

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSBROOK SCHOOL

Deanshanger

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122060

Headteacher: Mr A Howlett

Lead inspector: Dr A R Beaver

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 October 2003

Inspection number: 259184

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	988
School address:	Stratford Road Deanshanger Near Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK19 6HN
Telephone number:	01908 563468
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr S Parkin
Date of previous inspection:	25 February 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Kingsbrook School is located in Deanshanger, near to Milton Keynes. Most students come from local villages - Cosgrave, Deanshanger, Old Stratford, Paulerspury, Potterspury, Yardley Gobion, and one in three is from Milton Keynes. The school provides for 988 girls and boys, of whom 131 are sixth form students. There are similar numbers of girls and boys in the school, and numbers are similar to those when it was inspected in 2002. An average number of students join or leave the school other than at the usual ages of 11, 16 or above. Most students come from backgrounds that are generally favoured, and the percentage of students known to be eligible for free meals is well below average. Most students are white, but a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Indian sub-continent. A few students are at an early stage in learning English. The percentage of students identified by the school to have special educational needs is below average, and considerably reduced since the inspection of 2002. These students mainly have specific or moderate learning, or emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few have physical and sensory impairments. An average percentage has statements of special need. Students' attainment on entry to the school at age 11 is above average and, in some year groups, well above average. Students who enter the sixth form often have standards of attainment below those usually found for entry to higher level courses. In the 2002 inspection, the school was found to have serious weaknesses, mainly in the quality of some teaching, the use of assessment and the underachievement of significant numbers of students and sixth form students.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Lead inspector	Business (sixth form)
9504	Mrs S Gurney	Lay inspector	
3958	Ms M Cawdron	Team inspector	
32115	Mr J S Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form)
8501	Mr P Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)
27416	Mr T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
1994	Ms H Olds	Team inspector	History History (sixth form)
15971	Mr M Pye	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education Physical education (sixth form)
15678	Mrs J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education
12721	Mr D Riddle	Team inspector	
3731	Mr W G Robson	Team inspector	English Drama English (sixth form)
31701	Mr G Rudland	Team inspector	Music
6432	Dr V M Sewter	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
18638	Mr C Shaw	Team inspector	Art Art (sixth form)
11300	Mr B Smith	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs Geography
3390	Dr K Thomas	Team inspector	Psychology (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Kingsbrook School has greatly improved in a very short time and is **an effective school**. Its students receive a good quality of education. The teaching and learning are good. Girls and boys of all abilities and backgrounds achieve at least as well as they should. Since 2002, standards have improved and are now above average. The headteacher provides vision, drive and direction for the further development of the school. Key staff and governors contribute increasingly well to school leadership. Management is good and set to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has improved greatly since its 2002 inspection.
- Students' standards are above average; they achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. There is a strong sense of purpose to raise standards further.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below average and students are not yet achieving the standards that they should.
- The headteacher vigorously challenges complacency and demands improvement in school performance. The leadership of key staff and governors has become increasingly effective.
- Overall, the teaching is good, much is very good, and students learn well.
- Students are responsible, have positive attitudes, enjoy good relationships and usually - but not always - behave well.
- The National Strategies for literacy, numeracy and ICT are not coordinated well enough across the curriculum.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship are not yet well enough developed in all subjects.

Since the last inspection in February 2002, when the school was judged to have serious weaknesses, very good improvement has been made. Standards have risen. English results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests have improved and achievement in the subject is good. Boys' standards have risen and boys attained their best ever results in the 2003 GCSE examinations. Overall, teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Provision in art is now good and satisfactory in design and technology. Provision in ICT has improved, but students do not yet achieve well enough in this subject. The teaching for students with special educational needs is good and well directed; they learn well. Assessment is used with much greater effect to monitor performance and to raise students' achievement. In general, subjects are now adequately resourced.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools* are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9. 2002 is the latest year for which national comparisons are validated, but some reference is made below to results in 2003.*

Overall, achievement is good. Students reached above average standards in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2002. Their result in mathematics was very good. Standards were sustained in 2003. In GCSE examinations, standards in 2002 were the school's highest ever and although not as high in 2003, the result was better than the school's average of recent years. Results compared well with those of similar schools. Boys reached their highest standard ever in the 2003 GCSE examinations. During the inspection, students were seen to achieve well in Years 7 to 9;

achievement in Year 10 was better than in Year 11 and overall satisfactory in these years – as in mathematics and science. Achievement in English is good throughout the school. Students are not yet achieving well enough in ICT where their standards are below average. Challenging targets to be achieved are set and usually reached. In the sixth form, students, overall, have below average attainment on entry to advanced courses and they achieve well to reach average standards.

Students' **attitudes to school** and to others are **good**. They **behave well** and **attend regularly**. Students' **moral and social development** is **very good**. Their **spiritual understanding** and self-knowledge and their **cultural development** are **good** and **well developed**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. The **teaching** is good in Years 7 to 11. Students are usually well challenged to learn successfully. They are increasingly expected to use initiative and skills to think for themselves in their **learning**.

The **curriculum**, the **care and support** students receive and **links with parents** are good. Links with other schools and the **accommodation** and **resources for learning** are satisfactory. Overall, provision meets students' needs well and enables them to achieve at least as well as they should.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is very good and relentlessly challenges any complacency. He leads the school with energy and clear vision for its future development. The headteacher and senior staff are a new and increasingly effective team. Subject leadership is generally good. **Governors** have improved their leadership of the school since the last inspection and are increasingly effective, but they do not meet all statutory requirements and, in this respect, governance is unsatisfactory. **Management** is good; teaching and learning are very closely monitored.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally pleased with the school, although some have concerns about changes of staff and the effects on their children's progress. Students are pleased to attend the school and want even higher standards of behaviour and even greater opportunity to achieve well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve further students' standards and achievement throughout the main school and sixth form.
- Raise standards and achievement in ICT.
- Coordinate more closely the application of the National Strategy for literacy, numeracy and ICT in all subjects to help improve students' achievement.
- Extend students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship in all subjects.
- *Increase recruitment of students to the sixth form.*
- *Extend the sixth form curriculum to provide courses below advanced standard.*

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide all students with the opportunity for an act of worship every day.
- Fulfil requirements to disapply from the National Curriculum those students not taking a modern foreign language in Year 10.
- *Meet the statutory requirement to provide students in the sixth form with religious education.*

SIXTH FORM

The sixth form provides advanced courses for 131 students almost all of whom attended the main school before joining the sixth form.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The **sixth form is effective** and has improved considerably since the last inspection, when it was judged to be providing students with an inadequate quality of education. Students now achieve well and reach at least the standards that might reasonably be expected from their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Provision is **cost-effective**. The teaching and learning are very good. Students' performance and progress are much more closely monitored than in 2002. Since the last inspection, assessment data are used more effectively to help students to achieve the standards that they should. Provision for ICT is satisfactory. However, no more students have yet been recruited to join the sixth form, the curriculum lacks courses below advanced standard and although a conference has been provided, students do not receive their full entitlement to religious education.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The sixth form has improved well since the 2002 inspection.
- Very good teaching enables students to learn successfully and to achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning in lessons and some make a very good contribution to the main school community.
- The good leadership of the sixth form has clear vision and a sense of purpose to raise achievement further. Management is providing more direction and guidance to require students to work in a more effective and independent way.
- No additional recruitment of students to the sixth form has taken place.
- The curriculum provides a good range of advanced courses, but no courses are yet available below advanced standard.

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 in full.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English , with very good teaching that enables students to achieve well. Satisfactory in French , where teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well. Very few students of German; very good teaching and learning were seen in Year 13; satisfactory in Year 12.
Mathematics	Good . Very good leadership and very skilled teaching are raising standards that are now very good in Year 13.
Science	Satisfactory in biology , where students achieve well to reach average standards. Good teaching and successful learning by the few students involved were seen in physics. A chemistry lesson seen was satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory . Satisfactory teaching enables students to achieve in line with expectations.
Humanities	Very good in history , where very good teaching enables students to achieve good standards. Very good in psychology , where very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes enable them to learn very well. In sociology, teaching and learning were very good, and in geography, teaching and learning were good.
Health and social care	Students achieve very well and reach above average standards.

Visual and performing arts and media	Good in art and design , where good teaching helps students achieve above average standards. Students achieve well in drama, where good teaching and learning were seen. In music an increasing number of students of a wide range of abilities achieve well because of good teaching. In film studies students achieve well despite unsatisfactory resources and accommodation.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good in physical education . A good curriculum and good teaching help students to achieve satisfactorily. Good teaching was seen in travel and tourism, and very good teaching and learning in leisure and recreation.
Business	Good in business where good teaching and learning ensure that students achieve well and reach average standards in all advanced courses. No lessons could be seen in economics; students attain average standards in A-level examinations.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good **advice, guidance and support** to enable them to choose courses. The support they get to ensure that they achieve their best has recently become more focused and specific - with the higher expectations of new management. The recently introduced system for the setting and monitoring of targets to guide students' progress has not yet had time to be proved effective.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The **leadership** has very clear vision for the future development of the sixth form. It is effective in challenging complacency and demanding a rise in the standards achieved. **Management** is effective in promoting higher expectations of what students should achieve. More rigorous monitoring of students' working practices is taking place to enable them to achieve well. Best use is made of the adequate accommodation. Management has not yet increased recruitment of students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are generally pleased to attend the sixth form and think they are on the right courses. Some are having difficulty in adjusting to the working practices necessary at this level and to the higher expectations that leadership and management hold for them to achieve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, girls and boys of all abilities and social and ethnic backgrounds **achieve** well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. **Standards** reached are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in the work currently seen in Years 10 and 11. *In the sixth form, students achieve well to reach average standards.*

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although students achieve well in most subjects, they do not reach the standards that they should in ICT throughout the school.
- Students achieved good standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 and 2003.
- GCSE examination results were well above average in 2002 and the school's best ever performance. Good results were also gained in 2003, when boys achieved their highest ever performance.
- Although improved since the 2002 inspection, standards in design and technology are below average.
- Students achieve good standards in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9, but they do not achieve well enough in Years 10 and 11.
- In the sixth form, students achieve well, other than in the new Year 12 ICT course where their achievement is currently satisfactory.

Commentary

1. When students enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, their attainment is often below that expected by the end of Year 6. They make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Their results in the end of Year 9 2002 National Curriculum tests were well above average in mathematics, above average in science, and average in English. English results improved considerably in 2003, and mathematics and science results were similar to those of 2002. Overall, results compare satisfactorily with those of similar schools. *(Similar schools for Year 9 are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 6.)* The trend in performance in the national tests over five years has been in line with the rising national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.9 (31.6)	33.3 (33)
Mathematics	37.1 (35.2)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	35.1 (33.3)	33.1 (33)

There were 187 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2002 is the latest year for which validated results are available.

2. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to progress well enough to gain well above average results in the 2002 GCSE examinations. These results were much improved on those of 2001. The school attained its best ever performance in 2002. Results compare well with those of similar schools. *(Similar schools for Year 11 are those whose students achieved similarly at the end of Year 9).* The trend in performance in GCSE examinations in the last five years has been above the rising national trend. The school sets itself challenging targets and is becoming increasingly effective in attaining these. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were not as

high as in 2002, but compared well with the average standard attained in the last three years. The inspection of 2002 required the school to improve boys' performance and it did so very well in 2003, when boys reached their highest ever standard in those examinations.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	58 (53)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	37.6 (N/A)	37.6 (N/A)

There were 169 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2002 is the latest year for which validated results are available. 2003 results are referred to in the text.

3. In the work seen during the inspection, girls and boys of all backgrounds achieved well in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, their achievement was satisfactory. In some lessons seen during the inspection, some students - especially those in Year 11 - did not achieve as well as they should have done because their attitudes and behaviour were not positive enough.
4. The progress and achievement made throughout the school by students with special educational needs are good. The progress of students on the register of special needs is carefully monitored across all years. Initial testing ensures that suitable targets are set and records show that given special arrangements - such as extra time in examinations and help with reading questions - students do well in GCSE examinations. In lessons, students achieve well and, in some mixed ability groups, as well as their peers. For example, they achieve very well in religious education; in a top ability mathematics class, one statemented student achieved very well by working to an individual lesson plan. Few students are at an early stage of learning English, in Years 9 and 10. The support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants in mainstream classes and in withdrawal groups enables them to make good progress. They achieve highly – as seen recently in the success of a group of Japanese students. The school centrally identifies gifted students and the planning of lessons generally identifies the differing learning needs of students so that they achieve at an appropriate level.
5. Students achieve well in English throughout the school and their performance has greatly improved since the 2002 inspection. In mathematics, their achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. They use linguistic and mathematical skills well across the curriculum, but whole-school coordination of use of these skills across all subjects is insufficient.
6. The only subject in which students' achievement is not at least satisfactory overall is ICT. Standards are below average in lessons specific to the subject. In use of ICT in other subjects, students' achievement is just satisfactory. In the last inspection, achievement and standards in ICT were judged to be poor; consequently, there has been satisfactory improvement in the relatively short time since February 2002. However, students' achievement and the standards they are currently reaching are still below what they should be. There has also been improved achievement in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 since the last inspection, and provision in the subject overall is now satisfactory. However, achievement and standards in Years 10 and 11 remain below what they could be. The good achievement of students in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9 contrasts with unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

7. Students achieve well in the sixth form. On average, their standards on entry to advanced courses are below those usually found, and they reach average standards in these courses. Consequently, most students reach at least the standards predicted from their earlier attainment, and many gain higher standards than might reasonably be expected. Average standards were gained in AS, A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) courses in 2002. Similar standards were gained in 2003. In general, students reach standards in Year 12 AS examinations high enough to enable them to continue to Year 13 A-level studies with confidence.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	36.6	36.2
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	99.4	98
Average point score per student	79.3	76.8

There were 64 students in the year group. 2002 is the latest year for which validated results are available.

