

INSPECTION REPORT

BURY ST EDMUNDS COUNTY UPPER SCHOOL

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124787

Headteacher: Mr Adrian Williams

Lead inspector: Mr David Thompson

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th October 2003

Inspection number: 259187

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:	13 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	951
School address:	Beetons Way Bury St Edmunds
Postcode:	IP32 6RF
Telephone number:	01284 754857
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Heather Graham
Date of previous inspection:	16 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bury St Edmunds County Upper is an average-sized mixed comprehensive school, with 951 students on roll. It is situated on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds and has Technology College status. The school has gained many awards including the Schools Achievement Award, Education Extra Distinction, Artsmark Gold Award and Investors in People. It was designated an outstanding school by Ofsted in 1999. The school has very strong community links and is extensively used, throughout the year, by a wide range of organisations. Its socio-economic characteristics are below average. Students who have recently entered the school have average standards of attainment but older students previously entered the school with below average standards. Students are predominantly white British; there is only a very small proportion of students with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs is in line with the national average but the proportion with a statement of need is well above average. Most special needs are associated with moderate learning difficulties, a small number have social, emotional and behaviour difficulties and a few with hearing impairment are supported by the school's hearing impaired unit. The school meets the needs of these students well. Student mobility is low; most students remain at the school throughout their secondary schooling.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15640	David Thompson	Lead inspector	
9865	Susan Howley	Lay inspector	
1153	Stephen Lavender	Team inspector	Religious education
12920	Mary Kingsley	Team inspector	Hearing Impaired Unit
8119	David Millham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology; Workplace learning
11926	Alan Alder	Team inspector	Science; post-16 biology
32086	Joy Bond	Team Inspector	Mathematics
19858	John Follett	Team Inspector	Physical education; citizenship; sociology
33232	Claire Morrell	Team Inspector	English
18834	Sharon Green	Team Inspector	Music
7202	Elizabeth Hale	Team Inspector	History; business studies; business education post-16
7431	Mike Lewis	Team Inspector	French; German
12968	Jon Parker	Team Inspector	Design and technology
12957	John Stout	Team Inspector	Geography
33067	Maggie Woods	Team Inspector	Special educational needs
10209	Vincent Gormally	Team Inspector	Art and design
10327	Philip Garnham	Team Inspector	Post-16 chemistry; post-16 physics; health and social care
32807	Jamie Clarke	Team Inspector	Post-16 mathematics
6798	Sylvia Gibson	Team Inspector	Post-16 English

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bury St. Edmunds County Upper is an outstanding school. Very good leadership is producing an excellent ethos and a very effective school. Students' personal development is excellent and their achievement is very high. A lack of complacency and a keenness to improve have ensured that the quality of teaching and students' achievement have both improved since the previous inspection. The school uses its above-average expenditure per student well to provide good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and senior leadership team provide very strong yet sensitive leadership; this has produced a very positive ethos which enables all students to be confident that they can do well.
- The outstanding provision for students' personal development results in excellent attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
- The school offers a very wide range of curricular choices and extra-curricular activities, giving every individual an opportunity to succeed.
- Students achieve very well, especially in Years 10 and 11 where standards are well above average; this is because very good teaching produces very effective learning and students build on this very well using the extensive support beyond lessons.
- There are excellent links with the community; the school very effectively fosters partnerships with a very wide range of organisations.
- Management is very successful; management strategies have narrowed the gap between the most and least effective subjects but there is scope for further improvement in the monitoring and support of provision by subject managers.
- Students develop very competent ICT skills but have too few opportunities to use them in a range of subjects.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The school was judged to be very successful at the last inspection and standards, achievement and teaching have all improved since then. Year 11 examination results were above average in 1998 and are now well above average. Achievement was good and is now very good. There is a higher proportion of very good and excellent lessons now than in 1998. However, there is scope for further improvement in monitoring by subject managers and using ICT across the curriculum, which were key issues in the previous inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Students achieve very well overall. They achieve well in Year 9, attaining above average standards. Progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11 where students achieve very well to attain well above average standards. Students achieve very well in almost all of their subjects during Years 10 and 11, and particularly in modern foreign languages where achievement improves rapidly so that it is excellent by Year 11. Other notable strengths are music and workplace learning in which achievement is excellent. Sixth-form students achieve well to produce above average standards. The school has worked hard to narrow the gap between girls' and boys' achievement and there is now no significant difference. Students with special educational needs (SEN) show good achievement in Year 9 and very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent.

Students really enjoy school and are highly motivated to learn. They work together very well, have a good understanding of different cultures and their spiritual and moral development is very strong. Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are excellent and make a very positive contribution to achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching is very good and leads to very effective learning in lessons. An excellent school ethos and the extensive support provided for students beyond lessons enables them to build on this learning very effectively and achieve very well. Teachers' expert knowledge and dedicated enthusiasm enable students to have a clear understanding of syllabuses and be very determined to succeed. Teachers know students really well and set realistically high expectations, resulting in a clear sense of purpose for students and a strong desire to learn. Teachers use assessment well but there is scope for improvement in written and verbal feedback to students on how they can improve.

The excellent care and very good guidance and support provided to students is fundamental to the school's success. The school's "personal service" goes to great lengths to provide students with a curriculum which is matched very well to their individual needs and there is a very effective system of helping students to identify their potential and achieve it. This produces students who are confident about their future success and work hard to achieve it. Links with parents are very good and with the community are excellent. The school builds very strong relationships with parents which contribute successfully to students' learning. Partnerships with other schools and colleges are very effective, enabling students to transfer between schools smoothly and providing a much broader curriculum than would be achieved by a single school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led very well and managed very successfully. The school's high aspirations for students' attitudes, personal development and achievements are very effectively implemented. Management strategies have been very effectively targeted on less effective subjects, resulting in improved achievement, but there is scope for further monitoring and support by subject managers. The governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths and areas requiring further improvement in the school. Governors and school representatives work very well together to continually improve provision for students.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is very well regarded by parents and is over subscribed. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciative of all that is done to help their children succeed. Students feel privileged to be members of the school. They have very high regard for their teachers and feel very strongly that they are given every chance of success.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

To improve still further, this very effective school should:

- Support subject managers in further improving their monitoring and support of provision, including the observation of teaching and analysis of data, so that planning for improvement can be more effective.
- Provide more opportunities for students to use their ICT capabilities in a wider range of subjects.

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of worship, religious education for all and improved reports on students' progress.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is of average size. A very effective partnership with the local Catholic school is successfully providing a very good range of opportunities for students.

Effectiveness in the sixth form is above average. Above-average expenditure per student is used well to generate high achievement. Years 12 and 13 students are not subsidised by others in the rest of the school, making the sixth form cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the sixth form is led well;
- students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development and attendance are excellent;
- students achieve well, attaining above average standards;
- the school makes very effective use of its partnership arrangement to offer a very wide choice of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities;
- there are very strong links with the community;
- students achieve well in almost all their subjects but there is scope for further improvement in science;
- statutory requirements for a daily act of worship, religious education and reporting students' progress are not met.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is good in English, and excellent in modern foreign languages where there is first-rate teaching and consistently high examination rates.
Mathematics	Provision is good. Effective teaching is leading to good learning for current students; examination results for previous students were in line with the national average.
Science	Provision is satisfactory in chemistry, physics and biology. Teaching is satisfactory in all subjects and achievement is sound. Previous students attained examination results in line with expectations, taking account of their GCSE performance.
Information and communication technology	Provision is very good. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Although students begin from a variety of backgrounds, they quickly develop very high achievement.
Humanities	There is very good provision in geography, history and sociology. Very effective teaching, with high levels of challenge and inspirational enthusiasm, is producing very strong learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in music and art and design is very good. Very high quality teaching ensures mature work from students and very high standards. A-level results are well above average.
Business	Provision in business education and business studies is very good. Very effective teaching, including high quality feedback on how students can improve is providing very good learning and well above average standards.
Health and social care	Provision is very good. Teaching is very good and students learn very

	well. Achievement is very high and examination results were well above average in 2002.
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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 benefit from excellent advice, guidance and support. There is very good access to a well-planned guidance programme, including impartial careers advice, to help students make choices for sixth form subjects and post-school decisions. Very effective use of performance data and student interviews is made to maximise achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is led well and managed effectively. The school's vision of meeting the needs of every student and supporting them in gaining their potential is implemented successfully, resulting in confident, articulate students who achieve well. Management of the partnership with another local school is very effective, resulting in a wide range of subjects and courses which meet individual needs very well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They have great confidence in their teachers, feel privileged to be at the school and express great enjoyment in their work. They appreciate the many opportunities provided for them to express their views, both informally and through active participation in school bodies.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students achieve very well during their years of statutory education, attaining well above average standards by the end of Year 11. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well, attaining above average standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Year 9, attaining above average standards.
- Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11, attaining well above average standards.
- Post-16 students achieve well, achieving above average standards.
- English language and listening skills are well above average.
- Competence in information and communication technology (ICT) is well above average.
- Achievement of students with special educational needs is well above average.
- Achievement of gifted and talented students is above average.
- Students achieve very well in the majority of their work; there is scope for even higher achievement in mathematics and post-16 science.

Commentary

1. Students are currently entering the school with average standards of attainment, but older students previously came into the school with below average standards. By the end of Year 9 students are achieving well and are attaining above average standards. In Year 9 national tests in 2002, students attained average standards in comparison with all schools, representing very good achievement when compared with their performance in national Year 6 tests three years earlier. Results improved further in 2003 to be above average standards.
2. When students reach Years 10 and 11 the school's very positive ethos has even greater impact than it does in Year 9, resulting in accelerated progress and very high achievement. By the end of Year 11, students' standards are well above average. In 2002, students' GCSE/GNVQ results were well above the national average, representing very good achievement and this was sustained in 2003 results. Students achieve very well in the majority of their subjects. They do particularly well in modern foreign languages where their achievement improves rapidly and is excellent by the time they are in Year 11. Achievement is also excellent for students in the workplace learning course where potentially disaffected students attain very high standards. Music students attain excellent examination results.
3. Recent improvement in the management of mathematics has had a positive effect on students' achievement but there is scope for further progress from the promising 2003 results.
4. The school has agreed ambitious targets with the local education authority for its examination results and managed to exceed these. There is an improving trend in results. Results in national Year 9 tests were in line with the national average at the previous inspection and are now above average; Year 11 examination results were above the national average and are now well above.
5. Achievement for special educational needs (SEN) students is good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. They enter the school with below average attainment and make very good progress. Almost half of students gained at least one Level 5 at the end of Year 9. At the end of Year 11 all achieved at least 4 A* - G grades at GCSE. Overall, the school has been very effective in narrowing the achievement gap between boys and girls. There are now no significant differences throughout the school.

6. The school is very successful in developing students' speaking and listening skills. High standards are rapidly attained and this has a strong, positive effect on progress in a wide variety of subjects. Students also develop high levels of competence of ICT very quickly, but their skills do not contribute as strongly to achievement in a range of subjects because of a lack of opportunity to use computers. Competence in mathematics is above average. Students demonstrate a wide range of mental calculation strategies, but not all students are aware of the most efficient strategy to use when performing multi-step calculations. Students analyse and evaluate data well in subjects across the curriculum.
7. Gifted and talented students achieve well. Teachers know who the most able students in their groups are but there is no formal identification of gifted and talented students across the school. In 2002, the percentage of students gaining A*/A grades was well above the national average in modern foreign languages, drama and English literature, but was below the national average in business studies, English language and mathematics. In 2003, the overall percentage of students gaining A*/A grades was above the national average.

Sixth form

8. In Years 12 and 13, students attain above-average standards overall, representing good achievement. In 2002, results in A/AS examinations were above the national average. Boys attained higher standards than girls, reversing the picture seen in 2001.
9. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, from average to above, representing good achievement. Students achieve well because of the school's extensive efforts to provide a range of experiences to meet everyone's needs and because of excellent student attitudes to learning.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.6 (33.0)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	36.3 (34.3)	35.3 (34.7)
science	35.1 (33.5)	33.7 (33.8)

There were 268 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	70.2 (71.3)	52.6 (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98.1 (93.8)	88.6 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100.0 (100.0)	94.6 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	50.6 (50.2)	34.7 (39.8)

There were 238 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards 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	95 (93)	94.8 (89.5)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30 (52)	39.4 (35.5)
Average point score per student	264.1 (244.2)	263.3 (n/a)

There were 78 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

10. Results in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations in 2003 showed improvement on the above results. No national comparative data was available at the time of the inspection.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students really enjoy their time at the school. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent and make a very positive contribution to achievement. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are highly motivated to learn and fulfil their full potential .
- There is a very strong praise and achievement culture in the school.
- Students' attitudes to learning, and their involvement in the wide range of opportunities on offer, are excellent, particularly in the sixth form.
- There are high expectations of behaviour, clear codes of conduct and excellent behaviour management.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and exclusions are rare.
- There is considerable mutual respect and relationships are excellent.
- The support provided by the school produces high levels of confidence and self esteem.
- Attendance is excellent and very high in comparison with other schools.
- Personal development is very good; students are mature and well prepared for life after school and further study.
- Students respond positively to a wide range of opportunities, within lessons and elsewhere, to reflect on their own beliefs, values and actions.
- The wide range of enrichment activities encourages students to work together, respect one another and develop their understanding of a range of cultures.

