

INSPECTION REPORT

SWANWICK HALL SCHOOL

Swanwick, Alfreton

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112930

Headteacher: Mr J R B Lees

Lead inspector: Mrs W Hola

Dates of inspection: 12th – 16th January 2004

Inspection number: 259226

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:	1232
School address:	Derby Road Swanwick Alfreton Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE55 1AE
Telephone number:	01773 602106
Fax number:	01773 609284
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R MacKinnon
Date of previous inspection:	11 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Swanwick Hall School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. In 2001, the school achieved Specialist Technology College status and became a Training School in 2000. It received a School Achievement Award and European Award for Language in 2000, the Career Mark in 2002 and the Sportsmark award in 2003.

The school has 1232 pupils (627 boys and 605 girls), 179 of whom are in the sixth form. It is larger than other secondary schools. The school is in central Derbyshire and its pupils come mainly from five surrounding villages. Pupils come from varied socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from affluence to considerable social and financial deprivation. Their attainments on entry varied widely and are just below average overall.

The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and the vast majority has a white British heritage. The proportion of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is average and the proportion with statements of SEN is above average. Most pupils who need support beyond action which can be taken by the school itself have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or specific or moderate learning difficulties. There are a few who have either speech, communication or physical difficulties, visual impairment, are autistic or have another specific difficulty.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4359	Mrs W Hola	Lead inspector	
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector	
3654	Mr M McLachlan	Team inspector	Mathematics
28199	Mr P Lawley	Team inspector	English
20832	Dr M Galowalia	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form English as an additional language
17923	Mr M Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20533	Mr D Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
31779	Mr V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology
3827	Mr J Knight	Team inspector	Geography
14633	Ms J Bannister	Team inspector	History
2447	Dr F Mikdadi	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
30128	Ms S Stanley	Team inspector	Music
31821	Mr B McCann	Team inspector	Physical education
12179	Mr L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship Business education in the sixth form
11913	Mr M Howard	Team inspector	Special educational needs
12897	Mr M Mealing	Team inspector	Health and social care in the sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset
TA8 1AN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Swanwick Hall is a good school that has improved greatly and has a capacity and determination to improve even further. Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning. They develop as responsible and considerate young people. Standards have risen significantly in recent years. **The school provides good value for money.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, governors and senior management team have the vision and drive for raising standards and achievements and are effective in their efforts.
- The school is an innovative and effective learning community where staff and pupils develop their skills in many ways and share their talents and expertise within the school and beyond.
- Relationships are very good and contribute greatly to pupils' learning and achievement.
- The overall quality of provision is very good in English, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and business studies.
- There are many sound systems for assessment but, overall, more use should be made of attainment information within each subject to promote pupils' learning.
- The school does not identify clearly enough those pupils with particular gifts or talents and does not ensure that they are always sufficiently well provided for to extend their learning.
- Accommodation has significant shortcomings and the library, though pleasant and well run, is too small for the school and inadequate as a resource for learning.
- Whilst attendance is satisfactory overall, systems to monitor and promote high attendance are not rigorous enough to improve the poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual and multicultural development is too limited.
- A few statutory requirements are not met, most notably in citizenship and religious education.

The school has improved significantly since its last inspection in May 1998, primarily because standards have risen in the main school; they have been maintained in the sixth form. Good progress has been made in developing the role of middle managers, progress in assessment has been reasonable and considerable improvements have been made in ICT. Statutory requirements are now met in design and technology, and generally in ICT across the curriculum, except in music. Provision for pupils with SEN now meets requirements. Governors reviewed teaching time and decided to make no changes; this inspection found that time is not always being used well in the tutor periods.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good overall. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies greatly and is just below average.

- Standards in Year 9 are above average overall and pupils achieve well.
- National test results in 2003 for pupils in Year 9 were well above average in English, showing a great improvement from 2002. They were average in mathematics and science but, in both subjects, also showed an improvement from 2002. These pupils' achievements, that is, their progress over Years 7 to 9 in relation to their attainment on entry, compared with similar schools, were excellent in English, very good in mathematics and good in science.

