timetable clashes many students do not have the opportunity to attend the course and statutory requirements are not therefore met.
50. The focus this year in key skills is on those students who have not attained a minimum C grade in GCSE mathematics or English. ICT focus is on vocational groups; support is available to others when needed. This change in emphasis is in response to external demands. Examination courses are offered in physical education and timetabled recreational sport is available to all students.
51. Sixth formers help with younger students' clubs and teams; many play in regular school fixtures. Overall, the range of enrichment opportunities provided in the sixth form is good. Students' learning is enhanced by visits to theatres, galleries, exhibitions and businesses.

They undertake a range of roles in whole school productions and some extend their learning through foreign visits.

52. The range of options available to sixth formers, particularly the vocational options, enables SEN students to benefit from post-16 education.

### **Care, guidance and support**

There are very good arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety. The school provides students with outstanding support, advice and guidance and involves them very well in its work and development. The house and sixth form tutor systems are a major strength of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The house system and sixth form tutors provide excellent support, advice and guidance for students.
- Excellent health and safety procedures ensure students' welfare.
- Very good induction procedures ensure smooth transfer into school for students in Year 8 and for students into the sixth form.
- Careers education and work experience are very well organised, accessible and effective.
- Links with some middle schools are not sufficiently well developed to ensure that essential data of good quality is transferred with all students.

### **Commentary**

53. Health and safety procedures are excellent, with an excellent approach to risk assessments. All safety checks are carried out and issues are reported to the governing body. Child protection systems are in place and the school has very good systems to support 'looked after' children.
54. Welfare and care systems are very good, mainly through the house system. First aid provision is very good and responsibilities are well identified – supported well by the school nurse and external agencies as required. The pastoral system, an integral part of the house system, is very well structured and the caring staff know the students well and have built up excellent relationships with them. Students stay in the same house for the four years and so are well known by the staff.
55. Support, advice and guidance are outstanding. Teachers and other staff know students well and anticipate their needs and the school is proud of the standard of care given to individual students. Assessment and other data is used very well to monitor personal development. Without exception those interviewed indicate that they had at least one adult in the house system they could approach with problems, or to whom they could turn to for advice. Students from one family are placed in the same house. Contact with parents is regular and the first day contact arrangements are very effective.
56. Students with SEN are generally well supported. Their specific needs are clearly identified and catered for. There is however no resource base to act as a safe haven and to provide a productive environment. Support for gifted and talented students is provided in different ways by some departments but a whole school approach is being developed.
57. Improved assessment procedures and target setting provide students with good support. Students' progress in relation to academic targets is monitored in subjects and records are accessed within the house system where there is excellent pastoral contact.
58. The induction of Year 8 students is very good. The house system very quickly provides very good support and guidance but the limited links with some middle schools do not ensure that appropriate information comes with all students on entry in Year 8.

59. Advice and guidance for students choosing options, routes of study or career paths are very good and appreciated by the students. Contact with the Connexions Service is established and the connexions library has a range of information about family issues, the use and misuse of drugs and other relevant areas.

### **Sixth Form**

60. Students receive excellent support and guidance in the sixth form. Induction arrangements are very effective and include conference and presentation events, which are much valued by students. Well thought out and focused student interviews for sixth form courses contribute to the high quality of guidance on entry. Relationships between students and tutors are well developed and students feel able to approach staff at any time about academic and personal matters. Communication between the houses and the sixth form is very good, as is contact with parents. Sixth formers are good role models for younger students, and promote good standards of behaviour throughout the school.
61. There is a high retention rate between courses in Year 12 and 13 and, once started, students tend to remain for the duration of the course. Teachers provide students with very good feedback on their work, which is regularly assessed, and their progress is carefully monitored. Most students agree that the school seeks their views and sometimes acts upon them.

### **Partnership With Parents, Other Schools And The Community**

The school has very good links with parents. Links with the community are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Links with other educational establishments are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides very good information to parents.
- The house system within the school allows concerns and complaints from parents to be dealt with very well.
- There are very good transfer arrangements from the main school into the sixth form.
- There are few formal opportunities for parents to be consulted about their views.
- Educational links with other establishments are not sufficiently developed to give students maximum opportunities.
- The information in the governors' annual report to parents does not meet statutory requirements.

### **Commentary**

62. Parents are very supportive of the school with only a few areas in which there is limited concern. Parents are pleased that students are expected to work hard and that they do make good progress as a result of the good teaching. They think that the school is well led and managed and that the school encourages their children to mature. There were some concerns about the behaviour and bullying within the school, which they think is dealt with well, and they would like more opportunities to be consulted and to be given more information about the homework their children are expected to do. The positive views were confirmed during the inspection and the areas of concern investigated. The inspection team's views are contained in the appropriate section of the report.
63. Parents have very good opportunities to obtain information on progress through the house system. Heads of house are the first point of contact for parents and all children from a family are in the same house. Parents meet the head of house at an induction meeting in June and again in November at the first parents' evening where they also get a report which gives not only information on progress but of target grades. All parents receive a very good annual report on progress, which is given to them at the annual parents' meeting. Although there are

very good opportunities for parents to communicate with the school there are very few formal consultation processes.

64. The use of 'planners' as a means of communications is very effective and used well. The information provided to parents about the school is very good through the newsletters and the prospectus. The governors' annual report to parents is also a very informative document, which gives a lot of useful information to parents. However, the most recent issue does not contain all the required statutory information although all parents will have received equivalent information in other documents.
65. There is a good partnership with local schools which ensures smooth transition at the age of 12 and also into the sixth form. There are improving educational links with partner schools but links with other educational establishments are less well developed. The community contributes to the opportunities available to students but the use of premises by the community is limited because the school is physically remote from the community it serves.
66. For parents and carers whose children are on the SEN register, the school seeks to ensure that parents are fully involved. This is recognised and valued by the majority of parents. There is also good liaison with outside agencies.

### **Sixth Form**

67. The sixth form has good links with the community through students' contact during work experience and enrichment activities as well as benefiting from visiting speakers and visits to the community.
68. Although the school has approached other local schools to work with them on sixth form courses there has so far been little progress. This is an area that needs to be pursued to ensure that students are given the maximum opportunities and range of courses.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and his sense of purpose and vision has been instrumental in the continued improvement of the school over the years. Governance of the school is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Strong leadership of the headteacher and other key staff has led to continued improvement.
- Very good involvement and commitment of the governing body has had a major impact on the development of the school.
- There is a strong commitment to inclusion, with all students having support to match their individual needs.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are undertaken through performance management but greater emphasis and rigour are needed in monitoring of teaching by heads of department to identify those aspects that affect students' achievement.
- The process of self-evaluation is developing, but is not as extensive and comprehensive as it might be, especially in the use of assessment and performance data.
- There is a strong commitment to the training of new teachers and support for student and newly qualified teachers.

### **Commentary**

69. Overall, the leadership of the headteacher and other key staff, including heads of department and heads of house, have had a significant impact on raising standards and securing good improvement in almost all aspects of the school. Their shared vision and high aspirations are replicated by all staff and this has a significant impact on students, who hold the teachers in high esteem.
70. The governing body is totally committed to supporting the school. Most spend a great deal of time in school and committees are extremely active. They have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and vigorously discuss and challenge proposed development. However, although a policy is in place, governors have not ensured that a daily act of collective worship is undertaken by all students, or that religious education is provided for all students in the sixth form.
71. The commitment by senior staff on the leadership team, those leading departments and those responsible for the house system, is very strong. Students and parents have a very high regard for this aspect of care within the school. The school is very determined to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring and observation of teaching are a clear part of performance management, and arrangements for peer observation are encouraged to share good practice. However, rigorous monitoring to identify features of teaching that affect the achievement of students, such as use of homework (which is found to be inconsistent in quality), is not well enough embedded in departmental practice. The use of performance data is being developed at senior management level, but is not well understood in the school as a whole. The wider use of data by heads of department and by teachers is again not consistently well done.
72. The Learning Support Department is very well led and managed. All statutory requirements are met and there is good quality assurance. Administrative procedures are excellent.
73. Procedures for the induction of new staff are very good. The school makes a strong commitment to newly qualified teachers and has developed very effective systems for monitoring and supporting them. Arrangements for the continuing professional development of teachers are good. Following significant reductions in the available budget, the school now makes good use of in-house expertise to provide training opportunities. Five staff are currently taking the NPQH qualification.
74. The school's finances are managed well, and careful consideration is given to ensuring that development plans are within financial budgets. Although financial support has been forthcoming from external agencies in development of premises, the school actively sets aside funds to make continued improvements in accommodation and resources. It always seeks to ensure principles of 'best value' are applied.

### Financial information

#### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5,011,870
Total expenditure	4,920,312
Expenditure per student	3,280

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	443,773
Balance carried forward to the next	535,031

## **Sixth Form**

75. The good leadership and management of the main school extend into the sixth form. The head of sixth form has a strong commitment to development and is very effective in managing the diverse range of opportunities for students in their studies. The same commitment to inclusion in the main school is found in the sixth form and all students are valued and supported.