Commentary

11. Students are loyal and proud of their school and very positive about their involvement in its life. They enjoy coming to school and have a strong desire to learn and do well. They thrive within the very strong praise and achievement culture. They participate with considerable effort and enthusiasm in the wide range of opportunities on offer. In lessons, students are interested, engrossed and hardworking. They speak with confidence and pride about their work and have high self-esteem. The school's flexible approach to courses in Years 10 and 11 means that all students are engaged and complete their studies successfully. Post-16 students have excellent attitudes and commitment to their considerable involvement in the life of the school.
12. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school. Parents are very satisfied with the school's ethos of hard work and positive attitudes. The school is harmonious and very orderly. Students respond very positively to the high expectations and demonstrate very good self-discipline. Exclusion is used rarely. In lessons, students are consistently well behaved and

there is no disruption to teaching and learning. Students move purposefully between lessons with minimal supervision and queue sensibly and agreeably at lunchtimes and after school for buses.

13. Relationships are excellent and there is widespread mutual trust. Students feel secure and are confident that the very small number of minor bullying incidents are quickly and properly dealt with by the school.
14. Attendance is excellent because the school works hard to promote it by thorough follow-up of absences, effective incentives to encourage high attendance and a strong emphasis on the link to achievement. A significant number of students achieve full attendance. Parents fully support the school by ensuring their children attend regularly. The staff work in close partnership with parents to make good individual arrangements for students with a specific difficulty to ensure continued learning. Punctuality is very good; students arrive promptly to lessons.
15. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
16. Spiritual development is very good. Students express their views and opinions on important matters of faith and belief and know that others in the class will respect their views. An annual arts celebration called 'Creation' encourages students to express their feelings through art, drama, dance, music and poetry. Assemblies, whilst not held every day for all students, involve a range of staff and visitors including members of the local Christian community
17. Moral and social development are very good. Students are set a clear code for behaviour in the school and respond very positively to it. Many subjects, including religious education, English and guidance encourage discussion about moral and ethical issues. Charitable activities and volunteer work encourage social responsibility. Adults in the school provide very good role models.
18. Cultural development is good and is enriched through a wide range of artistic, dramatic and musical activities. The appreciation of the diversity of cultures is encouraged in religious education, geography, English and art and design.
19. Students are very enthusiastic about the way in which the school supports their personal development. They articulate very clearly that the wide range of opportunities to express their views, and the very strong ethos of the school, enable them to develop into confident, responsible and well-informed young people.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.9%	School data	0.0%
National data	7.7%	National data	0.8%

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

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	869	3	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. Excellent care and guidance for students, very good teaching and very effective matching of the curriculum to individual needs is producing very high achievement.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is very good overall, leading to very effective learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very high quality teaching and learning in almost all subjects;
- teachers have very good command of their subject, so they teach with confidence and authority;
- lessons are carefully planned to encourage students to enjoy their work and respond to the challenges set;
- there are realistic, very high expectations of students, so they achieve very well;
- effective management of lessons leads to excellent standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes to work;
- assessment is used well but there is scope for providing more written and verbal feedback to help students improve; and
- many teachers plan for a good variety of activities but this is not yet sufficiently widespread.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 172 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (5%)	54 (31%)	65 (38%)	41 (24%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

20. An important strength of the teaching is the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers. This rubs off on students who therefore work with determination and extremely positive attitudes. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and clear understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and specialist examinations syllabuses. Students benefit from their expert knowledge, and are well prepared for tests and examinations. A good example was seen in a Year 10 English lesson on Romeo and Juliet. The teacher's understanding of the complexities and difficulties of Shakespearean language meant students were effectively supported in their reading, and consequently in their understanding of the text.
21. Similarly, in a Year 13 geography lesson, the teacher used his own expert knowledge of East Africa and Iceland to help students understand the effects of volcanoes. In a Year 9 history

lesson, the teacher's love of the subject was also evident. She set a challenging activity for students to get to the truth about conditions in factories during the Industrial Revolution. She

managed the class discussion skilfully and enthusiastically, so students could make the most of the learning experience. As a result, all students gained a high level of understanding about social and political conditions of the time.

22. Teachers know their students well and build good relationships with them. They insist on high standards of behaviour and effort from their classes. They encourage and support their students at all times. Students respond very well to their teachers because of this, and know their efforts are valued. This leads to a strong sense of purpose in lessons and a clear desire to learn on the part of all students. This is particularly effective in modern foreign language lessons. For example, in a German lesson in Year 10, the teacher established an excellent rapport with students. They enjoyed their lesson and wanted to learn. Class routines were established well so no time was wasted. As a result students', achievement was very good, using language with confidence, fluency and good pronunciation.
23. An important area for development is in the use of assessment to help shape individual short-term learning targets for students. For example, in some lessons students are not sure what to move on to when they complete work quickly. Students' work is assessed regularly and students understand the marking system. Comments in exercise books are usually encouraging but are not sufficiently focussed on what students have to do to improve. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special educational needs do not have sufficient impact on teaching because they do not include clear, short term targets which identify appropriate teaching strategies. An extensive range of activities is provided in lessons by some teachers, so that interest is very well maintained, but in others there is too little variety. There is too little use of information and communication technology (ICT) in most subjects. There is good potential for students to further enhance their learning through increased access to computers in lessons, but too few opportunities to do this are taken up.
24. Teaching in the sixth form is good. There is a consistently high standard of teaching in ICT, geography, history, modern foreign languages, business education, sociology and art and design. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects, so work is prepared with thoroughness and authority. Students get a good grounding in their courses and are prepared well for their examinations. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and set challenging and thought-provoking work. Students respond well to the challenge. Their attitude is excellent. They work with interest, commitment and determination. It is because of this that they achieve so well.
25. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The high standard of teaching across the whole school has been maintained. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons has increased.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is very good. A broad, balanced and flexible curriculum and an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities, coupled with excellent advice and guidance to students and parents, is having a very positive impact on the quality of learning. Teachers and support staff are well qualified and deployed very well to meet students' needs. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very broad curriculum with opportunities for students to study a full range of courses in Years 9 to 11.
- There is a wide range of sixth form courses, and very good advice is given to students about post-16 education and work opportunities available beyond the school.

- The curriculum provided for students in Years 10 and 11 is very flexible, including an excellent vocational course run through the school's link with the local further education (FE) college.
- There are excellent extra-curricular activities and opportunities for learning outside the school day.
- Subject specialist teachers and support staff are well-qualified.
- Refurbishment of the design and technology area has created a very good learning environment.
- There is too little use of ICT in many subject areas.
- There is insufficient religious education in the sixth form and collective worship across the school.
- There is a shortage of study accommodation for the sixth form.

Commentary

26. There is a very flexible curriculum tailored very well to meet the needs of all. Students and their parents get excellent advice on the choice of subjects at GCSE and courses in the sixth form. Particular strengths are: the provision of a very appropriate work-related course for Years 10 and 11 at the local College of Further Education (FE), which has a very positive impact on students' learning and achievement; and the involvement of many students in a huge range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music, drama, dance and sporting activities.
27. There is a very good personal, social and health education (PSHE) and careers education programme across the school which covers all aspects of the curriculum. Students have the opportunity to study German as a second modern foreign language. Provision for students to study religious education (RE) in the sixth form is too limited. Where students are disapplied from areas of the curriculum (notably design and technology and French) to study a more beneficial curriculum, the school has involved students and parents in this decision and followed the latest guidance from the Department of Education and Skills.
28. The school is fully staffed with sufficient numbers of well-qualified subject specialists to meet the needs of the curriculum. Support staff, both curriculum and administrative, provide a very good service to the school and enhance significantly the quality of education the school provides to students. Accommodation is satisfactory; however there is insufficient study space for sixth formers, and examination theory teaching in physical education suffers from the lack of a permanent teaching room which would enable the better storage and provision of teaching materials and equipment. Resources are generally good, despite tight budgets, and they are used well to meet the needs of students. There is a shortage of ICT resources in design and technology, particularly to meet the need of the graphics syllabus, and in music, which restricts students' opportunities for composing.
29. Provision for SEN is very good. The school is strongly committed to inclusion of all students. The SEN provision successfully aims to foster students' confidence and self-esteem so that they can be successful learners. The provision is well organised with a clear sense of purpose and good resources. For example, there is a generous supply of age-appropriate books for emergent readers. There is a strong focus on developing basic literacy skills through frequent practice, especially of reading. This supports achievement well. Teachers are provided with a helpful handbook containing information about SEN in the school. This handbook includes reference to strategies for accessibility.
30. Students with a range of learning difficulties have access to the full curriculum. There is minimal use of withdrawal from lessons. There is additional support in lessons which is effective in facilitating learning by anticipating students' needs and providing help or encouragement quickly and unobtrusively. There is good communication about lesson planning between teachers and support staff.
31. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. There is now an even wider choice to suit everyone's needs and, discrete ICT lessons, which were not in place in 1998, are now very effectively delivered.

Care, guidance and support

The excellent care, and very good, guidance, and support provided to students is fundamental to the schools' success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well known to staff who have a thorough understanding of their individual needs.
- Very good guidance and support for students is spearheaded by the headteacher and senior staff.

- There are very effective procedures to ensure students' care, welfare and health and safety, including arrangements for child protection.
- Students have access to very good advice and guidance as they move through the school, particularly when making curricular choices for Year 10 and post-16.
- Data and personal interviews are very effectively used to motivate students to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their learning and personal development.
- The school provides a very wide range of inclusive opportunities which promote achievement for all and excellent personal development.
- Induction arrangements into Year 9, Year 10 and post-16 are very thorough.
- Students, especially post-16, are very involved in all aspects of school life and have a strong student voice.

Commentary

32. Very thorough policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students. Arrangements for child protection are very good and staff work closely with external agencies.
33. Students' individual needs are very effectively identified by staff and very well supported. Induction into the school is excellent, and the personal interview for parents and students with a member of the senior management team is a very positive feature. Similar further personal interviews in Year 10 and Year 11 demonstrate the schools' commitment to partnership and the success of the students.
34. The efforts of the staff, from the headteacher down, are concentrated on knowing students' circumstances really well and giving high regard to their wellbeing. Staff provide very good, appropriate support, especially to those students at greater risk, and act to minimise disruption to their learning. Great emphasis is placed on inclusion and achievement for all and students respond very well to the rewards system. The end-of-term achievement assembly is a significant feature in the life of the school and held in high regard by students and staff.
35. Students have very good access to a well-planned guidance programme, good impartial careers advice and excellent work experience and work-related learning. They are very well supported when making choices in relation to Years 10 and 11 options, post-16 choices and opportunities beyond the sixth form. The school takes particular care to provide appropriate individual curricular choices and this is a strength of the school which impacts very positively on the attitudes and success of students.
36. The school makes very good use of performance data and regular progress interviews with individual students to motivate and encourage them. Staff systematically scrutinise cumulative data from interim assessments and use these as the basis for regular discussions in one-to-one interviews. Students value these discussions and are highly motivated to seek additional support from subject teachers, which is readily forthcoming. Very good continuity in the form-tutor and head-of-year teams means that staff have a very good awareness of students' progress and performance and are able to consistently provide very good advice.
37. Students have very good opportunities to make their views known. They influence decisions through a network of student councils, regular surveys and very good access to staff they hold in high regard. Post-16 students have very good opportunities to influence decision making, through specific, whole-school and faculty responsibilities and active participation in PTA and governor meetings.
38. There are very effective systems in place for senior managers to track students' progress, with appropriate involvement of subject teachers, form tutors, parents and students. This whole-school review system provides students with a good understanding of how well they are achieving. Progress checks are carefully scheduled to give students sufficient time to make improvements. Information is shared regularly between parents, staff and students and links

are made between achievement, effort and behaviour. Students receive consistent advice and value the time that teachers spend giving them the help that they need. Students value the merit system and would like to see this extended into the sixth form. The very effective overall provision identified in the previous inspection has been maintained.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents, other schools and the wider community, including business, is excellent and makes a significant contribution to overall achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very positive and supportive.
- The school provides very good written information and a substantial range of consultations and meetings.
- The school builds very strong relationships with parents which contribute successfully to students' learning.
- The school is very well regarded in the community and used well as a venue by many local groups.
- There is an excellent partnership with local schools including the management arrangements for the linked post-16 provision.
- Excellent community and business links are very effective in enhancing provision.
- Annual profiles provide parents with inconsistent information about progress and targets for improvement. They do not meet statutory requirements.

