

# INSPECTION REPORT

**WEATHERHEAD HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA ARTS  
COLLEGE**

Wallasey

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105105

Headteacher: Miss S M Davies

Lead inspector: Mr C Sander

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 259218

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 pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1518
School address:	Breck Road Wallasey Wirral
Postcode:	CH44 3HS
Telephone number:	0151 6314400
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Michael Emberton OBE JP
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Weatherhead High School is an oversubscribed 11-18 community comprehensive school for girls. The size of the school and its sixth form are both above average. It received national achievement and Artsmark awards in 2001 and the Sportsmark award in 2002. In September 2002 it became a specialist media arts college and moved to newly-built premises in 2003 as part of a private funding initiative [PFI]. As a specialist school it has extensive links with its local community. It is involved in Excellence in Cities [EiC], a national initiative to raise standards. The pupils' socio-economic circumstances are below average with an above average number known to be entitled to free school meals. Standards on entry to the school are above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, as also those with statements of special educational needs, is below average. Approximately seven per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is low, three of whom are at an early stage of learning English. The numbers who join or leave, other than at the start or end of the school year, are low. Approximately four-fifths of pupils continue their education beyond the age of 16, nearly all of whom do so within the school's sixth form.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4151	Mr C Sander	Lead inspector	Citizenship
7958	Ms G Lewis	Lead inspector Post-16	Media studies in the sixth form
12682	Mr J Griffin	Lay inspector	
22723	Mr B Hartman	Team inspector	Mathematics
32782	Mr M West	Team inspector	English as an additional language English
5439	Mr G Jones	Team inspector	Theatre Studies in the sixth form
12016	Ms C O'Leary	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form
31096	Mr J Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32329	Mr A Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
30979	Mr P Clewes	Team inspector	Design and technology
14704	Mr J Cooling	Team inspector	Geography
15971	Mr M Pye	Team inspector	History
1769	Mr M Holohan	Team inspector	Health and social care in the sixth form Psychology in the sixth form
32169	Mr B O'Hagan	Team inspector	Sociology in the sixth form
14851	Mr G Laws	Team inspector	Special educational needs Modern foreign languages
19867	Mr M Pettitt	Team inspector	Music
27331	Mr P Smith	Team inspector	Physical education
27746	Ms J White	Team inspector	Religious education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school** for girls that provides **good value for money**. It is as effective as it was at the time of the last inspection. **Good leadership** and **good teaching** have maintained satisfactory achievement and good learning in lessons during a period of major change in status and location. Results are rising ahead of the national trend at Year 9 and in line with it at Year 11 and in the sixth form. In the 2003 national tests at Year 9, they were well above average for similar schools and above average for all schools nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with similar schools and above average for all schools.

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

- The good leadership of change by the headteacher, key staff and governors.
- Good subject leadership but some weak aspects of management, resulting in some inconsistencies in the quality of provision.
- Very good achievement in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, with very high performance in English that was in the top five per cent nationally.
- The good but inconsistent quality of teaching and some aspects of assessment. The very good teaching in English is a strength of the school.
- Well-planned provision for media education.
- Very good links with the community.
- The pupils' very good relationships with others.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Achievement was good in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9. It is satisfactory in current work** at Year 9 and Year 11 and **good** in the sixth form. It is good in English, mathematics, media literacy, information and communication technology [ICT] and physical education at Year 9 and in English, mathematics, geography, design and technology, music, media studies, physical education and citizenship at Year 11. In the sixth form it is good in all the subjects inspected except in biology and geography, history and design and technology where it is satisfactory. It is very good in physical education. **Standards of current work are similar to those expected nationally at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form.** They are higher than this in English, mathematics, history and citizenship at Year 9 and much higher in media literacy. At Year 11, they are higher in English, mathematics, geography, design and technology, physical education, media studies and citizenship. They are higher than usually seen nationally in the sixth form in English, art and design, media studies, theatre studies and health and social care. They are much higher in physical education but lower in design and technology.

**Pupils' personal qualities, behaviour and attitudes are good.** They respond very well to good teaching. Exclusions are unheard of. Attendance is satisfactory. Within the extensive new building **punctuality to lessons is satisfactory**, as also at other times. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.**

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**Good quality. Good, very knowledgeable teaching** prepares pupils very well for national tests and public examinations. Learning is more effective in Years 10 and 11 because the proportion of good teaching is considerably greater than in Years 7 to 9. The proportion of very good teaching was well above the average for the school in English, religious education and physical education. The best teaching, in English and across all subjects, contributes much to their personal development and plays to pupils' strengths in reading, writing and speaking. These features are inconsistent. The learning of less competent pupils is currently weak in Year 8. The use of assessment in some lessons is unsatisfactory. On occasions, learning is unsatisfactory because teaching methods are not well matched to the needs of the pupils.

Achievement is also boosted by the wide range of stimulating, additional activities, many of which are linked to the school's specialist college status and its Sportsmark and Artsmark recognition. Support of the most vulnerable and gifted and talented pupils is very good. Links with community are very strong.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership is good. Management is satisfactory.** The determined and principled leadership of the headteacher drives improvement well, including the successful application for specialist school status in 2002 and the move to new, purpose-built facilities in 2003. The partnership with governors is strong. **Governance is satisfactory**, providing strong support in the school's successful bid for specialist status and diligent monitoring of budgets during the creation of the new buildings. Some statutory requirements are not fully met. The governors and leadership team have worked tirelessly to secure best value within the private funding initiative [PFI] contract. Most of the principles of best value are applied well within the school's overall good financial management and performance. Comparisons of academic performance with others are not rigorous enough. Some parents would like to be consulted more fully. Some aspects of management are weak, including the consistent monitoring of performance and the evaluation of both what the school provides and its performance.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The relatively small number of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and completed the questionnaire are broadly satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. They appreciate the good teaching that helps their children make good progress and expects them to do well in an atmosphere largely free from any aggressive behaviours. They would like communication to be stronger, telling them more about the progress made and listening more frequently to their suggestions and concerns.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve some aspects of **management**, particularly the monitoring of quality, the evaluation of performance and provision and the effectiveness of communication.
- Improve some aspects of **teaching**, particularly its consistent quality, the match of methods to need and the quality of less competent pupils' learning in Year 8.
- Improve some aspects of **assessment**, particularly its use by teachers to inform their planning to raise achievement and by pupils to increase their knowledge of how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
- Meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

# THE SIXTH FORM AT WEATHERHEAD HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA ARTS COLLEGE

## OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Its cost effectiveness is satisfactory.**

Results are below the national average but are improving. Standards of work seen are higher and similar or better than those usually found nationally. Achievement is good as a result of good teaching and thorough preparation of coursework. Some students do not attend regularly but this has improved this year. Students' welfare is very well managed. Good leadership defines well how further improvement will be made in the longer term. Management is satisfactory. Administration and organisation are good. It is too early to evaluate the impact of several new procedures on students' achievement and personal development.

**The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- Strong pastoral support for students by the head of sixth form.
- Strong support from subject teachers in helping students raise standards.
- Variety of courses offered.
- Good or better teaching which motivates and challenges students in English, biology, art and design, psychology, physical education and media studies.
- Involvement of sixth-formers in the main school, providing reading 'buddies' and 'guardian angels' for lower school pupils.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently rigorous and regular.
- Insufficient time to carry out and develop the role of head of sixth form.

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

Eleven subjects were inspected in detail. Teaching in other subjects was sampled

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Provision in English language and English literature is good.</b> Very good subject knowledge and good matching of materials and teaching methods with students' needs help them to achieve well.
Mathematics	<b>Provision in mathematics is good.</b> Subject knowledge is good. Good extra support and hardworking attitudes result in good achievement.
Science	<b>Provision in science is good.</b> Challenging teaching in biology extends the depth and range of students' learning well. Achievement is satisfactory.
Humanities	<b>Provision in psychology is good.</b> Good subject knowledge underpins challenging teaching. Achievement is good. <b>Provision in history is satisfactory.</b> Good subject knowledge motivates most students to achieve satisfactorily. Achievement at the higher grades is unsatisfactory. Some features of preparation for examinations are weak. <b>Provision in geography is good.</b> Good subject knowledge linked to very good preparation for examinations raises standards. Achievement is satisfactory. <b>Provision in sociology is satisfactory.</b> Good leadership is improving provision. Standards are now broadly in line with those seen nationally but the 2003 AS results were below average. Increasingly popular. Satisfactory achievement.



Curriculum area	Evaluation
Visual and performing arts and media	<p><b>Provision in art and design is good.</b> High expectations, good level of challenge, resulting in improving standards and good achievement.</p> <p><b>Provision in media studies is good.</b> The high expectations in good teaching are raising standards. Methods and materials are well matched to students' needs. Achievement is good.</p> <p><b>Provision in drama and theatre studies is good.</b> Standards similar to those usually seen nationally. Excellent subject knowledge in the challenging and supportive teaching results in good achievement.</p>
Health and social care	<p><b>Provision in health and social care is good.</b> The emphasis on developing students' independence and practical skills raises standards.</p>

*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'.*

The quality of teaching in other subjects sampled is good. It is very good in physical education. Assessment is well used in media studies and physical education. Marking is good. High expectations present a good level of challenge to students but sometimes their learning is too directed by the teacher.

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

**Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory.** The support given to students is good. Students interviewed said they received good support from all their subject teachers and especially the head of sixth form. The end-of-first-term questionnaires completed by the school support this view. The students are very appreciative of the support from teachers and tutors.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

**Leadership of the sixth form is good.** New leadership has started to identify the next steps in strategic improvement, particularly to raise achievement. An all-subject team to monitor students' progress in Year 12 is now in place. The good quality of leadership provides a good role model of high expectation for both teachers and students.

**Management of the sixth form is satisfactory.** It is too early to measure the impact of recent leadership action, for example in target setting. The involvement of the students and communication with parents are good features. The monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. Targets are set which are communicated to students and their parents. The time available for the leadership to monitor standards is unsatisfactory.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

**Students' views of the sixth form are good.**

What students like about the sixth form:

- Support and encouragement in their studies
- The much improved facilities of the new school especially for their use
- Teaching which is challenging
- Being involved in the main school, providing support for younger pupils

What they feel could be improved:

- More notice being taken of their views and being treated like adults
- The quality of careers advice

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

- *In this report the young people in Years 7 to 11 are referred to as pupils, those in the sixth form are referred to as students.*
- *In this report the word ‘**competent**’ refers to those pupils whose work is broadly in line with the standards expected or usually seen nationally. On entry to this school in Year 7 they comprise approximately one quarter of the year group. The proportion is smaller than usually found.*
- *The phrase ‘**more competent**’ refers to those whose work is higher than the standards usually seen or expected nationally. They comprise approximately one half of this school. The proportion is larger than usually found.*
- *The phrase ‘**less competent**’ refers to those whose work does not yet reach the standard expected nationally or is lower than that usually seen in other schools nationally. They comprise approximately one quarter of this school. The proportion is broadly the same as is usually found.*
- *Approximately five per cent of pupils have identified special educational needs, well below the national average. Less than one per cent has a statement of special educational needs, well below average.*
- *The word ‘**results**’ refers to pupils’ performance in public examinations or national tests. They are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word ‘**standards**’ is used to define how well the pupils at this school do when their work is compared with what others nationally are expected to know, understand and do at ages 11, 14 and 16. Occasionally the term ‘work’ is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of the standards usually found, or expected nationally.*
- *The word ‘**achievement**’ defines how much progress and improvement the pupils at this school have made over time. It indicates whether the pupils are doing as well as might reasonably be expected and whether they are working hard enough. It may also refer to how well they are doing at age 14 compared with what they were able to do when they started at the school at age 11, or at age 16 compared with their national test results at age 14 compared with their previous GCSE results. Evaluations are expressed in terms such as ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘satisfactory’, ‘unsatisfactory’. The word ‘**progress**’ describes the rate at which the pupils are learning.*
- *This specialist school provides for all pupils in Years 7-9 lessons in ‘media literacy’. This course is not the same as media studies.*
- *When the school was inspected it had been in its new buildings for just over one school term. There was a significant number of issues concerning the completion of the accommodation and its facilities, in particular the planned provision for information and communication technology [ICT]. The successful resolution of these matters was progressing at the time of the inspection but lies outside the control of the school and its governors. All references to the lack of ICT in this report should be read in this context.*

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

#### What do the pupils and their parents say?

1. Parents are generally well satisfied. There were some individual concerns expressed about the achievement of the more competent. Nearly all of those who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children made good progress. Nearly all pupils say they are expected to work hard and most say they know what they need to do to raise the standards of their work.

## What do the school's national test and public examination results show?

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.9 (35.8)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.2 (35.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.2 (33.9)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 251 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	59 (49)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (89)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.7 (34.7)	34.2 (34.7)

*There were 250 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.3 (90.0)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.8 (32.7)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	227.4 (235.1)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 119 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year, 2002.*

<b>How does the trend in national test results at the end of Year 9 compare with other schools nationally?</b>	<b>ABOVE</b>
<b>How do the 2003 results in national tests compare with similar schools?</b>	<b>WELL ABOVE AVERAGE</b>
<b>How do the 2003 results in national tests compare with all schools nationally?</b>	<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>
<b>How do the 2003 results in national tests compare with those of girls nationally?</b>	<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>
<b>How does the trend in GCSE results compare with other schools nationally?</b>	<b>SIMILAR</b>
<b>How do the 2003 GCSE results compare with similar schools nationally?</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>
<b>How do the 2003 GCSE results compare with all schools nationally?</b>	<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>
<b>How do the 2003 GCSE results compare with girls' results nationally?</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>
<b>Are these results at least in line with the school's targets?</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>How do the results in GCE examinations in the sixth form compare with those nationally in 2003?</b>	<b>SIMILAR</b>
<b>What has been the trend in GCE A/AS VCE results in the sixth form?</b>	<b>STEADY</b>

## What did the inspection team find?

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The significant rise in results in national tests and GCSE examinations in 2003 at a time when the school was managing the move to new buildings under a PFI contract.
- GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average for all schools but below those of the girls' national performance.
- Very good achievement in the 2003 national tests with very high achievement in English.
- The proportion obtaining 5+ GCSE's at grades A\*-C represents good achievement but the proportion obtaining at least one A\*-G grade dipped below average in 2003.
- The three-year points' average for GCSE results is below the national average for girls.
- Good achievement at Year 9 in English, physical education, history, religious education, media literacy and ICT.
- Good achievement at both Year 9 and Year 11 in mathematics.
- Good achievement in several subjects that pupils make a choice to study after Year 9, including music, physical education, geography, music, media studies and ICT but unsatisfactory achievement and standards in religious education at Year 11.