# 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 **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations and very good subject knowledge lead to generally good achievement.
- Teacher-student relationships are secure and supportive so that in most lessons there are positive attitudes to learning.
- Boys do particularly well in examinations.
- The strong leadership of the department encourages high professional standards in planning and teaching.
- Some marking does not give students sufficiently precise targets for improvement.
- Higher attaining students are sometimes not given sufficient opportunity in lessons to show what they know and can do.

#### Commentary

76. Students' attainment when they enter the school is average. Results in tests taken in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were in line with national standards but well above average compared to similar schools. Results in GCSE language and literature examinations were also well above average compared to similar schools. This shows that over their time in the school students make good progress and achieve well. This is particularly so for boys, who do better than do girls.
77. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed the good picture given by these results. In lessons both boys and girls make good progress. This is particularly true for students in the mid and lower ranges of ability. For example, a lesson on *Macbeth* for a class containing many students with special educational needs was entirely purposeful and productive. Such students are well served by teachers' close support for their learning. On occasions the potential of higher attaining students is not fully exploited by the challenge of lessons, though at best (as in a Year 11 lesson actively examining advertising techniques) the high expectations of teachers is matched by work of real commitment and quality. The usefulness of the targets for improvement arising from teachers' marking is also variable. The best is clear and specific and results in obvious development. Some is too vague to helpfully inform students' progress.
78. Teaching was good overall in Years 8 and 9 and very good overall in Years 10 and 11. Learning was good across the board in response to careful planning and teachers' secure knowledge of their subject. For example, lessons on the media in Years 8 and 11, and on literary texts in Years 9 and 11 were taught with pace, variety and confidence, often with expert use of ICT to support and accelerate students' learning. Because teachers know their subject and their students well, relationships are courteous and trusting, so that in most lessons there are very good conditions for learning. Many older students remain quite dependent upon their teachers for motivation however, and this explains why for them the quality of teaching is better than their learning.

79. Leadership of the department is very good. Students' progress is carefully tracked, and any underperformance is identified and acted on. Curriculum development (as in media studies or the new syllabus for GCSE) is carefully undertaken to take account of students' interests and aptitudes. The department works collaboratively and with a well-understood set of principles. This explains the impressive improvement in results and achievement over recent years. Because the head of department carries other substantial responsibilities (for drama, and for literacy across the school) it is more difficult than it should be to support the work and professional development of a large team, many of whom are relatively new to the profession. Nevertheless, the management of the department is good.
80. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. ICT is now an integral aspect of work in English. Achievement, particularly of boys, is significantly improved. Literacy development informs the teaching of English in clear and beneficial ways.

### **Language And Literacy Across The Curriculum**

81. The school's policy (overseen by an active Literacy Group) ensures that the work of departments clearly focuses on literacy development. Inspectors noted good support for extended writing in English, science, religious education, PE, art, and design and technology. Standards of literacy were judged to be satisfactory overall, with work sometimes compromised by uncertain spelling and expression. Therefore the priority given in the school development plan to improving students' literacy is fully justified.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

Most students study French but are offered the opportunity to add German or Spanish to their study of French from Year 8. Some students in Year 8 study Spanish instead of French.

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Listening skills are well developed but speaking and reading skills need improvement.
- Very good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment are characteristics of the teaching and lead to good relationships but students are allowed to be too passive in their learning.
- Homework is inadequate to support learning sufficiently.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to support achievement and there is a lack of analysis of performance data, which hinders improvement.
- Although a second language is offered throughout, there is insufficient curriculum time for the second foreign language studied in Years 8 and 9.
- A wealth of extra-curricular activities and contact with native speakers enhance learning.

### **Commentary**

82. GCSE results for French in 2001 and 2002 were broadly in line with the national average. In 2003 they were well below average and showed a marked deterioration. Despite a small number of entries for GCSE German, the percentages of grades A\*-C in 2001 and 2002 were well above national figures but also showed a similar marked deterioration in 2003. Numbers of entries in Spanish are too small to detect trends or make a significant comparison with national figures. Overall students attained less well in modern languages than in most of their other subjects in 2003.
83. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Standards seen in languages are low at Year 8 and 9. Listening skills are good. Students are willing to participate in oral work and emulate the sounds of the foreign language. There is some spontaneous use but students do not practise the spoken language enough. They do not often speak at length

or from memory. There is insufficient emphasis on reading skills and on extended writing in Years 8 and 9. Standards seen are average in Years 10 and 11 indicating improvement over the previous year. Students do best in their written coursework in Years 10 and 11 where high attaining students in particular are able to produce extended and accurate pieces of written language using a variety of tenses and showing good attention to detail.

84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and some very good lessons were seen, as well as two lessons which were unsatisfactory owing to poor behaviour. The main strengths in the teaching are teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm, very good relationships, contact with native speakers, and effective classroom management. Most students respond with positive attitudes and display consistently good behaviour. However, some students are not achieving as well as they might because they often remain passive throughout and in a number of lessons there is insufficient use of the foreign language. Insufficient homework is given to consolidate the learning.
85. In Year 8 work is poorly matched to the attainment of students in the first term because knowledge of their prior attainment is lacking and there is little use of materials to support or extend students. Excellent displays are used to enhance the learning environment.
86. Assessment is just satisfactory. The end-of-module tests and evaluation reviews conducted regularly are well used to help students understand how they are performing. However, there are few opportunities for day-to-day assessment in class in essential skills, and for example, suitable opportunities are not mentioned in the scheme of work and mock orals are not conducted sufficiently frequently.
87. Although curriculum provision in French meets requirements, students do not cover the full programmes of study in German or Spanish in Years 8 and 9 if they are studying these languages in addition to French due to the limited curriculum time available.
88. Provision for SEN students is satisfactory because of flexible setting arrangements and teachers' giving adequate attention to meeting the differing needs of the students. Provision for EAL students is good where target language teaching is the norm, as limitations in English do not act as a barrier to learning. Their achievement is good because they are used to manipulating language. There is no special provision yet identified for gifted and talented students.
89. Leadership in the department shows vision, a sense of purpose, enthusiasm and high aspirations. A committed team has been created and they are well supported. The quality of teaching is monitored and in-service training planned. A wealth of extra-curricular trips and exchanges are organised for the benefit of the students. The management of the department is satisfactory.
90. However, there is a lack of focus on standards and achievement and a lack of data analysis as a means to improvement.
91. There has been some improvement since the last inspection; boys now participate well and work has been done on boys' achievements. GCSE results have improved with the exception of 2003 and there has been some improvement in the quality of teaching. However, students still perform less well in French than in their other subjects.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement is found because of consistently good and well-planned teaching.
- Very good management and leadership have been instrumental in the continued development of teaching quality.
- Good relationships evoke a good response from hard-working students.
- Limitations of space in many classrooms restrict the teaching methods used so there is only a limited amount of paired or group work.

### **Commentary**

92. Attainment on entry is slightly below the national average but has risen slowly over recent years. Results in the 2003 national tests for students in Year 9 were slightly above national levels. With the achievement of boys and girls almost identical, this is broadly in line with national figures. When compared to schools with similar prior attainment shows this indicates good progress. GCSE results for 2003 also indicate above the average levels of attainment for all schools with boys gaining significantly better A\*-C grades than girls.
93. These results were better than predictions based on students' results at the end of Year 9. The department therefore adds value to students' attainment. Achievement of students overall throughout the school is good. Standards seen in lessons and from the evidence of students' work are above average in Year 9 and in Year 11.
94. These results are a consequence of good teaching and learning. Teaching is good with some very good and excellent features. An effective scheme of work enables teachers to prepare lessons well. Lessons contain material that interests students and challenges them to work hard. Limitations of space in many classrooms restrict the teaching methods used so there is only a limited amount of paired or group work. The department has successfully embraced new technology in its teaching so that lessons are well presented and stimulating. Lessons have good pace coupled with clear exposition and relevant examples. This stimulates students to achieve well. Grouping students by ability enables teachers to match work closely to them. Students' work is generally well marked although there is some variation in written feedback given to students. Teachers regularly refer to target GCSE grades for the whole class; this sustains good levels of working for all students. Teachers liaise well with their support staff by sharing lesson plans before lessons; this enables targeted students to work as well as the rest of the class. Students who have special educational needs receive extra support and make similarly good progress to their peers. Students who are gifted and talented also make good progress; these students are in the higher attaining groups and receive extension material at opportune moments.
95. The consequence of the good teaching is the good response of students. Students arrive at lessons promptly and because of the effective use of short starting activities settle very quickly. Students are attentive and generally polite; they answer and ask questions, justifying their answers with appropriate reasons when necessary. Some higher attaining students put this into action with geometric proofs of circle theorems; they worked on the board giving logical reasons for their answers. Students relate to their peers well so that working solutions on the board for the whole class is not an embarrassment, as an air of mutual respect exists in all classes. Teachers maintain firm discipline in lessons; this aids progress by enabling all students to work effectively.
96. The accommodation for mathematics is in a suite of adjacent rooms, but many of these rooms are too small for a wide range of teaching methods. Resources, including sufficient, up-to-date textbooks, are adequate.

97. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a good vision for improvement and regularly monitors all teaching and learning, including a scrutiny of exercise books. The subsequent evaluation includes action plans for the future. This has been a major factor in improving teaching and learning. Assessment is effective in monitoring progress and setting targets for the future. All students are aware of their targets and have a clear idea of how these relate to examination success. Development of teaching and learning to sustain improvement is also the focus of regular, well documented, department meetings. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, teaching has improved and this has led to a rise in results. Numeracy across the curriculum has also improved. This is a very mutually supportive, highly committed, well-qualified department with much strength and unity.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

98. This was an issue in the last inspection and since then there has been very good progress. The National Numeracy Strategy provides a basis for the development of students' skills so that they can access the whole curriculum. There has been good, whole school training on the correct use of a wide range of relevant numerical topics. There is a good, effective guidance document for all departments to use as a reference. Departments have a numeracy policy embedded in their scheme of work and opportunities for number reinforcement were evident in many lesson plans. The head of mathematics works with new teachers to develop their awareness of relevant skills. Good examples of the use of graphs, charts and diagrams are evident in science and geography. Very good links exist between the mathematics and the design and technology departments to support areas for improvement. Year 8 students who have weak number skills are given a week of individual support by the head of mathematics this has led to good improvements in their ability.

## **SCIENCE**

The provision for science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement of students is good overall as a result of good teaching throughout and often very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good leadership and teamwork promotes continuing improvement.
- Teaching and learning by lower ability students in Year 9 are variable.
- Students who are gifted or higher attaining achieve very well through the separate science course.
- Monitoring of teaching needs more rigour and organisation to identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses in their skills.

### **Commentary**

99. In 2003, in the National Curriculum tests, the average point score in science was close to the national average. Attainment in GCSE science in 2003, combined for single, double and triple (separate) sciences was above national average, with two thirds of students overall obtaining an A\* - C grade. The double science entry, the main cohort, was at the national average. For the last two years, the school has improved its curriculum offer to higher attaining students by offering specific teaching and GCSE entry in the separate sciences. The separate science results were above average.
100. Standards seen in Years 8 and 9 are above average. Achievement is good. Both boys and girls achieve well. Science attainment by students on entry is slightly below average. These standards rise considerably in Year 8 and 9 due to an emphasis on science investigation, literacy and numeracy in lessons, regular homework and good feedback through marking. Target setting and well-communicated teacher expectations mean that students across the

ability range are suitably challenged in lessons, encouraged to develop practical skills, and work safely and competently with apparatus. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average, evidenced across the ability range, and particularly in science investigation. Achievement is good. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Students, who are gifted and have the opportunity to study the more demanding separate sciences, achieve very well.

101. Teaching and learning overall are good. Several very good lessons were seen. However, there is some variability in the quality of teaching and learning of lower ability students in Year 9. The use of ICT has seen considerable development and improvement since the last inspection. There is now frequent and systematic use of data projectors, simulations and data-logging which stimulates learning. In most lessons, students show good listening skills, a capacity to ask relevant questions and work in co-operation with others. The quality of teaching and learning is equally strong across the science attainment targets, reflecting the strength of subject knowledge and the planning within schemes of work. Teachers use assessment to give information on progress to students very well. Independent learning is encouraged and often investigation tasks require students to reflect before recording results. For example, in a Year 11 biology class learning about the human immune system, students were asked to explain the detailed interactions of the system to their peers and in plenary create a concept map using brief notes to summarise their own understanding.
102. There is a good match of teachers to the curriculum although some staff teach in additional subject areas such as mathematics, music and PE. There is very good leadership and very effective management in science. Monitoring of teaching is being developed but needs more rigour and organisation to identify the strengths and weaknesses. The large faculty of nineteen teaching staff works cohesively as a team. There is an extensive development plan that has supported continuing improvement. There is good partnership with the technicians and a faculty commitment to teacher training. Science has shown very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and detailed planning are leading to rapidly rising standards in the central course.
- Students' attitudes are good and this helps to improve achievement.
- Good subject leadership and management have successfully brought about good improvement since the last inspection through the provision of a better curriculum.
- The programme for using ICT across subjects of the curriculum is inconsistently applied.
- Students' experience of computer-aided-design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is limited.

### **Commentary**

103. The GCSE results for 2003 in business and communication studies were above national average. The GCSE results in information technology were well below national average. This was in the main due to coursework not being completed on time, syllabus changes and staff illness. Procedures are in place to alleviate this situation in the future.
104. In Years 8 to 9 students show satisfactory skills in a range of activities: word-processing helps them to improve their presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They use desktop publishing to a good level of competence combining text and images in leaflet construction. Students have access to the Internet and download images and data for research with confidence.

Higher attainers evaluate their work well. The quantity of work completed by lower attainers can sometimes be sparse. In the GCSE classes students are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desktop publishing and use of database and spreadsheets to simulate business practice. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are good for the needs of the courses being offered. Students develop and apply their skills further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects. Achievement is good throughout Years 8 to 11 and standards are rising.

105. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is little variation in the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching was good in the majority of lessons and satisfactory in the rest. In the best lessons the use of a data projector has a very positive effect on students' learning because basic knowledge and skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. The specialist teachers have good subject knowledge, are up-to-date, explain new work very well and engage the interest of the students. Lessons are usually well organised, with good use of co-operative work that ensures students are actively involved. There is a brisk pace to lessons and effective summing up to reinforce what has been covered. Learning support assistants ensure that special needs students are well supported and keep up with the class. There is some classroom practice that does not engage students and, on occasions, less organised classroom management leads to an unsatisfactory rate of learning. Marking of students' work is inconsistent throughout the department.
106. Specialist subject provision in ICT benefits from good leadership and management. Standards have risen because teaching has improved and there is more stability amongst staffing of the department. The curriculum has improved significantly, meeting the needs of all students. Good assessment systems are in place and used effectively to help improve students' achievement. Some ICT specialist rooms are small and run down and affect teaching methods.

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

107. There is about one computer for every five students and this is broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools. Data projectors are well used throughout the school as a medium for presenting information to the whole class and to support students' learning. In a number of subjects there are opportunities for students to apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers, for example, in art and design, geography, history, mathematics and religious education. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network and the skills of individual teachers are used effectively to teach ICT. Technical support is good. However, opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not sufficiently well embedded in all subjects to achieve full coherence and progression. Students' achievements across the curriculum are not fully recognised or assessed. In a few curriculum areas there is a lack of access to computers, largely owing to timetable issues.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

The provision for geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good assessment procedures in place with interactive assessment for students in Years 8-9 to improve students' knowledge of their own progress.
- The accommodation is widely dispersed in different buildings on a large site. This disperses

resources, teachers and also limits support for new teachers; all factors affecting students' achievement.

- Teachers have very good ICT skills leading to very good presentations in lessons and to improved management of teaching materials and resources.

### **Commentary**

108. Students enter the school with average attainment in geography. In Year 9 standards of work seen in lessons and students' books, are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. However, higher attainers often produce very good work. In 2003 results at GCSE were well below average. Standards seen in Year 11 are below average although achievement for this group of students is satisfactory. Standards seen however indicate improvement over the previous year.
109. Teaching is good overall and some very good teaching was seen. Lessons are well planned with very good use of ICT to improve presentation and provide students' with additional stimulus for learning. In a good Year 10 lesson ICT was used to present animated resources explaining coastal processes. Very good questioning, which probes students' understanding, is a feature of the best lessons, but in other lessons teachers often limit the opportunities for students to contribute to the lesson. In some groups very good varied work is used to suit the differing abilities of students within the group. This technique could be used more widely within banded groups in Years 8-9. There is good support for students' basic literacy and support for higher skills in detailed writing is planned. Students have good numeracy and ICT skills and the latter are promoted through virtual volcano tours, reporting of events and other activities in Years 8-9. In Years 10-11 all stages of coursework show evidence of ICT use and students use a variety of skills and websites. There is also provision for students' creativity through writing letters, writing about life in other places, reporting on events, making posters and brochures, and in producing creative layouts for case studies.
110. Leadership of the department is satisfactory but management is good. Good planning is in place to raise standards at GCSE. The department is well organised with good assessment procedures. These are well used to monitor students' progress. Marking is good, with factual and literacy corrections. Weekly meetings are held to support all staff, with additional meetings for new teachers. Improvement is good with improved standards in Years 8 and 9, good ICT skills for students, good marking, good planning, and improved questioning of students.