8. In the ten subjects reported in full in this report, students are generally achieving well, except in the new AVCE ICT course, where standards are below average. However, given these ICT students' prior attainment in GCSE examinations, their achievement is satisfactory. The few students studying French achieve very well. In the other subjects that were sampled during the inspection, students also generally achieve well.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' **attitudes** to the school and to learning are good. The **behaviour** of most students is good and supported by effective policies and management. **Attendance** is satisfactory. Their **moral and social development** is very good and their **spiritual** self-knowledge and **cultural development** are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes to school and are becoming effective, independent learners.
- Behaviour is generally good and many examples of very good behaviour and attitudes were seen in class.
- Some students disrupt learning in some classes.
- Relationships among students are good.
- Students willingly undertake responsibilities which they carry out efficiently.

Commentary

9. Attendance is satisfactory but has decreased slightly every year since 1999-2000, when it was good. The school is active in ensuring that attendance is at least satisfactory. Year coordinators regularly monitor attendance and the education welfare officer checks weekly. Punctuality is good and lateness is often caused by the late arrival of school buses.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2001-2

Authorised absence	
School data	7.7
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.9
National data	1.2

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

- The vast majority of the students have positive attitudes to the school. In lessons they work well in groups and independently. Where the teaching is good, they listen carefully and show enthusiasm and commitment to their learning. In lessons, students' response is at least good and in some lessons it is excellent.
- Students on the register of special educational needs have positive attitudes in the vast majority of lessons. For example, in a Year 11 Certificate of Achievement English lesson, students with severe and moderate learning difficulties showed enthusiasm, good organisational skills and growing confidence and self-esteem in making presentations about their work experience. Students are well integrated into lessons and, on the occasions when they are withdrawn for additional support, they work very responsibly in a friendly atmosphere.
- A small minority of students sometimes behaves badly and disrupts lessons, especially where the teaching is less challenging. This behaviour was particularly noted in some Year 11 classes. Unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated and last year three boys had permanently to be excluded. Less serious offences led to a number of fixed term exclusions.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	950	42	3
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

- The behaviour of the vast majority of students, however, is good. Relationships are good. Students are happy at the school and feel safe. Students from different ethnic backgrounds relate well to each other and there is racial harmony across the school. As in all schools, there is occasional bullying but known bullying is not tolerated and students agree that it is swiftly and effectively dealt with.
- Students' spiritual development is good. Teachers help students to develop self-esteem, and in return students show confidence in contributing to discussions on spiritual themes, and most of them show an awareness and concern for each other in lesson activities. Students are developing their understanding of different values and beliefs in religious education through the

study of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. When given opportunities to reflect in assemblies and tutor time they respond well, as in an assembly taken by a visiting speaker from the local "Bridge Builders" group. However, despite guidance through the "Thought For The Day" booklet, these opportunities are not always available.

15. An understanding of right and wrong is very well developed. There is a clear code of conduct that students understand and accept, and staff and senior students provide very good examples of taking responsibility in school life. Teachers use opportunities well to make students think about moral issues, as shown in a Year 9 geography lesson when students imagined the repercussions of a major earthquake in Japan. Citizenship also makes a good contribution to students' moral development through discussions on asylum seeking. Most students have a respect for equipment, and in design and technology they consider the purpose of making things and the effective use of materials.
16. Social development is very good. Students are very successful in putting into practice the school's motto of 'working together'. Most understand the responsibilities of living in a community and they work very well together in groups and pairs in lessons and in drama and sporting activities. Students value other people's opinions, and respect their attempts to explain their thinking. Throughout the school, students are encouraged to take on responsibilities. They do so very well and become mature and responsible. The school council ensures that students' views are listened to and enables them to initiate change. Students give valuable help with a range of activities. Some become trained mentors and help younger students both with their work and with personal problems. A number of students have received the Princess Diana Award for achievements in and out of school. Each year group supports a charity of their choosing, which shows their concern for others.
17. Students' cultural development is good. Since the last inspection the school has placed more emphasis on cultural diversity, and students show a lively appreciation of their own and others' cultures. There is a very good range of different cultures and artefacts in art and religious education, and students experience a wide variety of music from around the world.

Sixth form

18. Attendance in the sixth form so far this year is satisfactory. Last year it was unsatisfactory and well below the rate of attendance of the main school. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored by the new head of sixth form. Currently there is evidence of unsatisfactory punctuality by a significant minority.
19. Students' attitudes in lessons seen were almost all at least good, and in many cases they were very good or excellent. Students appreciate the very good standard of the teaching and the range of subjects to choose from. They find the teachers approachable and helpful. They consider that their views are listened to but not necessarily responded to. Most students enjoy the sixth form. Some Year 13 students have found the changed expectations of management, with its clear emphasis on study, hard to get used to. A small group of boys especially are having difficulty adjusting to new requirements, but most students are now positive. Behaviour in the sixth form is good and there are no problems of bullying or harassment.
20. Sixth formers are very willing and efficient at taking on extra-curricular responsibilities. They give valuable help to younger students by acting as mentors.
21. Overall, the school makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of sixth form students. Students are pleased to accept responsibility. They volunteer as mentors and provide good role models for younger students. They are members of the school council, and support fund raising activities. They do sports coaching, run the main school drama clubs and help in the library. The school relies heavily on these reliable students who are becoming responsible young adults. Students generally are good

ambassadors for the school on outside visits. Students' personal development is good, but because the school does not yet make adequate provision for religious education in the sixth form, in this respect, their opportunity for spiritual development is restricted.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

In the main school, students receive a **good** quality of education. Provision is **consistently good in all main aspects**, but the accommodation and resources for learning and links with other schools are satisfactory. *In the sixth form, teaching and learning are **very good** and **other aspects of provision are satisfactory**.*

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** in the main school and **very good in the sixth form**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching meets all students' needs well and enables them to learn successfully.
- Teachers' expectations are suitably high and students of differing abilities are usually - but not always - well challenged to learn.
- Most lessons are well planned and resourced.
- Teachers' management of uncooperative students is occasionally not effective enough to ensure that they achieve the standards that they should.
- *The teaching in the sixth form is consistently very good.*

Commentary

22. Teaching and learning are good in the main school. All students' needs are well met; teachers show a good understanding of the learning needs of girls and boys of differing abilities. Students of all ethnic backgrounds learn equally well in line with their levels of ability. Teaching of the 112 lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 was a little better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 158 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	61 (39%)	50 (32%)	38 (24%)	6 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons across Years 7 to 13; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. Figures do not total 100 per cent because of rounding.

23. Overall, across Years 7 to 11, one third of the lessons seen were of at least very good quality. Two-thirds of the lessons seen were at least good. Three lessons in science, Spanish and religious education were examples of excellent practice. One lesson is described below:

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Example of outstanding practice

This was the last lesson for a Year 9 class of average competence in Spanish, in a series on clothes, fashions, colours and styles.

Students change from school uniform into multi-coloured, informal clothes. They prepare a 'clothes show'. To the delight of the class, the teacher theatrically models the type of performance expected: "Señor X lleva un pantalón de moda, blanco y holgado ...". Working together in pairs and threes, the students prepare descriptions of each other's outfits, using dictionaries, text-books and previous work. The teacher monitors, encourages and prompts corrections, entirely in Spanish. All the students are enthusiastic, busy and totally focused. Their presentations, about two minutes each, are video-recorded by a second teacher. The students perform very well, using extravagant gestures, pointing to the items mentioned. They are very motivated by the task, enjoying themselves so much that all inhibitions about using Spanish in front of the camera are swept away. They deliver their speech fluently, with authentic accents and intonation, and almost flawless accuracy. They are so proud of their efforts that they spend break watching the recording. This exciting lesson, full of good humour and fun, but well controlled and directed, celebrated and rewarded the successful learning of these students and ensured their high achievement.

24. In the inspection of 2002, teaching was judged to be a serious weakness because students did not learn well enough and their achievement was unsatisfactory. Since then, management has monitored teachers' work very closely and much training has been provided to enable teachers to enhance their skills. There have also been many changes of staff in the last two years, a matter of considerable anxiety to some parents with children in Year 11, who have had changes of teachers during some of their GCSE courses. However, the quality of teaching has improved considerably from that reported in the 2002 inspection and is now consistently good in most subjects. Teachers provide their classes with challenging work; learning is good and enables students to achieve at least the standards that they should. Increasingly, students are gaining the skills of thinking and working independently – without close direction from the teacher. Some teachers use ICT very well, but others lack the expertise to use it well enough.
25. Provision for special educational needs was a key issue at the last inspection. The use of individual education plans, and teaching and learning insufficiently adapted to students' needs were the main causes for concern. The coordinator for special educational needs and the school have dealt well with these issues. Individual education plans are now properly drawn up. Teachers use them well in lessons and are well aware of students' needs and now adapt work well for them. For example, very good practice was seen in physical education, where a special needs student using a wheelchair benefited from a personal fitness programme.
26. Students with special educational needs in learning receive extra teaching and support for literacy and numeracy. Individual needs are carefully considered and support is very flexibly arranged. The teaching in groups withdrawn from mainstream lessons is often very good. Groups are given support from a commercial learning system using computers, and these lessons greatly benefit students' learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed. They and teachers ensure that statemented students receive their full entitlement. However, the effectiveness of teaching assistants varies and occasionally they focus too narrowly on the support of one individual, when others could also receive help. Nevertheless, they are well aware of the needs of their charges and in English, mathematics, science and religious education, particularly good support for learning was seen.
27. The teaching of English and literacy is good in English lessons and across the curriculum. Mathematics is well taught in Years 7 to 9 and very well taught in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of mathematical skills in other subjects is generally satisfactory.
28. Teachers plan and structure their lessons well, and objectives at different levels are shared with students in most lessons. The teaching in six lessons was unsatisfactory, mainly because teachers could not manage uncooperative students, usually in Year 11, well enough. As a

result, their learning and standards of achievement were not good enough. In general, students concentrate well on their work, enjoy good relationships with teachers and other students and increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject well.

29. The teaching of history was very good across Years 7 to 11. Teaching in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, and religious education in Years 7 to 9 was very good. There was much very good teaching in geography in Years 7 to 9. There was good teaching in at least some years in all subjects - apart from ICT. However, the serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been overcome in the teaching of ICT and design and technology, where teaching is now, at least, satisfactory.
30. The marking of students' work is usually thorough and students receive clear guidance about the levels at which they are working and the targets that teachers consider students can achieve. However, teacher-assessed National Curriculum levels in music are too high, when compared with the standards seen during the inspection. Where assessment is most successful - for example, in business studies, geography, religious education and health and social care - teachers provide students with very helpful guidance on how they can achieve higher standards. Use of assessment information was a serious weakness at the last inspection. Although some subject departments are more effective than others in their use of assessment, overall practice is good and is contributing well to raising standards.

Sixth form

31. The teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. As a result, students achieve well and often better than that predicted by their attainment on entry to the sixth form. In over half the 45 lessons seen, the teaching was very good, and in the vast majority, it was at least good. In no lesson was the teaching unsatisfactory. Of the ten subjects reported in full in this report, the teaching of English, mathematics, history and psychology was consistently very good. It was good in the other subjects – apart from ICT in Year 12, where it was satisfactory.
32. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively to challenge students and help them to learn successfully. Relationships are good and support learning effectively in well planned lessons. Students respond well, concentrate on their work and are responsive in lessons. Consequently, they achieve well.
33. Assessment of students' work has improved considerably since the last inspection, when it was a serious weakness. Practice is now satisfactory. Students are aware of their target grades. Teachers' regular, detailed marking and monitoring of progress are giving students a better picture of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is **good** in the main school and **satisfactory** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has an innovative approach to the curriculum and provides a good range of worthwhile learning opportunities.
- Enrichment opportunities for learning outside the school day are good.
- The National Strategies for use of English language, mathematics and ICT across the curriculum are not coordinated well enough.
- Citizenship is not co-ordinated well enough across all subjects.
- Students do not receive their entitlement to a daily act of collective worship every day.
- In the sixth form, there is a good range of advanced courses, but none below advanced level.
- Few learning opportunities are provided beyond mainstream sixth form subject courses.