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection were very high in English, and above average in mathematics, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education. They were average elsewhere.
- GCSE examination results in 2003 were average overall and have improved in recent years in line with the national rate of improvement. Results in ICT were extremely high. They were significantly above average in English language and literature and in French but lower than average in geography. Achievement for this group of pupils was very high.
- Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were average overall. They were well above average in ICT, above average in English, modern foreign languages, history and physical education, average in mathematics, science, design and technology, art and design and music and below average in geography. Standards in religious education were average for those pupils taking the GCSE examination but below average for others taking the general religious education course because not enough time is allocated for them to cover the material.
- Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are average overall and best in business studies and ICT. English results have been consistently good for several years. Students achieve well. They work hard and, in many lessons, show the ability to work independently and think critically.
- Across the school, pupils and students have good skills in English language and literacy, sound competence in mathematics and very good skills in ICT.
- Pupils and students with SEN achieve well in the school because of the good provision made to support them. Gifted and talented pupils and students are not identified assiduously and achieve variably with examples of both good and underachievement.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall but fostered unevenly across the school. The school's promotion of honesty, integrity, trust and respect is good. Most pupils act responsibly, show good respect for others' feelings and beliefs, know right from wrong and have a reasonable understanding of their own and others' cultural traditions. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is insufficient and opportunities are often missed to promote this. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and very positive in the sixth form. Pupils generally behave well and most teachers apply the school's behaviour management strategies well. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form. Teachers have very good command of their subjects, and the encouragement they provide to pupils is very good, often with high expectation and challenge. The school's status as a Training School, with all the work done to develop teaching, is having a positive impact on the quality of education. The curriculum is good but does not meet requirements in religious education (in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form) or in citizenship (in Years 7 to 11). Not enough use is made of ICT in music. Provision for pupils with SEN is good, with some very good features. A notable development is the Pupil Support Centre which supports very well a wide range of pupils' needs. The good life skills programme supports personal development well. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided with strengths in drama, music and sport. The careers programme is of high quality. Accommodation has been improved in recent years but still has many shortcomings that impede learning. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Pupils receive good advice and guidance over personal and academic development, although even greater use could be made of assessment to identify any underachievement and act upon it. The few pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are generally supported well. The school's very good links with the community and other schools and colleges have a positive impact on pupils' experiences and achievements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school and its sixth form are good. The headteacher's leadership is very good and, with his senior colleagues, he has improved the school greatly in terms of its educational achievements and its standing in the community. Management systems are good.

Governors play a strong and positive role in school improvement but have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met. The impact of the school's technology status has been very good in enhancing pupils' achievement. The school's very good work in teacher training is also strengthening its own educational provision, as well as supporting developments in other schools. The deputy headteachers and the head of learning support promote a clear and inclusive vision for the further development of the school's good and well managed SEN provision and provide very good leadership. Leadership and management of subject areas are mostly good or better.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

A large majority of parents states that their children like school; arrangements for settling in were good, and staff expect pupils to work hard. They also feel that teaching is good and that staff treat pupils fairly. A significant minority of parents feels that they are not kept well informed about their children's progress and a few are concerned about some instances of bad behaviour. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They feel that, although reports are generally satisfactory, the school's recently changed procedures for reporting progress need to be more clearly explained to parents. Pupils' views are mostly very positive but some concerns are raised in relation to pupils' behaviour and bullying; inspectors found that some poor behaviour does exist but that it is generally dealt with well and promptly. A significant minority of pupils feels that worthwhile homework was not set regularly; inspectors found some good homework but agree that it is not set consistently.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve in order to continue to raise standards through high quality learning, are:

- make greater use of assessment information to identify any underachievement and to determine appropriate action for improvement;
 - identify more assiduously pupils with particular gifts and talents and ensure that they are provided with suitable tasks and challenges;
 - ensure that statutory requirements are met in religious education, citizenship and music;
 - continue to work at improving accommodation and developing a more effective library and learning resource area;
 - strengthen systems for monitoring and promoting good attendance;
 - review and improve the use of time designated for tutor time;
 - develop further provision for pupils' spiritual development;
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- provide a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

This sixth form is cost effective and provides a good education for its students. Standards have fluctuated in recent years and are average overall. Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of prior attainments, including many with below average attainment, and most achieve well. There are indications in current work that standards are rising. Improvement since the last inspection has been reasonable; although standards have not risen overall, course provision has been enhanced. Leadership and management are good with a firm commitment to further improvement. Students are very positive about being in the sixth form.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students' attitudes to work are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Most lessons are stimulating, challenging and employ a range of methods.
- Overall provision is very good in English, ICT, physical education and business studies.
- Assessment is sound overall, with some good features, but teaching could make even better use of attainment information to ensure that all students achieve as well as possible.
- Library facilities for the sixth form are inadequate.
- Students' contribute very well to the life of the school as a whole.
- The Alfreton Further Education Centre provides a very good setting for the vocational courses, and students enjoy being there.
- Religious education does not meet requirements.
- Attendance is satisfactory. The present system of registration does not allow attendance to be tracked systematically.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Very good in English. Standards are above average, arising from very good teaching which stimulates mature levels of literary appreciation and original thought in students. Library provision limits learning.
Mathematics	Good. Standards are in line with national averages and improving. Teaching is good. Students learn well but they are not given enough opportunity to tackle difficult problems to strengthen their research skills and to learn how to learn.
Science	Good in biology. Standards are average and rising. Teaching and learning are good. Homework, independent study and ICT are not used enough. Chemistry and physics were sampled. Chemistry results have remained well below average during recent years and, for physics in 2002, they were below average.
Information and communication technology	Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. A very good range of ICT courses is provided.