Commentary

39. The school has maintained its very good partnership with parents. Parents are very positive about this well-regarded, over-subscribed school and their views are regularly surveyed. Attendance at consultations and meetings is very good and parents are very supportive of extra-curricular activities and performances. The school builds strong relationships with parents through personal interviews with them and their children. This approach supports learning very effectively. Staff are very accessible and have regular dialogue where there are concerns.
40. Parents are provided with very good information about the school. Very useful curriculum booklets are supplemented well by journals and additional information meetings. The school provides good, regular information about students' effort following interim assessments, and parents are helpfully kept informed about changes to setting arrangements. Annual profiles, however, do not consistently report progress in all subjects and often do not sufficiently identify targets for improvement.
41. Links with local schools are excellent. The school has provided good targeted support through its specialist technology college funding. A well-established cycle of meetings with local schools supports very good curriculum development. Strong working relationships contribute to an effective sharing of expertise and support to other schools across the 5-13 age range. There are excellent management arrangements for the linked post-16 provision, which result in improved choice and access for students of both schools. Arrangements for transfer from middle schools are very thorough and very well managed and students settle quickly. Very good partnership arrangements with the local college provide excellent work placement learning for a number of students.
42. The school is well-regarded in the community and is used very successfully as a venue by a large number of local groups. Excellent community and business links provide very valuable sponsorship, extensive opportunities for work experience placements and curricular enhancement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led very well and managed very successfully. The school has a very clear vision, supported by effective strategies, to meet the needs of every student and support them in gaining their potential. This produces very high achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership which is inspirational and has resulted in a much improved school.
- The headteacher has forged a most effective partnership with his highly competent and dedicated deputy, and hard-working leadership team.
- The leadership team is very cohesive and has a strong, shared vision, which is understood very well.
- The school's high aspirations for students' behaviour, achievement and personal development are very effectively implemented.
- The extensive care and effort put in to meeting every students' needs produces a very strong ethos of a partnership in learning.
- Governors are very supportive; they have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are actively involved in decision-making.
- The leadership team has successfully narrowed the gap between the most and least effective subjects but there is scope for further improvement in the monitoring and support of provision by subject managers.
- Statutory requirements for a daily act of worship, religious education and reports to parents are not being met.

Commentary

43. The school is led very well. The appointment of the existing headteacher brought about a dramatic improvement in the attitudes and achievement of students and this has been very successfully built on in subsequent years. There is a highly appropriate vision of providing a "personal service" where every student is known really well and supported very effectively to reach his or her potential. The leadership team has formed a very strong partnership and has been most effective in ensuring that the school's vision is understood well by students, teachers and parents. This has successfully brought about a situation where all students feel confident that they can do well. There is a very strong ethos where students know that they are working in partnership with teachers to maximise learning, personal development and achievement. The result is that students develop very positive personal qualities, have excellent attitudes to work and produce very high achievement.
44. Governors have a passionate belief in the school's ethos and are very supportive of the strategies used to bring about its success. They have formed a strong partnership with representatives of the school. Regular meetings, including high quality presentations by teachers, have enabled the governors to develop a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have used their knowledge well to shape improvement and have not been afraid to take difficult decisions when they can see how the provision for students can be made better.
45. Governors and the leadership team have worked very well in partnership to identify the most and least effective subjects and have intervened successfully to bring about improvement. However, there is scope for further development in the monitoring and support of provision by subject managers, such as in the observation of teaching and the analysis of data, to inform more sharply-focused improvement planning. Recent budget constraints have led to professional development for teachers being too limited and insufficiently related to their

performance management or improvement plans. Statutory requirements for a daily act of worship, religious education and reporting students' progress to parents are not being met.

46. Overall, students are entering the school with below average standards and by the end of Year 11 are well above average. This is because very good leadership is producing an excellent ethos and a very effective school. A lack of complacency throughout the staff has ensured that the quality of teaching and students' achievement have both improved since the previous inspection. The school uses its above average expenditure per student to provide good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2001 to March 2002

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,055,441	Balance from previous year	47,000
Total expenditure	3,090,431	Balance carried forward to the next	-34,990
Expenditure per student	3,589		

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Excellent teaching strategy in a Year 9 French lesson improving the fluency of essential phrases.

Right from the first moment in the room, all students were immediately at work, using information from the overhead projector to prepare for the initial lesson activity. This was focused on basic French expressions needed to maintain classroom conversation in the language, such as "May I remove my pullover", "I have forgotten my pen", and "I'm sorry I am late".

After a quick and very successful round-the-class session, the teacher stopped the class briefly to discuss the lesson objectives, explaining the reason for the work, asking questions which pinpointed students' prior learning, and defining what would be learned during the lesson. He asked students to say in their own words what concepts like 'fluency' and 'accuracy' meant to them. He asked them to decide a personal target for how many things they would learn. Students were thus fully involved in their own learning process. The rest of the lesson put all this into action.

After a brisk presentation, the class practised the essential words and phrases in a lively and enjoyable way. Then they practised in pairs, in order to work towards their learning target. They became steadily more proficient, and were able by the end of the lesson to evaluate the quality of their own and others' spoken contributions.

Although the major part of the lesson had been conducted in French, the class discussed in English at the end what they had achieved, whether they had achieved their personal targets, and what they would have to do next time.

Excellent teaching strategy in sixth form sociology lessons involving the analysis by students of a pre-prepared A level examination answer.

A very effective feature of teaching in sociology in the sixth form is the excellent strategy of using a pre-prepared examination answer to raise further the standard of students' achievement in the subject. This involves students discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the answer and marking it using the examination mark scheme. In carrying out this task it was clear that this critical analysis was very effective in developing students' understanding of the marking scheme, as well as the requirements of the examination syllabus. In most cases students were harder in their marking and analysis of the strong and weak points in the answer than the teacher. Very good management of this activity by the teacher clearly enabled students to improve their own understanding of the examination requirements and thus their answers to examination questions.

Excellent work place learning provision in an adult, professional environment producing very high standards.

A partnership with a local College of Further Education is outstandingly effective. This is a key feature of the school's extensive efforts to meet the needs of all students and is extremely well-received by those who participate. Students make excellent use of their capabilities. They receive excellent teaching in small groups and this produces outstanding learning. Students rapidly develop professional skills in areas such as brickwork and metalwork. The learning day is broken down very effectively ensuring very high levels of motivation and enthusiasm for all. Very experienced tutors and much individual attention enables students to work very productively at their own pace. Students' enthusiasm, interest, achievement and attendance are all excellent. Every student is given very high quality careers advice and has excellent opportunities to continue in the construction industry, such as with a modern apprenticeship.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

HEARING IMPAIRED UNIT

Provision in the Unit for students with hearing impairment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff in the unit have a good knowledge of hearing impairment and its effects upon students' progress.
- The learning support assistants provide good quality support.
- Hearing impaired students are provided with very good access to the curriculum.
- There is an effective role model for inclusion provided by the qualified teacher of the hearing impaired, when he teaches mainstream classes.
- There is scope for improving joint planning with mainstream teachers.
- Some targets in Individual Education Plans are too broad.

Commentary

47. The unit for students with a hearing impairment meets the needs of five students.
48. Achievement is good. Students work hard in lessons and the staff have high expectations ensuring good progress. The students work to the same broad objectives as the mainstream students, with sufficient consideration of individual learning to meet everyone's needs. For example, in a geography lesson on Kenya, the excellent signing provided by the support assistant enabled very good access to the learning opportunities. The teacher also asked specific questions of the student with a hearing impairment in line with one of the targets on the student's Individual Education Plan. Some students have inappropriate targets on their Individual Education Plans with no criteria for success, nor strategies to be implemented.

49. The signing support given to students is very good. Students are withdrawn for some lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, when the students do not follow as many GCSE courses as their mainstream peers. The inclusion of the students into the life and work of the school is facilitated well. The support staff provide good signing skills and good note-taking, which enables the students to refer back to consistent accurate information. The staff, when working in a support role, also implement strategies to enable the students to become independent learners. Where the support is not so effective is when the support staff have not been involved in the planning of the lesson and therefore, because of their lack of knowledge, are unable to provide the appropriate support to students.
50. Day-to-day management of the unit is satisfactory with skills of the support staff being matched to the needs of the students.
51. The leadership of the unit for students with hearing impairment is good. There are effective relationships with a range of outside agencies. Suitable provision is made for work experience for the students. For example, one student was making a preparatory visit at a nursery which employs adults with learning difficulties. Former students provide positive role models, and those who are in employment come back to the school to provide information and encouragement, for present students. The head of the unit has an effective vision for development. However, at the moment, that vision has not been articulated nor committed to paper and so it is difficult for the unit to be pro-active in its development. The documentation for the Annual Reviews of the students is satisfactory but there is scope to make better use of ICT to improve presentation.
52. The head of the unit works hard to ensure that the students' hearing aids are in working order and takes positive steps to remedy any defects. The resources provided for the students are satisfactory. The classroom provides adequate acoustically screened teaching spaces, enabling more than one student to work in the unit.
53. There was no focus on the hearing impaired unit at the previous inspection.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good; they reach high standards in examinations.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes and strong motivation to learn.
- Excellent relationships exist between students and staff.
- High standards of language development are evident in written and oral work.
- Effective feedback is given to individual students which helps them make very good progress.
- More analysis of data is required to ensure that planning reflects appropriate provision for specific groups of students.
- Too little use of ICT in lessons restricts the breadth of learning.
- Not enough students are entered for GCSE English literature.

Commentary

54. This is a successful department in which standards are well above average and achievement is very good. In tests, students in Year 9 are in line with national results, and by the end of Year 11 examination results are well above the national average. Students make rapid progress on entry to achieve well above expectations by the end of their first year. By the end of Year 11 the most able students produce work of a very good standard consistent with the highest two grades at GCSE. Students with special educational needs succeed well at GCSE. Results in English literature are significantly higher than nationally but there is a much lower entry rate than might be expected. More could be done to assess students' potential in this aspect of the subject.
55. Teaching in English is very good and students learn very well. Good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are features of all lessons, allowing all students to learn in a secure environment. Most teachers explain the learning objectives clearly; this results in students having a good understanding of the focus of lessons. However, students have too few opportunities to reflect on their learning at the end of lessons. Students are often helped to extend their thinking and self-evaluate their responses, by the teachers' use of effective questioning techniques. Students feel confident to challenge statements and discuss difficult issues. During an excellent analysis of poetry in Year 11, students were encouraged to question a teacher, in role, about her life as a British Asian. The teacher challenged cultural and moral perceptions and skilfully promoted understanding through empathy. Written work is marked well and gives clear guidance about what must be done to improve. Students themselves are given opportunities to assess their own responses and performances and those of their peers. In a Year 11 drama lesson, students made helpful and constructive observations on staging choices for performances from "Our Day Out".
56. There is a strong sense of leadership in this department, with a clear vision and ethos that is shared amongst the staff. There is a shared commitment to high standards of teaching, and students consistently identify English as a subject that they particularly enjoy. They speak of staff with confidence and respect. There are excellent relationships within this subject team and newly qualified and trainee teachers feel supported and encouraged by the head of faculty. The department is well resourced with books, although greater access to ICT facilities and

greater provision for ICT identified within curricular plans would improve learning opportunities. A well-organised library adds to the range of resources available to students. There is a designated, but under equipped, studio for drama. There is a clear plan for departmental self evaluation but too little analysis of student data and monitoring of teaching to ensure that provision for individual groups of students is specific and targeted. The departmental commitment to extending the range of teaching styles has good potential to enhance an already successful learning experience for students.

57. There has been very good progress since the last inspection with significant improvement in standards. Teaching is now very good, particularly in Year 11.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. There is good support for the development of literacy in many subjects. This is apparent both in classroom activities and the marking of students' work. Students are encouraged to develop their language skills through the written and spoken word. Many subject areas promote good opportunities for discussion work, and students are confident and articulate. There is a keen focus on extending vocabulary to equip them to respond appropriately in such lessons as physical education (PE). In science, teachers help students to understand more complex terms by breaking words down into their recognisable roots. Geography offers students the opportunity to write effectively in a range of styles including description, explanation and evaluation. Extended writing opportunities are provided in science, history and geography; students are taught to construct essays which are appropriate to examination requirements. There has been whole-school training to promote the development of literacy across the curriculum although, at present, there is no specific focus to ongoing development.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

Provision for the subject is **very good** because excellent subject leadership and high quality teaching ensure high standards of achievement for all students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations are outstanding.
- Teaching is very good.
- Subject leadership is excellent.
- Attainment by boys at GCSE is very good.

Commentary

59. Year 9 teacher assessments are slightly better than the national picture. GCSE results have been reliably well above average over recent years. In particular, boys' grades are much better than nationally. These results represent very high achievement.
60. Standards are above average in Year 9 and very high by Year 11. At the time of the inspection Year 9 students were still building essential skills and routines at levels broadly in line with expectations for their age. They are on target to achieve good standards by the end of this year. Last year, some Year 9 students produced very sophisticated work which reflected GCSE standards, and current Year 9 upper sets are working towards similar quality. Achievement is excellent by Year 11, when students in upper sets produce lengthy and original spoken and written work, and read with confidence and accuracy. Some Year 11 work reaches standards usually associated with Year 12. Progress in German is rapid. Students in lower sets make slower progress, but they generally achieve as well as they can. Boys make better progress than usually seen.