- Recruitment to the sixth form has not improved, and some classes remain small.
- The statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form is not met.

Commentary

34. Students in the main school have equal access to a good range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. Overall, provision has improved since the 2002 inspection. In Years 7 to 9 the National Curriculum is supplemented by drama, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), which includes, for example - aspects of citizenship, sex education and drugs prevention. However, citizenship is not well coordinated across the other subjects of the curriculum. Drama is taught in Years 7, 8 and 9 as part of the English curriculum, and is separately timetabled in Years 7 and 9. Students have good opportunities to learn modern foreign languages. All take one of three choices of language in Year 7, and can study a second language in Year 9. Students study ICT as a separate subject in Years 7 and 8 and use it adequately in other subjects. However, the continuity of their learning of the subject in Year 9 is barely adequate and relies wholly on their just satisfactory use of it in other subjects. As drama is taught in Years 7 and 9, but not in Year 8, there is some loss of continuity in students' learning in Year 9.
35. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has recently been re-designed to suit different learning styles. However, half of the current Year 10 students have chosen not to study a modern foreign language, and the school has not followed the correct procedures for disapplying these students from the National Curriculum. There is a good range of optional subjects, including vocational courses.
36. There are flexible opportunities for students with special educational needs and others more suited to an alternative curriculum. Students with special needs are taught almost entirely in classes with other students. A few students with particular needs undertake an alternative curriculum. This provision was well illustrated in a Year 11 lesson in which students showed their ICT skills in an exercise on 'improving the school'. At present two students are following the COOL programme, which is a practically based curriculum, part of which is provided outside school. Other students with literacy and numeracy difficulties are able to study for the bronze and silver awards of the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. The school also identifies the needs of gifted and talented students and provides special extra activities, challenges and experiences to stretch them.
37. The school has an open-minded and innovative approach to the curriculum. It has received national recognition for its piloting of philosophy for children, which develops thinking skills. It is working closely with other local schools on a fresh approach to the 14-19 curriculum.
38. The National Strategies for English language and literacy, mathematics and ICT have been implemented, but they are not well coordinated across all subjects. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of worship is not met.
39. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, including field trips, visits and trips abroad. Almost all students benefit from a residential experience in Year 8. A homework club operates regularly. Provision for sport outside the school day is very good. Drama is strong: there are thriving clubs and a popular annual production is staged.
40. Staffing is satisfactory overall. There have been considerable changes in the teaching staff during the last two years. Continuity of staffing is a concern of some parents with children currently in Year 11. However, the changes followed a period of minimal change. Teachers have been replaced to meet the needs of the curriculum and to raise the standards achieved. As at the last inspection, recruitment remains difficult, particularly in ICT, where one teacher has very recently left, and this is having a detrimental effect on learning, because the support teacher is not qualified in the subject. A considerable number of temporary teachers were employed to compensate for two long-term absences during the spring and summer terms in

2003, a situation unhelpful to students' learning and a matter of concern to some parents. Support staff are helpful, well trained and readily adapt to meet students' needs.

41. Overall, accommodation provided for the curriculum is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, good improvements in accommodation have been made in science, ICT and history. Accommodation is good in English, history, geography, and modern languages, and very good in music. It is satisfactory in other subjects. There is one drama studio, and learning is impeded when two classes are timetabled for the subject at the same time. The dining room is small and becomes crowded at lunchtimes. The school buildings are adapted for use by students who have physical impairments. There is access for wheelchairs with ramps and a recently installed lift.
42. Resources to support students' learning are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, when provision of resources was a key issue, the school has overcome most of the shortcomings noted at that time. The ratio of computers to students is now near the national average, although difficulties over access have not yet been completely resolved. Textbooks have been upgraded in many subjects, and new interactive whiteboards are a positive asset – as seen in geography, science and ICT, for example. There are still inadequacies in design and technology, however, where electronic equipment is lacking and some drawing boards are unsatisfactory – a situation that prevents students from learning as well as they could.

Sixth form

43. Curricular provision for the sixth form is satisfactory overall. The school provides a good range of advanced courses, including AS, A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) courses. Psychology is by far the most popular subject, and is studied by over half the students. However, no courses are offered below advanced level. This restricts the opportunity for many students to undertake suitable courses in the sixth form. Some students on Year 12 AS level courses have minimal qualifications with which to undertake these courses. Recruitment remains at the same level as at the time of the last inspection; some classes have few students. The school anticipates the development of distance learning in some subjects to extend choice of course and to overcome the problem of small numbers of students. French and German are already taught by video-link in Year 12.
44. There are opportunities for extra-curricular sport and drama. Sixth formers run the drama clubs in the main school. They take on the responsibility of acting as mentors to younger students. However, students' complaints about the restricted range of enrichment opportunities are justified to some extent. For example, there is no timetabled sport. Although plans are in hand, general studies are not yet provided. No key skills programme is available. Most students are able to access their chosen courses well enough although some would benefit from more support with their writing in order to express their ideas more clearly.
45. Unlike previous practice, private study has been supervised this term. This has not been universally welcomed by Year 13 students. However, students are using private study time well.
46. The requirement to provide religious education for sixth form students, a key issue of the last inspection, has not yet been resolved. A day conference was provided last term, but attendance was low. There is no course currently provided and the statutory requirement to provide religious education is not being met.
47. Teachers in the sixth form are very well qualified in their subjects. There are sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum provided, although few are experienced in teaching the vocational courses. Planning is taking place to extend staffing expertise through liaison next year with other institutions providing sixth form courses. Students taking foreign languages are already receiving such teaching and support.

48. Accommodation for the sixth form is adequate. However, specialist provision in art and film studies is restricted, and the sixth form area has barely adequate space for private study.
49. Provision of resources in most subjects is satisfactory. The inadequacies in equipment for A-level physics and film studies reported at the last inspection have now been remedied. The resource centre is used well by students and offers good support for learning, including access to the Internet for reference and research purposes.

Care, guidance and support

The provision of **care, guidance and support** is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good relationships with students and readily help and care for individuals.
- There are very good procedures to ensure child protection.
- Year coordinators, teachers and form tutors give good individual personal and academic guidance. Both adult and student mentors give valuable assistance.
- Induction to the school for Year 7 students is very good.
- The school is good at seeking and, where sensible, acting on students' views.
- There are some concerns about health and safety.

Commentary

50. Teachers help and care for individual students and have good relationships with them. Students receive good personal and academic guidance with the valuable assistance of mentors. Induction to the school for Year 7 students is very good. The school places importance on students' views. Almost all students agree that the school seeks and values their views and sometimes acts on them.
51. The school is proud of the standard of care given to individual students. Procedures to ensure child protection are very good. Most teachers enjoy very good relationships with their students. Parents and students agree that induction into Year 7 is very good. The Year 7 coordinator spends considerable time ensuring students are happy in appropriate tutor groups. Curricular liaison between Years 6 and 7 varies. There are links in English, mathematics and science with the Northamptonshire primary schools, but none with Milton Keynes, which accounts for about one-third of the intake.
52. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of the students and staff are generally satisfactory. However, deficiencies were noted in the resistant materials department. There is too much dust and noise, machines are too near to the students' working area and some machines lack an easily-accessible emergency off switch. The breakfast club is well supported and a great asset but, more healthy food could be on offer for both breakfast and lunch.
53. The advice and guidance given to students are good. The vast majority feel they have a trusting relationship with at least one adult to whom they can turn for advice. The mentoring system helps students achieve their targets and offers personal support. The homework club in the library is a very helpful resource. The school nurse has an effective weekly drop-in session and also helps with sex education. The school has a Charter Mark for the excellence of its careers education but has been very disappointed over the last year by the problems experienced in working with the careers advisory service provided by Connexions of Northamptonshire.
54. Improved assessment procedures and target setting provide students with special educational needs with good support for their progress at school. This matter was a concern and key issue

of the last inspection. Students are made aware of what they must do to reach the next level of attainment. Subject-specific departmental targets augment those in individual education plans. Targets and methods to achieve these are carefully identified. Students' progress against targets is regularly assessed and reviewed and parents are informed of all matters concerning the use of individual education plans. The school's monitoring system gathers data about students' performances, each term, and provides heads of year with academic profiles of students. Reports to parents contain accurate, constructive comments together with current levels of attainment and target levels or grades. There are good links with the primary feeder schools and identification of those with special needs is prompt and thorough.

55. The effectiveness of assessment and its use for the support and guidance of all students was a concern of the last inspection. Currently, a much improved assessment system provides students with clear, but ambitious targets to be attained. Their performance on their courses is monitored more closely than previously to ensure that they are achieving sufficiently well to reach their targets. The effectiveness of the new system for assessment has yet to be proven by consistent improvement in results of tests and examinations, but students are more aware of how well they are achieving on their courses, and they have a clearer understanding of examination criteria.

Sixth form

56. Measures to ensure students' care, welfare and health and safety are good, as in the main school. Academic support and guidance has been mainly satisfactory in the past, but is greatly improving under the direction of the new head of sixth form. Most students think that their work is helpfully assessed. Reports are very helpful. Planning is in place to ensure that students next year are guided towards the courses to which they are best suited. Year 13 felt less secure about the guidance they had received but thought they were very well supported in their university applications. Students' main concern was about inadequate careers education. The school has not found external guidance by Connexions of Northamptonshire sufficient. Not all the students have had a one-to-one interview with an external careers adviser. However, the school itself provides careers education and invites a range of speakers from universities and colleges. Sixth form students agree there is at least one adult they can approach for academic help, but many say they would seek help with personal problems elsewhere. More than half the students consider that their views are generally listened to, but not necessarily responded to in the way they want. The general guidance given is satisfactory and improving.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the

Links with **parents** and the **community** are good. Links with **other schools** are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are supportive of the school, which is over-subscribed.
- The Parents' and Friends' Association is strong and active. It is very successful at fund-raising to benefit the school.
- Parents are well informed about school events and their children's progress, although a significant minority feel unsure about how their children are getting on.

Commentary

57. The school has good links with its parents. They are supportive of the school which is over-subscribed. They are very well informed about school events through weekly newsletters, the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. Students' annual reports give a clear indication of their attainment in each subject together with targets and suggestions of how they can improve. Inspectors do not agree with the views of parents who think that they are not well informed about their children's progress, although there is some inconsistency in the use of planners as a means of communication. Teachers are always prepared to discuss parents'

concerns with them and the headteacher holds popular monthly “surgeries”. There is a very good parental attendance at the annual consultation evenings. Students and teachers agree with parents that there are instances of unsatisfactory behaviour but, in general, inspectors found behaviour to be good.

58. The Parents’ and Friends’ Association is very active. Very considerable sums are raised and used to enhance school accommodation and resources. Parental volunteers give vital support to the school.
59. The school has a number of valuable community and business links. Some of the students’ helpful mentors come from local firms. An industry day is run for Year 10 when businesses give interesting presentations. A local Christian group sends members to help with assemblies and religious education lessons. Students, staff and parents have links with various local and national charities. Links with the local community include the singing of Christmas carols in Deanshanger Church and student musicians perform at a senior citizens’ party.
60. There are valuable links with Northampton Boys’ School where mutual help has been exchanged concerning raising boys’ achievement. The school participates in the South West Area of Northamptonshire (SWAN) group of schools that are planning developments in the 14-19 curriculum. Transfer and induction links with the seven Northamptonshire feeder schools are good, but academic links are underdeveloped. There are no academic links with the Milton Keynes middle schools from which many students transfer. Sporting links are very good both with other schools and the local community.
61. Parents who have children with special educational needs are kept very well informed of their children’s progress. The department is very flexible and helpful in its dealings with parents and as a result no parent has missed attending a review meeting. Communication between the department and parents is good.

Sixth Form

62. Links with parents are good as in the main school. Annual reports are informative and give sixth formers and their parents a clear idea of students’ attainment and progress. Planning is taking place with other local schools and colleges to provide a wider range of sixth form courses from September 2004.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** in the main school *and in the sixth form*. Governance of the school has improved and is now **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher has contributed greatly to the improvements made since the 2002 inspection.
- Governors’ leadership has improved and is now good in the main school and *satisfactory in the sixth form*. Their leadership is unsatisfactory only in the particular respect of not meeting all statutory requirements.
- Key staff work increasingly well as a team and contribute well to school leadership.
- Management is effective and has enabled students to achieve higher standards.
- Management of special educational needs has improved considerably.