Humanities	Good in history. Good teaching leads to enthusiasm and commitment on the part of students and the growing popularity of history. Greater use could be made of assessment and independent study to enhance students' learning. Results are below average. Geography and religious education were sampled. In 2002, A-level results in geography were average and they were below average in religious education. Some excellent teaching was seen in religious education.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Food technology and product design were sampled. Students make good progress and can work well independently.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in physical education. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good. Good use is made of ICT. Students do not have the opportunity to take accredited coaching or refereeing courses.
Business	Very good in combined advanced economics and business studies Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good and enhanced through conferences and displays. Greater use could be made of ICT.
Health and social care	Good in health and social care. Standards are average. Teaching and learning are good. Students are highly motivated and keen to succeed. Students' achievement is good. The diploma in child care and education was sampled – teaching is good with thoughtful lesson planning and close links made with the student placements.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students in the sixth form benefit from good support and guidance. New assessment procedures have been implemented recently and students now have half-termly work reviews that ensure they know how their standard of work is progressing and what they need to do to improve. Effective guidance for entering higher education or the world of work is provided. The sixth-form council draws matters to the attention of the head of sixth form who takes their concerns seriously. Students receive good support, where necessary, to ensure that their basic skills are at least adequate for the courses they study.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is well lead and managed. A number of new measures for future development and improvement have been introduced, with support from staff and students. The head of sixth form has also done much to promote and improve the work ethic with the adoption of the sixth-form review week and through more careful monitoring of students' responses to deadlines and homework. Sixth-form links with the community are very good. The management arrangements for shared or linked provision are very good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

A high proportion of students enjoys being in the sixth form and finds teaching challenging and demanding. Students feel that teachers are experts in their subjects and that they are accessible and helpful. Students also feel that the school is well run and that students get on well together. Students' questionnaire responses raised some concerns over the quality of personal and careers advice to students, but inspectors found that these were good, and students did not pursue these matters as concerns in discussion with inspectors.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies greatly and is just below average as a whole. **Standards in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form are average. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average.** Standards have risen in recent years because of the school's successful drive to improve teaching and learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in national tests in Year 9 have been rising at a faster rate than nationally and are above average.
- GCSE examination results are average and have risen steadily, in line with the national rate of improvement.
- Standards in the sixth form have fluctuated, are average but show signs of improvement.
- Pupils and students generally achieve well at each stage.
- Pupils' English language and literary skills are good; their skills in ICT are also good and their competence in mathematics is sound.
- Pupils with SEN achieve well because of the very good support they receive; pupils with EAL achieve reasonably well but could do better given more focused support.
- The school does not identify clearly enough or evaluate the achievements of gifted and talented pupils.

Commentary

1. Pupils' attainments on entry into Year 7 vary greatly and are just below average as a whole.
2. In national tests at the end of Year 9, results have risen at a faster rate than nationally and are now above average overall, based on average points in English, mathematics and science, taken together. The rate of improvement has been most marked in English where standards were well below average in 2000 and rose to well above average in 2003. Results in mathematics have risen from below average to average in that time and, in science, they have risen, keeping broadly in line with national averages throughout. The school's targets for the 2003 tests were exceeded in all three core subjects and by a considerable figure in both English and mathematics, greatly so for English. Results show that pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 was very good overall.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.3 (33.0)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.6 (33.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.2 (32.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 183 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Standards in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection were very high in English and above average in mathematics, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education. They were average elsewhere.

4. GCSE examination results in 2003 were average overall and have improved in recent years in line with the national rate of improvement. GCSE results in ICT were extremely high. They were significantly above average in English language and literature and in French but lower than average in geography.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52.0 (38.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93.0 (91.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (98.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.7 (34.7)	32.7 (34.7)

There were 161 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were average overall. They were well above average in ICT, above average in English, modern foreign languages, history and physical education, average in mathematics, science, design and technology, art and design and music and below average in geography. Standards in religious education were average for those pupils taking the GCSE examination but below average for others taking the general religious education course because not enough time is allocated for them to cover the material.
6. Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are average overall and best in business studies and ICT. Sixth-form students achieve well. They work hard and, in many lessons, show the ability to work independently and think critically.
7. Across the school, pupils have good skills in English language and literacy, sound competence in mathematics and very good skills in ICT.
8. Achievement, that is, progress in relation to pupils' prior attainment, is good at all stages overall. It is best in English in Years 7 to 9 where it is excellent because of the highly effective teaching that so thoroughly and carefully meets the needs of all pupils; teachers are very clear about how to enable pupils to develop their skills and make progress through the National Curriculum levels. Achievement in English is very good in Years 10 to 13 and the department has achieved consistently good results for several years, although the 2003 A-level results were average. Achievement is also very good in modern foreign languages because pupils and students are exposed to high quality provision, including much use of the target foreign language. Students in business studies with economics also make very good progress and achieve very good results. In other subjects, achievement is satisfactory or good. Compared with other subjects that pupils took at GCSE, results were relatively strong in English language and ICT but relatively weak in art and design, science, design and technology, English literature, geography and mathematics.
9. Gender differences in performance do exist but they vary from subject to subject and year to year so that no overall patterns are clearly discernible.

Sixth Form

10. Standards in the sixth form are average overall. They have fluctuated in recent years; they were below average in 2001 and average in 2002 and 2003, based on average point scores. In 2002, results for female students were above average and those for males were average. In 2001, results for both males and females were below average. Although the pass rate in 2003 was

average, the percentage of students obtaining the higher grades A and B fell to below the national average.