### Commentary

2. **Standards are in line with those that pupils nationally are expected to reach at Years 9 and 11. In the sixth form, they are higher than those usually seen nationally. Achievement is satisfactory. It is good in the sixth form.**
3. Standards on entry to the school are above average. The proportion of pupils whom one might anticipate should reach well above average standards in national tests and GCSE examinations is reduced by the local provision for grammar schools.
4. Achievement is satisfactory at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and good in the sixth form. It is good in English, mathematics, media literacy, ICT and physical education at Year 9 and in English, mathematics, geography, design and technology, music, media studies, physical education and citizenship at Year 11. In the sixth form it is good in all the subjects inspected except in science, geography, history and design and technology where it is satisfactory. It is very good in physical education. The very small number of those for whom English is an additional language, and who are at an early stage of learning English, achieve similarly. The small number of pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
5. Standards of current work are similar to those expected nationally at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form. They are higher than this in English, mathematics, history and citizenship at Year 9 and much higher in media literacy. At Year 11, they are higher in English, mathematics, geography, design and technology, physical education, media studies and citizenship. They are higher than usually seen nationally in the sixth form in English, art and design, media studies, theatre studies and health and social care. They are much higher in physical education but lower in design and technology.
6. In several subjects, particularly in English and geography, the pupils are very well prepared for national tests and GCSE examinations. Consequently, they do even better at GCSE than might reasonably have been expected from their work in lessons. Most pupils' skills in reading and writing are good. Their skills in speaking and listening are very good.
7. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' previously completed work were broadly in line with those that pupils are expected to reach nationally. The performance of competent pupils was broadly similar across the year groups. The more competent pupils performed better in Year 11 than in Year 9. The standards reached by the less competent, when measured against those usually seen nationally, were lower in Year 9 than in Year 11.

8. There is evidence in some subjects that the standards achieved by some less competent pupils are not high enough. The school makes good provision for the small minority of more disaffected pupils but teaching methods are not always sufficiently well designed to catch and sustain the interest of some of the less competent pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school agrees that this is a feature of its performance that it wants to improve further.
9. The proportion of pupils who obtain 1+ A\*-G grades at GCSE is lower than usually found nationally. The school makes good provision for work-place learning for a small number of pupils in Year 11. They achieve well in their alternative courses with many continuing in further education and training beyond the age of 16.
10. Most pupils' mathematical competence is sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. It is applied well in science, art and design, physical education, ICT and geography, helping to bring rigour and precision to pupils' work. The application of ICT skills is more mixed. It is helping to drive up standards in media studies and physical education as part of the school's media arts strategy. An inordinate delay in the establishment of the school's ICT network, completely outside the control of the school and its governors, has limited the opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their skills across the curriculum and particularly in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and history.

*What features are boosting achievement?*

11. The good reading, writing and oral skills of many pupils make a powerful contribution to driving up standards. Achievement is strongest when teaching methods play to this strength through discussion, challenging questioning and the good range as well as varying length of written tasks. Many pupils' confident knowledge and use of technical vocabulary is driving up standards and raising achievement in science.
12. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well. Enrichment opportunities are a strong feature of the school's media arts strategy, as well as of its effective EIC involvement. These opportunities are provided for more than just the designated pupils. Consequently, many more competent pupils achieve well.
13. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Almost all reach their target levels at the end of Year 9 in mathematics and English. GCSE grades show that good progress is sustained at Year 11. In a very good drama lesson, a number of pupils showed style and panache in a rehearsal of a play about Lizzie Borden.
14. Good subject leadership has steered nearly all subject departments successfully through the choppy waters of change consequent upon the move to the new school site. Good management in English has established strong teamwork that underpins high standards. The relatively high number of part-time teachers does not impede the continuity of pupils' learning and, therefore, their achievement. These arrangements are well managed.

*What features are barriers to raising achievement?*

15. The massive demands on the headteacher and her leadership team and the governors' definition of the team's role during the closure of one school on several sites and the move to a new, single-sited but still unfinished school, have resulted in currently weak performance management. Consequently, despite adjustments to the membership of the team the monitoring of teaching quality within and between some subjects is inconsistent. This is a significant weakness within the overall satisfactory provision for modern foreign languages. The school acknowledges this weakness in its own self-evaluation but the leadership team's managed response has been unsatisfactory.

16. Missed opportunities to build on pupils' strong oral skills are a barrier to raising achievement in French and German. Their relatively more restricted competence in algebra limits the proportion of pupils who reach well above average standards in mathematics.
17. Several other aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in some subjects are barriers to raising achievement. Sometimes the richness of opportunities provided through additional activities is not matched by a rich variety of suitably matched methods in lessons. Even in media studies, where achievement is good, the good teaching of practical skills is not matched by a depth of theoretical knowledge and understanding. Some of these issues are analysed more fully in the section on teaching and learning [pp 18-21].
18. Some aspects of timetabling restrict the time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and there is an unsatisfactory degree of flexibility for grouping pupils in English and mathematics.

### **Sixth Form**

19. **Achievement is good. Standards are higher than those usually seen nationally.**
20. Achievement is good in all the subjects inspected in detail except in biology, geography, history and design and technology where it is satisfactory. It is very good in physical education. Students achieve well in subjects where the materials and teaching methods are closely matched to students' needs.
21. Standards are higher than usually seen nationally in English, art and design, media studies, theatre studies and health and social care. They are much higher in physical education but lower in design and technology.
22. Higher grades are not achieved in some subjects because some students' commitment and preparation for the final examination are unsatisfactory.
23. Results in 2003 were broadly in line with the national average.

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

#### **What do the pupils and their parents say?**

24. The pupils and their parents are in strong agreement. Most pupils like coming to school and are expected to work hard in response to good teaching. They feel trusted to do things on their own and parents are appreciative of the school's work in fostering mature attitudes. Parents and pupils speak positively about pupils' freedom from bullying and the effective way in which rare incidents are dealt with. Pupils express negative views about unsatisfactory access to reliable computers and the length of time they spend queuing at lunchtime.

#### **What did the inspection team find?**

25. The inspection team confirms the positive views expressed by the pupils and their parents. To date, access to computers is well below that planned for this new school. Some pupils do not follow the school's guidance about lunchtime arrangements, resulting in significant queuing.

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good.</b>
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<b>Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.</b>
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<b>Rates of attendance</b>	<b>SATISFACTORY</b>
<b>Rates of exclusion</b>	<b>ZERO</b>
<b>Punctuality</b>	<b>SATISFACTORY</b>

<b>Behaviour and attitudes</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
<b>The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
<b>How good are the procedures to monitor and promote regular attendance?</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
<b>How well does the school encourage pupils to get on well with each other and do their best?</b>	<b>GOOD</b>

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The majority of pupils like coming to school and work hard.
- Most pupils behave well, responding positively to praise from staff.
- Such values create a strong sense of community, including very good relationships between adults and pupils.
- There is inconsistency in how incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are addressed, partly because the well-defined policy and procedures in the staff handbook are not applied consistently by all.
- The good range of opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility and get involved in school life.
- Zero exclusions over several years.
- The low level of unauthorised absence.
- The positive contribution made by sixth form students to school life.
- The unsatisfactory access to reliable computer facilities is a significant issue for pupils in all year groups.

### **Commentary**

*What features are boosting achievement?*

26. Positive attitudes help many pupils to learn well, particularly their readiness to listen, to respond and to help one another. Most pupils' good note-taking skills enable them to record and refer back well to previous learning. This is a weakness in the work of some less competent pupils. Most pupils confidently ask questions of their teachers. This helps them to progress well.
27. Good behaviour is well promoted through regular praise in lessons and written notification to parents. The very good relationships between adults and pupils stem from the very good example and high level of expectation.
28. Procedures and measures to prevent and address rare incidents of bullying are good. Issues are well covered in personal, social and health education [PSHE] and pupils' views on bullying have been sought and analysed. Pupils are confident that any incidents, once reported, are taken seriously and effectively addressed by staff. There are no recorded incidents of racist behaviour.
29. The good provision for personal and social education contributes to pupils' good social skills. Discussion and debate in a range of lessons make a significant contribution to their good moral and social understanding.
30. Pupils with special educational needs usually apply themselves conscientiously. They respond particularly well when presented with tasks that challenge them. Pupils in Year 9 readily, and imaginatively, set about the task of devising an advertising campaign. The school promotes strong relationships. Many sixth-form pupils meet their 'reading buddy' every week.
31. The school also provides many opportunities for pupils to extend their horizons, both within and beyond school. Assemblies are held regularly but not every day for all pupils.

32. The headteacher places a very high priority on the avoidance of exclusions. There have been no fixed or permanent exclusions for many years. Consequently, the usual table is omitted from this report. Some use is made of internal exclusion and alternative curricular provision, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
33. Attendance has been broadly in line with the national average over recent years. Unauthorised absence is below the national median. The table below provides attendance and absence data for the latest complete reporting year.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year ( 91.9%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.7	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

34. Good procedures to assure regular attendance include first-day contact with home. Most parents take seriously their duty in this matter. The attendance of different groups of pupils is not monitored currently, partly because the electronic data processing system is not yet operational.

*What features are barriers to achievement?*

35. The school's policy for dealing with distracting and occasionally disruptive behaviour is not applied consistently. Some teachers told inspectors that they did not feel fully supported in dealing with misbehaviour in lessons. In the unsatisfactory teaching and learning seen, in a small minority of lessons misbehaviour was not well managed. Discussions with pastoral staff indicate that many would appreciate and benefit from clearer guidance, including some norms in terms of sanctions, when dealing with incidents. Similarly the 'On-Call' system, operated by senior managers, would benefit from a more consistent application of sanctions. This lack of consistency also contributes to the view amongst a significant minority of pupils that staff do not treat them fairly and with respect.
36. Punctuality is satisfactory. Pupils generally get to lessons promptly during the day. However, too many pupils do not arrive in time for morning registration. Arrangements to confirm attendance during the afternoon are not robust enough.

**Sixth form**

37. Students value the support provided by teachers, the good range of clubs and the friendships with other students. Some express frustration at what they consider to be poor access to reliable ICT resources. In most lessons, students listen very well and show good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. They are very appreciative of the leadership of the sixth form.
38. Students' behaviour is good. Relationships between staff and students and among students are very good.
39. Students' personal development is good. They are articulate, thoughtful, generous and considerate. Many volunteer willingly. The head girl and deputies demonstrate good leadership. Well-managed committees successfully support a very good level of fund-raising and social events.



40. There are good opportunities for older and younger pupils to work together beyond the classroom. For example, sixth-formers act as reading and number buddies to pupils in Years 7 and 8 and study buddies to pupils preparing for GCSE's. Sixth-formers are keen to extend their responsibilities. For example, a group called 'The Guardian Angels' is being formed to provide support in relation to homework as well as additional support to pupils experiencing bereavement or social isolation. Sixth-formers provide good role models to the younger pupils.
41. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form is satisfactory.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

**The quality of education is good.** Good teaching enables pupils and students to learn well and the care for their welfare is good. The well-planned curriculum provides a good range and quality of opportunities. Despite the frustrations arising from many incomplete features of the new premises, particularly affecting provision for ICT, many of the new facilities are very good and those for media literacy are state-of-the-art.

### Teaching and learning

#### What do the pupils and their parents say?

42. Both the pupils and their parents are well satisfied about the quality of teaching, particularly the high level of expectation. The pupils are satisfied with the assessment of their work and are more positive than their parents about the quality and regularity of homework. Students in the sixth form rate highly the quality of teaching and the helpful assessment of their work. They are strongly appreciative of their teachers' subject expertise and agree strongly that they are encouraged to study independently.

#### What did the inspection team find?

<b>The quality of teaching and learning is good.</b>	
Is nearly all of the teaching at Weatherhead High School satisfactory or better?	Yes
What is the proportion of very good teaching and learning?	One fifth
What is the proportion of less than satisfactory teaching and learning?	One tenth
What are the strongest features in the learning?	Pupils' literacy skills and responsiveness to good teaching
What are the strongest features in the teaching?	Very good subject knowledge
What is the most significant barrier to effective learning?	The inconsistent use of assessment in lessons
What is the most significant barrier to effective teaching?	The matching of methods to pupils' different needs
Can most pupils identify accurately the strengths and weaknesses in their work?	Not always, particularly in Years 7 to 9

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The frequently good, but sometimes inconsistent, quality of teaching and learning, ranging from excellent to poor.
- Very good subject knowledge that prepares pupils very well for national tests and GCSE examinations.