61. Teaching is very good overall. Teaching in Year 9 is good. High expectations encourage students to reach their full potential. Lessons start briskly, are conducted mainly in the foreign language and focus strongly on the skills and procedures which students need to become fluent and accurate. Teachers regularly emphasise pronunciation and spelling features, which leads to good pronunciation and an enhanced ability to read accurately aloud. Occasionally, significant periods of whole-class work slacken the pace of learning, so that some students are not active enough. On a small number of other occasions, insufficient separate and varied practice is given of the small individual elements of a major grammar area, so that students' learning is less efficient, and they do not build up the usual level of confidence.
62. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good. It focuses strongly on 'quality features' in writing and speaking, and on the mechanisms of language which students need to master. As a result, students make a conscious effort to include these features, develop the ability to generate original language at a high level, and say and write much more complex things than most students of that age. Sometimes, the objectives of lessons are not explained or revisited clearly or thoroughly enough, so that students are not wholly clear about the purpose of their learning.
63. The leadership provided by the head of department is excellent. He is a role model of excellent teaching and a leading-edge innovator. His mission and vision drive a scheme of work which produces both a coherent teaching team with shared values and approaches, and high quality learning for students.
64. Improvement since the last inspection has been continuous and good. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above what is usually seen. The most able students are systematically challenged, so that they attain excellent results. Lower attaining students are better provided for, and their progress has improved. The schemes of work continue to evolve in order to drive improvement. The focus on skill-building and equipping students to generate language is producing excellent results. ICT remains under-exploited; action to address this is under way. Some lessons remain very teacher-centred.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- The department is led effectively.
- Students have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Students appreciate the help that teachers give them.
- Provision for less able students is good.
- All students gain a pass grade at GCSE.
- The range of teaching and learning styles is too narrow; there is too little monitoring and support of teaching to inform improvement.
- There is too little use of marking and analysis of performance to help students improve.

Commentary

65. Over recent years, standards in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 have been in line with the national average. This represents very good achievement when compared with end of Year 6 test results. Results improved even further in 2003 when the percentage of students gaining at least a Level 5 in the tests rose to 75 per cent. Standards in the GCSE examination in 2002 were in line with the national average, and, in 2003, the proportion of A* to C grades

- improved to be above average. All students in the school gained a pass grade in 2002 and in 2003. The performance of boys in 2003 at grades A* to C improved by 13 per cent.
66. Work seen in the inspection showed that students achieved well overall. The achievement of students in Year 9 is good. Middle attaining students in Year 9 have a good understanding of how a polygon can be used to estimate the circumference of a circle. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is sound. Middle attaining students solve linear equations, although many struggle with aspects of algebraic manipulation.
67. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The provision for less able students in all years is good. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students were challenged and motivated by the puzzles that the teacher set, and with the support of both the teacher and the learning support assistant they demonstrated and practised very good strategies for problem solving. In the most effective lessons the teachers had high expectations for what students could achieve and they challenged students to think. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on indices, higher attaining students used an investigative approach to determine the addition law of indices. On the few occasions where teaching was unsatisfactory students were insufficiently engaged in the task, saw very little relevance in what they were doing and were easily distracted. Teachers are using a narrower range of teaching styles than would normally be seen to meet the needs of all learners. Students' work is marked regularly but teachers are not giving students sufficient written guidance to demonstrate what they have to do to improve.
68. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The head of department is a very good role model and has high aspirations for students' achievement. In the very short time that he has been in post, he has been effective in establishing his vision, improving the learning environment and starting to develop the new schemes of work. However, there is insufficient monitoring of, and support for, individual teachers, focusing on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is also insufficient detailed analysis of performance data to identify student strengths and weaknesses and to inform planning.
69. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The percentage of students gaining grades A* to C at GCSE has improved significantly but students are still attaining less well in mathematics than in their other subjects, although the gap is closing. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9 has also improved. There is still work to be done on further improving teaching and learning and the use of assessment.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. The contribution of subjects, other than mathematics, to the development of mathematics is good. Students have developed numeracy skills well and demonstrate a wide range of strategies for mental calculations. However, not all students are aware of the most efficient calculation strategies. Design and technology provides good opportunities for students to apply their skills in a practical way when measuring and marking out in resistant materials and when weighing ingredients in food technology. In science and geography, students develop skills in the analysis and evaluation of data. The school has held an in-service training (INSET) day to raise awareness and develop the use of mathematics across the curriculum but there are no whole-school policies or plans to continue this further.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is good, and teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good and they work hard.
- The department is led and managed well.

- Accommodation and resources are good.
- Greater consistency is needed in the marking of students' work so that all students know what to do to improve further.

Commentary

71. Students make very good progress. The achievement, both of boys and girls, in science by the age of 16 is very good. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are similar to national averages. This represents good progress from when students arrive at the school. By the end of Year 11 standards are better than those found nationally. Students' literacy and data-handling skills are developed well in science. Students' knowledge of science is good. Their practical and investigative skills are developed well.
72. Teaching is good throughout Years 9, 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and how to teach it effectively. They have high expectations of what students can achieve. Work is well planned and a stimulating variety of approaches is used. Students respond in lessons by showing keen interest, working quickly and making very good progress. For example, in a Year 10 lesson students of above average ability responded very well to some complex abstract work on the reasons for energy changes taking place in chemical reactions. The students showed great interest and continually challenged the teacher for still more detail and explanation. The teaching of investigative skills is very good. Opportunities are taken to develop students' planning skills and also their ability to analyse data and evaluate their practical work. Literacy skills are well developed through extended writing, discussion, oral presentation and an emphasis on the meaning of scientific terms. In a Year 10 lesson, students of average ability worked very quickly and co-operatively to prepare and give presentations on ways of generating electricity. They understood the relevant points well and gave their presentations with confidence. Information and communications technology is used in Year 9 for datalogging purposes, but too infrequently beyond that. Marking of work is satisfactory overall. Greater consistency is needed in marking so that all students understand how they can improve their learning.
73. The leadership of the department is good and management is effective. There is a clear focus on raising achievement. A detailed analysis of how well students have understood different ideas is undertaken and this is used very well to identify areas where teaching can be improved. The department runs smoothly and is well served by a well-organised team of technicians. The department has a satisfactory plan for improvement which would benefit from greater clarity on the actions which need to be taken.
74. The department's improvement since the last inspection is good. More appropriate written materials for low attaining students are provided, the quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision is **very good** when taught as a discrete subject but further development is needed across the curriculum in all subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well throughout Years 9 to 11.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good in discrete lessons.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding is very competent.
- Students have very positive attitudes, enthusiasm and behaviour
- Students' independent learning skills are very well developed.

- Systems for monitoring student progress are very effective.
- There is scope to further raise students' awareness of how to improve their capability in Year 9.

Commentary

75. Students achieve very well in Year 9 to attain well-above-average standards. Over the last three years over ninety per cent of students have consistently achieved Level 5 and above by the end of Year 9. Girls and boys achieved equally.
76. Students also demonstrate well-above average standards in Year 11 examinations, representing very good achievement. At GNVQ, ninety-nine percent of students entered achieved A*-C grades for both of the last two years. The majority achieved A*, A, and B grades. Girls' results were higher in 2002, but boys achieved more distinctions in 2003.
77. On entry into Year 9, students' prior skills are quickly built on and they make very good progress to reach well above national standards. They competently improve their skills in all strands of the ICT National Curriculum. They also learn very effectively about Internet safety and the importance of protecting their identities. Projects are challenging, enabling all students to significantly extend their capabilities. Students of all abilities are fully included in lessons and all achieve very well. By the end of Year 11 standards at GNVQ intermediate level are very high. Students build on and develop their skills to a very high level, through data presentation, data handling, database and spreadsheet assignments, multi-media and design projects. They experiment with vector graphics software very well to produce scale drawings, which include scenario features, and make full use of tools and facilities. They are confident users of ICT and put considerable effort into their coursework, which is of a very high standard.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons very well. Very good use is made of the interactive whiteboard and data projectors for lesson introductions. From these, students clearly understand task requirements. Explanations of how to achieve high examination grades are clearly given in lessons with a very positive effect on achievement. Students are prepared well for examinations using pre-release material. They have access to examination and coursework information on the Intranet and this helps with independent learning. Very effective teaching ensures that students concentrate well and work hard throughout lessons.
79. Leadership is very good. The subject is led by a very experienced teacher, with a clear sense of direction for the future. All staff work well as a team and work very hard to ensure students' success. Monitoring procedures are in place and these lead to consistently very good teaching. A graduate teacher is very well supported. Management is very good. Organisation is efficient and staff have clear roles. E-learning is a major feature of the good development plan which is well-focused on raising achievement across the whole school. Target setting and a very detailed student data system are in place to monitor individual progress. Management is supportive and strives to maintain high standards. Documentation is clear.
80. There has been good improvement and much investment in ICT since the previous inspection and the quality of teaching has improved to very good. There has been good response to key issues raised in 1998; ICT is now taught as a discrete subject in Year 9 and schemes of work are now in place. There is still insufficiently wide use across the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. By the end of Year 9 students are competent and confident users of ICT having followed a discrete course. They build on these skills and use and develop them in too few subjects across the curriculum. Students are enthusiastic users of ICT before and after school, during lunchtimes, and make good use of library facilities. Standards in all lessons seen are good, sometimes very good. Wall displays show good use of ICT. Geography coursework folios are of particularly high quality. In physics, laptops are used very effectively to simulate experiments in the conservation of momentum, through the collision of moving bodies. Students' knowledge

and understanding are reinforced quickly. In design and technology, students learn to use PRO-DESKTOP which is a challenge for all ability levels. Leisure and Tourism students develop good Internet and word processing skills. In art and design, very good use is made of image enhancement software to produce high quality work. In mathematics, students reinforce and consolidate knowledge of the laws of indices.

However,

- The use of ICT across the curriculum would benefit from further development and co-ordination.
- All subjects do not ensure students' entitlement to ICT and record and report their capabilities.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- Teaching in geography is very good so students learn very well.
- There is excellent subject leadership.
- There is a very positive ethos in which students are encouraged to do well.
- Lessons are very carefully planned so students find them interesting and enjoyable.
- The range of learning activities in lessons could be extended.
- Assessment is insufficiently used to set learning targets for students

Commentary

82. The standard of attainment in Year 9 in this year's teacher assessments is above that normally seen. This year's GCSE examination results are similar to national standards.
83. Students currently in Year 9 are achieving very well to produce above average standards. They have a good understanding of physical and human geography. Their work on Mozambique, for example, gives them a good understanding of the effects of flooding on a less economically developed country.
84. Students who choose geography in Years 10 and 11 attain average standards; this represents very good achievement when taking account of their prior attainment at the beginning of Year 10. Their work, for example on the Holderness coast, gives them a sound understanding of coastal erosion. In their studies of Kenya they rapidly improve their understanding of the importance of finding sustainable ways of managing tourism to protect the environment and the people of the country. Students work particularly hard on their examination coursework, in demonstrating further understanding of ways in which the environment can be managed. They also develop their skills of data analysis and evaluation very well. Students make very good use of ICT to improve the presentation of their work. Students with special educational needs are very well supported by both class teachers and teaching assistants, so they also demonstrate very good achievement. Gifted and talented students also achieve very well. In one GCSE lesson for example, they showed a good grasp of the complexity of interrelationships between more and less economically developed countries. Geography makes a useful contribution to literacy and numeracy. For example students make good use of a range of graphical techniques to analyse data showing environmental quality as part of their coursework on Hunstanton.

85. The standard of teaching is very good. A team of subject specialists work with enthusiasm and commitment to create an atmosphere in which students are keen to learn. They insist on high standards of behaviour and effort, so students work hard. Planning of lessons ensures syllabuses are covered thoroughly, whilst also taking care to provide interest and enjoyment. In a lesson on Mozambique, for example, the teacher started promptly by asking students to feedback the results of their homework research about the country. He then provided a carefully prepared proforma for them to identify the effects of flooding. Students worked well together. The teacher used his specialist knowledge very effectively to sum up. As a result, all the students learned a lot about the country and the effects of floods.
86. The leadership of geography is excellent and management is very good. The subject leader has a clear vision of the nature of geography and real enthusiasm for the subject. He supports his colleagues, with planning lessons and makes sure day-to-day organisation is effective. There is scope for widening the range of learning activities and improving the setting of learning targets.
87. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. In particular the standard of teaching is much better and this is the main reason why standards of attainment are improving. Further work on the use of assessment data is needed to help in planning individual learning targets for students.

History

Overall the provision for history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, particularly the high level of challenge and range of activities which lead students to very high levels of concentration and interest in the subject.
- GCSE examination results are much improved.
- Teachers encourage and support students so that they want to do well.
- Students have very good attitudes and behave very well.
- Day-to-day assessment, to help students know what they need to do to improve, is not consistent across the department.
- There is too little use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

88. Students currently in Year 9 are achieving well and producing above average standards. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the period of history from 1750 - 1900. They explain, for example, how changes in population and technology led to the growth of towns and factories in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. Students with special educational needs are supported well in lessons, so they complete all the work set and achieve well. Gifted and talented students also make good progress. In a lesson on the cotton mills, students displayed good skills of historical enquiry, critically evaluating information to form an opinion about the working conditions. Work in history helps students develop key literacy skills. For example, they make very creative use of writing to describe and begin to explain changes in the local area during the 18th and 19th centuries.
89. Attainment at GCSE has improved from 2002, when the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades was below the national average, to 2003, with results well above the national average. Those gaining A* to G also improved. The performance of boys improved most so that their results changed from below that of the girls to well above. In current Years 10 and 11, students are achieving very well and sustaining well above average standards. They are

making making very good progress in the development of historical skills as well as knowledge and understanding. Students answer questions set using a range of source materials and use these very well to provide evidence to support a judgement; as in a Year 10 lesson, exploring the role of the Egyptians in the history of medicine. They have a good level of recall and an understanding of chronology, so that they show effective explanation and description of major events and people.