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	80.4 (80.2)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	19.3 (24.3)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	241.6 (253.4)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 63 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

11. A-level examination results in 2002, for which national comparisons are available, were best in business studies where results were well above average and in ICT where results were above average. Results were in line with national averages for English and general studies. They were below average in mathematics, religious education, physics and history and well below average in art and design, biology, chemistry and physical education.
12. The 2002 results in the AS-level examinations were well above average in business studies, and above average in physical education, English and art and design. Results were average in ICT and religious education. They were below average in general studies and well below average in biology, geography, mathematics and sociology.
13. In 2003, the following subjects achieved a 100 per cent pass rate: English; history; art and design; music; religious education; business with economics; ICT and German. English results have been consistently good overall with students achieving a 100 per cent pass rate in every year except one for the last 15 years. National comparisons are not yet available for 2003.
14. Taking account of students' attainments on entry to the sixth form, which were very wide and below average overall, the 2003 results represent reasonable overall achievement but with a significant minority of students underachieving. The current position shows an improvement; based on inspection evidence, achievement is now good because the quality of teaching and learning has been improved.
15. In the eight subjects looked at in detail on this inspection, achievement is very good in English and ICT and good in mathematics, history, physical education and business with economics. Achievement in biology and health and social care is sound.
16. Students' key skills of communication, use of number, and especially the use of computers, are good and contribute positively to their achievement in subjects.

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

Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are **good**. The attendance of pupils is **satisfactory**. The punctuality of pupils is **satisfactory**. The behaviour of pupils is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The attitudes that pupils display towards their learning are good and, on occasions, very good, and contribute to the above average standards they achieve.
- The behaviour of pupils both in lessons and around the school is good.
- Working relationships between pupils and with staff are very good and based on mutual respect.

- Pupils develop as responsible and considerate young people because the school's ethos encourages this growth effectively.
- A small number of pupils, on occasions, disrupt lessons and affect the learning of others.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development is too limited.

Commentary

- The attitudes of pupils towards their learning are good and contribute significantly to the standards they achieve. Most are able to sustain their concentration well and take an interest in their studies. When given the opportunity, they are able to work independently. In English lessons, for example, pupils are consistently encouraged to become autonomous in their learning and develop independent thinking skills. Pupils observed in withdrawal tuition teaching situations had positive attitudes, were well motivated to achieve and had positive relationships with their teachers and support staff.
- Pupils willingly accept responsibility within the school, such as acting as peer mediators or as mentors to student teachers in training. A school council has recently been introduced and, together with year councils, is becoming an effective forum for pupils to present the views of their peers and be part of the school's consultation process.
- Behaviour in the majority of lessons is good. Working relationships between pupils and with staff are very good and supportive. A small number of pupils, on occasions, fail to engage in lessons and can disrupt the learning of others; parents expressed concern about this at their meeting with the lead inspector. A few teachers are less confident in dealing with these pupils and do not always follow the behaviour management procedures set out by the school. All teachers have received behaviour management training. The school is developing an effective provision in the Pupil Support Centre to support these pupils and help them to improve their standard of behaviour and avoid potential exclusions. Fixed-term exclusions are used appropriately and only two pupils were permanently excluded last year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – any other mixed background
Chinese

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1226	14	2
2	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0

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

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, but is fostered unevenly across departments. This is due partly to the absence of a whole-school policy that would offer guidance for sections of the school to follow. The result is that provision is not properly planned in all subjects and, in some cases, happens by chance.
- Provision to support pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory overall. It is good in some departments. In religious education, for example, a short part of each lesson is set aside for quiet reflection. The drama department also provides well for spiritual development. In many departments, there are few planned opportunities to develop spiritual awareness. Some

assemblies do allow for reflection on spiritual matters but, here again, provision is inconsistent.

22. A clear moral and social code is promoted well. Pupils know they are expected to behave well. The school promotes honesty, integrity, trust and respect in all pupils. In English, for example, pupils are taught about strength of character in the face of adversity. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively and to respect the views of others. In geography, pupils studying the effects of a recent earthquake reflected on why suffering from such disasters is always more acute in less developed countries than in more affluent societies.
23. Development of pupils' cultural awareness is satisfactory. Whilst pupils have a good appreciation of their own culture, they are taught comparatively little about other cultures. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated, but they have few opportunities to celebrate and share their own cultural heritage with others. Two subjects in which a diversity of cultures is studied specifically are music and religious education. The study of Afro-American blues music in the former, and world religions in the latter, are two good examples.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1	School data	2.4
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.

24. The attendance of pupils is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national standard for all schools. A good initiative has been started this term for pupils in Year 9 whose attendance is becoming a concern. They are currently attending a support group run by the deputy head of year. However, there is a lack of rigour in the monitoring of attendance, particularly of pupils whose attendance falls between 80 and 90 per cent. Last year, about a third of pupils in Years 10 and 11 had less than 90 per cent attendance. The school works hard to retain some of these pupils in mainstream education by offering a range of flexible learning opportunities and ensures they gain some GCSE passes. Some parents do not fully support the school in ensuring the regular attendance of their children. The punctuality of pupils is satisfactory but affected at times by late arriving transport.