Commentary

63. The school is well led. Governors have become increasingly effective since the 2002 inspection. They inform themselves increasingly well about the standards that the school achieves, and monitor much more for themselves the quality of provision. However, their committees vary in the impact they make on decisions. Governors are now better able to criticise management in a constructive and informed way. They work hard on the school's behalf and give it and the headteacher their support. However, governance is unsatisfactory in respect of not complying with the statutory requirements to provide all students with the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day, and to disapply the students who do not study a foreign language in Year 10 from the National Curriculum order to do so.
64. The headteacher's leadership is very good. He has led the school to overcome the serious weaknesses identified at the last inspection – for example, standards have risen, teaching has improved and the use of assessment is much more effective. Many staff, some of whom had long service in the school, were reluctant to accept the findings of the last inspection, which questioned whether the standards achieved were high enough. The present ethos among the staff is now much more positive in recognising that standards can rise further. There is now no complacency. However, the school is still in transition, and some parents and older students, especially in Year 11, are concerned about the rate of change and the extent of the benefits arising. Nevertheless, the headteacher has driven the changes forward with vision, energy and high commitment. Without change, the school would, for example, have very little chance of reaching the expected higher targets for results in GCSE examinations during the next five years. A new leadership team is already working well together. They are intensely committed to ensuring the further improvement of standards and provision.
65. The leadership of subjects is good overall. Several new subject leaders have been appointed since the inspection of February 2002. There is vision and determination to improve standards further in all departments. However, some are moving from a very low base of achievement – for example, in 2002 standards in design and technology and in ICT were well below what they should have been. There has been satisfactory improvement in a short time in these subjects. Very good leadership continues in some other subjects – for example, in history and geography.
66. Management is good and ensures that students of differing backgrounds and abilities receive a good quality of education. Much monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching have taken place by senior and subject managers. Governors also contribute. The local authority has contributed considerable support to the process of monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Thorough sixth-monthly reviews have taken place with the headteacher, senior management and the authority to ensure improvement in the quality of teaching. Training has taken place to enable teachers to extend their skills. The school's effectiveness in this respect has been recognized in its renewed status as an Investor in People. As a consequence, the quality of teaching in the main school is now good overall; many very good and a few excellent lessons were seen during this inspection. The performance management of staff has been operating successfully and has contributed to the enhancement of teachers' skills.
67. A very experienced governor, with extensive knowledge of providing for young people with severe difficulties, is attached to the department for special educational needs. The coordinator for special needs attends governors' meetings. Through governors, parents receive good information about the provision for special needs and also about the academic success of these students. Documentation is thorough and well organised. Since the last inspection, the special needs department has successfully improved provision; much has been accomplished in a short time. Identification and assessment, the use of individual education plans and the adapting of work are now all in place and beginning to work well. The department has the capacity to further the good improvement, as has been noted in recent local authority and OFSTED reviews.
68. The response to the key issue of the last inspection to improve assessment in the school has been good. The staged introduction of a whole-school policy to improve assessment within

teaching has been effective in raising staff awareness of and skills in assessing students' attainment. The use of examination and test data for target setting and analysis of performance is developing greater awareness of the impact of developments in teaching methods and approaches. Analysis of standards achieved in past examinations has led to the setting of ambitious targets for students' future attainment. However, analysed data are in complex format and difficult to access by those not skilled in the construction of spreadsheets.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,101,690	Balance from previous year	97,850
Total expenditure	3,125,480	Balance carried forward to the next	-23,790
Expenditure per student	3,098		

69. Funds are used well to improve the quality of education. The school has been able to set a budget for the current year. However, a deficit is likely in the current financial year, and governors, management and the local authority are currently addressing this problem. Governors and management have improved learning resources – a key issue of the 2002 inspection – and, for example, the ratio of students to computers is now at the nationally expected level. There is fund raising and planning to construct an all-weather pitch which would be a considerable asset to students' learning in physical education. Additional funds – for example, for students with special educational needs are used well, and provision for these students – a key issue of the last inspection – has improved considerably. The school applies best-value principles well to all its work. It *compares* itself closely with other schools and sets itself demanding targets for future performance. The curriculum and extra-curricular learning opportunities provide good *challenge*; teaching gives students an increasingly stimulating and challenging learning experience. The school *consults* with all parties - including students who were given the opportunity to express their views directly to inspectors. Its systems ensure proper *competition* to obtain best value for services.

Sixth form

70. The leadership of the sixth form by the headteacher and other key staff is good. A new head of sixth form was appointed in September 2003 and already has a clear vision for the development of the sixth form. Governors give satisfactory leadership. However, they do not yet have a system to inform themselves of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses. Governance is unsatisfactory only in respect of not meeting the statutory requirements to provide students with religious education and not giving all students the opportunity for an act of collective worship every day.
71. Management is effective and provision cost-effective. A much more rigorous monitoring system of students' working practices and achievements has been established. For example, students' use of private study time is monitored more closely. Expectations for productive use of time are becoming part of the ethos for learning. However, some students who are more used to choosing for themselves how to spend their time when they are not in lessons resent the new restrictions. As most sixth form courses are now of a single year's duration, the school is determined to ensure that students make the most of their opportunities. Management has not yet increased recruitment to the sixth form – as required by the last inspection. The planning to extend the range of courses and the impact of providing more information about the sixth form to younger students have yet to be realised.

72. The response to the key issue of the last inspection to improve assessment procedures is satisfactory. The initial impact of new procedures was reduced because there were mistakes in the input of data; students' progress measured against the targets they were set was not monitored enough. These weaknesses have now been overcome and ambitious targets have been identified for individual students. Systems are now in place for the monitoring of students' progress towards these targets.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to learn and achieve well in all years.
- Current standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average.
- Better leadership and management have led to very good improvement in the subject since the last inspection.
- Schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9 are not well enough developed.
- Responsibilities for managing the subject are not clearly allocated.

Commentary

73. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement for most students as they enter the school with standards in English that are just slightly above average. Students listen attentively and contribute willingly to class and small group discussions. High attaining students are very articulate. They are able to analyse challenging texts such as film and book reviews from the Internet and distinguish between synopsis, argument and evaluation. Students reach higher standards in speaking, listening and reading than in writing. Even the most competent students rarely produce extended pieces of writing and boys in particular are reluctant to write at length. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs improve their spelling and punctuation and write simple sentences accurately. Performance in the National Curriculum tests has improved in the 2002 and 2003 results gained since the last inspection in February 2002, when they were below average and a key issue for improvement. In 2003 results were above the national average. Although students attained better results in mathematics and science than in English, they achieved well compared with students in similar schools.
74. In Year 11, current standards are also above average. Students are achieving well, having begun their GCSE courses with average attainment. They continue to work very cooperatively in groups and listen carefully to each other's presentations in class. Many confidently voice their own ideas about the meaning of texts that they read, with close reference to the text. However, they find it difficult to analyse the way writers use language for effect and teachers do not emphasise this enough. Similarly, students rarely use imaginative, descriptive vocabulary in their own writing. Nevertheless, they can write clearly in a variety of styles. For example, they wrote effective diary entries and monologues from the points of view of different characters in *Of Mice and Men* and *Educating Rita*. Spelling and punctuation are usually accurate in final drafts. GCSE examination results in English were above the national average in 2002. In English literature they were well above average. English results improved in 2003 but were not quite as good in English literature. Students with special educational needs achieve well and gain good passes in the Certificate of Achievement each year.
75. The quality of teaching is good and enables students to learn well. Teachers plan very well. They explain their objectives clearly and use a good variety of teaching methods and resources to keep students interested and working at a good pace. However, too many lessons are rushed at the end and there is not enough time for students to reflect on and evaluate what they have learned. An impressive feature of many lessons is the way teachers give students the confidence to develop and express their own ideas. For example, all students in a Year 8

class were able to contribute mature views about the nature of evil because the teacher created an ethos in the classroom in which everyone trusted each other. Teachers also base their good management of classes on these good relationships with students.

76. Leadership and management of the department have improved since the last inspection. Subject leadership is now good. Teaching, especially in the planning of lessons and assessment of students' work, has improved as a result. This in turn has led to a marked improvement in students' standards in the two sets of results gained since the last inspection. This is especially noticeable for boys. Appropriate priorities for further development have been identified. Management of the department is satisfactory but there is insufficient delegation of responsibilities amongst teachers. Schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9 are not yet refined enough to ensure that English is taught consistently well in all respects and that students have more opportunity to use ICT in lessons.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. Standards of literacy are good and enable students to achieve well in most subjects. Students have good speaking and listening skills. They concentrate well and contribute willingly to class and group discussions. Most students read texts in all subjects with good understanding and develop a good knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary. They write neatly and accurately and develop their ability to write in a range of styles in later years.
78. In most subjects, teachers help students to develop their language and literacy skills well. Key, subject-specific vocabulary is emphasised and teachers often discuss meanings and highlight unusual spellings. Teachers often ask students to read aloud and check their understanding. The teaching of writing skills is less consistent. For example, it is good in science, religious education, history and geography because teachers often encourage students to write at length in different styles and help them to structure their work well. However, such opportunities are rare in music, art and ICT. Some lower attaining students make good progress during regular lessons using a computer-based literacy programme. However, others would benefit from studying literacy progress units. The school has taught these in the past but has lost valuable time before introducing them this year. Although overall provision for teaching literacy is good, it is not coordinated well enough across the curriculum and the school does not have an agreed policy for the development of literacy skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have not achieved well enough in GCSE examinations in the last two years.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers are good linguists, but often do not use the foreign language enough.
- Assessment is good.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good in Years 7 to 9, but there are many reluctant learners in Year 11, and half the students in Year 10 have opted not to study a foreign language.

Commentary

79. In 2002, GCSE examination results were average in French and below average in German. In 2003, results deteriorated, and students did worse in French and German than in their other subjects.

80. Students are allocated to courses in Spanish, German or French in Year 7, in equal numbers. By Year 9, students' attainment is currently above national expectations in each language. Overall, their achievement, behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. However, modern foreign languages are not a popular choice for students choosing courses in Year 10, and a minority of students, especially lower-attainers, underachieves.
81. In Year 11, students' attainment is currently below average in French and German. Spanish is not yet studied. Achievement is unsatisfactory, owing to the negative attitudes of many students, especially boys. Their reluctance to learn is due to staffing problems which disrupted their learning in previous years. However, the motivation of students in the half of the Year 10 year group who chose to study a foreign language is very good. Many have excellent attitudes to study.
82. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in French and German and very good in Spanish. One Spanish lesson was excellent. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory in German and French, but learning is unsatisfactory because of the negative attitudes of many students in Year 11.
83. Teachers' planning is consistently good. Marking is regular and helpful. New language work is practised thoroughly, although the presentation is sometimes dull. There are opportunities in each lesson for students to work in pairs, to practise and to develop independence in their learning. They also have the chance to make individual presentations, and to assess their own and others' progress. Higher attaining students are given extra tasks to stretch them. Students with special educational needs are supported effectively, but they are often withdrawn from a part of the lesson, which interrupts their learning. Teachers monitor progress well in class, and show students how to improve. ICT is used regularly by most teachers, to enhance students' learning. Teachers are good linguists, but often miss opportunities to use the foreign language and consolidate students' listening and speaking skills. In less successful lessons, pace is slow, students are too passive, and they hear and speak little of the language.
84. Students have the opportunity to study a second language in Year 9. Currently, a few students continue a second language into Year 10 at lunchtimes. Annual trips to France boost the interest of students. Accommodation is good. Along with the attractive display of students' work, it provides a favourable learning environment.
85. Leadership and management of the department are good. Assessment procedures are effective. The head of department is a good role model as a teacher, has good vision and is aware of the department's strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring of classroom practice is under way. Nevertheless, the decline in standards in GCSE examinations has yet to be arrested. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is now a stable team of committed teachers, and the department is well placed to improve further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good and ensure good teaching and a good variety of learning experiences for students.
- Standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests are very high.
- Achievement in GCSE examinations is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment procedures are insufficiently detailed to help students to improve their work.
- Students' have developed good thinking skills which support their learning well.
- Presentation of work is generally not good enough and often lacks mathematical rigour, and so students cannot communicate sufficiently well what they understand.