- The readiness of many pupils to work hard in lessons but the occasional reluctance to do so amongst a small minority.
- The impact of media resources on pupils' learning but the incomplete provision for ICT.
- The unsatisfactory management of time and behaviour in the organisation of some lessons.
- The inconsistent impact of assessment and teaching methods on learning, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

43. Very knowledgeable teaching prepares pupils very well for national tests and public examinations. Learning is more effective in Years 10 and 11 because the proportion of good teaching is considerably greater than in Years 7 to 9. The proportion of very good teaching was well above the average for the school in English, religious education and physical education. The best teaching, in English and across all subjects, contributes much to their personal development and plays to pupils' strengths in reading, writing and speaking and their positive attitudes.
44. These features are not consistently present across the school. The learning of less competent pupils is weak in Year 8. Aspects of assessment are also applied inconsistently in lessons. On occasions, learning is unsatisfactory because teaching methods are not well matched to the needs of the pupils. This evaluation confirms the views of the pupils and students as well as their parents. The quality and regularity of homework was found to be closer to the views expressed by the pupils than the perceptions of parents. This feature of provision is satisfactory.
45. The school and its governors asked the inspection team to look particularly closely at the match of methods to the particular needs of the pupils. This was better in lessons for more competent pupils. It was sometimes unsatisfactory and occasionally poor, particularly for less competent pupils and where the range of competence was wide. Where learning was unsatisfactory, this feature was weak, for example in some lessons in French.
46. The move to new, but currently unfinished, buildings and the provision of additional resources has had a powerful impact on the quality of learning. As a consequence of its status as a media arts specialist college there are many state-of-the-art facilities and resources. These have a particularly strong impact on the quality of learning in media studies, and ICT is also very well used in physical education as part of the implementation of the media arts college development plan. In art and design, very good use is made of visiting artists, specialists and other resources beyond the classroom to enrich pupils' learning. This provision stimulates added interest and enjoyment. The expertise of the media demonstrators is high and has a strong impact on raising pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. In several subjects there is limited access to ICT resources for reasons beyond the control of the school and its governors.
47. The best teaching was observed in English and across nearly all subjects in Year 10. The proportion of good teaching was greatest in the sixth form. The proportion of very good teaching was well above the average for the school in English, religious education and physical education. It was above average in drama, science and geography. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in English. The quality of teaching and learning in history and personal and social education was much better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The proportion of very good teaching was smaller in the sixth form than in Years 7 to 11 and below the average for the school in ICT.
48. Several subjects where standards were high and achievement was good were observed for only the first part of the inspection. Thereafter, inspectors concentrated on those aspects of learning and teaching which had been identified as weak in order to diagnose the causes. As a result, the data that follows does not provide an accurate profile of the quality of provision.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 212 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1%)	40 (19%)	91 (43%)	54 (23%)	21 (10%)	3 (1%)	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.

The quality of teaching and of learning is not evaluated only by the statistics arising from direct observation. Evidence is also drawn from the analysis of pupils' work, discussion with them and with adults, particularly with reference to the monitoring of quality and, sometimes, the further analysis of documentation including schemes of work and lesson plans.

#### What features are boosting achievement?

49. Where pupils learn best they do so confidently because subject knowledge is very well presented in ways that expand their understanding and provoke them to think. Teaching methods also make learning fun, for example in Spanish and English. This is a feature of the best teaching in geography and religious education where learning is enlivened by the skilful use of learning resources. In such very good teaching, the use of questions is invariably well managed so that everyone gets involved and understanding is probed. On such occasions, the school's aim to meet the needs of each of its pupils is very well realised.
50. Learning is also frequently very good when teaching methods take full advantage of pupils' skills in reading, writing and speaking. All pupils respond very well to challenging teaching when these aspects are skilfully pitched to their needs. The best lessons are characterised by sharp 'sparky' starts and a well-planned close in which pupils look back at what they have learned. The skilful use of questions and discussion are prominent features. On such occasions, for example in mathematics, teaching is well paced and learning reflective. Where learning is good, the most significant barrier to very good provision is the absence of these features.
51. Learning is strongest when these features are combined with assessment arrangements that make the pupils fully aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to raise the standard of their work. The effective sharing of assessment information is a good feature of design and technology teaching in Years 10 and 11 and in media studies in Year 11. The rigorous application of assessment is a very strong feature in the teaching of geography.
52. There is a strong link between the very good teaching in English and the good teaching in mathematics and science and the performance in national tests and GCSE examinations. An associated strength is the expert knowledge of the requirements of the public examinations. The examination assessment criteria are very well applied in the planning of work. This is a good feature also in the teaching of geography, but sometimes this leads to narrow, very directed teaching methods that do not stimulate understanding.
53. The learning of less competent pupils gains from the good additional provision made for work-place learning in several subjects.

#### What features are barriers to raising achievement?

54. Inconsistent quality within and between subjects is the most significant barrier. Considerable autonomy is given to subject departments within a broad framework. This applies to learning, teaching and assessment. For the latter there is a policy to interpret, for learning and teaching there is not. Whilst assessment is a very good feature in geography, and good within lessons in science, design and technology and media studies in Year 11, the links between the

school's policy and what happens in lessons are weak, providing insufficient, regular feedback on how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve.

55. The move to the new building has resulted in a new timetable. Despite several strengths in its construction it has presented an unusually high level of individual challenge in adapting previous methods and plans to a shorter lesson time. Consequently, the management of time in lessons is sometimes unsatisfactory, particularly, but not only, in some of the practical subjects. Not enough opportunity is given to review learning at the end of the lesson because 'time runs out' and the quality of learning suffers as a result. Occasionally, for example in food technology, this can also lead to a rushed start to the lesson because of concerns that there will not be enough time to finish. The initial explanation of what the pupils will know, understand and do is rushed or omitted. Again, the quality of learning is diminished.
56. The weakest teaching was in Year 8. The most significant weakness in French lies in unsuitable methods that make insufficient use of the new language and do not concentrate on communication. When such teaching is weakest, the resultant poor response of the pupils goes unchecked and the learning of the more diligent pupils is impoverished.
57. In some lessons in all years, there were occasions when learning was too strongly directed so that pupils had little opportunity to reflect, explore options or make decisions for themselves. Where learning was satisfactory on such occasions, the pupils were compliant and attentive but passive. Where it was unsatisfactory, they demonstrated disinterest, distraction, disrespect and mildly disruptive behaviours.
58. Sometimes questions were used only to check for knowledge and did not prompt understanding or further enquiry. Consequently, the range and quality of pupils' learning was narrow.
59. Pupils with special educational needs are always taught in normal lessons. Sometimes a learning support assistant is in the classroom to help them. The quality of this support is often good. However, when assistants are not aware of the purpose of the lesson or have very limited subject knowledge, advice offered is less effective. They maintain personal diaries but are not required to note the progress made towards targets in individual plans. This weakness means that achievements are not tracked rigorously enough. The additional provision is good for the very small number of pupils who are at an early stage of acquiring English but general knowledge and awareness of how these pupils might best learn is not communicated formally across the school.

## Sixth Form

60. **Teaching and learning are good and in physical education very good.** Good or better teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge and well-matched methods and materials. Teachers' expectations are high and lessons are challenging in a range of subjects. Some teaching is too direct and allows little time or space for the development of independent learning. Students respond well to enthusiastic, well-planned lessons where they are given the opportunity to explore their own learning. Assessment within most subjects is still developing in how it influences future learning. In physical education and media studies courses, teachers are using assessment to successfully plan future targets. Marking is informative and provides students with clear information for improvement.

## The curriculum

### **What do the pupils and their parents say?**

61. Parents are generally well satisfied with the curriculum provision. They agree that there is a good range of activities that their children find interesting and enjoyable. The pupils agree. Sixth-form students feel very strongly that their courses suit their abilities and career plans.

## What did the inspection team find?

Good provision	
How well does the curriculum meet the needs of all pupils?	WELL
Are there enough subjects and activities to meet the needs of all pupils?	YES
How well do activities outside lessons interest and involve the pupils?	VERY WELL
Are the buildings, classrooms and textbooks sufficient?	YES
Are all statutory requirements met?	NO
How well does the curriculum help the pupils to make progress in their learning?	WELL

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The media arts college status has a significant impact on the richness of opportunities for pupils of all aptitudes, interests and aspirations.
- Enrichment through clubs, visits and extra-curricular programmes are available for all pupils.
- Accommodation is very good overall but several features are unfinished.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is good, and very good in the sixth form. The quality of support staff is very good.
- The school does not provide enough time for religious education for pupils aged 14 to 16 and the statutory requirement for the provision of a daily act of collective worship is not met.

## Commentary

### *What features are boosting achievement?*

62. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good. The school plans well both the coherence and continuity of its provision, effectively taking into account the different needs, interests and abilities of all pupils. The good match of the skills and abilities of the staff to the curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievements. Their academic needs are well met by the open-access policy to clubs and extra-curricular enrichment sessions. This is evident in mathematics, science, art and design, drama, modern foreign languages and music. Provision for less competent pupils in Year 9 includes an innovative vocational course in caring and catering, a very good feature of the school's increasing commitment to work-place learning. Projects such as early morning 'booster' groups and homework clubs enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs and others who need extra help. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good. A wide-ranging and intensive programme of extension activities and experiences promotes high-level attainment.
63. Provision in media arts and sport is very good. In media arts, students participate in a wide range of activities, both within school and within the community. The school's links with a wide range of artists and performers enriches curricular provision and contributes well to the implementation of the school's media arts strategy. In physical education, the school has the Sportsmark award; in art and design, it has received the Artsmark award.
64. In all years, access to the curriculum is satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs. They are supported very well by suitably qualified staff. There is a good range of challenging, additional activities for gifted and talented pupils. There is good provision for the very small number of pupils who use English as an additional language and who are at an early stage of language acquisition.
65. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including the citizenship programme, is good. It is provided for all pupils, including those in the sixth form, and taught by specialists. The strength of this programme is reflected in the good results in social science in Year 11, the numbers who elect to study subjects such as sociology and psychology in the sixth form and the very good general studies results in Years 12 and 13.

66. Many features of the new premises provide very good accommodation, despite some professionally frustrating incomplete work. Resources for learning are good overall with suitable textbooks and other resources. Resources for media education are impressive with much that is state-of-the-art. The provision for media demonstrators is very good. A good feature of the accommodation is the number of additional administration and office spaces to support the management of provision.

*What features are barriers to raising achievement?*

67. The provision for religious education is unsatisfactory. Not all pupils follow either the GCSE short course or are taught according to the locally agreed syllabus. Governors do not meet fully the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Assemblies do not occur every day for all. The recently introduced arrangements to provide a 'text' for the day are applied inconsistently and monitoring to assure their implementation is unsatisfactory.

68. Facilities within the resources centre are incomplete. The unfinished ICT network means that some subjects struggle to meet the requirements for ICT within the National Curriculum. The particular circumstances of the school as tenant of its buildings mean that the resolution of these problems lies outside the control of the school's leadership and its governors.

**Sixth form**

69. The provision is good. There is a wide range of AS and A-level subjects and good provision for vocational courses. The school has been a pioneer in the accreditation of key skills. Good continuity exists because recruitment onto courses is very good. The number of pupils who remain at school after age 16 is rising dramatically. Retention of pupils on courses is very good.

70. There is good provision for work-place learning through vocational courses at Levels 1 and 2 in food preparation and catering. Previously, the school has achieved great success within the Young Enterprise initiative. Involvement has been postponed this year owing to the additional demands arising from the move to the new school.

71. Plans to develop several courses in the near future, for example the European Computerised Driving Licence and vocational ICT have been delayed by the late completion of agreed resources. Although links with higher education are good, the guidance and preparation for subsequent stages of education, employment or further study beyond the school are viewed by the students to be unsatisfactory.

**Care, guidance and support**

**What do the pupils and their parents say?**

72. Most pupils think they are well looked after. Their parents share this view. The very large majority has a good and trusting relationship with an adult and considers that their work is helpfully assessed. The school recognises all aspects of success for all pupils and supports well more than solely academic success.

**What did the inspection team find?**

<b>The overall care, guidance and support provided by the school is good.</b>
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<b>How well does school provide for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety?</b>	<b>WELL</b>
<b>How well does the school monitor its pupils' achievements and personal development?</b>	<b>SATISFACTORILY</b>

How well does it use this information effectively to support, advise and guide its pupils?	SATISFACTORILY
How well does it support pupils with special educational needs?	WELL
Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views?	SATISFACTORY

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Aided by *Excellence in Cities* funding, the support given to the vulnerable and the most competent pupils is very good.
- Well-planned procedures for child protection.
- Effective arrangements for health and safety.
- Form tutors' knowledge and understanding of their pupils' individual needs.
- Good induction arrangements for pupils.
- Some aspects of guidance about courses and careers in the sixth form.

### Commentary

#### *What features are boosting achievement?*

73. The additional support for vulnerable pupils, provided by learning mentors, is very well managed. Vulnerable pupils speak very positively about this extra support, particularly in relation to family and friendship issues, which would otherwise adversely affect their achievement. Similarly, the additional opportunities available to the gifted and talented pupils significantly raise their horizons and expectations.
74. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are well considered and properly carried out. Form tutors and other staff know pupils well and recognise their needs. They act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle.
75. Induction arrangements for Year 7 pupils, from over 20 primary schools, are thoughtful and thorough. For example, there is close contact between schools in relation to pupils with special educational needs. A learning mentor is effectively used to support other pupils who are considered likely to find the transition particularly difficult. The practice of providing a Year 8 'buddy' for each Year 7 pupil in the early weeks smoothes the transition of all pupils. Any significant issues identified by a pupil survey, covering issues such as how safe they feel, friendships and freedom from bullying, are effectively addressed in assemblies and the personal and social education programme. An early 'settling-in' parents' evening completes the picture in relation to individuals. When pupils with special educational needs transfer to Weatherhead from their primary school, their records go with them. These are used to good effect.
76. The school currently supports three pupils between Years 7 and 10 for whom English is an additional language. The pastoral support for the very small number of pupils who are at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language is very good. Good links with parents and carers support their smooth entry to the school. The initial assessments using the local education authority (LEA) recommended profile are good. They provide a satisfactory ongoing framework to review progress in basic English skills. Weekly individual support from a specialist teacher to develop competence in English is valued by the pupils who might otherwise feel vulnerable. All three of the pupils are integrated into the mainstream and evidence during the inspection week indicates they are making good progress.