Sixth Form

25. Students demonstrate very good attitudes towards their studies, and work hard to achieve the grades in external examinations they need to further their career aspirations. Their behaviour is excellent and they provide very good role models for younger pupils. They are involved with the main school in many ways, such as acting as buddies to the incoming Year 7 pupils and mentors to Year 9 pupils. They are also represented on the school council. Attendance is satisfactory. The present system of registration does not allow attendance to be tracked systematically.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in the sixth form. Assessment of pupils' performance is sound. The curriculum has many good features, is organised with flexibility to meet individual needs and enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Pupils have access to good advice, support and

guidance. The school works well to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Accommodation has some shortcomings and is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. The school places great emphasis on developing teaching and is successful in this. Pupils come to school expecting to work hard and learn. The **assessment** of pupils' work and progress is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of their subjects.
- The encouragement and engagement of pupils are very good.
- The level of teachers' expectation and challenge is very high in most lessons, although not quite as high for gifted and talented pupils, on the whole.
- The school has supported teachers very effectively in widening their range of teaching methods so that methods used in lessons are varied and appropriate for most pupils' differing needs.
- Most pupils work diligently, putting good effort into their work.
- Marking does not always indicate to pupils how to improve their work.
- Teachers and support assistants collaborate well to enable pupils with SEN or other needs to learn well; the few pupils with EAL are not as well supported.

Commentary

26. The school's status as a Training School, with all the work done to develop teaching, is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and of education as a whole. In a third of lessons, teaching and learning were of very high quality (very good or excellent) and pupils learned avidly because of teachers' interesting and varied presentations and activities. In a fifth, they were satisfactory, with reasonable learning gains but with some minor disruptions or slow pace. Only very occasionally were teaching and learning unsatisfactory, mainly because the teacher's subject knowledge was limited when teaching outside their specialism. These figures represent a considerable improvement since the previous inspection and the improvements to teaching and learning have played an obvious and crucial part in raising standards at this school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 167 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (4%)	50 (30%)	74 (44%)	33 (20%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

27. The quality of teaching and learning, whilst good overall, varies slightly across the school; it is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 and is best in the sixth form. It is weakest in Year 8 but not hugely so; reasons for this are a slight increase in off-task behaviour by pupils or some weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge when teaching outside their main specialist area.
28. Teachers' high level of expertise is a real strength in many subjects. Teaching is very good in English (and excellent in English for pupils in Years 7 to 9), in modern foreign languages and in ICT in Years 10 to 13. In other subjects, it is either good or satisfactory overall. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in drama, English, German, music and religious education; in these cases, teachers adopted exciting, thought-provoking or innovative approaches which successfully

developed pupils' skills whilst stimulating their enthusiasm for learning. In English, teachers have worked effectively as a team to address boys' underachievement, with clear improvements in boys' standards.

29. The impact of the national strategies is very visible in teaching and learning at Swanwick Hall School. The developments in teaching encouraged by the national Key Stage 3 Strategy have been harnessed robustly and are being used right across the school, effectively in most cases. Teaching promotes and develops pupils' skills in literacy across the subjects. Some good work has been undertaken to develop numeracy skills, although this is not yet being covered as uniformly or as well within all subjects as it is for literacy. With the relatively recent increase in access to computers, the use of ICT across all subjects for teaching and learning is still being developed; ICT is being used reasonably well in nearly all subjects except for music.
30. Teachers' marking is good, although pupils are not always clear about what can be done to improve their work; pupils do not generally ask specifically about this and accept the grades given so that clarity about exactly what would constitute a better piece next time is not obtained routinely. In some lessons, pointers for improvement are given well verbally. Teachers generally make good assessments of pupils' work to plan lessons and other activities so that, in most cases, learning for all pupils is purposeful in raising their levels of knowledge, understanding and skill. The 'levels days' provide an opportunity for tutors to share with pupils and parents the levels at which pupils are working. What is not yet securely in place across all departments is teachers' understanding of what can be expected of each pupil and the extent to which all pupils, or groups of pupils, have achieved their best. The school has the wherewithal, because a good central database on attainment is kept, to support teachers in developing this full understanding. This work is a possible next step in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning so that any underachievement, and reasons for it, are quickly identified; teaching can then be adjusted accordingly to enable pupils to catch-up where necessary.
31. Many teachers give time freely outside lessons to provide individual support, and pupils appreciate the extra help they can have.
32. Overall, the teaching and learning observed in withdrawal tuition sessions, involving pupils across the age range, were very good. Teaching includes a variety of methods to maintain pupils' concentration and motivation and provides pupils with multi-sensory learning opportunities. Methods include one-to-one and small group discussions, board work, written assignments and short assessment tasks to ascertain learning. ICT is also used to good effect. Teaching is carefully targeted towards pupils' individual learning goals and delivered at a good pace. Careful questioning is used to shape and extend pupils' thought, knowledge and understanding. Pupil responses, both oral and written, indicate very good progress, demonstrating the clear link between high quality teaching and effective learning.
33. Teachers provide a secure environment for pupils with EAL. Pairing each of these pupils with another pupil is a common learning strategy. This strategy works well, when pairing is with average or higher attaining pupils, especially those whose own language is of high quality and, hence, provides good models for listening, reading and writing. However, this strategy is much less effective when these pupils are paired with others who do not provide such rich interactions. This is largely due to teachers' lack of experience in how pupils acquire an additional language. Teachers' personal interactions are helpful but these are not as frequent as these pupils need.