Commentary

86. Students enter the school with above average attainment.
87. Standards in Year 9 lessons and in students' books are above those expected for their age and represent good achievement. Students have very good numerical skills and are able to calculate surface areas of a variety of solid objects. However, the quality of their presentation often lacks mathematical rigour and limits their capacity to communicate their understanding. In the 2002 Year 9 National Curriculum tests, standards were well above average. Students' results were better in mathematics than in science and English. This represented very good achievement by students when compared to results in similar schools. Girls did much better than girls nationally and their results were better than those of boys. An improvement in standards was attained in the 2003 tests - continuing the rising trend of recent years.
88. Standards in Year 11 lessons and in students' books are above those typically found, and achievement is satisfactory. Students are improving their presentation and mathematical rigour in preparation for GCSE examinations. They are increasingly able to make links between the various areas of mathematics. However, there is some weakness in students' recall and recognition of basic technical vocabulary. Students with differing special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are represented at most levels of performance and achieve in line with other students of similar competence. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were average, but above average for students attaining grades A* to C. However, despite the slight trend of improvement in recent years, this represented underachievement for many students. Results in 2003 reversed the improving trend when results were well below those of 2002. This further emphasised under-performance during these years, especially that of girls. The main focus for improvement in teaching and standards has been on Years 7 to 9, rather than Years 10 and 11.
89. Teaching is good overall and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Pace and challenge are the main features which encourage students to respond well and become willing learners. There is a good variety of activities to enrich students' learning. Good relationships between teachers and students promote partnerships in discovering new ideas. Students' versatile thinking skills enhance their learning. However, they lack the capacity to communicate their understanding in appropriate written solutions. Where the pace of lessons slowed, learning was less successful and achievement was only satisfactory. Assessment of what students have learned is good and, often, detailed comments and praise are given, but there is insufficient guidance given on how students can improve their work further.
90. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear view of how he plans to improve the provision for the subject and how this will improve standards. He is a very good role model for teachers and students and his enthusiasm for the subject is building an ethos of enjoyment of learning. He has implemented strategies to develop the quality of teaching and results have already improved. Underachievement in Years 10 and 11 is being addressed. He has coped well with recent staffing problems and is improving resources, especially for ICT equipment within the classroom, to provide better teaching tools for all staff. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

91. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. However, there is uncertainty regarding who is responsible for promoting the development of mathematical skills in all subjects. There has been no whole-school training dedicated to raising awareness of the teaching of mathematical skills. The head of the mathematics department is recognised as an expert adviser to all departments and he has produced a document outlining standard techniques for use by others. Students' mathematical skills are good and support their learning in other subjects. The use and development of students' skills by other subject areas are satisfactory. Best use is found in art, geography and history lessons, where opportunities are

written into schemes of work and well developed as a natural part of students' learning. Very good use of students' numerical and algebraic skills was seen in an ICT lesson when students constructed spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9 and reaching above average standards.
- Scientific investigation is not well developed in Years 7 to 9, and ICT is not used enough in general.
- Students are enthusiastic and well behaved.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good and excellent practice.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Use of assessment has improved, but use of analysed data has not yet been fully developed.
- Students have little opportunity for extra-curricular activities in the subject.

Commentary

92. The results of the 2002 Year 9 National Curriculum tests were above the national average. Results in 2003 were similar. This represents good achievement during students' first three years in the school, including those with special educational needs. Results were also above average in comparison with those in similar schools. In the work seen of current students, standards are average, but they achieve well. For example, Year 9 students understand well the reactions of carbonates with acid and have well-developed practical skills. Similarly, Year 8 students of all levels of competence work well together to use plotting compasses to show the shape and extent of a magnetic field. However, there is insufficient day-to-day focus on problem-solving, practical inquiry, and the excitement of discovery.
93. Results in GCSE examinations were in line with the national average in 2002. Standards in 2003 were similar. Usually, all students follow a double science course. However, by choosing the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme in Year 10, many students have opted to do a single science course. Typically, girls do slightly better than boys, but in 2003, they did much less well than boys, who reached higher standards than usual. In work seen, students attained average standards. Some Year 11 students showed very good knowledge and understanding of variables in their work on investigating terminal velocity; boys talked confidently about their understanding of refraction and the pin-hole camera. Overall, achievement is satisfactory for most students and they progress at a reasonable rate through their courses. They show responsibility and maturity in the way they work independently and in small groups. They are enthusiastic and well behaved.
94. The quality of teaching and learning in science is good overall. There are examples of very good and excellent practice. The recent introduction of starter and plenary activities is a strong feature of some lessons. Thorough and detailed planning and well-focused questions help students to do well and they respond with enthusiasm to learn successfully. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good. Assessment practice is improving, but use of the data is not yet fully exploited. Teachers use the technical support available well.
95. The leadership and management of science are good. The team of teachers and technicians is well supported by the head of department.
96. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the way the science curriculum is organised, and resources have been enhanced to support revised and rewritten courses. Marking has improved and teaching and assessment support learning well. However, the use of ICT by students is insufficient, and few extra-curricular activities are available. Students' work of good quality is on display and science has a popular and positive image and is enjoyed by most students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are not high enough in Years 7 to 11.
- Some dynamic teaching raises achievement in Years 7 and 8.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are good in Years 7 and 8.
- Insufficient coursework and other written work are produced.
- Students' understanding of their progress against national standards is not updated with sufficient frequency or accuracy.

Commentary

97. Year 11 GCSE examination results in 2002 were well below the national average. Results in 2003 were similar.
98. Analysis of Year 7 and 8 students' printed work using commercial software shows that it is below national expectations in quality and quantity. A few students produce near-average work when using the computers, but most do not reach nationally expected standards. The lack of a timetabled lesson in Year 9 is unhelpful to their progress, when use of ICT across the curriculum is no more than just satisfactory. However, there has been some improvement on the very low standards identified at the last inspection, mainly in Years 7 and 8. The situation is similar in Years 10 and 11, where standards in lessons and of printed work seen were below and often well below expectations. There is no significant difference in the quality of the work of boys and girls of all backgrounds when they use the computers. Overall, students' achievement throughout Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory. However, this represents some improvement since the 2002 inspection, when standards and provision in the subject were poor.
99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection. A few lessons seen were very well taught and resulted in very good achievement. This teaching gave clear explanation of learning objectives and processes with effective use of an interactive whiteboard. Good pace, high expectations and a helpful summary enabled students to complete the work and print it out in the time available. Students respond well to good teaching and their attitudes and behaviour are good in Years 7 and 8. In some lessons, teachers lacked knowledge of the software. Some teaching does not use the electronic equipment available for presentation enough to create interest and help students to understand what they have to do. In Year 11 in particular, regular deadlines set for coursework to be completed and handed in for review have not been set. However, deadlines have now been put into place. Learning is adversely affected by large classes where it is necessary for students to share computers. Some students have to wait several minutes to receive individual help from teachers. Insufficient testing and feedback to students leaves them without a clear view of their progress in relation to national standards.
100. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have improved since the 2002 inspection, when they were judged poor. A new subject leader has been appointed. However, much remains to be done. There is insufficient use of databases and of desktop publishing software. Students lack guidance on control processes that are related to programmable machines and simulations on screen. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is unsatisfactory, and a teacher left just before the inspection, creating difficulties for continuity of work and coursework for some students. However, the staffing situation has improved since the inspection of 2002. The number of computers has increased and there has been some improvement in standards since the last inspection, mainly in Years 7 and 8.

101. Students and parents are understandably concerned at the standards and rate of progress in the subject. Provision is unsatisfactory, but even this represents improvement on the poor provision reported 18 months ago.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

102. Provision in ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, but standards are below those usually found. Moderate use is made of computers and other equipment in most subjects. ICT is used well in history and geography as a database, for research using the Internet and in word processing. However, little use of ICT is made in English or music compared with that usually found in other schools. Most subject departments help students to use commercial software for presenting work and to use the Internet. Data-logging is used to record experimental data in science and a computer-controlled engraver is used in design and technology. A food analysis programme has recently been acquired for food technology. A commercial system to extend students learning of literacy and numeracy is used effectively in the special educational needs department. Computers are available for students to use in the library and some time is made available for whole-class bookings in one of the ICT rooms. The number and deployment of the computers are continuously being reviewed. Coordination of ICT use across the curriculum is insufficient. Currently, management's understanding of the impact of ICT on the curriculum as a whole is uncertain.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, history and religious education which were inspected and reported in full.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results, including those of boys, are well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment is used well.
- Students with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

103. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national expectation. This represents good achievement from students' average level of geographical skills and knowledge on entry to the school. Students of all abilities display increasing understanding of geographical processes in physical and human geography and the resulting global patterns. In Years 7 and 8, they become adept at using number - in the form of measurement and coordinates - and representing data in graphs. By Year 8, written skills are well developed and good extended writing was seen in enquiry work on Brazil. Students with special educational needs are carefully identified and make good progress through the provision of appropriate materials.
104. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average and students achieve well. There is little difference in the work of girls and boys as a result of measures taken by the department to raise boys' achievement. Girls and boys do better in geography than in the other subjects they take. A good grounding in subject skills and the encouragement of independent thought enable students to produce good coursework that shows the capacity to hypothesise, gather and interpret data and reach valid conclusions.

105. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. Well planned lessons involve all students and generate high levels of interest and concentration. Good probing questioning reinforces learning and requires students to think for themselves. Very effective assessment helps to guide individual progress with appropriate targets. As a result, students are very aware of how well they are doing. Improvements have been made in the use of ICT and the Internet is regularly used for research; the department is planning further expansion of ICT in its teaching.
106. Leadership and management are very good. A new head of department with the help of a good team is maintaining high standards of work. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and both teaching and standards have improved.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well through a strong emphasis on writing skills.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Lessons are well planned, although homework is sometimes set too late in the lesson.

Commentary

107. GCSE results are average. The results for girls were well above average in 2002, but lower in 2003. Girls consistently perform better than boys although the difference was reduced in 2003.
108. Standards in Year 9 are above average. This represents good progress and achievement. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, demonstrate increasing skill in using sources of evidence. Students have a good factual knowledge of Russian society and analyse clearly the causes of the 1917 November Revolution. They have a good feel for the period, and used clip-art symbols and a photograph of Anastasia effectively. They discussed maturely the fate of the Tsar and his family. Students write at length and achieve well in written work, although there are some persistent spelling errors. ICT is used well.
109. Standards in Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement over the two years of the GCSE course for all students. The most competent students, including boys, have a very good knowledge and understanding of the differences between interiors and vestments in 16th century Catholic, Protestant and Puritan buildings and practices. Many less competent students work as well as they can, although some boys are reluctant to participate in class discussion and this reflects in the quantity and quality of their work.
110. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is the depth of teachers' specialist knowledge. Lessons are carefully planned to include crisp question and answer sessions and a range of challenging tasks. Students become engaged in their learning, and benefit well from the interesting opportunities given for independent or collaborative work. A relative weakness is insufficient guidance and direction for some Year 7 to 9 students (other than those with special needs) in how best to structure their writing. On occasions, homework is set too near to the end of the lesson for all students to record it accurately.
111. The leadership and management of history are very good. The subject leader is a very good role model. The department has sustained the high standards of the last inspection. This has been particularly difficult during the prolonged absence of an experienced history teacher.

However, the department is now a strong specialist team. Policies are well written and very

supportive of raising standards. There are good assessment procedures in place and ICT is used well.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An above average number of students attained the higher grades in the 2002 GCSE examinations.
- Students in Year 9 reach above average standards because they respond very positively to the challenging and innovative teaching.
- The uncooperative attitudes of a small group of students in Year 11 have a detrimental effect on their own achievement and on the learning of others in the class.
- Assessment of students' work is very good.
- Homework is not set regularly.
- Students in all years benefit from high quality resources produced through very good teamwork among teachers.

Commentary

112. Results in the short course GCSE examination in 2002 were average. The percentage of students gaining the higher grades of A*, A or B was above average; 11 students attained grade A*. This represents good achievement overall. Standards were maintained in 2003, and show good added value over time.
113. Standards in Year 9 are above average. They exceed the expectations as defined in the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Students achieve very well. Boys and girls of all levels of competence respond enthusiastically to innovative teaching which spurs them on to think out ideas for themselves. Most students have a good knowledge of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, and they understand how religious and moral principles influence individual decision making. Written work and discussion are generally of a high standard.
114. Most students in Year 11 reach the expected standards. They have a firm knowledge of important episodes in the history of Judaism and their significance in worship in synagogues. Written work is of average standard, although there are several examples of unfinished tasks. However, a small number of students, mostly boys, are underachieving. Although they are capable of above average attainment, they do not have a responsible approach to their work, or to the progress of other students in the class.
115. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is very good in Years 7 to 9, where students are stimulated to grasp fundamental yet complex concepts. Year 7 students had little difficulty in understanding the concept of free will, because teachers made very good use of puppets and robots to demonstrate the difference between controlled activity and choice of action. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching and learning are often of a high quality, but occasionally unsatisfactory, because of difficulties in classroom management when a few students behave badly. A strong feature of the teaching is the detailed planning of lessons, with each member of the team contributing ideas and resources. Students with special educational needs receive effective help from well-briefed support staff. A weakness is the absence of a homework timetable, so students do not extend their learning by producing independent assignments on a regular basis.

116. The leadership of the subject is good and provides a clear vision for future development. It has a positive impact on achievement and students' enjoyment of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Assessment is now very good, and resources have improved. Good management has led to the production of work-books for each year group in which students make lesson notes and record their assessment grades. They are also a useful aid for revision.
117. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development. Older students find out about different religious traditions through the good links established with a Jewish girls' school, and visiting a synagogue and the Jewish Museum in London.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' attitudes are good in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards and achievement are not high enough, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment is not frequent enough.
- Insufficient resources are used - including use of ICT.