90. Teaching is very good. In Year 9, lessons are carefully planned, so they challenge students with interesting and enjoyable activities. For example in a lesson on the cotton mills in the early 19th century, the teacher engaged students in an interesting role play activity, in order to conduct an enquiry into life in the mill. The attitude of the students was excellent. They took part with interest and enthusiasm. As a result, they all gained a good understanding of the social conditions of the time. In Years 10 and 11 good questioning is used to involve all students and to challenge them to go beyond the descriptive to the more analytical. Students are given very positive encouragement which means that they are willing to try their best and volunteer their ideas. Common assessments across the department have improved, but day-to-day marking is too inconsistent. Although good use is made of information technology in Year 9 projects, there is insufficient use elsewhere in lessons. There is scope for teachers to develop their materials and strategies to better meet the needs of all students.
91. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is very focused on improving standards and contributing to the overall aims and values of the school. An analysis of the 2002 examination results led to a very detailed and effective action plan for improvement.
92. There has been very good progress since the last inspection, with improvements in almost all areas, including attainment, attitudes and teaching.

TECHNOLOGY

The inspection covered the subjects taught in the design and technology department in Years 9 to 11. In Year 9, all students follow a general course in design and technology. In Years 10 and 11, students can choose to specialise in one material area. Lessons were observed in design, engineering, food and nutrition, graphic products and resistant materials.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Students' have very good attitudes and a strong commitment to their work.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good.
- Teachers provide effective help and support for individual students.
- The course in Year 9 does not provide students with the opportunity to fully sample the range of GCSE courses available before making their options.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to enhance their designing and making skills.
- There is scope for developing further links between the department and the local community.

Commentary

93. Recent teacher assessments of 14 year-olds, just one year after joining the school, have been below those recorded nationally. By the age of 16, however, recent results at GCSE level have been very good, and well above the national average at grades A* to C. In the current Year 9 students are achieving well to build on their low attainment when entering the school, so that

standards at this early stage of the year are already similar to those normally seen nationally. Girls and boys are making good progress developing designing and making skills within each material area. For example, in resistant materials, students learn how to design and make a clock. They use a range of tools and equipment to cut out plastic components with accuracy. At present, however, students have insufficient opportunities to build upon and develop their knowledge and understanding as they move from one material area to another. Furthermore, as they progress through the year, they are not able to engage in sufficiently challenging designing and making so they can reach the higher National Curriculum levels. Within Years 10 and 11, students are making very good progress and achieving very well in all areas of the subject. At this stage of the year, the standard of GCSE coursework is higher than that normally seen at this age. In Year 10, students learn a broad range of designing and making skills. For example, in food, they develop a good knowledge and understanding of batch production techniques by working in groups to manufacture scones. In Year 11, students' work closely matches the requirements of the GCSE courses. For example, in graphics, they have completed detailed research to inform designs for board games. In engineering, students use computer-aided design software to generate accurate drawings of their project components. In the other GCSE groups, however, students have insufficient opportunities to use computers to enhance their coursework.

94. Teaching is good. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms. They provide detailed help and advice on an individual basis, discussing the work completed and advising students on how to proceed. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Many teachers plan a variety of different activities for the lesson. For example, in a Year 10 food lesson, the teacher engaged the group in a mixture of whole-class questioning, individual and group practical activities. In a few very good lessons teachers demonstrated skills effectively to their groups, enabling students to make real progress within the lesson. For example, in Year 10 graphics, the teacher showed students how to render drawings using pencil crayons. In a small number of less effective lessons, teachers missed the opportunity to demonstrate skills to raise the standard of students' designing and making.
95. Leadership is good and management is effective. There is a clear focus on raising standards across the department. There is scope for further improving the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and its impact upon learning so that practice is shared across the department. Currently, students have limited opportunities to take part in design and make projects linked to industrial practice and the local community.
96. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress. Students' achievement has improved so that they are now achieving very well in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE results have also improved to be well above the national average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

Overall provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve good standards at all stages.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and have a very positive effect upon progress.
- The department is well managed with very good subject leadership.
- Resources for ICT are inadequate and limit the scope of its application.
- Many classes are large for a practical subject and create difficulties for teaching across the full range of ability.

Commentary

97. Students, on entry to the school, have had a very varied experience of art and design and are at an average level of attainment. At the end of Year 9, however, teacher assessment indicates that students gain above-average results. These accurately reflect the quality of work seen during the inspection and represent good achievement over the year. Very good skills are evident in drawing from observation and in printmaking. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys. Students with special educational needs, and those with special talent, make good progress and achieve well due to the sensitive individual tuition.
98. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to make good progress, and achievement, again, is good. The general nature of the GCSE syllabus chosen allows students to develop their interests in the earlier stage and work shows wide variety whilst retaining strengths in drawing and printmaking. Results in GCSE examinations are above average generally, and well above average in the highest attaining group; girls gaining marginally better results than boys. A notable feature in the most recent year was the comparatively large number of very high grades.
99. The quality of teaching is very good across the school. Strong features of the most effective teaching are enthusiasm for the subject and a high level of subject expertise. Work is planned carefully to ensure continual development from year to year. The very high quality of learning reflects the teaching. At this stage, students show a strong capacity for independent learning, and their progress is enhanced by very good, well-presented sketchbooks and notebooks. Some large groups make very heavy demands on the teaching and create particular difficulties for the supervision of learning across different abilities. These difficulties, however, are met resolutely, with a high degree of commitment, and with a very beneficial effect on learning. Assessment is very thorough and detailed. Students' progress is monitored effectively and there is innovatory thinking in the use of 'advice slips' to enable students to keep a record of critical comment and encouragement. Students respond very well to the teaching. They show a high level of interest and concentration in lessons and their behaviour is very good throughout. A very good working atmosphere prevails in studios, and this has a positive influence upon learning.
100. The quality of subject leadership and management is very good. Every effort is made to widen students' experiences. Visiting artists are recruited and students make gallery visits, locally and in London. Relationships within the department are excellent, with a very high collective commitment to the success of the department.
101. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The quality of teaching and students' achievement have both improved. ICT resources were too limited at the time of the last inspection and there is still too little use of ICT now.

MUSIC

The quality of provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very positive energy, commitment and enthusiasm for music shown by students and teachers.
- Teaching is vibrant and passionate, especially of singing and examination courses

- Very high standards are achieved by the students who take GCSE and A-level music
- The quality and range of extra-curricular music are very high.
- Resources for ICT in music are poor; there is only one computer and no Internet access. The lack of equipment hampers the progress of students.
- The number of students opting for GCSE music is low and largely confined to students who are instrumentalists

Commentary

102. At the time of the inspection the music department consisted of five part time members of staff including a new part time, temporary head of department and two musical directors from the cathedral who are helping out with some A-level teaching.
103. Test and examination results in music are excellent. Teacher assessments of students' attainment recorded at the end of Year 9 were well above national averages in 2002 and 2003. In 2002 and 2003 GCSE results were also well above national averages, based on a small number of entries.
104. Standards of the current Year 9 students are above national averages, representing good achievement. They perform structured rhythm pieces and arrange blues-style chords, bass line, vocals and improvisations effectively. They sing with enthusiasm, confidence and a sense of style. They are beginning to describe and evaluate pieces that they compose and listen to with an appropriate musical vocabulary. Students in Year 11 achieve very well so that standards are well above national averages. They have very good performance skills and a good grasp of features of the exam syllabus such as minimalism, ground bass and dance music. They work together well as a group and are developing confidence as expressive and critical musicians. The students' skills in using ICT for creating, refining and manipulating sounds is under-developed in Year 9 and at GCSE because of a severe shortage of equipment and software in the music department. Students who learn instruments achieve particularly well at GCSE. This is because the teaching caters well for their needs, they are keen learners and they are committed to taking part in a broad range of musical activity within and beyond lessons. The achievement of instrumentalists in Year 9 is not as good because students are less likely to use and build on their skills by using their own instruments in class lessons.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teaching of singing is a particular strength. Resources are chosen well, the musical skills of teachers are excellent and the department buzzes with infectious enthusiasm. Students learn quickly because they are well motivated. Performing, composing and appraising are effectively integrated into most lessons in Year 9 and at GCSE. This has a positive effect on what the students understand. Some of the teaching has a good focus on developing musical memory and aural skills such as Year 9 singing and drumming activities. However, in some of these lessons there is too little opportunity to challenge students to develop their own ideas and opinions.
106. Leadership is good and management is effective. The new head of department has made a good start to evaluating some key areas for development in the department. She is supported well by staff and students. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. The standards achieved in music in Years 10 and 11 are very high but a below average number of students (mostly instrumentalists) opt for the exam course. Extra curricular activity is a strength of the department. There is scope for improved recruitment of permanent staff.
107. Progress since the previous inspection is good. Standards have improved in Year 9 but the teaching of ICT in music has declined due to a lack of equipment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**. Students benefit from good teaching, a broad curriculum and some good facilities. As a result, students make good progress and many achieve a good level of performance and success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a continuing improvement in GCSE exam results, which are now well above the national average.
- There is very good leadership of the subject, with a clear purpose and direction for future development.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and deliver a well-balanced curriculum.
- Teachers work hard to include all students, whatever their ability so that they can participate in all aspects of the curriculum, including GCSE.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and involve a large number of students.
- There is too little access to and use of ICT to enhance learning in the subject
- There are too few opportunities within lessons for students to develop their observation and analysis skills to improve their own and others' performance

Commentary

108. By the end of Year 9, students are achieving well and producing above average standards. A few are performing at a level that is typical for their age and there are many who are producing good performances in a range of activities.
109. Students in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate very high achievement, so that by the end of Year 11 students are working at a level which is well above what is typical for their age. For example, in a Year 10 trampolining lesson, most students made good progress despite the short time they had experienced the activity. All students performed a short sequence using the basic movements they had learned with satisfactory control. Several gifted and more confident students, with very good teacher support, performed a front somersault with increasing control and accuracy. GCSE is a popular option choice, and results over the past three years show a steady increase from a high base. In the most recent examination, all students gained a pass, with two-thirds gaining a C grade, or better. This was well above the national average.
110. Teaching is good and produces good learning. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of physical education is a particular strength and they make good use of questioning to ensure students have understood what they have been taught. The school's policy of open-access to the subject at GCSE means that students of all ability levels, including those with special educational needs, are represented in the groups. They are supported well by teachers and achieved very well. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE lesson, the teacher organised different tasks which were well matched to students' abilities. Lesson planning, however, needs to ensure that there are better opportunities for all students to focus on the development of their observational and evaluative skills. This will help them to improve their own and others' performance. Students' standards of behaviour are very good and they respond very well to the teaching. Most students are keen to do well, listen carefully and follow instructions, and at the same time show high levels of effort. Working relationships are very positive; students generally show respect for each other, teachers and other adults and work well to improve their own standard of performance.
111. The head of the department provides very good leadership and at the same time he is well supported by his colleagues in the drive to raise standards in the subject. Accommodation overall is good. However, the lack of a dedicated classroom for theory teaching is a barrier to learning.
112. The subject received a good report at the previous inspection and the department has maintained these good standards. The curriculum is now broader; a bigger proportion of students take GCSE examinations and the department has worked hard to offer a wider range

of extra-curricular activities. The area for improvement in the last report, to ensure non-participants are fully involved in lessons, has been addressed well. Participation rates are high and where students are unable to take part for medical reasons they are well involved in the lesson. This constitutes good progress.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The encouragement and support of all students by their teachers creates a very positive learning ethos.
- Examination results are consistently above the national average.
- Students develop independent learning skills very well, particularly through their coursework.
- There are very good relationships.
- Use of homework to extend and reinforce what is learned in the lesson is too inconsistent.

Commentary

113. GCSE results were consistently well above the national average, representing very good achievement. There was a dip in results in 2002 but this was reversed in 2003, with significant improvement for those gaining an A* to C grade and the higher A* and A grades. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also well above the national average; achievement is very high. Students use a range of sources very well to answer questions set, including a variety of textbooks, the Internet and material from newspapers. They demonstrate a very good level of knowledge and understanding and use of appropriate vocabulary, as in their work on types of business organisation and marketing. They are developing very good independent learning skills particularly through their coursework projects. They are collecting and using primary and secondary sources of information but are not interpreting and evaluating the information they have collected sufficiently, so that they can draw more detailed conclusions.
114. Most students are making very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The work is demanding and challenges them to do as well as they are able. Girls and boys achieve very well although girls perform better in the examination than boys. The very positive attitudes and enthusiasm of the students contributes very positively to their learning.
115. Teaching and learning are very good. The good teaching in lessons is extended by additional support which enables students to do their best. Very good tasks are set which clearly reflect the criteria set down by the awarding body. Teachers have high expectations and give a great deal of encouragement so that students feel confident that they can achieve well. Very good support materials are produced and this, together with a 'business like' working environment, helps the students to achieve well. Excellent relationships between the students and between the teacher and students further supports the students' learning. Students' work is assessed very well so that students know what they need to do to improve. Very good use is made of information technology.
116. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department clearly contributes to the overall philosophy and aims of the school, ensuring that all students do as well as they can. The head of department works well with other teachers in the department to plan and deliver the programmes effectively. The department focuses well on high standards and is student-centred. The department is very well managed and is extremely well organised. The head of department does not make sufficient use of the data which is available to monitor and review progress and to identify and share good practice across the department.