Sixth Form

34. Teaching is very good in the sixth form, and some of the high quality features noted above for Years 7 to 11 have even more positive effects at sixth-form level. The level of teachers' expertise is a strong factor influencing students' very good learning overall. Teachers have very high expectations of their students and, in many subjects, teaching demands good levels of critical analysis from students. Assessment of students' work is generally sound and has improved but, as for the main school, further work needs to be undertaken to identify more clearly any underachievement and to take action for improvement. Students' capacity for independent study is generally good, although further guidance could be provided on this in some subjects, so that lesson times are used to maximum effect and students' own study time is well structured to support their learning. The school library is inadequate for the needs of sixth-form students as a resource for independent learning.

The curriculum

The **breadth of curricular opportunities** is **good** and the curriculum generally provides well for the school's pupils and their differing needs. Not all statutory requirements are met. **Opportunities for enrichment** are **good**. **Staffing** is **good** but there are some **shortcomings in accommodation** that impede learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements are not met in religious education and citizenship, and ICT is not used enough in music.
- The school works effectively to create flexible curriculum and timetabling arrangements, so that pupils' needs can generally be met well.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is good but that for gifted and talented pupils is not so well developed.
- The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities to suit pupils' interests and needs.
- Morning tutor time is not generally used constructively to prepare pupils for learning, although there is some good practice.
- The library, though pleasant and well run, is too small for the school and inadequate as a resource for learning.
- The careers programme is of high quality.
- Accommodation has been improved but still limits learning in some curriculum areas and presents the school with many difficulties in relation to maintenance.

Commentary

35. The curriculum is broad and balanced and reflects the aims of the school. Most statutory requirements are met, but too little time is allocated in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form to deliver the locally agreed syllabus in religious education, and the requirements to teach citizenship in Years 7 to 11 are not fully met. In music, not enough use is made of ICT. The school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
36. A number of curriculum improvements have been made since the last inspection. These include the provision of an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, and improvements in geography and design and technology, in particular. An extended range of courses in Years 10 and 11, involving additional, after-school classes, gives pupils the option to study courses from a more flexible choice list of subjects. Approximately two-thirds of pupils opt in to these after-school classes. Additional classes in most subjects are available outside the school day, when pupils receive extra help with their examination work and preparation.

37. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum includes a Youth Award programme and a Learning for Work course, based at the local college. These courses are primarily for pupils who do not take a full range of GCSE courses. Pupils on these courses speak highly of them and they are entirely appropriate for their needs.
38. A good and well-established life skills course is taught fortnightly to all pupils and this contributes well to pupils' personal, social and health education. It also includes elements of citizenship. The careers programme is very effective and benefits from the school's very good links with the community.
39. Equality of access to the curriculum for girls and boys is kept under review and encouraged. In English, for example, very good mixed-ability teaching has successfully ensured that boys, in particular, are provided with stimulating and challenging work, leading to improved standards.
40. There is no formal identification of pupils who are gifted and talented and few departments plan activities which are directly targeted at raising the attainment of this group of pupils; there are, consequently, too few pupils who achieve the highest grades at GCSE. A number of activities, such as a chess club and inter-school chess competitions, national cycling competitions and poetry and drama groups, provide good additional activities for pupils with particular talents.
41. The provision for pupils with SEN has improved since the last inspection and is now good, with some very good features. Individual education plans (IEPs) are of a generally high standard, with the majority including specific targets and useful guidance on strategies and resources to support pupils' learning. An area for development would be the inclusion of subject-specific targets in some IEPs. Some staff training is needed so that subject specialists feel more confident and become skilled in doing this. There is also now adherence to the SEN Code of Practice. Support staff are used effectively across the curriculum and ensure that pupils with SEN are included and have equal access to the curriculum. Good withdrawal tuition is also provided for some pupils who need individual programmes of work designed to help them to improve their basic skills.
42. Opportunities provided for participation in extra-curricular activities are good. Pupils value the range of activities. There is a wide range of sports-based activities and also a good range of clubs, activities and revision sessions to support other subjects. In music, pupils can join choirs, ensembles, keyboard groups or the orchestra. Some of these groups entertain in the community and local primary schools. Pupils also benefit from the provision of a wide range of subject-related excursions, as well as foreign exchange visits. Participation in the arts is good. Opportunities for enrichment through drama are excellent and involve large numbers of pupils.
43. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Although the buildings allow the curriculum to be taught, the quality of curricular provision is reduced by limitations in the accommodation. Several of the shortcomings noted in one or both of the two previous inspections remain. Cramped conditions persist in some English rooms and in music. The library is still too small and continues to be under-resourced. The pleasing variety of architecture that makes the school site so attractive in many ways, continues to bring with it problems for the maintenance and repair of some of the older buildings. Whilst much has been done to improve external paintwork, many rooms, stairways and corridors are drab, with peeling plaster and damp stains still common. Acoustic problems remain in those rooms with hard and glazed surfaces, having an adverse impact on speaking and listening in English, for example. The damp atmosphere in music rooms affects pupils' breathing when they are singing or playing wind instruments. The statement made in the first inspection report that 'some of the accommodation detracts from learning' still applies.
44. Despite these shortcomings, there have been some notable improvements to accommodation since the previous inspection. Pupils can now eat in a new dining room that replaced the earlier