Commentary

118. The GCSE examination results for 2002 were below average. They were below the average of most other subjects in the school. Although girls' results are better than those of boys, especially in home economics (food and nutrition), both are below average overall. The 2003 results are of a similar standard.
119. When students enter the school, their standards of measurement and presentation are below those expected nationally. Their standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 remain below average. Standards improve during Year 8, but are still below average by the end of Year 9. However, students' progress in Years 7 to 9 enables them to achieve satisfactorily. Their use of software to show the nutritional content of foods effectively improves their standards of numeracy. Although they make printed circuit boards and solder components to produce flashing lights, they generally have little understanding of how the circuit works. By Year 11, standards are below average and achievement is not high enough. Coursework is not well enough presented. The range of different subject courses ensures that textiles, electronic components, food, card and wood are used, but students lack experience with plastic and metal. Standards in making items are below average and students have insufficient opportunities to develop their design skills well enough. They develop their drawing skills well in graphics lessons, but often fail to transfer these skills to their work in other subjects. Some work of good quality is done in textiles, where some complex items of clothing are designed and made by well-motivated students. Insufficient use is made of ICT to ensure that presentation of text and designs for coursework is as good as it could be.
120. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There has been some improvement in the quality of teaching since the inspection of February 2002. Lessons are generally well planned. Assessment does not provide students with short-term goals related to National Curriculum levels, so students are not always certain of the standard of their work. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Students generally behave well and there are good relationships between most teachers and their classes. However, some Year 11 students were seen to be uncooperative, and held back the learning of

the whole class. Challenge and expectations are not high enough in many lessons; not enough examples of good work are used and students are given a clear date for handing in each section of the coursework for marking. Discussion of issues such as conservation, use of materials and the need for certain products contributes to an understanding of citizenship. Support staff provide valuable help where students have special needs and often help others nearby.

121. Leadership is satisfactory and has resulted in some significant improvements since the last inspection. Documentation has been completed so that the work of the department is progressive. The curriculum now includes food technology in Years 10 and 11 – a subject which was not available at the time of the last inspection. The subject areas of food, graphics, resistant materials, textiles and systems and control provide for coverage of the National Curriculum. However, difficulties are created because some of the subjects are not being taught to each year group and some classes are too large. Records of marks are kept but further analysis of results for whole year groups would enable teaching and the curriculum to be monitored and modified where necessary. Some health and safety issues need to be addressed in the resistant materials area. There is insufficient electronic equipment available in some lessons, and some drawing boards are unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus was on art and music, but drama was sampled.

All students study drama in Year 7 but not in Year 8. In Year 9, students who do not take a second foreign language study drama. The subject is a popular option in Years 10 and 11. Drama clubs and regular school productions also provide valuable opportunities for students' personal and social development. One Year 9 lesson was observed in which students achieved well. They are beginning to use basic drama conventions such as mime and freeze frame effectively. In the one Year 11 class that was observed, standards were above average. Students worked well together to devise interpretations of quotations from *West Side Story*. High attaining students stayed in role well and produced polished performances but others lacked the concentration that they needed to achieve their best. GCSE examination results were well above average in 2002 and were at a similar level in 2003.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers plan in great detail. They have high expectations of students and challenge them to improve through very good questioning that encourages them to evaluate their own work. However, students do not achieve as well as they could in Year 9 because they do not study the subject in Year 8. There is also a lack of continuity between Years 9 and 10 because there is no teacher in charge of drama in the lower school.

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average throughout the school.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good and often very good.
- The students' writing and skills of critical analysis are not being consistently developed.
- The restrictions imposed by the accommodation and resources sometimes limit progress.

Commentary

122. Standards in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 last year were above average. Girls did much better than boys, whose standards were average. Judging by work in students' sketchbooks, this assessment was too high. Students in the current Year 9 have made good

progress recently and standards are above average. This represents good achievement, since students entered the school with average attainment in art. Students make good judgements and decisions about improving their work and make good use of drawing and recording for research. Boys and girls do equally well.

123. Standards in the GCSE examination at the end of Year 11 have varied in recent years but were average in 2002 and unlikely to be higher in 2003 when validated results are available. However, the boys did better than in earlier years, and their results were closer to the national average. The current Year 11 shows much more promise because of recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum. Standards are now above average. Boys and girls do equally well. This is good achievement when compared with their work at the beginning of the course, which was lacking in progression and coherence, with little critical examination of different artists.
124. Teaching is good overall and often very good. The teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject inspire the students at all levels. They respond with interest and concentration. Lessons are well planned and prepared so that they run smoothly. Teachers give a very clear idea of what students should be able to achieve. They also provide opportunities for all students to make additional progress, by moving on to higher levels of difficulty, and to evaluate and comment on each other's work. Teachers assess students' progress effectively and provide very good advice and support. They mark work using National Curriculum levels and describe what students can do to improve. However, there is insufficient development of students' writing and their skills of critical analysis. Homework is an integral part of each topic and the students' commitment to this is high. In some lessons - for example in Year 10 lessons on monoprinting techniques - the lack of space and resources hinder the students' achievements.
125. Leadership and management of art are very good. The new head of art has made an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. Improvements to the art provision already in train since the last inspection have been sharpened and refocused. She has a clear vision of how to raise achievement. She supports and briefs the non-specialist and temporary teachers well so that they have a clear idea of how to apply the scheme of work. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy music because of their teachers' very high level of commitment and encouragement.
- The assessment of attainment against national standards at the end of Year 9 is inaccurate.
- There is very good provision for vocal and instrumental tuition.
- The department lacks adequate computers to support students' learning.

Commentary

126. Standards in Year 9 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to when students started at the school. Students perform confidently using good keyboard techniques. They have insufficient opportunity to appraise their work orally or in writing. Lower attaining students are well supported by teachers, learning assistants and sixth form students, and their achievement is good.
127. GCSE examination results in 2003 were above average, although there were very few A* and A grades. Boys achieved better in music than in their other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, students build on their skills as performers and progress well. Their compositional skills are

less strong, and depend on repetition of musical ideas rather than development. This is because the keyboard resources used, whilst of high quality, do not enable the flexibility to develop independent styles. The overall achievement of students is good.

128. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. Good teaching is characterised by clearly set out tasks, broken down into stages, which are well matched to students' ability. Where the pace of lessons is slow and the work is not closely monitored, students lose concentration. Teachers place insufficient emphasis on improvement in singing, and the quality is below average. Teachers forge good relationships with students, and in Years 10 and 11, attitudes are outstandingly positive.
129. Enthusiastic leadership is generating a significant increase in the popularity of the subject. Insufficient attention is paid to the National Curriculum levels of attainment when planning students' learning and assessing their work. Because of this, students are awarded levels which are, on average, two levels too high. Provision for students to take specialist instrumental and vocal lessons is very good. The uptake of these lessons is high: 15 per cent of students currently have tuition. Students attend lessons reliably and achieve high standards. The uptake of extra-curricular activities is modest.
130. Improvement since the time of the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 has improved, and there has been a large increase in the uptake both of examination courses and of instrumental tuition. A wider range of musical styles is studied, and embraces a range of cultures. There are weaknesses in the assessment of students' work. Not enough computers are available to the department and, therefore, the range of compositional techniques that students can use is insufficient.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led and managed, and there is much curricular innovation.
- The teaching is good overall, and teachers apply their good subject knowledge well to assist students' learning.
- Some very good assessment procedures are used that allow for the effective monitoring of students' progress.
- Students do not yet use the National Curriculum descriptors of standards to aid their progress.
- There is insufficient coordination and guidance in the marking of theoretical work.

Commentary

131. Standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations, and students achieve well. They develop their skills satisfactorily, and they now evaluate performance. However, coaching aids are currently insufficient to raise standards further. National Curriculum teacher assessments by the end of Year 9 are generally accurate and indicate that standards are improving over time. By the end of Year 11 in compulsory physical education, standards remain in line with national expectations. However, in all years there is evidence of improving standards, and there exists a significant number of students with good standards, particularly in dance. Good teaching with the very effective use of teachers' subject knowledge help to ensure that students with special educational needs achieve as well as they should.
132. 2002 GCSE examination results were above average, and this constitutes good achievement for these students. 2003 results indicate that standards are not as high, and observation of lessons confirms this. In Year 11 theory lessons for the GCSE examination course, students

have satisfactory knowledge of the components of fitness and are applying this knowledge to their own sport. They satisfactorily improve their skills - such as the serving technique in volleyball.

133. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Strong subject knowledge enables teachers to plan a good variety of activities that motivate and challenge students. Students work well together, and are confident enough to make valuable contributions. Students are in groups of relatively similar general academic ability in lessons in Years 7 to 9, but the planning of work for students of different levels of attainment in physical education is inconsistently carried out. The tracking of students' progress in practical sessions is carried out through the use of a very effective system of monitoring. However, in theory lessons, whilst teachers mark students' work regularly and are supportive of them, there is not a common approach to marking across the department or for the setting of short-term targets for students to reach.
134. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a shared vision for the subject, with much innovation in the curriculum, based upon improving standards whilst maintaining students' enjoyment. All students benefit from a very good extra-curricular programme. However, the curriculum does not define clearly enough the progression of skills and knowledge for students of differing levels of attainment, and learning objectives are always clearly focused enough.
135. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. New courses, such as the theoretical work in Years 7 to 9, are now in place. The teachers are now more committed to teaching approaches that meet the different learning needs of students. Students are not yet guided to use the National Curriculum descriptors of standards so that they can improve their achievement further.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

136. Business studies and health and social care in Year 11 were sampled. Students following these courses share the same lessons, and are directly taught for half of these in either subject. Students would prefer separate provision, but accept that the arrangement enables them to take the vocational courses that they particularly wanted. Most students know their standard and are confident about their rate of progress. The curricular arrangement is unusual, but results and the good quality of teaching indicate that it works effectively. Several students from both courses regularly choose to study these subjects in the sixth form.
137. Business studies is a well established course in Years 10 and 11. Students' results in the GCSE examination usually compare well with those that they achieve in their other subjects and were above average in 2002 (the last year for which validated results are available). Three lessons were seen in Years 10 and 11. One Year 11 lesson was very well taught and the teacher engaged the students actively in learning, while managing health and social care students effectively in the same classroom. The teaching of a Year 10 lesson with a large class of boys was satisfactory, but some arrogant and immature behaviour prevented all the students from achieving as well as they could.
138. Students attain well in the GNVQ health and social care course. One very well taught Year 11 lesson was seen which proceeded at a brisk pace and provided the students with a good range of activities, while the business students followed set work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

139. The programme providing for students' personal and social education is satisfactory. The days of the inspection did not permit the timetabled lessons in the subject to be seen.

140. The school also provides opportunities for students to follow the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme – to gain bronze or silver standard. A Year 11 lesson was seen in which the Youth Award students were actively engaged in developing their literacy skills with the use of computers. The focus of the work was to ensure improvement in the school environment, and some worthwhile results of their efforts can be seen around the school. The lesson was well taught, the students were well engaged and took some responsibility for their own learning.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A school council and other good opportunities encourage students to participate in their school community.
- Students have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Good opportunities are provided for discussion in citizenship lessons as part of the PSHE curriculum.
- A philosophy club encourages thinking skills appropriate to citizenship.
- Work in other subjects does not focus directly enough on the teaching of citizenship.
- Assessment is lacking to track students' progress in the subject.

Commentary

141. It was not possible to see citizenship lessons within the PSHE programme during the inspection, but evidence was gained from students' work and discussions with staff and students. Discrete citizenship units have been added to the school's PSHE curriculum. These provide knowledge and understanding of what a good citizen is and what the accompanying responsibilities of belonging to a community are. The subject is also taught through other subject areas, which are required to identify where they contribute to the citizenship programme. However, there is insufficient focus in lessons to make the citizenship connections clear. Connections can be inferred, but are not made explicit in the learning. As yet, there has been no formal assessment of the students' work and progress.
142. On the basis of discussions with students and work seen, standards in citizenship by the end of Years 9 and 11 are satisfactory. Many students are able to talk knowledgeably about what makes a good neighbour. They described the issues that can result in the breakdown of relationships in the community and discussed the effects of bullying on the individual, and children's rights generally.
143. Other students described the work they had done that enhanced their skills of enquiry and communication. For example, they conduct research into charities. Students talked enthusiastically about the opportunities to discuss issues during the discrete citizenship lessons in PSHE. However, there are few opportunities for extended writing in the subject to challenge high attainers.
144. The most successful feature of provision is the school's encouragement for students' active participation and responsible action. The school council provides good opportunities for students to become involved in the life of the school. They have been invited to express their views to the governing body. All students are involved in the election of form and sports representatives. During the inspection, apart from arranged discussions between students and inspectors, a group of students took the initiative to express their views responsibly to inspectors about provision in one subject. This is a good indication of students' acquisition of the skills of citizenship. A philosophy club promotes thinking skills very well among students and provides an excellent opportunity for exploring issues relating to citizenship.

145. The quality of teaching and learning, based on the analysis of students' work, is satisfactory. A good mix of activities helps motivate students. However, little difference was seen in the work assigned to students of differing levels of competence. The tracking of students' progress is unsatisfactory.
146. Citizenship is well led by a coordinator who has conducted a whole-school review of the provision, and has developed detailed programmes of work to guide teachers. An annual review meeting takes place where year staff discuss the previous year's work and how it can be improved. Teaching and learning through the PSHE curriculum have provided a base of knowledge and understanding. However, coordination of work across all subjects is not in place to ensure that all contribute directly enough to students' learning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 10 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. (Comment on 2003 results is included in the report text.)