*What features are barriers to raising achievement?*

- 77. Pupil surveys in relation to induction and social inclusion are positive features. Wider use of surveys to cover teaching and learning of all pupils are not yet part of the school's improvement agenda.
- 78. Transfer information about pupils who speak English as an additional language is sometimes slight. Procedures are not in place to provide an accurate benchmark against which their progress can be measured. No guidance is provided to define these pupils' particular needs. There is a consequent risk that these are interpreted as 'special needs'. The monitoring of their progress and the evaluation of provision lacks rigour.

**Sixth Form**

- 79. The quality of support, advice and guidance given to students is satisfactory overall. Students are made appropriately aware of the entry requirements during Year 11. Progress reviews with form tutors are regular and where there are significant concerns the head of sixth form and parents are involved. The quality of guidance about the choice of courses and arrangements to review progress are inconsistent between subjects. Some provide one-to-one reviews for all students, whilst others do not. The careers guidance, contracted between the school and 'Connexions', covers students' basic requirements. However, students feel more of this advice should be in Year 11 or as part of Year 12 induction. The current guidance provided by 'Connexions' does not provide sufficient information for those students who are still considering a variety of career options at the start of Year 12. As a result, some Year 12 pupils say their academic progress is inhibited by not having an owned career target or plan.
- 80. The sixth-form leadership is responsive to students' ideas in relation to setting up clubs and groups aimed at fundraising and supporting younger pupils. Involvement of sixth-form students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is underdeveloped in relation to their learning. For example, an important opportunity is missed in sixth-form induction to get pupils to estimate likely AS and A-level grades. No systematic use is made of student surveys, including exit surveys, to inform future practice in relation to teaching, learning or pastoral issues.

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

**What do the pupils and their parents say?**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What some parents would like to see improved</b>
Staff expect pupils to work hard [95]* Good induction arrangements [94]* Pupils making good progress [92]* Pupils like school [90]* Teaching is good [89]* Freedom from bullying or other oppressive behaviour [89]*	Information about pupils' progress [29]** Homework levels/help with [21]** Behaviour of some pupils [17]** Seeking the views of parents/taking account of their suggestions/concerns [15]**

\* percentage pleased

\*\* percentage wanting improvement

**What did the inspection team find?**

**The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are broadly satisfied with what the school provides and achieves.**

**Links with the community are very good.**

**Links with other schools and colleges are good; its links with higher education institutions are very good.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good links with the community that extend the horizons of the pupils and the breadth of the curriculum.
- Links with universities are very good, whilst links with feeder primary schools and secondary schools are good.
- Good links with local companies support well the increasing provision for work-place learning.
- As part of shaping its improvement plans, the school does not regularly seek and act on the views and concerns of its parents.

### **Commentary**

A relatively small number of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and returned a completed questionnaire.

*What features are boosting achievement?*

81. The very high attendance at the events organised to mark the closure of the previous school sites last summer indicates the positive way the school is viewed by the local community.
82. The school is alert to the needs of its local community. Its new facilities are very well used for a sizeable adult education programme and by a range of community groups. Very good use is made of the school's database of business and community links to enrich the curriculum and to contribute to pupils' personal development. For example, the business links contribute positively to work experience placements in Year 11, pupil mentoring and opportunities for pupils to refine their interview skills. Public services, such as the police, health, rail and fire services, enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living.
83. The school's specialist status as a media arts college has helped to create a number of important new links and ventures. Good progress has been made in leading the implementation of this important aspect of the media arts development plan.
84. Pupils participate in a wide range of charitable fund-raising events, some of which sixth-formers help to organise. This has a strong impact on their good personal development and their awareness of some aspects of citizenship.
85. *Excellence in Cities*' strands make a major contribution to the very good links with universities. As part of widening participation work, Year 12 pupils attend a course at the University of Central Lancashire, that provides guidance on completing personal statements and curriculum vitae. The gifted and talented strand provides funding for pupils to visit Cambridge, Oxford and Nottingham universities to find out more about planned courses. Student teachers from Hope and John Moores universities, take part of their training practice at the school. Media arts college status is deepening and widening links with the primary schools. For example, the school provides help to primary schools by introducing use of computers, digital cameras and 'Stop-Frame' animation into art lessons. Similarly, the media arts links with secondary schools have led to a radio production course and a short film about a girl who tried to prevent her parents getting to see her school report. Links with the National Theatre, combined with EiC funding, led to a day of workshops for 20 Wirral schools, followed by a production of *'The Tempest'*.

86. Provision for work-place learning is well led and managed. It has a very positive effect on pupils' and students' attitudes and self-esteem. The planned continuity of provision between Years 9 and 12 are good. There is a strong network with local companies.
87. The school's increasing provision for work-place learning gains much from the very good links with local companies. A management group is well led by the school and good use is made of a 'tracker database' to maintain contacts and update information. The design and technology department has established strong links with a local jeweller to support project work.

*What features are barriers to raising achievement?*

88. Some parents would like to be more fully consulted. The school does not carry out a regular survey of parents' views to help shape its improvement plans. As a result, the school is not well placed to understand, in sufficient detail, the nature of some of its parents' concerns. This is reflected in the relatively high proportion of parents who have concerns about the information provided on pupils' progress and the variations in homework levels provided for pupils.
89. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are always invited to attend annual reviews, and many do. Arrangements for contacting parents are sometimes laborious and inhibit key personnel from addressing issues swiftly.

### **Sixth Form**

90. Vocational courses benefit from a very good range of links with hospitality, catering and childcare providers. Students help organise a wide range of fundraising for charity. The media arts department is developing a good range of community links.
91. Students help with the teaching of physical education and help organise inter-primary school games and tournaments. Those following vocational childcare courses help with, and benefit from, the on-site 'Weathertots' playgroup. The school is part of the Wallasey collaborative, formed between schools and colleges, to improve the range of third level courses available to students. This collaboration is at an early stage and it is too early to evaluate its impact.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **What do the pupils and their parents think?**

92. A large majority of pupils think that the school is well run and they enjoy being at the school. They particularly value the work of their teachers who encourage high standards and expect pupils to do their best. Parents generally share these views and have a high degree of confidence in the headteacher and feel that the additional demands of moving into the new school were well managed. A very high proportion of parents feels that their children are making good progress.

### **What did the inspection team find?**

What is the quality of governance?	SATISFACTORY
What is the quality of leadership shown by the headteacher?	GOOD
What is the quality of leadership of other key staff?	GOOD
What is the effectiveness of management?	SATISFACTORY
What is the quality of the leadership and management of pastoral care?	GOOD
What is the quality of financial management?	GOOD
How well does the school apply all the principles of best value?	SATISFACTORILY

**What is the impact of performance management?**

**UNSATISFACTORY**

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Determined and principled leadership by the headteacher provides the school with confidence and a drive for improvement.
- This strong sense of direction is well supported by the deputy headteachers and reflected in the very good media arts plan that enabled the school to achieve specialist school status in 2002.
- The school has a positive climate for learning and standards in tests and examinations have continued to improve.
- The new accommodation represents a major improvement in facilities and the arduous task of moving into the new premises was well managed.
- The strategic plan 1998 to 2003 provided a very good framework for the school to move forward, but operational planning is imprecise and the current school development plan is insufficiently monitored by the leadership group and lacks a rigorous framework for evaluation.
- Leadership of curriculum teams is good in most subjects, very good in English and satisfactory in music.
- The effectiveness of management at faculty and subject level is good in English, geography, ICT and physical education and satisfactory in all other subjects.
- Heads of year, well supported by the assistant headteachers, provide good leadership of teams of tutors so that pupils' personal and social development is encouraged.
- Performance management of staff is insufficiently focused on job descriptions and pupil progress targets.
- The role of the senior leadership group as curriculum mentors does not ensure that procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are consistent and rigorous.
- There is clear guidance to staff in the handbook and sufficient induction information to support settling into the new school, but guidance concerning provision for pupils who use English as an additional language is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

93. Strategic planning since the last inspection has been satisfactory with some good features. Its initial design was very clear and action thereafter very successful in bringing about major improvements in provision and good improvement in performance. Attention to several of the issues raised at the last inspection has been less rigorous, in part explained by the increasing demands made upon the leadership team's time by the PFI contract and the bid for specialist school status. The 'opportunity costs' of these highly beneficial developments have been considerable. Some aspects of monitoring have suffered. The precisely defined indicators in the media arts strategic plan provide the basis for rigorous evaluation. This is not a feature of the annual development plan where the framework for evaluation is much more general.
94. Financial management is good. The rigorous monitoring of budgets ensured that the school worked within financial limits during the establishment of the new school building. The school's particular circumstances present a complex web of funding. The co-ordination of budgets is good. Well-defined priorities demonstrate good leadership in financial decision-making. Most of the various 'income streams' are well managed, including those for EIC. Operational management is good, with robust tracking and monitoring systems, including rigorous procedures to identify and rectify errors. Procedures and practices are not fully in place to evaluate the impact of expenditure decisions with a similar degree of sharpness. The evaluation of expenditure within subjects lacks precision because it is determined primarily by formula and the links between expenditure and intended outcomes are not explicit enough. The monitoring and evaluation of the special educational needs budget is not rigorous enough.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,866,241
Total expenditure	4,487,602
Expenditure per pupil	3,017

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	126,518
Balance carried forward to the next	177,693

Several unsettled expenditures relating to equipment purchases for the new school account for the large balance carried forward.

95. Leadership of special educational needs is satisfactory. Procedures to record and use information about pupils' attitudes are good. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well defined and used in newly established arrangements to set targets within individual education plans. This supports well the monitoring and evaluation of progress. The management of learning support assistants lacks rigour. Record keeping in lessons is inconsistent. There are no clearly stated expectations about responsibilities. This creates confusion and frustration and imprecise interpretations of 'inclusion'. The leadership and management of those pupils who use English as an additional language are not precise enough to support the evaluation of provision or assure best value in the school's response.
96. Although it has positive features, the impact of performance management is unsatisfactory overall. More professional dialogue, clearer work priorities and more recognition of the contribution of individuals are positive features. Professional development needs of staff are now appropriately addressed. However, the effectiveness of implementation has varied between departments and among the leadership team. Use of pupil progress data to drive improvement is unsatisfactory, not least because the management and use of this performance data are not appropriately managed at a whole-school level. An important secondary barrier to its effectiveness has been the lack of the necessary time for subject leaders to complete lesson observation and reviews.
97. Governance is satisfactory. It provides good support for the school. For example, the governing body has given unstinting support to the school's leadership during the preparation of the media arts college bid and all phases of the move to the new school. However, their capacity to challenge is not sufficiently developed. Current arrangements do not provide as clear an understanding of the school's weaknesses as they do of its strengths, for example in curricular provision and the quality of communication across the school.

*What features are boosting achievement?*

98. In the context and circumstances of the school, the headteacher has worked closely with governors, the LEA and the PFI contractor to ensure that the school acquires the long awaited and much needed improved accommodation and facilities. In this demanding task, she has been ably supported by the leadership group and other key staff.
99. The very successful five-year strategic plan that culminated in the school's new status as a specialist college in 2002 and the move to new premises in 2003 illustrates well the headteacher's determined leadership. This also reflects the strong partnership with governors. As well as leading these changes, the headteacher and her leadership group have contributed well within the EiC initiative to a local partnership of schools that has produced a plan that promotes the improvement of leadership at all levels in the school.
100. The governors and leadership team have worked tirelessly to secure best value within the PFI contract. They have given their time most generously to secure the best interests of the pupils, parents and staff, not only by the exact scrutiny of estimates but also by comparing provision elsewhere. Most of the principles of best value are applied within the school's overall good

financial management and performance. Comparisons of performance with others are not rigorous enough and some parents would like to be consulted more fully.

101. The quality of leadership in curriculum areas and subjects is good and, in most, management is good or satisfactory. There is a general job description for heads of subjects and in most subject areas there are pockets of very good practice.
102. There are adequate arrangements for the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff so that the needs of the pupils and the curriculum are met. The school is reviewing patterns of deployment to take into account the national workforce reforms of 2003 but the full benefits and impact of this have not yet been achieved.

*What features are barriers to raising achievement and the school's performance?*

103. The aims and values of the school place strong emphasis on equality of opportunity and ensuring pupils have access to a broad range of experience. In practice there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Year 8. Some adults are unclear and a few are unconvinced or confused about the arrangements for guided choices for courses at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and the grouping of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Some parents expressed similar uncertainties.
104. Some, including the majority of subject leaders, feel that their voice is not heard sufficiently in consultations prior to decisions. The leadership team's response is constrained by the current attitude of some towards the frequency of meetings. In order to reduce the workload of staff over the last two years, the team has taken on the major burdens of decision-making, freeing up time for teachers to concentrate on teaching well. They perceive that procedures and routines on matters such as discipline, assessment and line management accountability lack consistency and rigour. Issues that staff identify for review include clearer rationale for pupil groupings and timetable arrangements; the allocation of non-contact time for leaders and managers of subjects/curriculum areas and years, vis-à-vis members of the senior leadership group and the three senior teachers; review of the sanctions within the school behaviour policy; and more opportunity to contribute to future planning
105. Some individual uncertainties about roles remain following the re-designation of responsibilities across the relatively large number of key staff now that the school is located on a single site. Some specific aspects of securing best value, particularly those involving comparisons of, and consultation about, performance, are weak.
106. The current school development plan identifies appropriate priorities for improvement and the leadership of the school has used the overarching framework to guide team plans for subjects and aspects of the school's provision. The absence of systematic, consistent and rigorous monitoring is a weakness in planning and does not ensure that standards and quality are assured by the leadership group. Members of the school leadership group have a role of curriculum mentor to designated subject areas but this lacks accountability and challenge. Consequently, some aspects of performance management are not rigorous enough.
107. Where there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching the school's self-review and monitoring procedures do not adequately identify and disseminate best practice. Unsatisfactory teaching in Year 8 requires diagnosis and intervention.