inadequate building. The Pupil Support Centre is now accommodated in a well-equipped converted house on the school site. Site security continues to be improved with the installation of CCTV and effective perimeter fencing. Recent replacement of windows in the main science building has improved the learning environment of laboratories. Art and design and drama are now housed in converted Victorian buildings which afford much more spacious accommodation than they enjoyed previously.

45. Within the limits imposed by tight budgetary controls, and the planning regulations associated with listed building status, the governors' premises committee, together with the site manager and his staff, is working hard to maintain and improve standards on a large and complicated site.
46. Management of teaching and learning on multiple sites is very good. Art and design and drama are taught in buildings separated from the main school site by a busy main road. The movement of pupils and staff is managed so that there is minimum loss of teaching time, together with maximum concern for safety.
47. Overall resources available to departments are satisfactory. They are very good in physical education and good in modern foreign languages, music, design and technology and the sixth form. Resources in the remaining subjects are satisfactory, apart from religious studies where there are too few textbooks. Resources to support pupils with SEN are very good. The library is unsatisfactory, as it has too little stock for the size of the school and this limits pupils' opportunity for independent study and research.
48. Teachers and support staff match the needs of the curriculum. Teachers have good experience and are well qualified. Very good in-service training programmes contribute to the development of teaching expertise. Whilst most departments have well-qualified teachers, this is not the case in religious education where many lessons are taught by non-specialist teachers. The good number of support staff provides effective administrative and learning support.

Sixth Form

49. The sixth-form curriculum offers a wide range of courses at AS-, A-level and advanced vocational courses. Students have the option to take a vocational course together with an A-level course. Options are made even more flexible for students by the sharing of teaching with a neighbouring school. Curriculum provision is very good in business studies, ICT and English. It is good in mathematics, history, physical education and health and social care. In biology, it is satisfactory. Religious education does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
50. A programme of sixth-form extension studies includes physical education. It also offers additional help with key skills where required, and the opportunity to take A-level general studies.
51. Sixth-form resources are good overall. Students have their own social area, although this is inadequate for the numbers who sometimes use it. They have access to a significant number of computers in the sixth form, one of the benefits of the school's technology college status. A number of small teaching rooms and more spacious study areas are available. Library facilities for the sixth form are inadequate.
52. Much of the sixth-form vocational studies programme is taught in buildings situated over two miles from the main site. These arrangements include joint lessons with another secondary school and involvement with adult education. The skilful management of the timetable and the movement of staff and students ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum and enhances the learning opportunities for Swanwick Hall students.

Care, guidance and support

The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **good**. The steps taken to ensure routine monitoring of health and safety are **good**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Not all pupils are aware of the levels they are working at in all subjects, although the school's recently introduced 'levels days' are helping pupils to understand their attainment ; nor are they always given sufficient advice about how to improve their work.
- Pupils receive good advice and guidance over personal and academic development, although even greater use could be made of assessment to identify any underachievement and act upon it.
- Induction arrangements for pupils coming into the school are good.
- High quality careers provision makes a strong contribution to pupils' preparation for life beyond school.
- The Pupil Support Centre for pupils, some of whom might otherwise not remain in mainstream education, is a positive feature of the school's good work on educational inclusion.
- Whilst attendance is satisfactory overall, systems to monitor and promote high attendance are not rigorous enough to improve the poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils.

Commentary

53. A high level of commitment to the pastoral care of pupils is demonstrated by heads of year and their assistants. They work hard to meet the needs of their year group and organise a range of support activities, such as focus groups, to meet identified needs. Pupils in Year 9, for example, benefit from weekly meetings to help them raise their attendance; a Year 11 group works on underachievement. Despite these efforts, the attendance of a significant number of pupils in all year groups falls below 90 per cent. Improving and good attendance is recognised through awards. The Pupil Support Centre has successfully reintegrated some pupils whose attendance has been poor. An attendance officer makes first-day phone calls in order to reverse the increasing trend of non-attendance; last year 24 per cent of Year 8 pupils had attendance levels below 90 per cent. Systems to monitor and promote high attendance are still not always applied rigorously enough to prevent this deterioration.
54. The induction arrangements for pupils coming into the school are good. Pastoral teams stay with their year group throughout their time in school and they are able to build strong relationships with the pupils and their families that are supportive and promote good learning. This good knowledge of pupils and their background helps the school to provide good support when needed. Pupils interviewed were confident that they would be able to ask members of staff for help, either academic or personal. The 20-minutes tutorial time at the beginning of the day is not used constructively by all tutors to set the climate for learning. Some pupils use this time for social catch-up and do not see it as part of their learning time.
55. There is a secure system in place for the identification and assessment of pupils having SEN. Good liaison with partner primary schools ensures that the arrangements to help the transition from the primary sector are very effective. Appropriate records are kept but there is scope for the further development of systems of record keeping so that it becomes easier to keep track of pupils' progress, and for the development of data analysis in order to inform individual target setting. The general nature of many IEPs makes it difficult to easily monitor the progress of some pupils.