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 & Design	9	44	90	22	43	18.9	39.0
Biology	8	25	82	0	33	7.5	33.2
Business Studies	14	100	96	29	33	71.4	76.5
Communication Studies	7	86	94	29	36	31.4	38.5
English Literature	10	80	94	30	38	35.0	38.9
Design and Technology	5	40	89	0	32	10.0	35.7
Geography	8	75	88	25	36	25.0	36.0
History	5	100	92	20	37	38.0	37.8
Information Technology	9	11	78	0	21	3.0	28.5
Mathematics	14	21	74	7	34	7.0	31.3
Psychology	16	69	83	6	33	20.6	33.6
Sociology	7	71	84	14	34	24.3	33.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	12	92	96	50	49	81.7	85.1
Business Studies	14	100	96	29	33	71.4	76.5
Communication Studies	9	100	98	44	37	86.7	81.1
Drama	7	100	98	43	42	82.9	82.9
Economics	7	100	96	29	46	80.0	83.1
English Literature	7	100	99	14	44	80.0	84.3
History	12	100	97	25	41	75	81.2
Information Technology	5	100	89	0	22	64.0	64.1
Mathematics	6	100	93	67	52	100.0	84.7
Psychology	20	100	94	45	38	80.0	77.7

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French, but German was also sampled. In the Year 12 German lesson seen, teaching was by commercial video link and learning was satisfactory. In the Year 13 German lesson, teaching and learning were very good, and speaking skills were developed successfully.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Very good teaching enables students to learn very well in lessons.
- Priorities for the development of the subject are not well enough identified.

Commentary

147. The school has maintained the good standards in English literature that were reported in the last inspection. In 2002, A-level results were in line with the national average. They improved in 2003 and five of the twelve students gained the highest grades.
148. Year 13 students are building well on their good AS level results. Current standards are above average and students are achieving well. They are very confident in putting forward their own, personal interpretations of set texts. They articulate their ideas well and back them up with close reference to the text. They are developing a good awareness of the importance of historical, contextual influences on the reader's understanding of poetry. For example, they appreciated that Carol Ann Duffy's reference to Brady and Hindley in *Mrs. Tilscher's Class* would have had a more chilling effect when the poem was originally published. They are less aware of alternative views propounded by literary critics. Lower attaining students have difficulty structuring their essays and would benefit from more support to develop this skill.
149. Year 12 students are also achieving well and making good progress from their earlier work in Year 11. At this early stage in their course, most have difficulty in analysing the effects that writers achieve through their use of literary techniques. However, they explore themes and relationships in *A Streetcar Named Desire* confidently and are developing mature, personal responses to the text.
150. The quality of teaching is very good and enables students to learn very well. Students find the subject interesting and challenging. Once committed to the courses, nearly all students complete them. Teachers plan very well and constantly remind students of assessment objectives, so that they know exactly what they need to achieve. Teachers' own understanding of texts is very secure and enables them to ask incisive questions to challenge students' views. However, they support students' ideas sensitively and are careful not to displace these views with their own. In all lessons there are ample opportunities for students to share and develop their thoughts with each other. In a very good Year 13 lesson, the teacher asked pairs of students to identify and trace themes through *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and present their findings to others. As a result, students developed an understanding of the novel's complexities, but understood that their own interpretations could be valid if they were backed up with good evidence from the text. Teachers provide students with contextual information to help their understanding of texts but rarely ask students to search for this themselves. In this respect, students are not sufficiently encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

151. Leadership of the subject in the sixth form is satisfactory. Two teachers currently teach in the sixth form and manage the subject well together. However, priorities for development have not been identified and there is no policy to provide other teachers with opportunities to teach at this level. Since the last inspection, above average standards have been maintained and teaching and learning have improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

152. Most students' standards of language and literacy are sufficient for them to make progress in the subjects of their choice in the sixth form. These skills are not separately taught. However, in art and design and English literature, for example, teachers do not give less competent students enough support to express their ideas more clearly in writing. The school provides the opportunity for students to complete a portfolio of evidence towards the key skills award in communication skills at level three but, in practice, few students wish to do so.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are expert linguists, who challenge students and bring out the best in them.
- Students are well-motivated, independent learners.
- Recruitment to courses remains low.
- There is little enrichment of the curriculum.

Commentary

153. No students sat A-level examinations in the last two years. Results in the AS examination were low in 2002, but better in 2003. The few students who begin the courses usually complete them.
154. The attainment of students in Years 12 and 13 is above average, and they achieve very well. The AS level course is currently provided by a commercial company, through distance learning. Students are very well motivated and work hard. They prepare well for the video-link sessions. Their private study time together develops their independent and co-operative learning skills. They have made a successful transition from GCSE work. Their written work is accurate, and they have gained a good grasp of basic grammar and structures. They write extended pieces and express their ideas well. Higher attaining students write impressively and at length. Students use ICT well to enhance their learning.
155. Students in Year 13 debate fluently and express complex ideas very well. They think deeply about themes, such as Amnesty International and world health. Their French course makes a major contribution to their personal development and to their citizenship skills. Their understanding of French spoken at native speed is very good and they have good reading comprehension skills.
156. Students amass a considerable body of written work. Higher-attaining students write long, fluent essays with few serious errors. However, others write less well and make too many basic mistakes.
157. Teaching in Year 13 is good, overall, and in some lessons it is very good. Teachers plan lessons very well, using a variety of teaching and learning aids to ensure the participation of each student. They have skilful strategies to promote lively and fluent debate, despite the small numbers. They keep up a rapid pace and challenge students to the limit of their

capacity, ensuring that they achieve very well. They are expert linguists, who use French almost exclusively, which improves students' listening and speaking skills. Marking is very good; corrections are thorough and helpful.

158. Students are used to working independently. They do a small amount of wider reading, but there is little other enrichment to their curriculum. They have little contact with French nationals - for example, through email, correspondence or study visits.
159. Leadership and management of the course are satisfactory, but modern foreign languages remain an unpopular choice in the sixth form. Thanks to the committed team of teachers now in post, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management and leadership are very good, providing an excellent match of teachers to the course.
- Teaching is very good and provides a challenging learning experience for students.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers ensure a good learning environment.
- Year 12 students' subject notes are not well organised, and this limits their value as tools for revision.

Commentary

160. Students enter the sixth form with below average attainment overall. Most complete the course they begin. Students in Year 12 are, overall, much less competent in use of mathematics than those in Year 13, but all students have sufficient skills for the courses.
161. In Year 12 overall, standards are average. Lower attaining students have difficulty in organising useful notes and in presenting solutions using correct mathematical notations. Some students' notes are unhelpful to their revision of topics. Even when methodology is understood, less competent students continue to make elementary errors. Students who enter the course with good GCSE examination grades are more confident and competent in their presentation of solutions. Achievement overall is satisfactory and students make gains in line with their potential. In the 2002 AS examinations, Year 12 students attained standards that were well below average. Most failed to register a grade. This reflected the diverse levels of attainment on entry to the course at that time. Those students who were successful progressed to form a competent Year 13 A-level group.
162. Standards seen in Year 13 are above national expectations for the course. Students' files are methodically kept and work displays good mathematical rigour. Students show good understanding of current topics of study and are able to make links to other areas of mathematics. They take responsibility for producing their own notes and they work co-operatively, giving mutual support, when debating solutions. Results in A-level examinations in 2002 were above average. Small numbers of students make national comparisons unreliable for the 2003 result, in which two out of six candidates gained pass grades. There is a predominance of boys studying mathematics, but girls also progress in line with their potential for the subject.
163. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers give students clear understanding of new methods and ideas and boost their confidence as learners. Teachers' very good subject knowledge provides students with well structured lessons that run at a brisk pace and

challenge students to learn very well. The very good relationships among students and between students and teachers create an atmosphere of mutual respect in which there is enjoyment in learning new skills.

164. Leadership and management are very good. They provide students with a high quality of teaching, appropriate courses and a range of assessment opportunities to monitor their progress towards their target grades. More competent students have been recruited in the current Years 12 and 13 groups, providing well for students who will benefit from advanced study of mathematics. Improvement since last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

165. Key skills are not formally taught. However, students' mathematical knowledge and skills are sufficient for their needs in the subjects they have chosen to study. Students generally analyse data competently. They use a wide range of mathematical techniques well enough in biology. Those studying modern languages can extract statistical information presented in their target language. In geography, students perform advanced analyses and calculate statistical correlation between sets of data. In general, business students manage the calculations involving fixed and variable costs well enough to draw reliable conclusions from the results.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology. Chemistry and physics were sampled. Too few students have taken AS and A-level courses in 2002 and 2003 to make national comparisons reliable. One Year 12 AS chemistry lesson was seen in which the students undertook practical work and in which the teaching and learning were satisfactory, but students' written results were not well presented. A well taught Year 13 lesson was seen in physics in which students achieved well with practical work.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, given their standards on entry to their courses.
- Teaching is good: teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well.
- Students' attitudes are good; almost all who begin the courses complete them.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students do not use ICT enough.
- There are no extra-curricular activities in the subject.

Commentary

166. The number of students on the AS and A-level courses is low. In 2003, there was one A-level student. Numbers are now increasing. Almost all who begin the courses complete them. Students enter the courses with a wide range of grades from GCSE examinations and achieve well, given their standards on entry. Girls and boys do equally well.
167. National comparisons of results in the Year 13 A-level examinations are unreliable because so few students have taken the subject in recent years. In 2002, two students of four taking the course attained grade B. In 2003, the one candidate passed the examination and, in the last four years, almost all students have gained passes. In the AS examination in 2002, results were well below average and no A or B grades were attained. In general, students reach the standards that are predicted from their standards at the start of their courses.

168. The standards of work seen during the inspection were average. Most students achieve well given their standards in GCSE examinations. In Year 12, students have good practical skills and a developing understanding of measurement using a microscope; they understand what factors affect results. In their work on biological molecules, students have varied competence in concept-mapping; some – but not all - are able to talk about their work with good understanding. Students in Year 13 have a very good understanding of the mechanism and products of light-dependent reactions and can competently explain the process and importance of the Calvin cycle.
169. Teaching is good overall and there are some examples of very good practice. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is used to engage students well in learning. The teachers use a good range of teaching methods and expect much of their classes. Questioning helps to focus students' learning well. Teachers' planning of lessons and organization of laboratories are thorough and they use resources effectively. They insist on very high standards of commitment and behaviour and, in response, students' engagement and productivity are good. Guided by staff, students produce very well-organised folders that contain detailed and useful notes. Due attention is given to health and safety requirements.
170. Leadership and management of biology are good. Teachers work well as a team. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in the way biology is organised and taught. Students have revised schemes of study and other supportive material. Together with additional texts, these developments support learning well. However, students do not use ICT enough. At present, there are no extra-curricular activities specifically for biology students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

A Year 12 AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) ICT course began in September 2003.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The AVCE course is providing a new opportunity for Year 12 students to study ICT at an advanced level.
- Some students have below average standards in GCSE examinations and are having difficulty in making satisfactory progress on the advanced course.

Commentary

171. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students follow this AVCE course, which is new to the school. Results in the discontinued AS and A-level courses in 2002 were well below average and average, respectively. Several students in the present AVCE class have entered with low GCSE examination results and have difficulty in making satisfactory progress. Students with higher GCSE grades are progressing satisfactorily and achieving the standards expected for the course. Overall, standards are below average, but students achieve well enough, given their standards on entry to the course.
172. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a lesson where the backup of documents was being discussed, students showed a below average knowledge of the process. An interactive whiteboard was not used to help the teacher's explanation of the process. In another lesson, on-line purchasing was being investigated, as part of the syllabus. The students were helped to use the Internet to test the buying process, but necessarily stopped before purchasing any items. Learning was consolidated with notes of the usual purchasing steps required by the vendors at the web site. This was new work for some students and they learned well and

achieved satisfactorily. Although many students have below average knowledge and understanding of the subject, the pace of learning and challenge in lessons could be increased.

173. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

174. ICT is used by students in many of the sixth form subject areas. Students generally have sufficient knowledge to choose appropriate software to support their learning with use of ICT in all subjects. However, standards are below those typically found in sixth forms. About 12 computers are available in the sixth form centre. There is further provision in the resource centre, where students often undertake private study. A good example of computer use is for AS French where a distance learning course is being studied by a small class of sixth form students. The course is provided by a private company and uses a video link with a qualified teacher as adviser. Students word process their work in many subjects to improve presentation.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history and psychology, but geography and sociology were sampled. Year 12 geography students were involved with a field trip during the inspection. Results in the geography A-level and AS examinations were average in 2002. A very well taught Year 13 lesson on the classification of hazards was seen and enabled the students to achieve well and their standards were above average.