## **Sixth Form**

108. **Leadership is good.** The newly appointed head of the sixth form is an energetic, committed leader who has a clear vision. The head of sixth form is thinking strategically about improving students' achievement. The setting up of the Key Stage 5 target-setting team is designed to identify students' needs and to raise standards at both AS and A-level. The head of sixth form

provides a very good role model for both staff and students by the commitment to improvement.

109. **Management is satisfactory.** Systems have now been put in place to identify and manage students' absence more effectively. The Key Stage 5 target-setting group will work to raise standards in two ways. Firstly, to identify students who are experiencing difficulty and secondly, to identify teaching strategies and materials which are beneficial in improving students' achievement across subject areas. However, these are at an early stage of development.



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

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and reach standards at Year 9 and Year 11 above national average.
- The positive attitudes of pupils and the good relationships with teachers contribute significantly to the high levels of achievement.
- Pupils learn very well in lessons and make very good progress because they respond well to very good teaching.
- The teaching provides high levels of challenge and is well matched to pupils' needs.
- Arrangements for sharing good practice are not systematic enough.

#### Commentary

110. Achievement is good. The standard of work seen at the end of Years 9 and 11 during the inspection is higher than is usually found nationally. In Years 7 to 9, pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding. They are very competent in writing imaginatively and enthusiastically in a variety of styles. The more competent pupils respond skilfully to challenging texts and identify layers of meaning with increasing accuracy. Most are confident and articulate when expressing ideas and make very good progress.
111. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 often show enjoyment in lessons and maturity and confidence in their written coursework. Their best writing shows considerable control and sophistication. The minority of pupils who have problems with the basic skills of spelling and punctuation are well supported and also make good progress. Speaking and listening are significant strengths at all ages and levels of competence, including for those pupils with special educational needs.
112. In the lessons seen, most pupils made good progress and in approximately half of the lessons they made very good progress. This is because teaching is strong and planning ensures that methods are well matched to pupils' needs. Relationships with pupils are very good. In the most effective lessons, teachers were enthusiastic and there was a sense of enjoyment. In such lessons, pupils were energised by challenging teaching and high expectations. Learning was highly interactive in these lessons and pupils were encouraged to be independent.
113. In the lessons where achievement was much greater than would be expected teachers were able to combine very good subject knowledge with interactive approaches. Progress is good across all abilities, including lower attaining groups. In a minority of satisfactory lessons in Years 7 to 9, learning gains were less than they might have been because teaching lacked high challenge, was less inspiring and pupils were less engaged. In these lessons, learning tended to be passive. It was in these lessons that the rare instances of poor behaviour emerged.
114. Assessment systems for tracking pupil performance have been improved since the last inspection and are well in place. Assessment is good and supports pupils' achievement well. The knowledge of external assessment within the department team greatly benefits pupils in the preparation for national tests and examinations.

115. Very good leadership has created a strong team of experts. Standards have continued to rise since the last inspection and ahead of the national trend. The department is well managed. There is a good supportive ethos and newly qualified and less experienced teachers are well nurtured so that they can make a contribution to the successes of the team. The procedures to monitor and assure the quality of provision, particularly teaching, are improving. They are now broadly satisfactory.

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

116. The standards of literacy throughout the school are good. Other subjects contribute well to the development of pupils' language and literacy skills. This is particularly strong in the support of speaking and listening. As a result, in physical education, science, citizenship, modern foreign languages, music, religious education, media education and health studies, pupils make good learning gains through teachers' skilled use of questioning. Another strong feature is the emphasis given to key subject vocabulary found in all subject areas. This, however, has had less impact because these key words are not sufficiently referred to or explained during the learning. Contributions are also less strong in supporting writing, and pupils lack models for writing. The school has identified priorities and there have been some good training opportunities. However, this is not yet systematic and there needs to be a co-ordinated approach to build on the existing good practice to ensure provision is consistent across all subjects.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership demonstrates to others how to teach well.
- Realistic target setting provides a framework for improving standards.
- Very few pupils are able to initiate or sustain conversations.
- Strategies for dealing with reluctant learners are inconsistent.

### **Commentary**

117. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are similar to those expected nationally. Achievement is satisfactory. Strong literacy skills help significantly with reading and writing assignments. There are consistently good examples of extended writing by pupils of all abilities throughout the school. This aspect of their work benefits from a valid concentration on grammatical principles. When tested or examined, pupils attain satisfactory levels in both speaking and listening. However, these skills are weak in lessons where classroom management is unsatisfactory.

118. Achievement throughout the school is affected fundamentally by significant fluctuations in the quality of lessons. When taught effectively, pupils systematically build on skills they have learned previously. In unsatisfactory lessons, they are generally kept busy when writing but are not challenged to use language independently. This is particularly evident when questions are directed to a narrow range of pupils. In most lessons, English is used too often for explanations.

119. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but range from very good to poor. In the best lessons, pupils are fully involved throughout and are required to use the language actively, whatever their ability. They also have fun as they learn, particularly in Spanish lessons, because relationships are strong. In a minority of lessons, a significant number of pupils ignore the teachers' explanations. When this continues unchecked and there is a dogged

perseverance with ineffective methods, progress of the more diligent pupils is affected. Written work is always marked very thoroughly.

120. The department benefits from determined and enlightened leadership. There is a clear focus on the promotion of 'learning partnerships' between teachers and pupils. Assessment is being used to promote progress in lessons not just achievement in examinations. The wide range of visits, visitors and clubs enhances the curriculum substantially. However, the current lack of ICT facilities, compounded by the straightjacket of the course book, is affecting provision.
121. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Spanish and German examination results have regularly matched national averages, whereas in French they have not. Assessment is much more rigorous. A scheme to support independent reading has not emerged but the production of booklets to guide pupils when preparing for examinations is impressive. However, speaking in unrehearsed situations is still weak. Almost every teacher taught at least one satisfactory or better lesson during the inspection and there is a commitment to continuous improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High expectations and commitment to raise standards.
- Very good subject knowledge and appreciation of common misconceptions.
- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning.
- Unsatisfactory amount of time devoted to the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Unsatisfactory quality of marking as a means of informing pupils what they need to do to improve.

### **Commentary**

122. Achievement is good at Year 9 and Year 11. Standards are above those usually found nationally. They are similar to those recorded in the national tests at Year 9 and the GCSE examination in 2003. Both were above the national average. By Year 9, competent pupils calculate reverse percentages and the more competent confidently handle compound interest calculations. By Year 11, less competent pupils solve equations and other elementary algebraic tasks. The competent and more competent Year 11 pupils sometimes spoil algebraic work by making slips, particularly with negative numbers. Less competent pupils find fraction work a challenge, whilst it is the manipulation of complex algebraic expressions that the competent and more competent find difficult.
123. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported by classroom assistants whose teamwork with the teacher is good. Gifted and talented pupils make the same progress as their peers, as do those from minority ethnic groups.
124. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The small proportion of very good teaching is characterised by a brisk, challenging style combined with a variety of activities directly involving pupils. Satisfactory lessons, although resulting in satisfactory achievement, tend to feature passive listening by pupils. Homework is set regularly; it supports and extends classroom learning. Marking is regular and positive, but not always crystal clear as to how work can be improved. Poor use is made of the library as a learning resource. There is, at present, insufficient use of ICT to support learning – for reasons beyond the department's control. The grouping of pupils in Years 7 to 9 produces an unnecessarily wide range of competency in some groups. This results in very occasional mismatches between some individual pupils' needs and the work set for the whole group.

125. Leadership is good. It is democratic and open with a strong commitment to drive up standards and results. Both are consistently higher than those of similar schools. Management is satisfactory. The quality of teaching cannot be monitored with adequate frequency. This is because of insufficient non-contact time available to middle managers. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Examination and test results are now above average. Expectations are higher, resulting in a considerable increase in the number of students taking the higher tier GCSE.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

126. Standards of numeracy are broadly in line with those expected nationally at Year 9 and Year 11. Numeracy skills acquired in mathematics support pupils' progress in other subjects. Pupils have a satisfactory recall of basic number facts, although some of the least competent pupils may not always use the most efficient methods. Pupils in all year groups have opportunities to practise and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects.
127. The planned provision for numeracy and the teaching of numeracy skills within subjects is satisfactory in the main school. The overall provision has developed since the previous inspection, in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Subjects have numeracy policies and schemes of work that indicate planned numeracy provision.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

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

- Good subject knowledge of specialists raises the quality of good teaching.
- Very good relationships between pupils and with teachers.
- The limited use of assessment and variability in teachers' marking results in pupils being unclear on how to improve.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- A good range of enrichment activities raises further the quality of pupils' learning.

#### **Commentary**

128. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are broadly in line with those expected nationally and similar to those recorded in the most recent national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE at the end of Year 11 in 2003.
129. Pupils' understanding, knowledge and use of scientific terminology, together with positive attitudes towards learning, are good. Their skills of analysing and interpreting information are weaker. Achievement in lessons and the standards of work seen in pupils' books confirm that pupils are making good progress, in particular those pupils with special educational needs who are taught in smaller groups.
130. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The most significant strengths in pupils' effective learning are their interest, application and productivity. Very good subject knowledge and high expectations of teachers encourage them. Lessons are carefully planned but the range of teaching styles is limited. This results in too few opportunities for pupils' experience to be matched to their learning style. Pupils know their targets and are informed as to how well they are doing through oral comments in lessons. The marking of pupils' work is often cursory and uninformative about progress and areas for improvement.

131. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is a clear vision for the department and strategies to deliver this are in place. The management of the department through a time of considerable change has been effective. Systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. This means that good practice is not identified and used throughout the department to develop more effective teaching and learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY [ICT]**

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures pupils achieve well.
- Achievement at Year 9 and Year 11 is good.
- The increase in resources has ensured all pupils experience ICT lessons.
- Hardware problems have compromised teaching and learning and impeded the raising of standards.
- The introduction of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 provides a more suitable curriculum to raise standards.
- Assessment is satisfactory but does not fully inform pupils of their current standard and what they need to do to improve.

### **Commentary**

132. The problems encountered with the network compromise the security and confidentiality of pupils' work and affected the quality of teaching and learning. The lack of access has prevented a significant number of pupils from extending their skills in the use of ICT and consequently affected the department's and school's plans to raise standards. These weaknesses in the hardware provision are not within the control of the school or its governors.

133. Achievement is good at Year 9 and Year 11. Teacher assessments at Year 9 indicated results were well above average. These were too generous as they were based on previous course requirements. Standards are in line with those usually achieved nationally by the majority of pupils. The results in both the GCSE short and full courses were above average. The introduction of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 is resulting in the satisfactory acquisition of skills. Pupils design multimedia presentations, but do not always consider how to make them effective for a particular audience. They insert basic formulae into a spreadsheet, but do not use the spreadsheet data to make effective predictions. The emphasis on integrated projects in Years 10 and 11 is also raising standards. Pupils design logos to include in structured letterheads, although the less adventurous pupils only use clipart. They appreciate the need to lay out a data capture form so that it is easy to use but do not always make appropriate annotations. There is little evidence of evaluation and subsequent re-drafting of work. Most pupils achieve similarly, although the more competent are not stretched enough.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, teachers set tasks which extend skills but not always understanding. Question and answer sessions at the start and end of lessons are not always appropriately matched to the needs of all pupils. Teachers expect pupils to work hard, but class sizes in Years 7 to 9 are too large to allow each pupil individual access to a computer. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good as the tasks are well suited to syllabus requirements. There is also effective emphasis on pupils managing their own learning. Homework is set which consolidates learning in lessons.

135. The department is well led and managed. The National Strategy introduced in Years 7 to 9 provides experiences in the modern uses of ICT. The seven specialist teachers are committed to driving up standards through good quality teaching and learning. Pupils are not regularly

involved in setting their own targets or assessing their progress. Developments in courses offered are being led by good analysis of data from external sources.

136. The improvement in resources and new courses mean all pupils now receive lessons in ICT. There has been a positive response to the recent rapid rise in the numbers of computers, but further training is needed to ensure effective management of the network once fully online.

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

137. Provision is satisfactory. There is good use in media courses and physical education, with other subjects using technology for lesson demonstrations. The media arts college development plan has been well implemented in media courses and in physical education. ICT is well used in other subjects for lesson demonstrations. Delays in the delivery of necessary equipment, all beyond the control of the school, have frustrated the planned use of ICT in English, mathematics and science. The management of plans to monitor and evaluate the impact of ICT across the school is weak.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Pupils' achievement and standards in Year 11 are good.
- GCSE results have improved from average. In 2003, results were above the national average for girls.
- Revised schemes of work and very good assessment arrangements are boosting provision and performance in Years 7 to 9.
- Excellent and very good teaching that accelerates learning motivates pupils.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- There are pockets of unsatisfactory teaching where whole-class teaching directed by the teacher leads to unsatisfactory learning and negative attitudes.
- The number of pupils who continue to study geography beyond Year 9 is much lower than the proportion found nationally.

#### **Commentary**

138. Standards at Year 9 are in line with those usually seen nationally. The statutory teacher assessments are rigorous and accurate. Work seen during the inspection is in line with this. From assessments made during Years 7 to 9, pupils demonstrate satisfactory achievement.
139. About one fifth of the pupils currently choose to study geography in Years 10 and 11. This is well below the proportion nationally. During the past three years, results at GCSE have improved from average and in 2003, results were above average for girls nationally and pupils achieved well. The proportion of the highest grades has significantly increased.
140. The quality of the majority of the teaching is good but varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Excellent and very good teaching engages the interest of pupils by the stimulating use of well-chosen activities and resources. In the strongest lessons, the needs of pupils are reflected in the constructive way that assessment is used so that pupils recognise their strengths and understand how to improve their work. More competent pupils in Year 7 made rapid progress in understanding the relationships between climate and natural vegetation in tropical latitudes because of very good use made of photographs and diagrams. The interest of some competent Year 9 pupils, who might have been reluctant to learn about the impact of tourism

on traditional life in Kenya, was very well captured by the imaginative use of ICT. Most pupils' attitudes are good, and in most lessons, relationships are very positive. Pupils work well with each other and respond well to good teaching. On a few occasions, teaching has weaknesses that result from poor planning. Where this results in a lack of variety of methods, pupils' behaviour remains compliant but opportunities for participation are severely restricted and lead to negative attitudes. This was particularly evident from pupils' comments in a Year 11 lesson. Provision for fieldwork is good and arrangements for homework are satisfactory.