### **History**

Provision In history is **good**.

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

- Students achieve well in all years because of good teaching
- Very good leadership and management and close relationships between teachers result in consistently high expectations
- Many students' literacy skills restrict their achievement
- Students are very well supported in their studies
- There are too few opportunities for using computers in lessons

### **Commentary**

111. In the 2003 GCSE examinations all students achieved a pass grade and the proportions of boys and girls gaining grades A\* to C were similar to national averages. These results reflect good achievement as students' attainment on entry was below average. Year on year results have risen consistently since 2000.

112. In Year 9, standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Students achieve well as they enter the school with below average attainment. In a lesson on social change in Britain in the 50s and 60s, lower attaining students, including several with special educational needs made very good progress in learning how to make inferences from sources. Work is not always well presented and accurately spelled, weaknesses, which could be addressed if students made more use of computers in their lessons.
113. In Year 11 standards are average. Students make good progress in understanding the topical history, for example the complexity of South Africa's multi-racial origins and the nature of the suffering caused by apartheid. Good use is made of ICT. In a lesson on late nineteenth century London, students were able to access and navigate a website, and extract information as part of the background research for the "Jack the Ripper" murders. In oral work on the nature of life in Soviet Russia, most students expressed and substantiated their opinions well, but only higher attaining students were able to reflect this convincingly in writing. Few students routinely evaluate the sources they use.
114. Students learn well because of good quality teaching. A significant role is played by the very good relationships stemming from the clarity and consistency of teachers' expectations, and the very positive way in which students respond to them in classrooms. Teachers mark work regularly and offer much constructive advice on how to improve, but they are not rigorous and consistent enough in their correction of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Lessons are very well planned and usually contain challenging and stimulating tasks. Question and answer are skilfully used to probe, extend and consolidate students' learning.
115. The subject is very well led and managed. Trips and visits broaden students' cultural experiences and raise their aspirations. Students are very well supported by the quantity and quality of study and examination guides, after school revision classes and the accessibility of their teachers. The head of department has energetically tackled the weaknesses referred to in the last report and the subject has sustained good improvement.

## Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main Strengths and weaknesses

- The subject benefits from very good leadership and a dedicated team of committed specialist teachers.
- The experiential approach to RE significantly contributes to students' spiritual development.
- GCSE results are improving and there is a growing interest in RE as an examination subject.
- Years 8 to 9 students achieve well in relation to the expectations of the local agreed syllabus.
- The use of new technology in teaching and management is in need of improvement.
- The subject lacks a resource base.

### Commentary

116. Students enter the school with a varied experience of RE and with standards below expectation. As a result of good teaching and thorough assessment students make good progress and standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Most students have a secure knowledge of the basic tenets of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. As a result of the regular opportunities they have to reflect on their own inner feelings and to empathise with the beliefs of others, their spiritual and moral awareness is above average. This represents good achievement, including those of lower ability and with special educational needs whose standards are below average.

117. The number of students entered for GCSE has risen. In 2003 a fifth of Year 11 students sat the examination and the percentage gaining A\*-C grades, was well above the national average. Currently nearly a third of each cohort opts to study RE at GCSE, which is an indication of the value students place on the subject.
118. Those students in Years 10 and 11 who do not study for an examination follow an internally accredited course, which meets the requirements of the current locally agreed syllabus. Standards are average.
119. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to very good. It is good overall. A key feature of all lessons is the good planning. Students are made aware of what they are expected to learn and a variety of resources and strategies are used to enable them to achieve the objectives. Nearly all lessons provide an opportunity for reflection or pose a question requiring a personal response. In the best lessons these opportunities are used to the full, not only to raise spiritual or moral awareness but as a means of strengthening students' knowledge and understanding of a particular aspect of belief. In some lessons the level of questioning and the reinforcement of knowledge are weak. Students generally respond positively to the subject and participate fully in lessons. Periods of reflection are treated seriously and valued by students.
120. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Two newly qualified teachers are given very good school support. The lack of a suitable resource base and access to ICT facilities limits the overall effectiveness of the department.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Upward trends in GCSE examination results at the higher grades.
- Strong assessment procedures ensure that all students get clear information about their progress and targets.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- There is a lack of emphasis on the use of ICT in Years 8 and 9.
- Schemes of work in the lower school need to be matched for all ability levels.

### **Commentary**

121. Current standards for Year 9 students are broadly average. This indicates good achievement, as they arrive with variable skills, knowledge and experiences of technology. The design process is clearly understood and a wide range of material skills is developed. Students show good awareness of health and safety when using various tools, know the importance of healthy eating, can make use of CAD/CAM, and produce good standards of sketching and annotation. In some cases practical skills are underdeveloped because of limited time to practise them before moving on to the next project. Greater insistence on the use of computers would improve quality and speed up work. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
122. Current standards of work in Year 11 are above average, and improving. In GCSE child development they are significantly so. Electronics results improve each year and food and textiles remain consistently high. Good quality work exists in all areas, but particularly in electronics, food, textiles, and graphic projects, where teaching expertise ensures that students of all abilities are challenged and coached to reach their target grades. Good use is made of ICT for researching kitchen products in textiles, and in applying product analysis

skills in graphics to examine blister packs. Where achievement is lower, in resistant materials with all boy groups, there is lack of detail in research and development of original ideas, and weak management of time results in incomplete and poorly presented work.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some very good teaching. Each teacher has commitment, expertise and enthusiasm. In the best lessons all students are clear about what they will learn, are specifically praised, are challenged to work quickly, engage in a variety of activities and are required to work co-operatively with others. In these circumstances behaviour and attitudes are very positive. Significant emphasis is placed on providing high quality displays, to set expectations, and thoughtfully planned resources support students in tackling complex tasks. Assessment is used well by teachers and students to share target grades and regular progress checks. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features but contain too much teacher talk, at the expense of students exploring ideas, or lack pace and challenge.
124. This extensive department is well led and managed, ensuring good improvement since the last inspection. Money is well spent on enhancing learning. There is a shared focus on continual improvement and the importance of teamwork; however, shared responsibility results in some duplication of core activities. Annual review and monitoring need a sharper focus on identifying best practice, and tackling issues of underachievement. Schemes of work for younger students need to identify how they meet the needs of various abilities. Accommodation is extensive and well equipped.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

125. Art and design and music were inspected in full and drama sampled.
126. **Drama** was lightly sampled. One Year 11 lesson was observed in which the teacher's sound background knowledge, very good classroom management skills and effective teacher modelling helped to improve students' performance. Standards are above average. Achievement from students' limited experience of drama in Years 8 and 9 is good. GCSE results have been consistently above average; in 2003 there was a higher than average proportion of A\*/A grades. Since the last inspection schemes of work and a new assessment system have been established in Years 8 and 9, but the problem of lack of curriculum time still remains. Drama makes an important contribution to students' personal development and, through the many opportunities for public performances, to the life of the school.

### **Art and design**

The provision for art is **very good**.

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

- The very good achievements in learning, which stem from the very good and occasionally excellent teaching.
- The very good leadership and management of the recently appointed head of department, who leads a strong team of teachers committed to raising standards.
- The very positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students, which lead to a pleasant and purposeful environment for learning.
- The programme of basic art skills learning lacks coherence in Year 8 and results in weaknesses in drawing in later years.
- The well-informed and well-resourced development of computer art, which is attracting boys to the GCSE option and leading to some innovative work.

## Commentary

127. The art department has benefited relatively recently from excellent new purpose built accommodation and the appointment of a very good leader and manager, who leads a very good teaching team. Standards are rising in the department and are reflected well in GCSE examination grades. These were above national averages in 2003, with a further rise predicted for the current Years 10 and 11.
128. Most teachers have an excellent command of their subject and teach it very well. Students respond positively to the encouragement they are offered in thinking for themselves and developing independent ways of working. Some excellent teaching was seen during the inspection, which led to rapid progress in students' understanding of technical processes and a very high level of achievement in digital and photomontage work. The focus on cultural development in lessons on South American and Egyptian art is very strong and supports very good learning. The teaching of basic art skills in Year 8 lacks coherence and weaknesses in understanding of perspective and form appear further up the school.
129. The head of department offers very good, clear leadership to his strong team of teachers who work very well together. There is a clear commitment to raising standards and to developing the curriculum in innovative ways. Computer art has been well established and resources are improving to enable students, boys in particular, to explore the exciting field of digital art and animation. The department keeps very good records of students' achievement, including exemplars of National Curriculum and examination standards, enabling students to be clear about target grades and standards expected. The self-evaluation of the department is very honest and very clear.
130. The lack of a qualified art technician restricts the development of ceramics, photography and printmaking, although teachers work very hard in after school clubs to sustain the good work done in those areas.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enrichment activities, which include performance groups, concerts outside school and singing with professional musicians, significantly broaden students' horizons.
- Instrumental teaching has grown significantly, and is heavily subsidised by the school.
- Musicians in residence activities significantly improve students' musical opportunities.
- Recruiting strategies for GCSE and post-16 courses have worked well.
- The proportion of projects involving world music and music technology with Years 8 and 9 needs to be increased.
- Strategies to increase the proportion of students gaining A\* and A grades at GCSE level need to be developed.