117. There was no previous inspection report for business studies.

Workplace Learning Course

Provision in workplace learning is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is excellent and standards are very high.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and students.
- High quality individual help enable students to work confidently and safely.
- Students have very positive attitudes and show high levels of enjoyment.
- The adult professional environment results in well-developed independent working skills.

Commentary

118. Students make excellent use of their capabilities and attain very high standards of work. During the first year of the course students experience sheet metalwork, fitting, turning, and welding. In sheet metalwork, a series of craft-based exercises is completed. These exercises become progressively more complicated until a toolbox with hinged lid and tray insert is completed. Students work from drawings with care, measuring, marking out and working materials with accuracy. They confidently select and use the correct equipment and machinery and work safely at all times. During the second year of the course students experience brickwork and carpentry. Students develop professional brickworking skills during the first term. They mix and roll mortar easily and apply it to bricks skilfully, with the minimum of waste. When laying out and building a stretcher bond corner, bricks are laid carefully with close attention to vertical and horizontal positions, using a spirit level.
119. Excellent teaching produces outstanding learning. Students are taught in small groups with a generous ratio of staff to students. Learning support provided by the school ensures that student's needs are co-ordinated very well between establishments. The learning day is broken down very effectively to ensure motivation and enthusiasm throughout. The structured nature of the course builds in confidence development and success for all. Very experienced tutors and much individual attention allows students to work at their own pace. All students work extremely well with enthusiastic tutors who work very hard to ensure their success. Their enthusiasm, interest, achievement and attendance are excellent. All are given careers advice and are encouraged to continue in the construction industry, possibly within a modern apprenticeship.
120. Leadership, management and organisation at all levels are excellent. All staff are very supportive of the course and what it is doing for students. All express a high level of job satisfaction from working with the students. The working environment is safe and very well equipped. Quality resource materials are used throughout and there is no shortage of them. The progress of all students is carefully monitored. They are given very useful individual feedback for improvement. The course is well documented and carefully structured and has a very good record of success.
121. This course is of great benefit to students and is having a very positive effect on their work in school.
122. There was no inspection of workplace learning in 1998.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An effective audit has been undertaken to identify where subjects contribute to the teaching of citizenship.
- There is very good liaison with middle schools to establish students' coverage of the citizenship curriculum.
- A dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers deliver good quality citizenship.
- Students develop as citizens very well through their active involvement in the life of the school and local community.
- There is too little monitoring to ensure all subject areas take responsibility for citizenship.
- There is insufficient time in Year 9 to deliver a full citizenship programme.

Commentary

123. Citizenship is taught within guidance. There were no opportunities to see any citizenship lessons being taught during the inspection because guidance lessons were covering careers education and PSHE elements of the curriculum. Discussions with students and analysis of the planning and schemes of work for citizenship indicate that standards are very good. Students make very good progress as they move through the school so that by the time they reach Year 11 they are attaining a very wide knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. This is particularly true on issues of human rights, the role of the media and possible bias in society. Most students are developing into well-balanced individuals who take part in sensible and mature discussions on a range of topics, especially in English, humanities, science and guidance lessons. The school's democratic process of election to Year and school council is highly regarded by students as an example of how democracy works, including the advantages of a secret ballot.
124. Teaching and learning, as judged by the positive outcomes of students' attitudes and relationships within school as well as examples of teaching seen in lessons where elements of citizenship were covered, are good. In a Year 9 ICT lesson working on the dangers of the Internet, especially the use of 'chat rooms', teaching was very effective in enabling students to identify the dangers and explore ways to guard against these. Students are learning very good enquiry and debating skills and use these effectively to build up a very good knowledge of the major political and social issues of the day, especially in the way these affect young people.
125. Management of the introduction of citizenship into the curriculum of the school is good. Very good audit and liaison with the school's main contributory middle schools has enabled gaps in provision to be identified and filled. The subject is co-ordinated by the head of guidance (which includes PSHE and careers education) and RE, and these responsibilities leave her with too little time to monitor the subject and ensure all subject areas contribute sufficient information on students' progress in the subject.
126. Citizenship was not a statutory subject at the time of the last inspection and was not therefore inspected in depth. An audit of citizenship and liaison with the school's contributory middle schools have been very successful in identifying where there are gaps in provision and building these into all areas of the school's curriculum. This process still needs further work in monitoring and reporting to parents, but overall progress since the last inspection is very good.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	15	100	90.0	53.3	42.7	47.3	39.0
Biology	20	90	81.6	10.0	33.2	25.5	33.2
Business	17	100	89.1	58.8	31.7	55.3	35.4
Chemistry	11	82	84.8	18.2	36.9	27.2	35.2
Design and technology	5	100	89.2	60.0	32.0	42.0	35.7
English/English language	12	100	92.0	58.3	29.9	47.6	35.7
English literature	8	88.0	94.4	25.0	37.9	32.5	38.9
French	9	100	85.4	66.6	35.2	51.1	34.9
General studies	38	88.0	78.6	17.1	25.7	28.3	30.0
Geography	23	96.0	88.3	21.7	36.4	32.2	36.3
German	7	100	87.6	85.7	34.7	50.0	35.6
Health and Social Care	13	92.0	n/a	15.4	n/a	30.7	n/a
History	15	100	91.8	60.0	37.2	46.6	37.8
Information Technology	20	95.0	78.2	5.0	20.6	23.0	28.5
Mathematics	9	78.0	74.2	44.4	34.3	33.3	31.3
Media Studies	18	100	n/a	44.4	n/a	41.6	n/a
Physical education	12	100	88.2	16.6	27.7	33.3	33.8
Physics	7	86.0	82.0	28.6	36.2	25.7	34.3
Politics	10	90.0	n/a	30.0	n/a	32.0	n/a
Sociology	8	100	83.7	50.0	33.6	38.7	33.8
Theatre Studies	13	100	n/a	30.7	n/a	39.2	n/a
Travel and Tourism	4	100	n/a	25.0	n/a	35.0	n/a

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	100.0	96.1	50.0	48.7	93.3	85.1
Biology	19	89.5	91.6	10.5	36.3	56.8	74.1
Business	21	81.0	96.4	61.9	32.8	80.9	76.5
Chemistry	14	85.7	94.0	14.3	45.9	61.4	81.1
Communication Studies	14	100.0	98.3	21.4	36.8	77.1	81.1
English/English Language	15	100.0	98.3	20.0	36.5	78.7	80.1
English Literature	9	100.0	98.5	11.1	43.7	71.1	84.3
French	5	100.0	96.2	60.0	46.1	100.0	83.0
Design and technology	5	100.0	95.3	80.0	35.5	100.0	76.5
General Studies	7	100.0	90.1	0.0	29.1	71.4	69.3
Geography	15	100.0	97.1	26.7	40.5	72.0	80.9
German	7	100.0	96.3	42.9	44.3	94.3	82.1
Health and Social Care	16	100.0	n/a	0.0	n/a	62.5	n/a
History	16	93.8	97.1	18.8	41.0	66.3	81.2
Mathematics	17	94.1	93.3	52.9	52.2	84.7	84.7
Media Studies	14	100.0	98.3	21.4	36.8	77.1	81.1
Music	3	100.0	97.7	66.6	41.8	106.0	82.2
Physics	6	100.0	92.8	33.3	42.8	83.3	78.6
Politics	7	100.0	94.3	42.9	38.9	85.7	77.7
Sociology	9	88.9	95.4	22.2	39.6	66.7	79.1
Sport/PE Studies	5	100.0	95.4	0.0	29.5	72.0	73.2
Travel and Tourism	4	100.0	n/a	100.0	n/a	105.0	n/a

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and Social Care	16	100.0	90.1	0.0	16.3	62.5	62.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

English Literature, and English literature and language were inspected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- There is a positive ethos for learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- There is too much inconsistency in results across the two subjects and over time.
- There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of provision to inform improvement.

Commentary

127. Examination results have fluctuated over recent years. In 2002, in both subjects, all students achieved A-E grades, but the proportion of A and B grades was lower in both subjects than was the case nationally, and students achieved lower average points scores. Results in English Literature and Language were better than in English Literature. In 2003, results in both subjects improved, and although the gap between the two subjects remains, a higher proportion of students achieved A and B grades.
128. In the work seen, standards were above average for the majority of students in Year 13 representing good achievement, with a minority at, or just below, the national average. Students show good knowledge of the texts they study and engage in lively debate, particularly about the wider social issues. They apply effective techniques to textual analysis and use key technical terms to describe the features of a wide range of texts. In work on literature, students consider style and structure as well as character and motive, and formulate their views about the attitudes and values conveyed in literature confidently.
129. Year 13 students acquire and apply their knowledge and skills well. They demonstrate an increasing ability to engage with texts on a range of levels. Achievement in Year 12 is satisfactory, reflecting the early stage in the course and the wide range of starting points and prior knowledge.
130. The quality of teaching and learning are both good. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge, a positive ethos for learning and opportunities for close text work. Teachers intervene supportively in students' learning and encourage enquiry, debate and individual interpretation. Students express themselves with confidence and commitment, collaborate well and respect the views of others. Teaching and learning are less effective in a small number of lessons, when students' engagement and concentration lapse and the pace of learning and challenge for individuals slows. These lessons contain too little variation in teaching approaches, to re-engage and challenge students and move their learning forward.
131. The Faculty is led well, operates as a cohesive team, and the Head of Faculty has established a clear and positive ethos. The Faculty succeeds in fostering students' engagement with, and enjoyment of English. Management is satisfactory but there is too little analysis of teaching, learning and performance to improve the quality of teaching and the learning outcomes for students.

132. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Examination results have fluctuated since the previous inspection, when standards were above average, and there have been changes in examination courses and specifications. The Faculty has maintained above average outcomes and the good features of teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

133. There is good support for the development of language and literacy across a wide range of subjects. Teachers emphasise the use and development of technical vocabulary and key phrases effectively, and students respond well. Enquiry and debate are promoted in many different lessons and students show competent and confident skills when expressing their points of view. Listening skills are highly developed across all aspects of the curriculum; students respect the views of others, concentrate well when listening, and this has a positive effect on their learning.

Modern Foreign Languages

French, German and Japanese lessons were sampled in Years 12 and 13, where French and German were studied to Advanced level, and Japanese to GCSE standard.

The quality of provision for modern foreign languages in the sixth form is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are consistently very high.
- There is very successful emphasis on how to construct language and achieve 'fluency'.
- Teaching is excellent.
- Unusually, Japanese is available, with excellent teaching and high levels of success.

Commentary

134. Examination results, for A-level French and German, and for GCSE Japanese, are consistently well above the national success rate, notably for the higher grades.
135. The standards achieved in their day-to-day work by sixth form students in A-level French and German, and GCSE Japanese, are consistently excellent. A-level students cope with complicated grammar much better than most students of that age. Their pronunciation is accurate. They produce mature, high quality written and spoken work on serious themes such as racism and environmental issues, and their spoken fluency is particularly good. Students of Japanese make rapid progress in learning the vocabulary, script and grammar needed to achieve upper GCSE grades.
136. Students' level of achievement is excellent. They cope exceptionally well with the transition from GCSE, partly because their command of grammar is much better than usual on entry into the sixth form. They develop an impressive ability to use new language and ideas with confidence and originality, and re-use the skills and language they acquire in lessons to shape independent study and original compositions. Their language study makes a significant contribution to the development of their communication, thinking, research and analytical skills.
137. Teaching is excellent. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, and the almost total use of the foreign language for most aspects of lessons, lead to a high level of intellectual stimulation, and an expectation that the language will be used to convey complex messages. Carefully chosen and relevant textual resources support the steady acquisition of high level language and ideas. In the best lessons, the students work with an exceptionally high degree of independence, so that the teacher is co-ordinator and provider of stimulus, raw material and

opportunities, whilst the students process the language and ideas. Overt and organised training in how to achieve oral and written fluency equips the students to write and speak effectively.

138. Leadership and management are both excellent. The head of department has established a first-rate ethos which produces excellent achievement. Strategies for improvement are managed very effectively to ensure consistently excellent provision.
139. Improvement since the previous inspection is good; previously high quality teaching and standards have been improved further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is provided by the head of department.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Students have the capacity to work independently and collaboratively.
- Very effective questioning techniques are used by some mathematics teachers.
- There is too little monitoring of teaching to ensure a greater consistency of approach and to enable the effective sharing of good practice.
- Schemes of work do not provide sufficient guidance and support for teachers in their planning.
- Assessment provides insufficient help for students to improve.