141. Leadership and management are good. The provision is more effective than at the time of the last inspection. The strengths then identified have been sustained and the range of resources and curricular opportunities has improved. There are good arrangements for monitoring and self-evaluation. This good practice, together with the very effective use of assessment information, has not yet been fully exploited by the senior management of the school.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and positive pupil response results in good achievement.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory because most pupils have little idea about what exactly they need to do to improve.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and allows them to build well on pupils' contributions.
- Good leadership of the subject sets high standards.
- Learning objectives are too general and this make it difficult for pupils to identify what they have learnt when reflecting during plenary sessions.

## Commentary

142. Achievement is good. It is good at Year 9 where standards are similar to those usually seen nationally, because of the good teaching and positive attitudes of pupils. In Years 7 to 9, a strong feature of the pupils' increasing standards is their secure knowledge of such topics as the battles of 1066 and their ability to answer questions using simple written sources. The more competent learners achieve standards above those seen nationally because they combine well their own knowledge with source information to answer such questions as evaluating Henry VIII's character.
143. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average, although the trend since the last inspection has been for achievement and standards to be in line with or slightly above the national average. In work seen, standards were similar to those that pupils are expected to reach nationally at Year 11. Many pupils are able to write in detail, but the achievement of some competent and less competent learners is lowered by their tendency to describe rather than evaluate.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' questioning tests what pupils know and understand and further challenges them well. Pupils are motivated by and work hard when presented with a good range of stimulating resources that teachers produce. Pupils complete homework which builds well on the work in lessons. Work is regularly marked but the ability of pupils to become more independent learners is limited by the inconsistency with which teachers set short-term targets for them. Achievement is further helped by the sharing of precise objectives that allows pupils to judge their progress and reflect upon their achievement at the end of lessons.
145. Leadership is good. High expectations exist, and there is a commitment, shared by the team of teachers, to improve standards. Policies support this aim although there is insufficient

guidance on how different teaching styles can best help pupils' learn, or how computers in lessons can boost achievement. Management is satisfactory. Good assessment procedures allow pupils to take responsibility for tracking their progress and setting work targets. Their ability to do this is hampered by an inconsistent level of understanding about what needs to be done to improve their work. The use of assessment data to identify shortcomings in the performance of the subject and how to plan changes in teaching and the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good.
- Inspirational leadership with a clear sense of purpose.
- Very good contributions are made to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all years.
- Time allocations in Years 10 and 11 are below those recommended by the Wirral Agreed Syllabus and lead to underachievement.
- The use of assessment to give clear targets for improvement is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

146. Year 9 standards are in line with the expectations of the Wirral Agreed Syllabus. Most pupils understand the links between beliefs and lifestyle in at least four of the religions studied. A particular strength is pupils' ability to use their subject knowledge and understanding to justify their oral responses. Year 11 standards are unsatisfactory. This is a direct result of the discontinuity of learning and lack of teaching time available in the modular organisation of the timetable.
147. The quality of written work and oral discussion in the three GCSE classes is good. All pupils can confidently evaluate different responses to religious and moral issues using relevant evidence from Christianity and Hinduism. They make appropriate use of ICT to research their coursework. As these are the first GCSE classes, it is not possible to compare year-on-year attainment.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. Very good subject knowledge is well used to capture the interest and motivate all pupils to learn well. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the effective use of resources supports pupils to make links between religious beliefs and lifestyle. Most pupils use a wide range of religious terminology in their oral responses but use a more limited range in their written work. Homework is used effectively to extend learning.
149. The new curriculum programme for Years 10 and 11 promotes an understanding of contemporary issues in Christianity and Judaism. Most pupils demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of how religious beliefs influence ethics and lifestyle. Due to the limited time allocation, pupils have an unsatisfactory understanding of the impact of celebration and worship.
150. For most pupils their oral response is better than written work. The range and challenge of written and assessment opportunities are insufficient. There are too few opportunities for pupils to reflect on the progress of their own learning.
151. The leadership of the department is good. A strong sense of direction and aspiration for improvement is driving forward the quality of teaching and learning and the status of the



subject. The number of part-time members in the department creates barriers for effective management and results in inconsistencies in target setting and assessment procedures.

152. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The raised status and pupils' positive attitudes to the subject are evidenced by the increased number taking the subject to GCSE. There have been increases in time allocation in Year 9 and the sixth form to meet statutory requirements. An increased range of resources supports the implementation of the new schemes of work. Underachievement results from insufficient curriculum time.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Above average results and good achievement at GCSE, especially by those achieving a full GCSE in short GCSE course time.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide significant support for their pupils during preparation of GCSE coursework.
- The demonstration of practical skills and the management of pupils' practical lessons are very good.
- The shortage of time both for individual lessons as well as for full GCSE courses is having an adverse effect on pupils' experience of the subject.
- There is a narrow range of experiences over Years 7 to 9. Pupils do not have a significant experience of systems and control, 'smart' and modern materials, or work in a sufficiently wide range of resistant materials.
- Pupils are unclear as to assessment objectives over Years 7 to 9. There are occasions when learning objectives are uncertain.

#### **Commentary**

153. Achievement in all specialist areas of the subject is satisfactory overall. It is good at the end of Year 9. Most pupils start the school with little previous experience of the subject. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above average. These are too generous. Whilst the standard of some work is very high, there are times when the lack of challenge in the design problem restricts pupils' creativity and consequently outcomes are low. Pupils enjoy and are generally good at, making products. They have a good awareness of the use of a design brief and specifications but some designing skills, such as sketching, are weak.
154. At GCSE, pupils achieve well in most specialist areas and results have improved over recent years. Textiles is a very popular option. The number of pupils taking resistant materials is low. The time allowed for the subject provides for short courses. A significant number of pupils have the commitment and support to be successful in gaining full course examinations within this time. This represents good achievement.
155. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Good subject knowledge, especially about examination requirements, informs successful strategies to overcome some of the difficulties imposed by the time constraints. Practical demonstrations are particularly well done and relationships with pupils are good. Too frequently, lesson objectives lack clarity and assessment arrangements in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory because they lack sufficient consistency and rigour. The current low provision for ICT within the department thwarts plans to develop computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM).

156. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality and level of additional technical support is very good for food technology and resistant materials. It is insufficient within textiles across Years 7 to 9.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are raised when a variety of teaching methods is employed to meet all pupils' needs.
- Learning is enhanced when teaching builds on previous experience.
- Inconsistent assessment across the department is holding back pupils' improvement.

#### **Commentary**

157. Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement for the pupils in relation to when they started at the school in Year 7. An extensive variety of approaches is used in Years 7 to 9 to improve basic skills, such as colour, line, form and proportion.
158. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average. They have fluctuated over recent years. Standards in the current Year 11 are in line with national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement compared to the National Curriculum levels attained at the end of Year 9 in 2002. Pupils on the GCSE course show the ability to develop individual ideas on a set theme. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to their peers. Talented pupils make good progress because they are given extra-curricular enrichment opportunities.
159. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. All pupils, and especially the less competent, learn effectively when skilful questioning and short demonstrations are followed by periods of pupils' activity. Teaching is unsatisfactory when planning is weak. Pupils become insecure about what to do, drift off task and make limited progress. The use of assessment in lessons is unsatisfactory. Practice is inconsistent across the department.
160. Leadership is good. There is a determination to drive up standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Management is satisfactory. Curriculum development makes good use of teaching strengths. Formal monitoring of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.
161. All pupils have the opportunity to visit art galleries and experience tuition from artists-in-residence. The effect of media arts college status has dramatically improved the art resources and, in turn, this has improved the curriculum, the quality of learning and the professional development of staff. A matter raised in the 1998 report said, 'some tasks take longer than is merited by the learning involved'. This still exists and is now an urgent issue.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

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

- Very good quality extra-curricular music provision enriches pupils' experience of music.
- Good peripatetic instrumental teaching develops pupils' performing skills.
- In Years 7 to 9, weaknesses in teaching restrict pupils' progress.
- Pupils' learning lacks coherence where lesson planning has not taken account of the new

- school timetable.
- Development planning does not pay sufficient attention to strategies for raising achievement.

## Commentary

162. Standards in Year 9 are similar to those that pupils nationally are expected to reach. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' listening skills develop well. Composing and improvising work can be imaginative as pupils begin to relate music to mood. Performing skills are modest except where pupils benefit from instrumental tuition. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. Standards in Year 11 are average, representing satisfactory achievement given the low prior attainment of most pupils who choose to take the GCSE course. Compositions show understanding of a variety of styles and structures. Listening skills develop well but technical knowledge is weak. Pupils perform with variable levels of success. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils. Pupils designated talented in music achieve well.
163. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and use resources well to demonstrate work to pupils. They provide a supportive learning environment founded on consistent discipline. The quality of peripatetic instrumental teaching is good. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Weak lesson planning restricts pupils' progress. Pupils are confused about what is required of them when lesson aims are not shared with them and too much is attempted in a single lesson. Progress is slow where creative tasks do not have short term, timed goals. More competent pupils are able to coast when teaching pays insufficient attention to differentiation. Teachers rarely use incisive questioning to challenge pupils' notions of what could be achieved in composition. Pupils are unclear about what they need to do to improve their work.
164. Leadership is satisfactory but some aspects of management are weak. Development planning and self-evaluation place insufficient emphasis on strategies to raise achievement, including the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Schemes of work have not been reviewed to accommodate the changes in the school day.

## Media Studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- **Media literacy and media studies are strengths of the school.**
- Leadership and management of media studies are good.
- Links with the primary schools and community are very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to media studies across all courses.
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good and make a substantial contribution to the pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Technical support for media studies is very good and makes a valuable contribution to all teachers' professional development.
- Some teaching in Years 7 to 11 lacks sufficient challenge for all pupils.

## Commentary

165. Achievement is good. Progress is rapid in Years 7 to 9 so that standards of work in Year 9 are well above those usually seen nationally. Pupils have responded well to the introduction of the media literacy programme and are enthusiastic. They demonstrate good knowledge of the media codes and conventions and use media terminology with confidence.

166. Standards in Year 11 are also higher than those usually seen nationally. Practical work is of a high quality. The accurate use of technical terms and grasp of media theory is weaker. All pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of a unit of work. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of the support and well-structured teaching they receive.
167. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory and learning is good. In Years 10 to 13, both teaching and learning are good. Where teaching is good or better, lessons have clearly communicated objectives and appropriate resources to support learning. The standard of discussion is high and teachers' use of open questioning challenges and stimulates pupils' and students' thinking. Teaching in practical lessons is good and often better as a result of the technical support provided by the 'media demonstrators'. In a small number of lessons seen, there was insufficient challenge to meet the needs of mixed-ability groups. Assessment of examination groups in Year 11 is well organised with cross marking of coursework and internal moderation.
168. Leadership is good with a clear vision for, and a strong commitment to, the successful development of media courses. In the last twelve months, good management has built an effective team in Years 7 to 9, using the different skills of the staff involved to deliver an interesting and challenging media literacy course for all pupils.
169. Provision since the previous report has improved substantially with the new accommodation and the school's successful bid for Media Arts College status. Media studies was not taught throughout the school at the time of the previous inspection. The development plan for the bid promotes media and arts throughout the curriculum and specifically provides media education for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. The community aspects of the bid provide very good links with primary schools which complements the EiC links. Community and higher education links are also well developed and make a substantial impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the school and within media studies in particular.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above those expected nationally because pupils make good progress and achieve well at Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13.
- Assessment procedures are very good and inform pupils of what they can do and what they need to do to improve.
- The curriculum provides a very good range of activities that develop pupils' skills.
- The quality of teaching is good but is not monitored effectively.
- Indoor facilities support good teaching and learning but outside facilities are poor.
- The department makes good use of ICT to promote effective learning and raise standards of achievement.

### Commentary

170. Achievement is good at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. Positive attitudes to work contribute significantly to good levels of performance. Pupils in Year 10 studying GCSE physical education, demonstrate high levels of attainment in theoretical and practical work, particularly in trampolining where they can successfully plan, perform and evaluate their own and others' performances. In core physical education, standards of performance are also good. Behaviour of pupils, overall, is very good and consequently they are able to work co-operatively together,

particularly in dance in Year 11 where they develop complex routines. Pupils enjoy the breadth of activities they are offered in outdoor education in Year 8 and in Year 11 where they can develop skills, knowledge and understanding in self-defence and aerobics to a good standard. Overall, the majority of pupils reaches standards above those normally expected nationally and results in the AS and A-level examinations in 2003 were good.

171. The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good due to the experience and expertise of the staff. However, teaching is not effectively monitored. Subject knowledge of teachers is good and they plan and deliver their lessons effectively. Teachers use ICT well so that pupils observe and analyse their own and others' performances and set targets for further learning.
172. The department promotes high expectations of its pupils; it encourages them to take the initiative, work on tasks with precision and maintain good levels of concentration. The very good extra-curricular programme and links with the community and higher education establishments extend the high quality learning experiences for pupils. The new indoor facilities, sports hall, gymnasium, dance studio and fitness suite support high quality teaching and learning but outside facilities are poor.
173. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear sense of purpose to the curriculum which promotes high standards and raises pupils' achievement. Assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' performances are well established. There is a clear department development plan. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress and the standards of performance of its pupils have risen.