## Commentary

131. GCSE results have been consistently at the national average over the last four years, but A\* and A grades are rare. Attainment on entry is below average, and by the end of Year 9 is average. Achievement is good at all levels, and work is at the national average. The lack of depth in work involving listening and analysis inhibits access to higher grades for Year 10 and 11 students. Those with special educational needs and the small number with English as an additional language achieve well. The extra provision for the ablest musicians in Years 8 and 9 gives them the opportunity to develop musically and to aim for deeper understanding and greater skills. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls. High quality

playing and singing was heard, and the four-part choir recently took part in a professional concert with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra performing music by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, who was also the conductor.

132. Teaching and learning are both good. In the best lessons planning and preparation linked to target setting are good, and students are challenged. Expectations are usually high, and students respond well. However, in some lessons work does not match ability, and enthusiasm is less evident. Learning was seen through listening, skill development and by doing- with the best students refining their own work. A keyboard composition by one boy in the Year 9 able musicians group showed this in action, producing a very exciting piece of music.
133. Leadership and management are good. They are very good for instrumental teaching and extra-curricular and extension activities; some features of the curriculum are good, but some aspects are insufficiently covered; the proportion of world music and technology needs to be increased for Year 8 and 9; strategies need to be put in place to enable more students to gain A\* and A grades at GCSE, and to redress their weakness in the listening and writing aspect of the examination. A good foundation has been laid for assessment, with self-assessment in place, but it needs refinement to give clearer National Curriculum level links in student-friendly terms, which will lead to greater impact on self-assessment. Nearly a tenth of all students receive instrumental lessons, which are subsidised by the school.
134. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with a firm foundation laid for further development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

- Standards are above average by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of students to learn well.
- The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- Access to the full curriculum is limited for students in Years 8 and 9 undertaking an additional music lesson and those in Year 11 following the GCSE RE course.
- Curricular links with partner middle schools are limited.

#### **Commentary**

135. Standards in lessons and in work of Year 9 and Year 11 students, are above average and show good improvement from their work in previous years; most students are achieving well. Year 11 students' examination results in physical education are consistently above the national average. Students achieve better pass grades than those in their other subjects and standards are rising at above the national rate. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Talented students achieve very well and are successful in a range of sports at area, county and sometimes, national levels.
136. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers manage students very well and plan work to suit all students. In a Year 9 hockey lesson, lower attaining students improved well, because the teacher planned appropriate grouping, modified tasks and used demonstrations. The learning of higher attaining students, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular participation. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in most lessons. In a Year 11 GCSE dance lesson, students achieved

very well, because high quality teaching enabled them to lead warm-ups, plan movement phrases and evaluate peer performance. Learning is less effective in a few lessons when teaching becomes more prescriptive and students are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas.

137. Students' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes, good relationships and the very good facilities, including a dance studio, sports hall and fitness room. Students handle numerical data well, through opportunities to measure, record and analyse performance. Teachers emphasise key words, are adept in their use of questioning and enable students to evaluate performance. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of students across the attainment levels. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the improvement of students' ICT skills.
138. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success; a dedicated team of specialists ably supports him. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and students' standards. Assessment systems are good and are used well to monitor students' progress, set targets and modify the curriculum. Improvement, overall, since the last inspection is very good. Standards have improved to above average; the proportion of good and very good teaching has increased and the curriculum is better balanced. Specialist facilities have been upgraded and extended. Curricular links with partner middle schools are underdeveloped. Because of timetable clashes, access to the full curriculum is denied to Year 9 students undertaking extra music and those in Year 11 following the GCSE RE course.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies and Business and Communication Systems**

Overall provision is **good**.

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

- Standards were well below the national average in 2003 in business studies but above the national average in business and communication systems.
- Students' ability to work independently using computers is an area of strength but some students fail to complete homework and coursework.
- The department is well resourced and has good accommodation. Facilities are used well and contribute to the good quality of teaching and learning.

#### **Commentary**

139. In 2003 business studies results at GCSE were well below the national average because of staff changes and students' failure to complete coursework. The results of boys were particularly low. However standards in the business and communication systems course were much better. Standards in Year 11 are close to those seen nationally and this represents good achievement as the subject recruits students from a wide range of attainment. There is no evidence of boys underachieving. Students with special educational needs and those of well above average attainment are achieving well because of the level of support and challenge in the classroom.
140. The department has clear expectations about work and behavior. Students work hard in lessons and during the inspection they responded well to a wide range of activities related to business ethics and employment. Computing skills are an essential part of both courses and students clearly progress well. Students are encouraged to work independently in class and this is an area of strength but some students fail to complete essential coursework and homework tasks and this affects their learning.

141. The good quality of teaching and learning ensures that by Year 11 all students have a secure grasp of the basics of the course and that the majority has the skills and knowledge to reach the higher grades at GCSE. The highest attaining students can explain about fringe benefits and the importance of training, while lower attaining students understand some of the reasons why there are ethical concerns about the manufacture of training shoes. Written work shows that students have a sound understanding of relevant environmental and equal opportunities legislation; the subject makes a valuable contribution to citizenship. Assessment is thorough, work is carefully marked and students also assess their own strengths and weaknesses in group-based activities.
142. The department is well resourced and students' learning is greatly enhanced by the very effective use of ICT resources. The good quality of teaching and learning are a result of the expertise of the teaching staff and the high level of co-operation in the management of the two courses. Key elements of management, for example monitoring and review, are in place. Both leadership and management are good and there is a clear vision for future development.

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

143. Personal, social and health education was sampled and citizenship inspected in full.
144. There is good planning for personal, social and health education within the school. The course is delivered in specific units by form tutors for one lesson each week and units on citizenship are also included. Careers education is well planned and taught through the PSHE programme. All staff have handbooks which provide detailed information about the course and some staff training has been provided. The use of form tutors means that expertise in teaching is variable but lesson plans in the handbook provide additional support.
145. Teaching and learning vary in quality. In satisfactory lessons discussion is overlong and sometimes dominated by a limited number of students. Progress files are used well by students to record their achievements including out of school activities. Other files and notebooks are used satisfactorily for recording students' work in lessons. In addition the school uses 'focus fortnights' for particular issues when the expertise of school subject specialists or external speakers may be used. This occurred during the inspection week when the school used national non-smoking day to focus on issues related to smoking. Health education and healthy eating issues are given particular attention in Years 8-9 and the school is involved with the Healthy Schools programme. Moral issues such as bullying, sexual and other relationships, racism and prejudice are all included in the course. A group of parents have recently become involved in PSHE and are sharing ideas with the subject coordinator.

### **Citizenship**

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- The citizenship coordinator is enthusiastic and committed to further development of the course.
- Resources are in place for delivery of the course and all form tutors have their own handbook.
- Progress files are used to inform students and teachers of work either in progress or completed.
- Assessment procedures and marking require more rigour to inform students of the skills and understanding developed on the course.
- There is good evidence of oral work including audio tapes, but limited evidence of written recording which could further develop students' knowledge and understanding.

## Commentary

146. Standards in all years are average. In work seen in files and notebooks standards are average. Limited evidence was available partly because of course changes in September 2003. Students come to the school with average attainment and therefore achievement is satisfactory.
147. Teaching and learning in citizenship were only seen in four lessons in Years 8 and 9. The evidence from students' work in files, notebooks and lessons is that teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good teaching also taking place. In Years 8-9 students are taught citizenship in modules and these alternate with health education and skills for learning. There is also some citizenship teaching in PSHE lessons. In Years 10-11 citizenship is again taught in modules and is incorporated into the PSHE programme and taught by form tutors. In a very good, well-paced Year 9 lesson on analysis of newspaper reporting, students had a wide variety of written, oral and shared information activities. They recorded information in short paragraphs and also on a prepared grid. Despite immense enthusiasm from the students there was not enough time to finish the grid. Unfinished work is a frequent feature of work seen in files and books. Some marking is very good but it is unsatisfactory overall.
148. Leadership and management of the subject are both good. There is provision for active citizenship and this is growing. A volunteer group of staff is working on materials for specific issues and could focus more on citizenship. Some training has been provided for staff and meetings are held with heads of houses, which helps with monitoring of the subject. To improve the subject, more active citizenship opportunities need developing. With a large number of staff involved, assessment and marking procedures need to be more rigorous and thought given to time allocation and to the recording of work.