AS sociology results in 2002 were average; one grade A was gained. All students continued to A-level in 2003. Three candidates gained A or B grades and one was unsuccessful. In the 2003 AS examination, the students achieved well and from a larger group, three gained A or B grades. During the inspection two very well taught lessons were sampled, one from Year 12 and one from Year 13. In Year 12, AS students gained knowledge and a deeper understanding of the changing patterns of marriage and divorce to reach a standard similar to that found nationally. In Year 13, all students have continued their studies from their previous AS course; they were well challenged to apply Durkheim's theories of suicide to real life events.

The school provided a conference last term on religious education. This was reportedly not well attended by students. No other provision has yet been made for this subject, and the statutory requirement for it to be provided for all students is not met.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS results in 2002 were well above the national average.
- Very good teaching promotes very effective learning.
- Detailed schemes of work reflect well recent changes in the history curriculum.

Commentary

175. Results in AS level examinations were well above the national average in 2002. Students performed better than their prior attainment predicted and they achieved very well. 2002 A-level results were below average, but above in 2001. Girls consistently outperform the few boys in examinations. In 2003, students performed better than their target grades predicted in both

Years 12 and 13 examinations. One student gained maximum marks in the AS examination paper on Nazi Germany.

176. Standards are above average and achievement is good. In Year 12, higher attaining students drew well on their knowledge and understanding of the feudal nobility and the political weakness of Henry VI in preparation for a comparative essay of events leading to the Wars of the Roses. Students use sources of evidence well and argue coherently to show how the Nazi Party gained the support of the German lower middle class. The current Year 13 group is reaching above average standards in the work seen. Most are girls but the few boys achieve equally very well. Students articulate their views with confidence and persuasiveness to determine the similarities and differences between the important events during reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. However, some students are less fluent in discussion and in writing. The most able students plan an essay answer with a clear introduction and competently link phrases together, using well-developed skills of analysis and synthesis. ICT is used for research, although not all students are confident in finding and extracting information from searches, and some found difficulty in understanding how concurrent global events influenced Britain's inter-war economy.
177. Teaching and learning are very good. Students' very good learning results from experienced teaching that is well focused on the requirements of the subject and the courses. Students are determined to exceed their target grades. Lessons are planned in detail. The pace of learning is brisk. Teachers know their subject very well and understand the different learning needs of students. Teachers' questions probe students' understanding well and promote higher achievement. However, occasionally teachers have to work hard to promote discussion.
178. Teachers and students enjoy a very positive relationship. Students appreciate that they are being taught very well and respond accordingly. The evaluation of their work is thorough and the marking is helpful in enabling them to raise their standards.
179. Leadership and management are very good and ensure very good teaching, learning and achievement. Schemes of work are detailed and of a high quality. They reflect the recent changes in the subject and the effective team approach to the innovative way the subject is taught. Teachers monitor each other and the subject leader supports the professional development of other colleagues well.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes very good learning.
- Achievement is good and virtually all students gain A-level pass grades at the end of Year 13.
- Students' attitudes are exemplary. They are highly motivated and display much enthusiasm for the subject.
- The thorough marking of students' work keeps them well informed of the progress they are making.
- The standards attained by boys are below those of girls.

Commentary

180. The 2002 AS level results were below the national average, both for the percentage of students obtaining a pass grade and for the percentage obtaining A or B grades. However, the 2002 A-level results were above both the pass and higher grade averages. In 2003, the AS level results were below the 2002 national average. The 2003 A-level results were similar to those of 2002, with almost all students gaining a pass grade, although fewer gained higher grades. There is a general tendency for girls to outperform boys.

181. One reason for the fluctuation in results is the rapid increase in the number of students taking psychology over the last two years. Many of these students have entered the course with GCSE examination grades below those normally expected for AS and A-level courses. This accounts for the below average AS level results and the below average proportion of students gaining higher grades at A-level. However, when standards of attainment on entry in Year 12 are taken into account, the results at both AS and A-level represent good and often very good achievement.
182. Students presently in Years 12 and 13 are making very good progress and standards are generally consistent with course expectations. The standards of work of some Year 13 students are well above course expectations. Students in Year 12 are gaining a basic understanding of key concepts and of some of the ethical principles related to psychological research. In Year 13, students show a good grasp of psychological principles and issues. This was seen, for example, in work on memory.
183. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and students respond very well to their enthusiasm for the subject. Because students are highly motivated by lively, interesting and very well planned teaching, they make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding. Work is marked constructively and students are given a very clear understanding of the standards of their work and what they need to do in order to improve. This makes a significant contribution to their progress. Student' attitudes are exemplary. They show a high level of enthusiasm for the subject and this makes a significant contribution to their good overall achievement. They are keen to express their views and show respect for the opinions of others.
184. The subject is very well led and managed. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Very good teamwork and relationships underpin a strong commitment to success and continued improvement in the subject.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design, but film studies, music and drama were also sampled. In film studies, good examination results were gained in 2003, but no students gained grade A. In these examinations, as in the one lesson seen, achievement was above average, taking into account the students' results in GCSE examinations. In the lesson seen, good teaching enabled students to demonstrate above average skills in analysing and criticising two film clips on the theme of "shocking cinema". This was achieved even though the impact of the films was partially lost due to unsatisfactory equipment and accommodation.

A small number of students have undertaken AS and A-level courses in music since the last inspection. Results in 2003 indicate that students achieve well. The current AS level course has attracted an increased number of students of differing abilities. Teaching and learning in the lesson seen on harmony was good. Students tackled the challenging task with enthusiasm and achieved well.

Drama is well established in the sixth form. A-level results were average in 2002. In the Year 12 AS lesson seen, students achieved well in applying their understanding of text from *The Crucible* to produce a set for performance. The lesson was well taught and learning was good, partly because students had very positive attitudes to the subject.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved greatly since 2002, and are now above average.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good and often very good.
- The students' lack of critical writing skills is restricting their achievement.

Commentary

185. Standards in the A-level examinations in most recent years have been well below average, except in 2002, when they were average. Standards in 2003 were above those of 2002. In 2003, students in the current Year 13 achieved lower results than expected in their AS-level examinations. Since then, they have improved greatly to the point where they are now developing exciting and sophisticated ideas, based on contemporary themes and artists. Their standards are currently above average and students are achieving well.
186. The Year 13 students' work from last year shows a lack of coherence and progression in their learning. There is insufficient evidence of mature critical analysis of their own and others' work. Both Year 12 and Y13 students suffered from the recent staffing problems. Under the very good leadership of the new head of department, the students' achievements at both levels are now good overall compared with their earlier results. This is because teaching is now at least good and often very good, so that students are learning well and have made good progress in developing their skills and understanding since last summer; they were inspired to work hard for part of their summer holiday. All students produce two-dimensional and three-dimensional work in a good range of media, making good use of drawing, photography and digital manipulation to record their ideas.
187. Teaching and learning are good - and often very good. The teaching focuses on careful assessment of the students' work and approach, and results in individual advice and target-setting. At the same time, the very good knowledge and experience of the teachers provide some exciting challenges and sets high standards. In a very good lesson, Year 13 students were inspired to give an intensely personal account of the artists who had influenced their work and the processes they had used. This included controversial and challenging artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Marc Quinn. The students' expositions were cogent and engaging. However, teachers are not yet giving students enough support in their writing - for example, with good models or structured frameworks for describing art and their relationship to it. As a result, the sketchbooks are not telling the full story of students' abilities and talents in the subject. Learning also sometimes suffers from resources and accommodation of poor quality - for example, the lack of supports for large drawings and cramped space in which to work.
188. The new leadership and management of the subject are very good and have ensured that improvement since the last inspection has also been very good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education. Leisure and recreation and travel and tourism were sampled.

Standards in the 2002 AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) leisure and recreation examination were above average. Two lessons were seen, but most of the Year 12 class were absent on a field trip; the standards seen were at the expected level for the course. The teaching and learning in the Year 13 lesson seen on the "life-cycle" of a leisure product were very good and students were achieving very well.

Standards in the 2002 AVCE travel and tourism examination were above the national average. Good teaching and learning were observed in a Year 13 lesson, although very few students are currently following the course at this level. Their attitudes were very positive to the course and very good relationships between teacher and students ensured that achievement was good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education and sports studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good with some very good practice.
- A good new curriculum has been introduced, but learning objectives are not refined enough.
- There are very good relationships and positive attitudes among students and with teachers.
- No programme of sport is provided for sixth form students who do not follow the examination course.

Commentary

189. Comparisons with past results are not possible because this is a new Year 12 course. Work seen during the inspection shows most students are achieving well, and are presently in line with the expected standards for the course.
190. Students' written work reflects satisfactory preparation and research, often making use of the Internet. In particular, the most competent students write very well-structured, analytical essays, and make use of a good range of subject-specific vocabulary. This is apparent in discussions about the nature of leadership. The students develop their subject vocabulary well and, for example, describe leaders as "autocratic", "democratic" or "laissez-faire", with good understanding of the terms. Most students handle proficiently the difficult task of balancing different views in order to help them answer the question set. Students with average levels of attainment often describe rather than analyse, and often do not use examples sufficiently well to support their arguments.
191. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good practice. Very good subject knowledge is at the core of the best lessons. Teachers plan a good range of challenging activities, and match them well to the differing learning needs and styles of the students. On occasion, there is a need to have more focus on learning objectives so that students have a clearer idea of the key learning points. Marking is thorough and students benefit from some good guidance. However, there is not yet a common approach to marking across the department that emphasises short-term targets enough to aid students further. Very good relationships exist in lessons, and students react positively when asked questions. However, some students are too passive and over-dependent on the teacher. Students speak highly of the teachers, and are pleased overall with the support that they receive.
192. Leadership and management are good, and the introduction of the new curriculum has been well handled. Some very good assessment procedures are in place and students benefit from thorough monitoring. Programmes of work that reflect the different levels of expected work have not yet been developed enough. No formal provision for sport is made for non-examination students in Years 12 and 13.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business. AS, A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) business courses are reported on below. Economics is also taken in the sixth form. In 2002, A-level economics results were average with boys attaining below girls. It was not possible to see an economics lesson during the inspection. The current A-level course is provided after the timetabled

school day, taught by a teacher who is not a member of staff. The six students who are studying industrial economics were interviewed. They appreciate the opportunity to take the subject and the high quality of teaching that they consider they are receiving. Their A-level target grades are A to D.

Business

Provision in business is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Insufficient qualified staff are currently available to teach the subject.
- Too few students take the subject.

Commentary

193. Students reach average standards in AS, A-level and AVCE courses. They begin these courses with below average attainment in the subject, and they achieve well to reach average standards. After one half-term following the Year 12 AS and the Year 13 A-level courses, most students are reaching the expected standards. Those with minimal qualifications from GCSE examinations have difficulty in doing so in Year 12. Although these students produce a good volume of word-processed written work, their knowledge and understanding of the topics they have covered are insecure – for example, the differences between types of business ownership. Students of higher potential produce an impressive range of work. Their writing is accurate and they have a good understanding of the subject. Most students following the AVCE course manage the mathematical requirements competently – for example, in calculating the association of fixed and variable costs in business – but some require considerable support from teachers to do so. More competent students respond well to teachers' questions, but no extended oral work could be seen during the inspection. Students have good access to ICT. They word process their work competently and regularly use the Internet for research.
194. Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons run at a very good pace, use a good range of media and are lively and interesting. Less successful lessons use too restricted a range of methods to engage all students actively in the learning. All teachers have good rapport with students and use their good subject knowledge effectively to extend students' own knowledge of the subject. Teachers' assessment and marking of work are very good and much helpful advice is provided for each student. The AVCE course maintains a very helpful summary of assessment in the front of each student's file.
195. Leadership and management of the subject are good, although the subject leader has other whole-school commitments to meet. The teachers form an effective team. Currently, the department lacks one qualified teacher after a very recent resignation. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection in 2002. Students have continued to achieve well and teaching and learning remain good. Recruitment to business courses has not improved.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) course in health and social care was sampled. AVCE results in 2002 were well above average. Over half the candidates gained grades A or B.

Two lessons were sampled, one in Year 12 and the other in Year 13. In both lessons the teaching and learning were very good, standards were above average and the students achieved very well. Students achieved very well because they were very well motivated, and because they received very good advice from their teachers on how to improve the quality of their work. Students in Year 12

were working independently on reports examining communications within a health, social care or early years setting. It was evident from their report writing and the teacher's records that research had been carried out in a very responsible and comprehensive way and that students' progress had been carefully monitored.

The Year 13 lesson consisted of presentations by groups of students on appropriate menus for families with different health and social needs. Students had worked together very effectively to research and produce their presentations in a clear and interesting manner. The teacher's evaluation was effective in concentrating on omissions of required information and ways of improving presentational skills.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No lessons in personal and social education could be seen during the inspection. Students have one lesson each week in this subject. There are plans to provide a general studies course, but no provision is yet available.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	4	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	4	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
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).