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

Personal, social and health education [PSHE] is taught by specialists. Citizenship is taught through media literacy lessons in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, there are timetabled PSHE lessons within which citizenship and aspects of religious education are taught. Standards in PSHE at Year 11 are broadly similar to those seen nationally. Many of the social and moral aspects of religious education are very well covered but provision does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus because religious education competes for time within the broader PSHE programme. A range of lessons was sampled with particular emphasis on citizenship.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' articulate and thoughtful responses demonstrate a good understanding of personal, social and moral issues in Year 11.
- The school's media arts strategy provides innovative opportunities in Years 7 to 9 to explore concepts of citizenship and to apply them.
- Good leadership in setting high expectations and identifying opportunities to enrich awareness beyond timetabled lessons.
- Moral and social issues are well taught in Years 10 and 11.
- There are many well-planned opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their citizenship through involvement in community activities.
- Identification and co-ordination of the opportunities to teach and assess citizenship across each subject is weak.

## Commentary

174. Achievement is good. Standards are higher than those that pupils are expected to reach at Year 9 and Year 11. In the sixth form they are broadly in line with standards usually seen nationally. Most pupils make very good gains in knowledge and good gains in understanding about a range of personal, social and moral issues at Year 11. The foundations of this understanding are well established at Year 9. Pupils are taught well how to spot and avoid stereotypical interpretations of people. The more competent pupils at Year 9 discuss issues confidently and nearly all express an opinion when asked. Sometimes it is only a few who have a precise grasp of technical vocabulary, but very good speaking and reading skills frequently help to support these high standards.
175. The quality of teaching is good. The quality of learning is highest, particularly within personal and social education lessons in Years 10 and 11, when opportunities for discussion, as well as the very effective use of questions, help pupils to define their ideas more clearly and to distinguish accurately the consequences of their actions, for example when in Year 11 they explore the maxim 'If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything'. A strong feature in the teaching is the increasingly more challenging coverage of moral issues as pupils get older. In lessons observed, moral and political issues were explored in a Year 8 lesson on Martin Luther King, analysed in greater detail in a Year 10 lesson on moral authority and justice, and explored enjoyably and practically in a decision-making game in Years 12 and 13. Occasionally, learning is unsatisfactory when the topic is too complex for the less competent but insufficiently challenging for the more competent pupils. Consequently, in a Year 7 lesson on accidents in the home, pupils gained little new understanding.
176. Leadership is good because it demonstrates and communicates to both pupils and adults the value of learning about and applying the principles of citizenship. Management is satisfactory. Resources are well managed with very good opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their citizenship within the local community. Assessment procedures are weak and the definition of expected standards lacks rigour. The lack of regular monitoring means that instances of weak practice are missed.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 12 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. At the time of the inspection the nationally validated comparative data had not been published.

### *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	11	45	N/a	18	N/a	17.2	N/a
Biology	17	93	N/a	29	N/a	35.7	N/a
Business Studies	5	100	N/a	40	N/a	36.0	N/a
Chemistry	9	78	N/a	11	N/a	26.7	N/a
Computer Studies	33	73	N/a	18	N/a	26.0	N/a
Design Technology	4	75	N/a	25	N/a	32.5	N/a
English Language	29	100	N/a	9	N/a	33.2	N/a
English Literature	21	85	N/a	15	N/a	28.5	N/a
French	2	100	N/a	100	N/a	60.0	N/a
General Studies	53	75	N/a	23	N/a	23.8	N/a
Geography	9	78	N/a	22	N/a	31.1	N/a
German	7	71	N/a	0	N/a	17.1	N/a
History	14	92	N/a	42	N/a	37.5	N/a
Mathematics	29	83	N/a	28	N/a	33.1	N/a
Media Studies	19	100	N/a	64	N/a	45.0	N/a
Music	1	100	N/a	100	N/a	50.0	N/a
Physical Education	9	78	N/a	11	N/a	25.6	N/a
Physics	5	100	N/a	40	N/a	40.0	N/a
Psychology	16	93	N/a	33	N/a	38.7	N/a
Sociology	42	68	N/a	29	N/a	26.5	N/a
Spanish	8	63	N/a	0	N/a	18.8	N/a
Theatre Studies	7	100	N/a	29	N/a	40.0	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	6	100	N/a	33	N/a	80.0	N/a
Biology	14	100	N/a	29	N/a	77.1	N/a
Business Studies	11	100	N/a	9	N/a	61.8	N/a



Chemistry	9	100	N/a	22	N/a	73.3	N/a
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Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Computer Studies	17	100	N/a	18	N/a	71.8	N/a
English Language	11	100	N/a	27	N/a	74.5	N/a
English Literature	18	100	N/a	11	N/a	68.9	N/a
French	2	100	N/a	50	N/a	90.0	N/a
General Studies	22	100	N/a	53	N/a	88.2	N/a
Geography	2	100	N/a	50	N/a	90.0	N/a
German	4	100	N/a	0	N/a	55.0	N/a
History	13	100	N/a	23	N/a	78.5	N/a
Mathematics	16	100	N/a	19	N/a	75.0	N/a
Media Studies	16	100	N/a	13	N/a	70.0	N/a
Music	1	100	N/a	0	N/a	80.0	N/a
Physical Education	5	100	N/a	60	N/a	96.0	N/a
Physics	7	100	N/a	0	N/a	60.0	N/a
Psychology	19	100	N/a	28	N/a	73.3	N/a
Sociology	19	100	N/a	32	N/a	76.8	N/a
Spanish	5	100	N/a	60	N/a	96.0	N/a
Theatre Studies	6	100	N/a	0	N/a	63.3	N/a

### ***Level 2 vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Certificate in Child Care and Education	8	88%	N/a	0	N/a	0	N/a
Leisure and Tourism	6	50%	N/a	0	N/a	0	N/a

### ***Level 3 vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No entered	% A - E
Health and Social Care	10	80
Diploma in Child Care and Education	4	75

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teacher subject knowledge.
- Teaching is good with lively, focused lessons.
- Teachers are good at matching materials and methods to student need.
- Relationships are very good and student attitudes are very positive.
- Students' capacity to work independently is underdeveloped.

#### Commentary

177. On entry to the sixth form, standards are above average.
178. Standards in 2002 at AS and A-level for English literature and English language were above national averages. English language A-level performance was much better than nationally and was better than national patterns for A-level literature. Course completion rates in 2002 for AS and A-level were very good. The overall pass rate in 2003 for AS and A-level was high for both language and literature. The proportion of students obtaining grades A-B was below average.
179. Standards seen in lessons and work analysis show good progress. By Year 13, language students can explore frameworks for systematic study of language, such as in the investigation study of 'the function of gossip in women's language'. This study showed the ability to explore, understand and evaluate language variation. By Year 13, literature students can express independent judgements and opinions. These mature skills of analysis are shown in an essay comparing, 'Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit' with 'The Colour Purple'.
180. Students make good progress and learn well because teachers have very good subject knowledge. Relationships are very good and students bring a positive attitude to their studies. In a successful mixed-ability Year 13 language lesson, the teacher used interactive approaches effectively to ensure student engagement. This resulted in the students consolidating and extending their understanding of how to annotate spoken dialogue. In a Year 13 literature class of mixed-ability students, the teacher challenged understandings of the poetry of William Blake through interactive group strategies. This lesson focused the approach to textual analysis in a highly challenging and systematic way. Learning was good and promoted independent as well as collaborative study. Such approaches ensure that able students are suitably challenged and the less able are well supported.
181. Students interviewed during the inspection week valued the efforts that their teachers make, especially those who had an 'inspirational teacher' and those who had teachers who gave support outside lessons. All students valued the monitoring system that provided predicted grades and the self-assessment process that gave students access to the grade criteria so they could identify sharp targets. Teacher assessment is accurate and contains helpful comments. All students thought that the taster days in Year 11 were a good idea.
182. English language students interviewed found the learning of linguistic terminology very challenging and would have welcomed opportunities at GCSE to extend their skills and knowledge in this area.
183. This area of the curriculum is very well led and managed. There is a strong team with a high level of commitment and dedication delivering these courses.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

184. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are higher than those usually found nationally. The different subjects build on pupils' language and literacy strengths that are developed in Years 7 to 11. This is particularly strong in the support of speaking and listening where teachers' skilled use of questioning and group work enables good learning gains for all students. Most students have the necessary skills to read the diverse subject texts and teachers provide necessary support for the minority who have difficulty. Some teachers provide good opportunities to support pupils' written work through structured writing frames. Where these frames are used, pupils make very good progress. However, literacy support is inconsistent and this is a barrier to maximising achievement. The school has identified priorities to develop literacy skills across the curriculum but this is not yet systematic and there needs to be a co-ordinated approach to ensure that the existing good practice is shared across all subjects.

## MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered modules in pure mathematics, statistics, decision mathematics and mechanics. Lessons for students retaking GCSE mathematics were not observed.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' commitment to raise standards and develop students' potential.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding of the examination specifications.
- Good relationships between students and teachers.
- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning in mathematics.
- Poor provision of mathematics resources in the library which do little to encourage students' reading round the subject or independent learning.
- Unsatisfactory amount of time made available for the monitoring of teaching and learning.

### Commentary

185. Achievement is good at Year 12 and at Year 13. Standards are in line with those that the majority of students usually reach naturally. AS examination results were average in 2001; no students converted their modules into AS results in 2002. Unvalidated results for 2003 suggest below average results. A-level examination results in 2002 were well above average, a significant improvement on the previous year. Results for 2003 which are unvalidated appear to be below average. The school operates a fairly open entry policy to post-16 courses. This explains why results are sometimes below average. Students find the algebraic content of the pure mathematics modules more of a challenge than the applied modules. These involve statistics, mechanics and decision mathematics. The latter module is found to be the more accessible by many.
186. There is some planned provision for students to retake GCSE mathematics in the sixth form. A small but significant fraction gain a grade C or above. This is broadly similar to the national picture.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Good teaching could be improved by increasing the extent to which students become independent learners, making greater use of the library and Internet. Students have a positive attitude to the subject and persevere. Help is readily available outside normal lesson time, which students appreciate. Teachers have very good subject and examination specification knowledge. This means that maximum effective use is made of lesson time. Relationships between students and teachers are relaxed and mature which increase students' confidence.

188. Leadership is good. The department has a clear sense of direction. There is a shared commitment to improvement. There are good relationships between staff and active encouragement for all those who wish to teach post-16 mathematics.
189. Management is satisfactory. The day-to-day running of post-16 mathematics is smooth. However, the analysis of examination results and rigorous target setting is still developing. In common with the main school, insufficient time is available to effectively monitor teaching and learning.
190. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Numbers of students taking GCE courses are growing and the retention rate is high.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

191. Students' mathematical skills are adequate to cover their needs in subjects they study in the sixth form. In the science subjects, they produce satisfactory work involving data analysis, interpreting and using a variety of statistical displays. Algebraic and numerical skills are practised in ICT. In geography, graphical and basic number work are encountered, as they are in media studies.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **good**.

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

- Very good relationships have a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- Very good subject knowledge of teachers encourages students to think beyond the content of the lesson.
- The limited range of teaching styles offers too few opportunities for development of understanding beyond the syllabus requirements.

#### **Commentary**

192. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in the sixth form are in line with national averages. The GCE results in 2003 show an improvement on the previous year. AS results in 2003 were above average with all students achieving a pass grade.
193. Standards of work seen in lessons reflect a wide range of ability on entry, which result from the open access to courses for students gaining any GCSE grade. All students have a good knowledge and understanding. They can interpret information in a variety of formats, formulate clear explanations and use appropriate terminology. Very positive relationships and good motivation create an ethos of learning. Homework is used to enhance and consolidate learning.
194. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their subject. Challenging use of questions encourages students to use extended questioning during their investigation work to ensure the accuracy of their interpretation of results. As a result, they are able to consolidate learning. This results in good progress in understanding scientific concepts. The setting of challenging homework and marking that focuses on improvement also impact positively on learning. A wider range of teaching styles should be developed to encourage students to develop their scientific understanding beyond the syllabus requirements.

195. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The open-door policy to GCE and AS courses is well managed. Records are well maintained and programmes of work are planned carefully to meet syllabus requirements. Targets are set and reviewed regularly based on modular assessments.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

196. ICT was not inspected in detail. Achievement is good as a result of caring and constructive teaching. Students have very positive attitudes and work hard. Leadership and management are good with the vision to extend the range of courses to meet the diverse needs of the students. Current circumstances restrict the access to ICT for some students.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Teachers' command of subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements are very good.
- Students' application and productivity are very good.
- Most students' show increasing capacity to work independently.
- Relationships between students and with teachers are very good and students feel well supported and encouraged.
- In some of the Year 13 lessons where there are only two students, there is a limited range of teaching methods and an over-reliance on passive note-taking.

#### **Commentary**

197. The number of students choosing to study geography in the sixth form has fluctuated. Recent very small numbers at A-level makes statistical comparison with national averages inappropriate. In the Year 12 AS group, there are three Year 13 students repeating the course and one student who has not studied the subject at GCSE.
198. In 2001, both at AS (with nine entries) and A-level (with fifteen entries), results were in line with national expectation for girls and achievement was satisfactory.
199. In 2002, from a smaller number of entries (six at AS and six at A-level) all students gained pass grades and achievement compared to capability and prior attainment was good. Results at A-level were above that of girls nationally.
200. In 2003, (with nine entries at AS and only two at A-level) results at AS were average and achievement satisfactory. From the two A-level candidates, there was one pass at grade B and one pass at grade C. For these two students, the results reflected satisfactory achievement.
201. From inspection evidence, the standards of work seen at AS are average. The standards of work of the two A-level students are above average. Achievement is satisfactory.
202. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All students benefit from teachers' very good subject knowledge. Students' progress is supported by regular assessment and good opportunities to develop examination technique. Relationships are very good and students value the good organisation of coursework and the access they have to a wide range of resources to assist independent work. In some of the Year 13 lessons, the informal seminar

style of the teaching feeds the students with good notes but does not promote their active participation in the learning. In a good lesson in Year 12, students were challenged to use a range of well-chosen materials and to work together to research a case study on the development of energy resources in Alaska. Within this AS group, three students repeating the course and one student without a prior GCSE qualification raise wider issues about the impact of guidance on sixth-form course choices.