## 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 2003.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	3	100	98.6	33.0	50.2	73.3	87.5
Biology	20	100	96.4	30.0	39.2	69.0	78.6
Business Studies	8	100	98.7	50.0	36.8	90.0	80.1
Chemistry	5	100	97.6	20.0	49.0	64.0	84.9
Communication Studies	6	100	99.4	0	37.8	53.3	82.1
Drama	4	100	99.5	0	40.1	50.0	83.6
English/English Language	9	100	99.4	11.1	36.3	68.9	80.9
English Literature	3	66.7	99.5	0	46.5	53.3	86.5
French	1	0	27.6	0	18.9	0	27.6
Design & Technology	2	100	97.8	0	35.0	60.0	77.9
Geography	9	100	98.7	22.2	44.5	71.1	84.0
History	6	100	99.0	16.7	44.6	80.0	84.6
Information Technology	13	69.2	95.6	7.7	24.6	40.0	69.5
Mathematics	15	93.3	96.7	26.7	55.6	68.0	88.8
Other Languages	1	100	96.9	100	64.5	100	93.8
Other Social Studies	18	100	97.4	11.1	42.7	64.4	81.8
Physics	19	100	96.7	31.6	44.6	73.7	81.7
Religious Education	3	100	98.8	0	46.7	73.3	85.6
Sociology	1	100	98.2	0	44.3	80.0	83.6
Sports/PE Studies	7	100	98.0	42.9	30.9	77.1	75.2

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & Design	6	83.3	80.1	16.7	23.7	26.7	29.9
Biology	4	75.0	65.2	25.0	11.1	22.5	20.6
Business Studies	4	100	76.4	75.0	16.3	45.0	26.2
Chemistry	12	58.3	72.7	8.3	13.9	15.8	24.1
Communication Studies	3	100	86.4	33.3	23.8	36.7	32.0
Drama	1	100	86.5	0	19.6	30.0	30.6
English/English Language	1	100	82.9	0	17.5	20.0	28.7
English literature	2	100	85.9	0	19.1	30.0	30.2
French	4	100	98.8	0	51.5	50.0	87.6
Design & Technology	1	100	74.9	0	15.1	20.0	74.9
Geography	1	0	74.3	0	19.8	0	26.5
History	4	100	80.7	50.0	19.5	45.0	28.6
Information Technology	15	80.0	67.0	6.7	10.9	24.7	21.4
Mathematics	2	100	61.9	50.0	17.1	35.0	22.1
Other Social Studies	5	100	69.7	20.0	16.7	32.0	24.1
Physics	5	100	68.6	40.0	14.4	42.0	22.7
Religious Studies	3	100	80.2	0	22.6	30.0	29.8
Sociology	5	100	71.8	60.0	18.4	46.0	25.4
Sports/PE Studies	3	66.7	73.2	0	11.4	23.3	23.1
Business VCE	9	77.8	88.6	33.3	20.6	57.8	60.1
Health & Social Care VCE	14	100	93.2	7.1	22.3	72.9	63.5
Science VCE	4	100	88.3	0	9.6	65.0	58.5
Travel & Tourism	10	100	90.0	20.0	19.5	72.0	62.2

### ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were English literature (English language and literature and English literature) and French. Communication studies was also sampled. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Although results and retention in the past have been low, present recruitment is healthy and current standards are above average as a result of challenging, rigorous teaching. Students develop a good grasp of complex concepts and improve their analytical skills, many showing original insight. Achievement is very good.

#### English Literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well from a low attainment base as a result of good teaching.

- Students receive a great deal of individual support following careful monitoring of progress, but the most able students are not always fully stretched.
- Some marking needs to be more rigorous.
- Very good leadership has created a strong team of teachers.

#### **Commentary**

149. Current standards in both A-level literature and A-level language and literature are better than the results of previous years might suggest. A-level language and literature has been on offer for the last two years and results have been well below average. A level literature results have declined from below average in 1998 to well below more recently. Retention on both courses has been low, but current numbers show a noticeable improvement. Attainment on entry to these courses is modest: very few students come with high grades at GCSE.
150. In contrast, standards in the current AS-level language and literature group are in line with expectations and recruitment is very healthy. Students are well-motivated, interested and hard-working and achievement is good. Students admit to struggling with the new demands of A-level work, but are developing an analytical approach to texts and the use of language. Some essays contain too many basic errors of literacy and style is inappropriate. Standards are below average in the much smaller Year 13 group. Students have less positive attitudes, several admitting they have been discouraged by earlier difficulties. Achievement in this atypical group is unsatisfactory.
151. In the A-level literature course standards overall are in line with expectations. Year 12 students respond well to difficult texts, helped by their teacher's clear explanations. Many lack confidence to articulate their ideas and are reluctant to use literary terminology. By Year 13 critical insights are more assured and many students write detailed, well-expressed essays, showing close knowledge of texts as well as sound understanding of critical theory. Though few students gain high grades, achievement overall is good. In both courses there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
152. There is consistently good teaching and learning on both courses. All teachers have good subject expertise, skilled questioning is used to check for understanding and to ensure further precision of thought, while well-planned lessons with a variety of activities maintain students' interest. Some teachers use imaginative methods to convey abstract concepts and to engage students actively in their learning. Assessment is used effectively to monitor progress and students are given a high level of individual support. Teachers are anxious not to discourage students who find A-level work difficult, but this results in inconsistent marking that sometimes lacks rigour and ignores errors of style, spelling and grammar. Higher attaining students need a different level of challenge so that more are helped to gain high grades.
153. Very good leadership has helped to create a strong team of committed teachers and a supportive ethos based on a sensitive understanding of students' individual learning needs.

#### **Language and literacy across the curriculum in the sixth form**

154. Sixth form students have generally satisfactory language and literacy skills. All courses give continuing attention to matter of literacy. In art, science, religious education and ICT for example, inspectors noted good support for extended writing, together with opportunities to practise and hone skills of discussion and oral presentation. Students have opportunity to re-take GCSE English as part of their sixth form programme. Extra-curricular opportunities for drama, debate and public speaking further develop students' skills and interests.

## French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Contact with native speakers and the wealth of authentic materials provided promotes learning and enhances interest.
- Students display positive attitudes and participate willingly.
- There are too few opportunities to speak at length and from memory.
- Insufficient attention is paid to independent reading.

### Commentary

155. As numbers studying French in the sixth form are small valid comparisons with national figures are not possible. There have been no A or B grades over the last three years.
156. Standards and achievement are both satisfactory and reflect individual capabilities. The range, breadth and challenge of topics for discussion, such as poverty, war, the media and the environment, allow students to develop their awareness and understanding of contemporary issues and express their views on them. Although they participate willingly orally they often do so briefly rather than at sufficient length. Students see the fascination and relevance of French as a gateway to culture and communication. In one lesson observed students viewed clips from a variety of French television channels, which enhanced their interest in the foreign culture as well as their listening skills. Listening skills are a strength. They are beginning to develop a wide variety of structures and breadth of vocabulary to improve their written assignments in which they have to justify their opinions. However their reading is not wide enough.
157. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory. Teaching is best when the students are actively involved and required to speak at length and are exposed to a variety of authentic materials. Other strengths of the teaching include constant use of the foreign language and effective formative comments on written assignments to help them progress further. Teachers make excellent reference to the requirements of the exam board and exam technique. Students benefit from frequent contact with native speakers of French who provide a wealth of cultural knowledge. Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses well. All groups of students achieve in line with their capabilities, especially as teachers pay good attention to the differing needs of students and provide extension material to challenge as necessary. Students' behaviour is very good and attitudes are positive.
158. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The course is well planned and organised and a wealth of authentic materials is provided.
159. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Students now perform in line with their capability, difficulties with grammar are being addressed and students are developing linguistic confidence.

## MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus subjects were mathematics, biology and chemistry. Physics was sampled. In the lesson observed, the teaching was good and achievement was also good for the majority of students.

## Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving at A-level with increased numbers of students choosing mathematics and a more promising retention rate from Year 12 to 13.
- Teaching is very good. Experienced knowledgeable teachers plan well and prepare quality materials, although with few personal development activities.
- Marking of students' work is very good, with detailed corrections and constructive comments.
- Students have positive attitudes, most show enthusiasm and work hard.