Commentary

140. Students achieved standards in external examinations that were in line with national expectations, but did not achieve as well in mathematics as in their average in other subjects. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment has been narrowed in recent years. Standards achieved by boys and girls in examinations are now similar.
141. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above expectations, such as when students develop effective models to represent real-life situations, as in a lesson on modelling projectiles. Some students could make better use of mathematical language when solving problems, as in a lesson when students were using differentiation. Achievement is good overall. Students are making good progress when taking into account their age and ability. However, there is scope for them to achieve more, given their prior attainment at GCSE and the school's entry requirements to take A-level mathematics in the sixth form.
142. Teaching in mathematics is good and leads to good learning. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Students are often skilfully guided towards learning new concepts by teachers. When this occurs, student achievement is good as in a lesson that developed a theoretical model of a moving projectile. Teaching is occasionally satisfactory; when this is the case it is prevented from being better because students are not able to consolidate their learning before being moved on. In such a lesson, the teacher demonstrated how to find the normal of a curve before most of the students had fully understood finding tangents to a curve by using differentiation. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods which helps students learn effectively. Teachers do not always make good use of time and when this occurs, students do not make the progress that they should. Students learn well overall and most have very positive attitudes towards their learning in mathematics. Most students demonstrate that they can work independently and collaboratively with one another. They work hard and want to do well. The marking of students' work rarely provides clear guidance for further improvement. There are examples of teachers making helpful comments on students' work but these are

rare. Most teachers know their students' capabilities well and do provide help and support in lessons that enables them to make progress.

143. Leadership of the mathematics department is good overall. The Head of Department has a clear vision that is focused on students' achievement and is demonstrated by knowledgeable leadership. Management is satisfactory but there is scope for better monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure the effective sharing of good practice. Schemes of work are insufficiently detailed to provide clear guidance to teachers to help them plan.
144. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The three year trend in 'A' level results shows improvement since the previous inspection, and the average points score achieved by students has also improved. Assessment procedures for recording progress are now in place but they are insufficiently developed to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and do not inform the planning cycle.

Mathematics across the curriculum

145. Other subjects contribute well to the development of students' mathematical skills. Students demonstrate that they can carry out mental calculations in an extensive variety of ways. Their high level of mathematical competence means that lack of skills in mathematics is never a barrier to learning in other subjects and often enables students to make rapid progress.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Theory and practical are well-integrated.
- There is scope for greater pace and challenge in lessons.
- Links between different parts of the subject are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

146. In 2002, biology A-level results were in line with national averages. Based on the work seen during the inspection boys and girls are both continuing to make steady progress and achieving in line with expectations. Progress and achievement are currently better in Year 12 than in Year 13.
147. Teaching is satisfactory. It is detailed and well judged to ensure that students of all abilities develop an understanding of the work. Theory and practical work are well integrated and support each other. Teachers know the subject well. Too many opportunities to discuss links between different parts of the subject in order to deepen knowledge and understanding are missed. There is too little pace and challenge in the work provided. Students' learning is satisfactory overall. In a complex practical to do with photosynthesis a clear majority of students were able to explain well what they were doing. In a Year 12 practical about the water potential of potato cells there was good understanding of how the practical related to theory and how the results would be analysed. Students' practical skills are better developed than their theoretical knowledge.
148. The leadership and management of the subject are both satisfactory. The teaching is well coordinated between the two teachers involved. There has been an analysis of students' marks in different components of the examination and an action plan for improvement has been produced. The department lacks a scheme of work containing strategies for improving

students' knowledge of the subject, and how resources such as the Internet can be used to further this.

149. Sixth form biology was not inspected in 1998.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining students have a sound grasp of concepts and apply them well. One hundred percent of A2 students gain an A – E grade.
- Students work well together and with their teachers.
- Teaching is enhanced through very good teacher subject knowledge and clear, detailed explanations.
- Course resources are organised and used well.
- There are too few students attaining higher grades.
- Insufficient opportunity is provided for individual learning.
- There is too little use of assessment to help students improve.

Commentary

150. A-level chemistry results in 2002 and 2003 were as expected when compared with students' previous GCSE results. The overall performances of students at AS level in 2003 was below average and below that expected considering their GCSE grades. A significant proportion of students discontinued their studies at the end of Year 12, in particular, those students studying only one science subject. Some of these results were adversely affected by staffing difficulties, especially AS results.
151. The current standards of students at the early stages of their course in Year 12 are in line with those normally seen. Higher attaining students are achieving at least as much as expected and show some good understanding; for example, in their knowledge of acids and hydroxides. In Year 13, students' achievement is satisfactory. Students in Years 12 and 13 make steady progress and demonstrate good understanding of key concepts. Progress is slowed through over-reliance on teacher guidance and direction.
152. Teaching of chemistry is satisfactory, with some examples of good practice. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this is used well in their questioning, explanations and the tasks they set. However, teaching in a few lessons is too teacher dominated and unimaginative. For example, teachers gave information to students and questioned only a selected few, rather than providing the opportunity for them to discuss ideas, rehearse responses, learn from each other and other sources, before testing all students' knowledge and understanding. These lessons were not stimulating and did not result in secure learning, particularly for less confident students. Students' learning is sound. They respond well to challenge, work hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part of their learning. Less confident students do not always enter into classroom question-and-answer sessions. When given the opportunity to do so, students undertake independent work maturely. Most extract information from a variety of sources well and make their own notes.
153. Leadership and management are both satisfactory, with relatively new courses now well established, resourced and organised. Teaching and learning in the department is restricted due to a lack of fully developed schemes of work that plan for a wider range of learning strategies such as for gifted students. Assessment data is not used enough to inform students of their progress and highlight strengths and areas to improve. A good range of

learning support materials provided by the exam board is adapted well and used effectively, but there is too little use of ICT both as a teaching and learning tool.

154. Sixth form chemistry was not inspected in 1998.

Physics

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and students are very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, clarity of explanation and questioning of students has a positive effect on understanding.
- Subject specifications content is rigorously followed.
- There is scope to improve planning and the range of strategies to raise achievement for the most able students.
- There are too few opportunities to develop independent learning skills.

Commentary

155. A-level results in 2003 were below average when in 2002 they were above average. However, these results were based on very small numbers of students where a change in one student's result can have a significant change on the overall statistics. AS level results in physics indicate students achieving at least the grades predicted, based on their previous GCSE performance. Students who failed to achieve a grade tended to be students studying only one science subject. The entrance criteria have now been tightened to select more rigorously onto the course.
156. The achievement of current students in Year 13 is satisfactory. Students are making steady progress; they show good recall and understanding of Newton's laws and explain energy levels in different circuits and light-emitting diodes. Students carry out most investigations capably, but on occasions a few lack confidence.
157. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. In good lessons, explanations and board work are clear and precise, lessons develop well using the early part as a foundation for later work, sustaining the pace and ensuring students make good progress. In a few lessons pace is slower and students' learning is too dependent on directions and questioning from the teacher. There are too few opportunities for students to discuss ideas and learn from different, more diverse and interesting sources. Students' learning is satisfactory. They are attentive and show a willingness to learn, seeking clarification of their understanding by asking thoughtful questions. For example, the differences between Newton's laws. Relationships in the classroom are very good; the atmosphere being relaxed, friendly and supportive but industrious. There is not enough done to encourage students to become more responsible for their own learning, to make greater contributions to discussions and the learning of the group. Too narrow a range of sources of information is used, including ICT.
158. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The course is soundly organised and resourced but lacks a comprehensive scheme of work to provide a wider range of teaching and learning strategies for staff and students. For example, there are too few strategies to challenge the most able and gifted. Test and other data are not fully exploited to help student's self-assess, set targets for improvement and plan their own learning.
159. Physics was not inspected in 1998.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently very good.
- Teachers have expert subject knowledge
- Students demonstrate high quality, independent learning skills
- Coursework is of a high quality.
- A well-chosen software package is used effectively.

Commentary

160. Students have not been entered for examinations until this year. All students entered for the six and twelve unit AVCE achieved a 100 per cent pass rate. This represents very good achievement.
161. Overall, standards are very good. Students begin the course from a variety of backgrounds, some without the benefit of previous examination experience in the subject. They are quickly brought up to a common level through a data presentation assignment. Current work seen in Year 12 shows that students are prepared well for examinations, using pre-release material. Students are confident and independent learners making very effective use of detailed, clear resource materials. They use multi-media elements very well to introduce and re-inforce topics and links to the Internet. They access the course on-line from home, which is very beneficial. Their learning includes the latest developments in computer technology, what they are and the impact they have on society. Students use the Internet effectively and present their findings to others confidently. They put considerable effort into coursework and present work of high quality. For some tasks real-end users within the community are found. Students assimilate new knowledge quickly, make very good progress and achieve well by the end of the course. Achievement is very good in both years. Students who start the course without the benefit of previous examination knowledge work very hard to catch up quickly. They are supported well and given effective individual help.
162. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers have expert subject knowledge which they use very effectively to ensure rapid gains in knowledge and skills for students. The quality software learning package allows students to learn quickly and work independently. Lessons move at a fast pace. Students extend their capabilities through on-line learning. Coursework is marked well to clear criteria and much individual feedback for improvement is given. Teachers develop very good relationships with students and provide very effective role models. Students respond very well; they have mature attitudes, enjoy the subject, are confident and prepared to work hard to achieve success.
163. Leadership is very good. The department has a high reputation, is part of the graduate teacher programme and links well with feeder schools. Teaching is very well co-ordinated. All staff work well as a team and are committed to student's success. There is a clear vision for the future. Management is very good. Staff skills are continually developed and the subject contributes well to whole school e-learning developments. A very detailed data collection system is in operation to monitor student's progress. Management is very supportive.
164. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. AVCE six and twelve unit courses have been introduced to cater for a wide range of students. These have proved very successful. A very good partnership with the local catholic school ensures that joint provision is co-ordinated very well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

165. There is too little use of ICT across the curriculum. Students' high level skills are being insufficiently harnessed to enhance their learning in other subjects. There are a few

exceptions, such as geography, business education and health and social care, where it is used well.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very effective.
- Standards of attainment are high.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Support for students is very effective.
- There is too little use of assessment data to help planning.

Commentary

166. The standard of attainment in the sixth form is above national standards. In this year's examinations all students achieved well, with the majority of students entering gaining the highest grades at both AS and A level.
167. Students currently in the sixth form are making very good progress and achieving very well in all aspects of the subject. They know about both physical and human geography. Work on coasts, earthquakes and volcanoes gives them a good understanding of how the landscape is being shaped by natural forces. In a lesson on global tourism they gained a good understanding of ways in which increasing numbers of visitors to some African countries can affect the local landscapes and ways of life. Work in geography also helps students develop key skills of literacy and numeracy. In one lesson for example they used detailed statistics to look at the effects of flooding. Work in their folders includes very well written essays, in which students demonstrate good evaluative and analytical skills. Students also make good use of ICT to enhance the presentation of their work. Gifted and talented students also make very good progress. For example they have a good understanding of complex theories which can be used to explain the growth of coastal towns.
168. The standard of teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good command of geography and of the requirements of the examination. They use this, together with an obvious love of the subject, to inspire their students to work hard. Lessons are carefully planned to be both interesting and challenging. In one lesson, for example, the teacher started the lesson by asking students to identify a mystery rock. He used this to lead into a well-organised lesson on volcanoes. He took the students confidently through a sequence of photographs and put across key ideas in an interesting way. As a result, all the students were attentive and keen to learn. They worked hard together and gained a good understanding of links between volcanic processes and their effect on the chemistry and fertility of soils. In another lesson the teacher's knowledge was also apparent, as she helped students to understand the difficulties of developing sustainable tourism in some parts of the world.
169. Leadership is excellent. There are well-developed courses enabling students to study and enjoy the subject, and prepare for examinations. The head of department gives an excellent lead in this, exemplifying high standards of teaching, and supporting his colleagues in the preparation of their work. There is an excellent atmosphere of commitment and endeavour which rubs off on the students, and contributes to their success.
170. The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching is now more effective and this is why students achieve high standards. Making better use of

assessment data, and continuing to broaden the range of class activities has good potential to raise standards even further.

History

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Historical and study skills are developed very well, particularly the level of analysis and the ability to make judgements backed by evidence.
- There is a high level of challenge and expectations of students, leading to very high levels of concentration and interest.
- Very good relationships exist between students, and between teachers and students, so that students are prepared to put forward their own ideas and views.
- There is too little use of information technology to support learning.

Commentary

171. Attainment at advanced level is very good. The trend over the past four years has been consistently high, with the exception of 2002, although the numbers involved are small for statistical comparisons, particularly in relation to the performance of boys and girls. Results in 2003 were much improved. Over time the examination results compared with national standards are very good.
172. The standard of work seen is also very good. Students have a real depth of knowledge and understanding of the topics being covered as in a Year 13 lesson on the spread of Protestantism. They question and analyse their work so that they extend their understanding with questions such as 'To what extent?' and 'How could they know?' The students are making very good progress in independent research and learning which is helping to support them in making oral contributions to their lessons. There is scope for further development in students' ability to view historical events from a range of perspectives. Students are making very good progress, particularly in the more advanced skills such as analysis and the drawing of conclusions. They are also making very good progress in a range of examination techniques. Overall, they are sustaining their progress and working towards high levels of attainment. Although some use is made of information technology to support learning in history, there is scope for further development.
173. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. There is a high level of expectation and challenge so that students develop a range of analytical skills and are confident in putting forward their point of view. This was seen in a lesson on the rebellions during Henry VII's reign when students were able to say which they thought were the most threatening and why. The students are also given a great deal of positive encouragement, and progress is supported by extremely good relationships. The teachers have a very good command of their subject which is helping students to acquire new and detailed knowledge to underpin their work. The very good attitudes of the students are resulting in high levels of enthusiasm and interest in the subject.
174. Leadership and management are very good in the history department. The head of department ensures that developments focus on improving standards. The department contributes well to the whole school ethos of encouraging every student to reach as high a standard as they can. The head of department is beginning to analyse the aspects of teaching and learning which impact on success and there is good potential for this to inform future action planning. The department is well-organised with policies being put into practice very effectively. There is scope for improved monitoring to ensure consistency and to identify good practice which can be shared across the department.