203. The work in geography in the sixth form is well led and managed. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers liaise well with each other to ensure that planning is coherent. Students identify clear differences in the styles of working with different teachers but have the capacity to adjust to this.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject knowledge provides detailed advice to students about how to improve their work.
- Induction procedures insufficiently emphasise study skills.
- Student attitudes are very positive and boost achievement levels.
- Students' independence of learning is insufficiently developed.
- Learning objectives insufficiently focus on how to progress and challenge students' learning.
- The setting of short-term targets to improve the standards of students' note-taking, essay work and source work is inconsistently carried out by teachers.

## Commentary

204. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards of work seen at AS and A-level are similar to those usually found nationally. They are higher than those in the most recent 2002 results. Achievement levels vary and reflect the wide-ranging standards at the start of the course in Year 12. Students speak highly of the subject. Their positive attitudes and the quality of relationships in lessons boost achievement levels.
205. Students have good knowledge and understanding of such topics as Wittes' economic reforms in Russia. More competent students have a good grasp of detail, and are able to compare the conflicting views of historians. Less competent learners describe rather than analyse topics, and do not always relate events to the wider context. Essays become descriptive; less competent learners write off the point and thereby highlight the need for a more considered induction programme that includes study and exam skills.
206. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The teachers make good use of their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons that use a good range of resources. Discussions in lessons are good, but opportunities for students to develop their own presentations and use computers in lessons are unsatisfactory. Achievement is undoubtedly aided by the setting of relevant homework and the regularity of marking. The quality of feedback is good and appreciated by students. There are inconsistencies in the degree to which the quality of note-taking by students is challenged and any gaps in knowledge identified.
207. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The pattern of below average standards at the higher grades remains and partly reflects the need for students to take more responsibility for their learning. The identification of more specific learning objectives in teachers' and subject planning would aid achievement by identifying more clearly challenge and progression. This would aid students' ability to self-assess their progress and identify more clearly how they can improve their performance. The

self-recording of grades and targets would further reinforce the move to more independence of learning for students.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject knowledge of staff results in high standards and effective teaching.
- The assessment of students' work encourages high standards.

### Commentary

208. Achievement is good. Standards of work are higher than those usually seen nationally and show a steady improvement over the last three years, with a significant number of students achieving grades A-B at A-level. All students achieve a grade at A-level. The AS results are good and the success of the course is mirrored in the high numbers of students who continue the course to A-level. Good induction to the course, combined with effective teaching, ensures regular attendance and high levels of course completion.
209. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The emphasis on ensuring students' understanding and developing their practical skills in an enjoyable way results in students being keen and interested. The emphasis on developing students' subject vocabulary enables them to work well on their own. Whilst the quality of book resources is good, numbers are insufficient. Good use is made of laptop computers to support learning but the school-wide problems with ICT are restricting students' access.
210. Leadership and management are good. The development of effective assessment procedures and the setting of basic standards for entry to the course are responsible for improving standards. The time available for the management of the subject is restricted by the requirement for staff to teach in other departments.

## Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory but too many fail in Year 12 because requirements for admission and subsequent guidance are not robust enough.
- Teachers emphasise theory and research well, but rely too much on didactic methods.
- Students respond well to attentive teachers.
- Good leadership lies behind an improving department.

### Commentary

211. Students' prior attainment is below average. Indeed, the GCSE results of some of those admitted to the AS course in Year 12 indicate they are not yet ready to meet the rigours of advanced study. The achievement of most students is satisfactory, but by the end of Year 12, AS results are below average. However, the standard of work seen during the inspection was similar to that found nationally, reflecting an improving trend. Folders are well organised and appreciation of theory is good, but notes for revision are often brief and superficial.



212. About half continue on to A-level in Year 13. Their knowledge and skills are stronger from the outset, being similar to that found nationally. They achieve satisfactorily: A-level results are broadly average, as is the standard of students' current work. Their understanding of the traditional, positivist perspectives is strong. Those Year 13 students who take sociology as an additional AS are more experienced and mature than their Year 12 equivalents. They make best progress in sociology, achieving well and gaining above average results.
213. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Skills of independent research are extended through good use of homework, challenging tasks and a welcome emphasis on theory and research. Broader understanding of theoretical models is enhanced through good linking of threads between modules and the use of whole-class questioning. Teaching methods are restricted and unimaginative, however, relying too much on teacher-focused verbal exchanges and worksheets. Consequently, conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking are often superficial. Students are well provided with textbooks that support homework tasks but teachers do not use a wide range of teaching resources. Pace is sometimes slow and the depth of teachers' subject knowledge is not always adequate to meet the needs of talented students. The department is notably inclusive and students benefit from attentive individual support.
214. Sociology is one of the most popular sixth-form subjects and builds effectively on GCSE social science. Students' attitudes are positive and they are able to work both independently and collaboratively when required.
215. Good leadership lies behind an improving trend in A-level results and the good improvement since the last inspection. A clear focus on improvement is evident, building on a shrewd strategic appreciation of the department's strengths and weaknesses. Insufficient attention, however, is given to building an effective team from teachers who are not all sociologists. Management is satisfactory. Student tracking and target setting are well developed and performance data are effectively scrutinised to aid self-evaluation. However, staff monitoring and performance management have not had sufficient priority, so notably good classroom practice remains in pockets rather than becoming a shared resource.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No subject was inspected in detail. In the sixth form, students' achievement in A-level design courses is satisfactory and results are broadly average. Those studying vocational catering courses are well motivated to reach good skill levels.

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

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are higher than those usually seen nationally because teaching is challenging, expectations are high and students' commitment is good.
- Expert teaching puts emphasis on research and preparation to raise standards.
- Tutorial reviews motivate students to realise their full potential.

### **Commentary**

216. Achievement in the present Years 12 and 13 is good given students' previous performance at AS and GCSE respectively. Students produce carefully planned work by using an exacting working method taught in a well-rehearsed way. For example, students are working

imaginatively on textile pieces influenced by Jan Beaney and Jean Littlejohn. The final outcomes are highly intense images of extensive textural complexity.

217. In 2002, the numbers taking GCE were very small and national comparisons are not statistically valid. At AS level in 2003, half of the students who completed the course failed to get a grade because they lacked motivation. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are higher than those usually seen nationally.
218. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Sometimes it is very good. Students' learning is particularly effective when teachers use a tutorial system to review progress. The examination assessment objectives are used well to let pupils see what standard they have reached and then precise targets are set for improvement. Students use ICT extensively in the research of artists' work which is well evidenced in their coursework sketchbooks. Students are taught how to scan images to embellish sections that enhance the textural effects. Students do not have the opportunity to manipulate images as part of their advanced level studies but facilities for this are to be installed. The attitudes of students are very positive at all times. They approach independent learning with enthusiasm.
219. Leadership and management are good, resulting in good improvement since the last inspection. Well-managed staff development has improved the quality of teaching at A-level. Retention rates are very good, as is recruitment to courses. Extra-curricular provision is good and many students spend extra time in studios to improve their work. Students are offered many opportunities to visit art galleries and local universities to enrich their experience. Many sixth-form students continue their art studies beyond the sixth form.

## **Media studies**

Provision in media studies is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Links with the primary schools and community are very good.
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good and make a substantial contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Technical support for media studies is very good and makes a valuable contribution to all teachers' professional development.
- Greater use of media language in lessons is needed to improve students' confidence in discussion.

## **Commentary**

220. Achievement is good. All students taking media studies make good progress and achieve well by the end of a unit of work. Students who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of good support and well-structured teaching.
221. The present Year 13 group is the first Year 12 to complete AS level. The results in the Year 12 group were high in relation to their prior attainment.
222. Standards are above that usually expected of AS and A-level students. Practical work is of a high quality. The use of media terminology in lessons is inadequate. However, students show confident understanding of media terms in their writing. Standards across media studies courses have been raised by the very good practical support for students and teachers by media demonstrators.

223. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is good or better in lessons with clearly communicated objectives and appropriate resources to support learning. The standard of discussion is high and teachers' use of open questioning challenges and stimulates students' thinking. Year 12 students studying ICT and media are less competent than A-level students. They study media at GCSE level and CLAIT Level 2 ICT. All make very good progress as a result of the very good support and subject knowledge of the teachers involved in the course. Students' work is carefully marked. Annotation is supportive and provides students with clear guidance for future improvement. Assessment of examination groups in Years 12 and 13 is well organised with cross marking of coursework and internal moderation.
224. Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed director of media and arts is a very experienced media specialist. There is a clear vision for, and a strong commitment to, improving standards. Different elements of the AS and A-level courses, taught by different teachers, are well co-ordinated. Students' work is well presented to meet examination criteria and also develops students' skills and abilities. The management of the subject area is very good because the director has effective strategies for monitoring teaching and learning and the development of the courses offered.
225. Provision since the previous report has improved substantially with the new accommodation and the school's successful bid for Media Arts College status. Aspects of the media and arts development plan provide very good links with primary schools which complements the EIC links. Community and higher education links are also well developed and make a substantial impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the school. A small minority of less competent students took media studies GCSE at the time of the previous report. The A-level courses and vocational education courses now give students a wide range of options.

## **Drama and theatre studies**

Provision in drama and theatre studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is clear leadership committed to raising standards.
- Effective teaching empowers independent learning and achievement.
- All students perform with imagination and skill.
- Technical facilities boost student learning.

### **Commentary**

226. There are too few students to make valid national comparisons but, in lessons seen and work scrutinised, standards are above those usually found in schools nationally. Almost all students complete the courses, which they hold in high esteem. They achieve well, demonstrating dramatic techniques such as those of Brecht. They improvise cleverly and interpret texts imaginatively, or show creativity in the design of costume and settings. Spoken language has clarity and expression and all students are able to argue persuasively. They evaluate their work critically and develop personal confidence. Independent work at home boosts their achievement.
227. Teaching is good throughout, supportive yet challenging, with excellent subject knowledge passed on to students who then take responsibility for their learning. Students progress well because of the pace and clear conclusion of a very good lesson and the consistently positive approach. Questioning is directed effectively to students of differing abilities to boost their progress. Similar appropriateness is not always applied to written tasks. Grade indicators and comments suggest ways to improve. These should be developed into consistent individual targets, to match student needs and help them measure their success.

228. The subject is well led, with clear goals for improvement. The modern technical resources are managed efficiently, boosting student learning, as are extra-curricular activities such as comedy writing, productions and projects with other schools.
229. At the last inspection, there were no similar courses.

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

### **GNVQ Leisure and Tourism**

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

230. Since the last inspection, within humanities, the school has successfully introduced vocational options into the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students in Year 12. Standards in the foundation level at the end of Year 11 and the end of Year 12 are below average and reflect that the overall competence of students choosing the course is below average. Achievement is satisfactory and for some pupils good as they respond with enthusiasm to the good teaching and the relevance of the course to their interests and needs.
231. At intermediate level in Year 12, students are well motivated and in one lesson demonstrated a very good understanding of the portfolio of work on European travel destinations.
232. At both foundation and intermediate levels there are good opportunities for work experience and, because of the well-planned arrangements for assessment, students have a clear understanding of how to progress from pass to merit to distinction. As a result of the very good provision, a small number of the students anticipate studying the subject at AVCE level and many will seek further training and employment in the leisure and tourism industry.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High standards which put an emphasis on students' independent learning.
- Very good opportunities for practical work, especially in the school nursery.
- Well-planned opportunities for the development of students' social skills through participation in work experience.

### **Commentary**

233. Achievement is good. Standards are higher than those usually seen nationally. Improved attendance has resulted in improved grades and a significantly higher retention rate. This is reflected in the increasing proportion of students who achieve the higher grades and the examples of those who go on to higher education in the subject. These improvements have been brought about by improved assessment procedures as well as good induction procedures for those choosing the subject.
234. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some aspects being very good. The emphasis on practical work using the school library is an important element in raising students' achievement. Work experience is organised by the students themselves with consequent benefits to their social skills. The organisation of tutorials ensures that students receive appropriate support and advice in the completion of their written work. There is a very good range of practical resources and the availability of a school nursery is a strength of the

provision. There is a need for further development of library resources and for increased use of computers.

235. Leadership and management are good. Improved assessment procedures and the monitoring of attendance are significant features. The development of the practical elements of the course have been successful in raising students' achievements.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

The provision for personal development and general programmes is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good achievement in general studies at GCE AS and A-levels confirms students' good grasp of key skills.
- Long-standing success in Young Enterprise.
- Well-managed opportunities to show leadership by helping younger pupils with their reading.

### **Commentary**

236. Results in general studies in 2002 at A-level were broadly similar to students' performance in their other A-level subjects. This represents good achievement. Nationally, students do less well. Results were weaker in 2003. Results at AS in 2002 were well above average. Students did better than in their other subjects whereas, nationally, the performance in general studies compared with that in other subjects is similar. Twenty-one pupils also completed the AS general studies examination at the end of Year 11 in 2003. More than four-fifths of the candidates obtained grade C or above.
237. Lessons are not timetabled for this subject throughout the year. Additional teaching is provided immediately prior to the examination period. The results confirm the students' good levels of general knowledge and their good grasp of the key skills of number and communication.
238. Owing to the significant demands placed upon the school community by the move to new premises, the competitive Young Enterprise initiative to develop leadership and management skills by running a small company for a fixed period has not operated this year. Previously, the school has a strong record of success both locally and regionally in this competition.
239. Many students contribute to the work of the school by assisting younger pupils with their reading. They demonstrate good commitment and give generously of their time. Their work also sets a fine role model to younger pupils.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