### Commentary

160. Mathematics A-level is offered in two option blocks, enabling a greater choice and combination of subjects, although in Year 13 this year very small classes result as many students left the course or the sixth form during or at the end of Year 12. Students wishing to study AS over two years are catered for well, and a GCSE re-sit class enables students to improve their grade.
161. Examination results at A-level have consistently been below national averages. All students completing the course in 2003 passed, but there were no A grades, although the proportion of B grades increased. Comparison of AS-level standards with national averages is invalid, as few completed the course. GCSE re-sit results in 2003 were close to national averages. There is no significant difference between the results of male or female students.
162. Standards of work seen are in line with national expectations in Year 12 and 13. Achievement is good overall, from a lower than average attainment on entry to A-level courses. Although the proportion of higher GCSE grades at the end of Year 11 has been above the national average in the last two years, there have been no A\* grades. Predictions of results are based on average GCSE scores, which in all cases are below each student's actual mathematics grade, giving a misleading impression of progress through the A-level modules. The groups studying AS over two year are small and struggling; achievement is satisfactory but standards are below average, especially for the pure mathematics modules.
163. Teaching is very good, with a team of well qualified and experienced teachers for the A-level courses. Strengths include precise planning and preparation of high quality materials. Hypothesis testing was introduced very well to two Year 13 students by clear verbal explanation and use of the interactive whiteboard, with annotations. Real-life contexts were used in the examples, especially effective in stimulating students' interest by the case study of drugs to combat obesity. The teacher flexibly adapted the pace of the lesson to deal with misconceptions about random tables, demonstrating excellent support of students. Copies of the teachers' presentations are included in students' worksheets, used well by the other Year 13 A-level class developing concepts of the Poisson distribution approximates to the normal distribution. Although the pace was fast the teacher checked regularly that students were 'happy' with understanding her arguments and could reproduce the reasoning.
164. Excellent verbal explanation combined with practical demonstration and clear board-work helped Year 12 students understand and use integration to calculate volumes of revolution. Their homework to prepare a presentation of answers to 'nasty' questions is intended to develop personal skills, a learning activity not frequently used by the mathematics faculty. Although attitudes are positive and students work very hard, many showing interest and enthusiasm, there are few opportunities for them to take responsibility for their own learning. Students enjoy particularly the research involved in the coursework module, showing initiative, good ICT skills and gains in wider knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

165. Assessment procedures are good, and thorough data analysis is used well to inform planning. Marking of students' work is very good. Detailed corrections, constructive comments and model answers provided help students know how to improve. Students, who recognise that they receive good support and guidance, appreciate oral feedback during lessons and tutorial sessions.
166. Leadership is good. The head of faculty is an excellent role model as a teacher and very knowledgeable on developments in mathematics. Staff development is a focus, and many less experienced and trainee teachers benefit from his support and guidance. Management is good, although the schemes of work and other documentation need development. As yet there are no policies or guidelines on teaching and learning methods, nor inclusion of social, spiritual, cultural or citizenship elements of mathematics. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum in the sixth form**

167. This year the mathematics faculty does not provide any other courses, nor an emphasis on numeracy across the sixth form curriculum. The wide range of course offered in the sixth form places differing demands on students' mathematical skills. The competence of students in mathematics is satisfactory and appropriate to course requirements.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good overall, and resources are used very effectively.
- Students' attitudes are very good and they are very positive about the course; they work hard and achieve well.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and the planning of lessons is very good.
- The assessment of students' work is very good and is used effectively to support learning.
- Links with other institutions and opportunities for extra-curricular activity in biology are not well developed.

#### **Commentary**

168. There has been a recent increase in the number of students entering the A-level course. Transfer rates are very good and typically all but one or two students on the AS course continue on to the following year and, once settled, they remain for the duration. All students gain pass grades in A-level examinations at the end of Year 13 and this is better than the national average, although the proportion of those gaining the higher grades of A and B is below. In 2003, the proportion of girls achieving the higher grades was in line with the national average, and more than three times that of boys. The standards students gain at AS-level enable them to continue with reasonable success to A-level.
169. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above the national average, and achievement is good for most students. Year 12 students have good understanding of the effects of smoking on the gaseous exchange system and the link with pulmonary disease. In their work on the structure and function of the brain, Year 13 students show good understanding of neurological degeneration and are able to talk with confidence about the symptoms and possible causes of Alzheimer's Disease. They also display maturity in way they take notes from a very professional presentation.
170. The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of very good practice. Teachers use a range of strategies well and they have high levels of expectation. Lesson planning and laboratory organisation are very well done, resources are used effectively, and the frequent use

of focused questions helps students to learn. Teachers are very good role models and their enthusiasm is reflected in the positive attitude and high quality of work of students in both year groups.

171. Leadership is good and the management of the subject is very good. There is a keen sense of common purpose and teachers and technicians have an excellent knowledge and understanding of biology. They encourage very high standards of commitment and, in response student engagement and productivity are generally high. Guided by staff, most students produce well-organised folders that contain detailed and useful notes.
172. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the way biology is organised and taught. There has been some recent change in staffing and an increase in confidence in the use of ICT by teachers. Schemes of work have been revised and rewritten, a practical examination has been introduced and additional texts and lesson plans are regularly produced. Assessment is very good and supports learning well. However, other than opportunities for revision there are no extra-curricular activities specifically for biology students and links with other institutions are not well developed. Biology is very popular with students and attitudes are positive.

## **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good overall; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and the planning and organisation of lessons are very good.
- Students' attitudes are very positive; they work hard and achieve well.
- The assessment of students' work is very good and is effective in supporting learning.
- Information technology and other resources are used very effectively.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activity in chemistry and links with other institutions are not well developed.

### **Commentary**

173. The number of students entering the A-level course is increasing. Very few students are lost from courses in Years 12 and 13 and the majority remain throughout. In 2003, all students gained pass grades in A-level examinations and this is better than the national average, although there are few higher grades. Success in examinations at the end Year 12 prepares students well for study at A-level. There is an improving trend and, even though student numbers are small, there is no apparent difference in the achievements of boys and girls.
174. Achievement is good for most students, and the standard of work seen during the inspection is in line with the national average. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have well developed practical and organisational skills. In Year 12, well-organised practical work supports their understanding of the catalytic oxidation of alcohols. Similarly, students in Year 13 show good understanding of the process of monitoring reaction rates and are able to talk with confidence about the practical determination of a rate constant.
175. The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of very good practice. Levels of expectation and challenge are high and there is a good range of teaching strategies. Lesson planning and laboratory organisation are very thorough and resources are used effectively. Health and safety issues are emphasised and the frequent use of focused questions and regular homework helps students to achieve well. Chemistry teachers and technicians work very well together with a common purpose and students respond very well to their enthusiastic and engaging teaching style.

176. Leadership is good. The management of the way chemistry is organised and taught is very good, and in particular the use of ICT in administration and documentation to staff and students on CD-ROM. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of chemistry and there is a strong commitment to very high standards. In response, student engagement is high and they produce good quality work in well-organised folders.
177. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. New schemes of work and supportive material have been introduced and new staff have joined the department. Information technology is used very well in the teaching and in the presentation of material to students. Assessment and its use to inform and support students are well established. Together with additional textbooks and software, these developments support learning well. However, links with other institutions and extra-curricular activities are not well developed, although chemistry is a popular subject and students' attitudes are very positive.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The focus was on AS and A-level information and communication technology

Overall provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in AS-level are above average.
- Confident well-informed and effective teaching helps students to build up their knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and students and positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students' contributions to oral discussion are weak.
- Students' skills in planning, organising and documenting work need improvement.

### **Commentary**

178. Results in 2003 AS-level information and communication technology were above national average and an improvement on the previous years. The majority of students obtained grades in line with predictions and some reached higher levels. A-level results in 2003 were significantly below average, in part owing to staff illness and the syllabus studied. There is now more stability in staffing and a different syllabus has been introduced.
179. Standards in AS-level and A-level are above average. Students in AS and A-level courses write effective specifications for coursework, as seen in the task on creating a website for a local design company. They explain well what they see as the task requirements and how they use the technical facilities available to produce good work. Coursework meets requirements and aspects of it reflect the high expectations that teachers have of students' work. Higher attaining students in Years 12 and 13 use technical language well in oral answers. Work seen in class shows that students are acquiring good skills across the full range of application of ICT. Achievement is good.
180. Teaching and learning are good; teachers have very good rapport with their students, who mostly take a mature attitude to their studies. A very high level of subject expertise ensures confident teaching at a good pace. Some of the teaching is very good. For example, in Year 13, difficult concepts such as the process of normalisation in database management systems are explained with clarity and sensitivity. Excellent use is made of the use of data projectors to enhance learning and understanding. Explanations of theory are well linked to practical examples and students are well supported. In a Year 12 lesson on security of data and back up systems well-focused questioning probed students' understanding and sustained their

interest. Teachers monitor students' individual tasks closely, guiding them well, yet leave overall responsibility for the work with the students themselves. Deadlines for work are reinforced well in lesson time.

181. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Students' needs are addressed and courses provided to match the range. They value the range of opportunities offered in ICT lessons and the way the school has helped them develop their personal and social skills.

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

182. Students in the sixth form make good use of ICT in their courses. Whilst they are not given specific training they have clearly developed good levels of competence in ICT whilst in the main school and these are adequate to support their course requirements.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus subjects were history and religious education. Sociology and psychology are both taught within the sixth form and are increasing in their popularity. One lesson in each was seen during the inspection and teaching and learning were both at least good with students achieving well.

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently very good teaching enables students to achieve well in relation to their abilities.
- Limitations in their literacy skills restrict many students' achievement.
- Very good leadership and management are raising the profile of the subject.
- Discursive methods develop students' independence and confidence in their learning well.
- Students are very well supported in their studies.