175. Since the previous inspection the department has maintained the high standards set in the sixth form. Overall, the department has made very good progress.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, based on very good relationships with students.
- Students are positively interested in the subject and work hard.
- Large numbers of students are entered for short course GCSE and they attain very good results.
- The head of department is not able to give sufficient time to lead and manage the department due to a wide range of other responsibilities within the school.
- Teachers need to be clearer about learning objectives and give more responsibility to students to encourage independent learning.
- There is no provision for statutory religious education in the sixth form.

Commentary

176. Achievement in the GCSE short course is very good. Results have improved over the past three years and are now well above average. In 2003, over one-third achieved an A* or A grade. Students achieve well in Year 9, attaining above-average standards. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of major world faiths but especially Christianity. Their ability to express their own viewpoints in lessons and in writing is a strength. Students achieve very well; in Years 10 and 11, they are very confident in expressing their views, arguing a case and asking questions. In lessons this was particularly noticeable and is due to the very good relationships that exist between teachers and students and between the students themselves. Students are encouraged to use correct terminology and make quick progress, especially where it is clear to them what the objectives of lessons are. This is most noticeable in GCSE classes where students draw on their knowledge and understanding of the religions studied and apply it to moral and ethical situations such as marriage, divorce and abortion.

177. Teaching in religious education is very good. It is based on clear planning, detailed expositions and explanations, a range of activities, high standards of behaviour and very good use of questioning to extend students into new areas of learning and thus requiring them to think for themselves. At times, some of the work is over-directed and lacks clear learning objectives so that students rely too heavily on teachers, and high attainers have too little expected of them in some of the written tasks. Homework is set irregularly at both key stages and not enough thought is given to how homework can be more firmly established within the subject.

178. Staff in the department are hard-working and conscientious. The head of department carries a wide range of other responsibilities and is pulled in many directions. Whilst the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and results at GCSE have improved, the lack of leadership and management time is hindering further development of the subject.

179. Religious education has made good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE results have steadily risen, teachers have improved their subject knowledge and positive relationships have been maintained.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Students achieved well in recent examinations. Good standards of teaching encourage students to develop good independent learning skills and become critical thinkers. Students are enthusiastic about the subject and the teaching they experience.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good; teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Use of completed examination answers for students to mark and analyse to improve their understanding of subject content and examination techniques.
- Students are enthusiastic about the subject and the teaching and learning opportunities they experience.
- Sociology makes a very good contribution to the development of students as informed and involved members of society.
- There is insufficient variety of teaching activities to cater for the different learning styles of some students

Commentary

180. In the last four years the standards achieved by students in A-level (and more recently AS) sociology examination have been well above the national average apart from a dip in results in 2002. For many students their sociology results compare very favourably to their predicted grades, and most students achieve well in their sociology examination when compared to their other subjects.
181. The standard of work of current students is at a level which is well above what would be expected nationally. There is a good gender balance in the current groups and there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. In Year 13, students are achieving well in comparison with their AS results. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course but they are achieving well given the fact that they have not previously studied the subject at GCSE. In a lesson on sociological theory, students were starting to show good knowledge and understanding of the main theoretical perspectives and were able to discuss the differences between social action theory and a structural perspective in a thoughtful and analytical way.
182. Teaching is very good; students learn very well as a result. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is excellent; they use questions very well to draw all students into the discussion. Teachers are particularly good at explaining sociological terminology and concepts in ways that make them accessible to students and relate them to their own experiences. For example, in a lesson on the sociology of the family, students drew on their own experiences in understanding women's role in the family and distinguished between different sociological views, including a radical feminist view. Students learn very well. They show high levels of interest and concentration in lessons. Relationships are a strength and students collaborate well with each other and with their teachers. Students respond well to teachers' questions and are not afraid to challenge each other and the teacher when making a point. In particular, teachers give good examples of examination answers for students to analyse and mark this is having a very good impact on improving students' knowledge of exam requirements. Students are very positive about the subject. They feel they are given good opportunities to do research, including using the Internet and to develop their independent learning skills and are given good information from teachers on how well they are doing and how they can improve further. The subject makes a very good contribution to the development of students, as informed and active citizens.
183. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and the subject teachers are committed to building on what has already been achieved. The subject co-ordinator has

reviewed the AS specification and made changes to the elements taught in order to raise standards further.

184. Sociology was not reported at all in the last inspection, however progress based on increased student uptake and raised standards indicates that the subject has made good progress since that time.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and results in A-level examinations are well above average.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students show a mature approach to their work and a developed capacity for independent learning.
- ICT, where used, is put to good effect, but is restricted by limitations in resources.

Commentary

185. In the present Year 13, six students are pursuing the A-level syllabus of the Edexcel Examining Board. Twenty students in Year 12 are taking the AS level course. In the previous year, twelve students gained very good results in A-level examinations. The number of higher grades achieved, and students' average scores, are above average in comparison with national figures and compare favourably with other subjects within the school. A-level results over recent years have been consistently high.
186. Work in progress in both Years 12 and 13 shows well above average standards representing very high achievement. Students demonstrate strong, creative self-confidence in the development of their ideas. The capacity to take their work forward independently is a major strength. In all cases, however, the skills evident in drawing and composition show clearly the way in which the experience of earlier years is built upon.
187. The quality of teaching is very good generally; carefully planned teaching leads to very good sequential learning. Students are given individual guidance, where needed, and are encouraged to present their work in a way which makes clear the pattern of their thinking. In this way a good level of challenge is sustained in the teaching, students being required to share responsibility for their progress with their teachers. There is good use of the local environment in a few cases and this could be extended to good effect in an area which is rich in stimulating source material. Students are thoughtful and serious in discussion of their work. They are keen to engage with important issues in art, including its function in their own development and in society. They participate in presentations of their work to the wider audience in the local gallery and they welcome the impetus to their work provided by visiting and resident artists of major standing.
188. Leadership is very good and management is very effective. The organisation of the sixth form provision is very well co-ordinated to make the best use of local resources. This includes gaining skills in ICT from attendance at sessions sponsored by the local authority and the church. This supplements the limited resources in the department and represents astute management.
189. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved and achievement is higher, owing to the enthusiasm and commitment of the current staff.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national averages.
- Teaching is good; the teacher is knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Students are well-motivated and are successfully encouraged to work independently.
- Accommodation and ICT resources for the subject are unsatisfactory

Commentary

190. Over the last three years A-level results have been well above national averages, representing very high achievement, based on a small number of entries. Approximately five students take AS and A2 music each year.
191. In lessons, students achieve very well to attain standards which are well above national averages. Students in Years 12 and 13 listen critically to musical scores and analyse them with a high level of understanding and a very good grasp of vocabulary. For example, in a discussion about Bach's Brandenburg Concerto Number Four, during the inspection, the Year 12 students commented and offered opinions about the effect of the orchestration such as the "juxtaposition of the smooth recorder part and the staccato orchestra". They understand key features of the styles of music that they have studied such as continuo, hemiola and terraced dynamics. The achievement both of boys and girls is very good, particularly at this early stage of the Year 12 course. Students have very good instrumental skills and many of them sing regularly in the school and Cathedral choirs.
192. Students have made very good progress in their compositions. Students in Year 12 are composing film music; their compositions are creative, literate and demonstrate deep understanding of the genre, for example in the intelligent construction of a 'cheesy' middle section. Some students have music software at home and use it for composition but, overall, ICT skills are underdeveloped because of a lack of equipment in the department.
193. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers are passionate about the subject and very knowledgeable. The students are high achievers and very eager to learn. The teachers know the students well and the supportive environment created means that the students feel secure enough to try out their own ideas and opinions and to take risks. This helps them to develop good independent learning skills. In the most successful lessons the teacher asks well-planned and focused questions.
194. The new, part-time head of department has made a good start to the leadership and management of music but has not yet had sufficient time to monitor the quality of current provision. Cathedral staff are generously giving their time and support to teaching Year 13 students. The accommodation and resources for sixth-form music are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is cramped and noise from other music lessons has a negative impact on students' progress. There are not enough computers in the department to support student composition.
195. Improvement since the last inspection is good. A-level results have improved as a result of better teaching.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical Education

This was not a focus subject in this inspection, however a few lessons were sampled. Teaching is good and students achieve well when compared to their previous performance in the subject. Results in the most recent A and AS level examinations were good with one third of students gaining an A or B grade and all students gaining a pass grade. The subject has increased in popularity with a large take-up for the current AS course.

BUSINESS

Business education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning and assessment against the awarding body criteria is extremely effective.
- Positive attitudes and enthusiasm of the students contribute strongly to their learning.
- Students' results are consistently above the national average.
- Very good relationships have a beneficial effect on learning.
- A few lessons do not have a sharp enough focus on what is expected of the students to help them develop their time management skills.

Commentary

196. The standards attained by the students at the end of their courses is very good and achievement is very high. The department offers both the single and double award for the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education. These are both currently taken over two years in the sixth form, with some of the lessons including both groups of students. Over the past three years the results have been significantly above the national standard, although numbers are small for statistical comparison. There was a small decline in results in 2002 but the average points score was still high and the grade comparing them with national figures has stayed at a very high level. In 2001, the girls' results were better than the boys but in the last two years this trend was reversed.
197. The standard of work seen was very good. Students work very effectively against the assessment criteria set by the awarding body and they achieve very well. They confidently use a wide range of business terminology and understand appropriate theoretical models which they use to support their work, for example theories of employee motivation, which they use in their portfolio work. The students also carry out very effective primary research through such means as questionnaires to support their more theoretical work, making very good use of a wide range of textbooks and other written material. They access a wide range of sources through the Internet and have very good access to, and make good use of, ICT. The students find that the skills of interpretation and applying what they have learned to new situations are more demanding and these are not sufficiently developed. Most students are making very good progress in the sixth form in relation to their prior attainment. The work is demanding, with many activities being open-ended; this allows students to develop and produce work of a high standard. They are making very good progress in developing the skills needed to meet the qualification requirements, as well as high levels of knowledge, understanding and analysis in the subject. The enthusiasm, high levels of concentration and interest shown by the students make a very positive contribution to their learning.
198. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. There is very good planning and organisation. This is enhanced by the development of helpful supporting materials for the students such as their course handbook. In addition to the lessons there is very good additional support so that students feel able to seek help and advice at any time. There is also very good detailed feedback on assessments for the portfolio so that students are very clear about what is needed to improve in order to reach higher standards. In some lessons there is lack of clear

expectations of what is to be achieved during the lesson so that students do not always make best use of their time throughout the lesson.

199. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. The head of department and the other members of the department work extremely hard to ensure that students do well in this subject. The department clearly supports the school's philosophy and aims by ensuring a learning environment that leads students to want to do well and provides the supporting framework for this to happen. The department is very well organised and there is a very good understanding of the qualification requirements. Further development of the use of the data which is available to monitor and evaluate the progress of different groups of students and to share good practice has strong potential to further enhance the department's development.
200. There was no previous inspection report for business education.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision for Health and Social Care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and take responsibility for meeting course assessment criteria very well.
- Student files are very well organised.
- Short-term outcomes for lessons are not always clearly established.

Commentary

201. VCE results in 2002 were well above average and in 2003 were average; all students gained a pass grade A – E. In relation to students' prior attainment and their results achieved at GCSE, these results demonstrate very good achievement.
202. Students achieve very well in Year 13 to attain very good standards. Files are meticulously organised and show the full range of subject specification. Students demonstrate good recall of child development theory and relate these ideas to case study examples and through work experience. Coursework-assessed practical assignments are of a very good standard, with self assessment against course work criteria a regular feature of work. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course but are already achieving well and attaining above average standards. Their work shows a logical progression and a well developed level of organisation and practical applicability, such as in community scheme visits.
203. Teaching is very good. The organisation, variety of practical and research tasks, blended well with taught sessions and individual guidance and tutorials, is highly effective. Students very quickly settle into a pattern of individual work, which is well-resourced. Students with lower level basic skills, knowledge and understanding are supported well and gain confidence quickly. Teaching is less effective in a small number of lessons when short-term objectives are not clearly established; this has an adverse effect on learning. For example, students struggled to use time effectively when planning a piece of research. Students learn very well. They are attentive and show a willingness to improve, seeking clarification of their understanding and showing a keen interest in the course content. Relationships in the classroom are very good. The atmosphere is purposeful, friendly and supportive. Students develop skills to work independently, carry out individual research and present work in different styles appropriate to the audience. ICT is used extensively and greatly enhances the quality of students' work.
204. Leadership of health and social care is very good. There is a commitment to developing each individual student to achieve well and further improve the course. Management is also very

good; a very good and detailed planning guide is used and a wide range of learning support materials have been developed. Formalised monitoring of teaching is still to be fully established, to improve consistency of quality.

205. Health and social care was not reported on in the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	2
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		2
Students' achievement	3	2
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		1
Attendance	1	1
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	1
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		1
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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