### **Commentary**

183. Numbers opting for the subject in the sixth form have been very small so national comparisons are insecure. In the two most recent years, all candidates obtained pass grades at A-level. In 2003 all six candidates were successful, but only one gained an upper grade.
184. In Year 13 standards of work seen are below average. However as their attainment at the start of the course was significantly below that usually seen, students' achievement is good. In a lesson on Stalin's personality cult students articulated their views convincingly and quoted valid evidence to support them. However the quality, depth and detail of understanding which students reveal orally are not always reflected in their written work. Students' skills in the analysis and evaluation of sources are relatively underdeveloped and their files reveal great variation in their organisational and literacy skills.
185. Students are uniformly positive about their enjoyment of the subject and in both years are opting for it in increasing numbers. They appreciate and value highly the accessibility of their teachers and the support offered by them. Classroom relationships are very good, enhanced by the use of humour on both sides.
186. Teaching and learning in sixth form history are consistently very good. Lessons are very well planned and resources carefully chosen to stimulate students' interest and challenge their understanding. Students learn very well because they benefit from teachers' considerable subject expertise and the variety in their teaching styles. Written work is marked regularly

and helpful guidance given on how to effect improvement although there is scope for more rigorous correction of students' too frequent errors in spelling and grammar. Additionally, students would benefit from reading more widely around the subject.

187. Leadership and management are very good. Trips and visits broaden students' cultural experiences and raise their aspirations. The head of department has energetically tackled the weaknesses referred to in the last report and the subject has sustained good improvement.

## **Religious Education**

The quality of provision in religious studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The increasingly high standards achieved by those who opt to study the subject at AS and A-level.
- Teachers plan lessons well and make good use of a range of resources.
- The marking of work is very thorough and makes a significant contribution to students' learning.
- Courses are well chosen to meet the needs of students.
- Only a minority of all sixth form students have access to a meaningful religious studies programme to meet statutory requirements.
- Greater participation in class discussion by all students is needed.

### **Commentary**

188. Since the last inspection religious studies has been introduced as an examination subject at AS and A-level, with a viable number choosing to follow the courses. The school is also working towards providing a meaningful course for all sixth formers but currently not all have access to, or attend, the limited provision available.
189. The two examination courses are well chosen to provide continuity from GCSE and to meet students' needs. Since the first examinations in 2001 all students have gained a pass grade. In 2003 over half of the AS students gained A and B grades. In work seen during inspection Year 12 students continue to achieve well. They are able to extract key ideas from text, summarise and articulate concepts well. A-level students are equally confident in their understanding of philosophical concepts such as the falsification theory. The results of an extended examination essay, and the work seen, would indicate that these students are reaching a high standard and achieving very well.
190. Teaching and learning overall are good. In lessons they range from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have a thorough grasp of their subject and in the best lessons are very good at explaining ideas to the students. Teachers know the students' strengths and weaknesses and cater for their individual needs very well. The quality of marking is very good as is the monitoring and individual feedback given to students. Teachers produce good background reading and support material for the students and refer them to key published texts and to sources on the Internet. Lessons, and the work set for further study, help students to develop their own study skills. Students respond positively to the work and show interest and commitment. In some lessons insufficient encouragement is given to those less willing to participate in discussion and sometimes there is not enough reinforcement of key concepts.
191. In the short six-week general module, students sample aspects of religious philosophy in relation to Christianity and Buddhism. Lessons are well planned and a good range of resources used to stimulate thought and discussion. Most students in a small Year 12 group were able to successfully draw on their previous study to discuss the implications of the cycle

of Samasar in Buddhism. They showed a sound knowledge of the issues and the lesson made a good contribution to their spiritual development.

192. There has been very good development in the subject and there is a clear vision of established core RE for all students as well as a wider take-up of the subject and for improving the standards achieved in both.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

There were no focus subjects in this area.

One lesson in design and technology textiles was seen during the inspection. Students achieved well as a result of very good teaching in well-resourced and spacious accommodation.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus subject was business studies including courses leading to intermediate GNVQ, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level qualifications.

### **Business Studies**

Overall provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below the national average on the GNVQ course but average elsewhere.
- Results at A-level in 2003 were well above the national average.
- Students' attitudes are good in class but the sometimes fail to complete set reading and other tasks.
- Few students take the AVCE course and this limits the range of learning opportunities.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and many have experience of business or industry that enhances learning.
- ICT is used well by all students and they have good access during lessons but they are not always sufficiently independent in their learning.
- Business links are being developed and the department is led and managed well.

### **Commentary**

193. Standards in the GNVQ intermediate course in 2003 were below the national average and relatively few students enter. AVCE results were average but standards at A2 were well above the national average. The trend is for standards to be close to the national average, as they are in the present Years 12 and 13, this represents good achievement overall as standards on entry to courses are below the national average.
194. Retention is good and students adapt well to the demands of a higher-level courses especially as not all have taken the subject at GCSE. Students participate well in lessons but they do not always complete homework tasks. They use computer resources well but they are not taking enough responsibility for their own learning or taking a leading role in class. There are more male students overall but no clear differences in attainment. Individually, female students achieve well.
195. This is a successful and increasingly popular subject because teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and some are able to use recent experience in business to provide real examples. A key feature in teaching is the high quality of resources and presentations in class that model the standards in business and industry. The challenge and pace of work in lessons are good. Students enjoy a range of business related activities and although they do not have formal placements they make good use of information from their

part-time employment. Teachers are skilled at questioning, to assess understanding and encourage higher-level thinking for example when helping students understand what is meant by quality. Student assignments indicate a good grasp of business theory and a clear understanding of the examination board criteria because these aspects of the course are very well taught. Although the subject is attracting more students fewer are now choosing to take the AVCE course. Learning in Year 13 is affected by this limit on group and team based activities.

196. The department is led and managed well. Resources are good and used very well. There is a well-planned programme of visits and information about students' progress is easily accessible. Very good support is available for trainee and newly qualified teachers. Planning is good and teamwork is a major factor in the department's success.

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

The focus subject was art. Theatre studies was sampled. Results at A-level have been below average, with numbers too small in some years to make valid national comparisons. Standards in the three lessons observed were in line with expectations. Performances are strong, showing verve and imagination, but the gap between performance and coursework noted in the previous report still exists. Students achieve well because of the expert teaching they receive. Teachers make their expectations clear and students are set challenging tasks, to which they respond with enjoyment. Teachers' very good questioning skills prompt students into reflecting, explaining and justifying their interpretations of texts, but no opportunities for in-depth self-evaluation were noted in the lessons observed.

### **Art**

Provision for art is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good and sometimes excellent teaching, which promotes high standards of independent learning and leads to very good individual achievements.
- The students' very positive attitudes to their studies and their commitment to the research and development of their project work, which ensures that they achieve to their potential.
- The very good leadership of a strong team of teachers who are committed to raising standards in the department.
- The very broad and well-balanced curriculum, including some innovative computer art, which forms a rich resource base for learning.

### **Commentary**

197. The numbers of students entering the sixth form are growing and a higher proportion of them have achieved very well in the GCSE examination in 2003. This is not yet reflected in AS and A-level examination results, which were below national averages on very small entry figures in 2003, although a rise on the previous year's figures.

198. The very good and occasionally excellent teaching is raising standards and there is clear evidence of improving achievement, moving strongly towards improved examination results in future years. Teachers are in full command of their subject and are confident and enthusiastic in teaching it. They foster independent learning very effectively and the range of research and development of individual ideas and practices is impressive. Male students remain underrepresented in art, but the recent innovations in computer art, taught from a very secure knowledge base, are attracting them to the exciting and innovative field of digital art and animation. Students produce some outstanding work in photomontage and digital imaging.

199. The commitment and positive attitudes of students, and their excellent behaviour in lessons, ensure that there is a pleasant, industrious and creative atmosphere for learning. They respond very well to the very high expectations that teachers have of their research and individual development of their work. They are creative and prepared to take risks in working with more demanding media, which results in some refreshingly innovative work.
200. Although the purpose built department is well designed, it does not afford a separate space for a sixth form studio, in which students can work in their own ways and their own time. The lack of a qualified art technician restricts the development of three-dimensional studies, in particular ceramics, although both teachers and students give their time to keep the curriculum broad, balanced and effective.

### **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

201. There were no focus subjects in this area. One lesson was seen in VCE advanced travel and tourism where enthusiastic students were making very good progress as a result of very good teaching in a small group. Physical education courses were also sampled. Provision is good. Teaching and learning are very good and numbers on courses are increasing. Standards in A-level examinations are consistently above average

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

202. There were no focus subjects in this area. One lesson was observed for the AVCE health and social care course where a very good standard of work was being produced by very interested students as a result of very good teaching.

## 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>
Students' achievement	3	3
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	2	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	1	1
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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