56. The school has been successful in gaining a Careers Mark award for its high quality careers programme. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from work shadowing and pupils in Years 10 and 12 undertake work experience. This provision is unique in that this is the only school carrying out work shadowing for these year groups. The programme is aimed at raising pupils' aspirations and awareness about potential careers they would not previously have considered.
57. The arrangements for seeking, valuing and acting on pupils' views are satisfactory. The recently-introduced school and long-established year councils are providing a forum for pupils to present their views to both senior management and the governing body. A member of the governing body sits on the council and is proactive in encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for the school environment. The school is aware of the need to promote the school council more widely within the school. The recently introduced 'levels days' involve pupils in a twice-yearly review of their work and progress towards their targets with their tutors. The system has not been in place long enough to have had much effect, and some pupils still remain unclear about the level they are working at, or the targets set, in most subjects apart from mathematics and English.

Sixth Form

58. Students in the sixth form benefit from good support and guidance. New procedures have been implemented by the recently appointed head of sixth form. Students now have half-termly work reviews that ensure they know how their standard of work is progressing and what they need to do to improve. Effective guidance for entering higher education or the world of work is provided by the Connexions personal adviser and tutorial staff. The sixth-form council draws matters to the attention of the head of sixth form who takes their concerns seriously.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is **good**. The quality of the school's links with the community is **very good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a strong commitment to developing an effective partnership with parents.
- Links with feeder primary schools and transition arrangements are good.
- Links with other schools, colleges and universities are very good.
- The quality of links with the community is very good.
- Annual reports to parents are generally good but vary in quality between subjects.

Commentary

59. The school's partnership with its parents is good and parents are encouraged to become partners with the school in managing their children's learning. For example, meetings between Year 9 pupils, their parents and tutorial staff ensure that subjects chosen for GCSE courses meet both the academic and potential career needs of pupils. Parents attend one of the 'levels days' and benefit from a one-to-one discussion with tutors about the progress their child is making. A recent 'thinking skills' evening was attended by over 60 parents who spoke very highly of its impact on their thinking and on the ways that they need to support and challenge their children's learning. There are a minority of parents who do not avail themselves of these opportunities despite the school's best efforts. The weekly 'Hallmark' newsletter is of high quality and very informative and celebratory.
60. Termly reports on academic progress are issued, as well as a more detailed annual report. Targets for improvement contained in them are mainly pastoral and few contain academic targets.

The issue of unsatisfactory attendance, where it exists for specific pupils, is not mentioned in these reports. A significant minority of parents responded in the parents' questionnaire that they do not feel well informed about how well their children are getting on; the school has recently changed its arrangements for informing parents about pupils' progress and not all parents are clear about these. The school intends to provide further information about the arrangements. The school should also provide further information about the ways in which it seeks parents' views; the school's arrangements for this are satisfactory but not entirely clear to parents.

61. The school's community has benefited from the Specialist Technology College status gained in September 2001. Successful adult classes now include increasingly popular evening sessions on basic computing and on building a computer. The latter effectively allows students to build their own personal computer and to buy it at a low rate which enhances the use of ICT at home. Close links with local universities and other further education providers have created effective opportunities to use university ICT students regularly, both in the school and in its partner primary schools. Links to partner primary schools have also been strengthened through the technology college work of the school, as part of the community dimension involved in having specialist status. The school now aims to increase the number of community participants in its activities.
62. The school's involvement in initial teacher training has further enhanced its relationships with universities and with local schools. Teacher trainees bring many benefits to the school and pupils are selected to mentor them and engage in open dialogues on teaching and learning. Through the school's good links with other schools and the community, pupils and students from all years, including Year 7, get a chance to engage in work experience.

Sixth Form

63. As in the main school, the very good links with other schools, colleges, universities and the community are bringing positive benefits to students, particularly in relation to work experience and in the development of teaching and learning as a whole.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher's leadership is very good. The senior management team provides the school with a clear sense of direction with a strong focus on teaching, learning and achievement. Management is good. Governance has much strength but is unsatisfactory overall because not all statutory requirements are met.

Statutory requirements are not met for the provision of a daily act of corporate worship, in religious education for pupils and students in Years 10 to 13, in the use of ICT in music and in citizenship for pupils in Years 7 to 11. The governors' annual report to parents does not comment on the effectiveness of the school's SEN policy.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and his senior team have successfully improved standards since the last inspection.
- Most key staff provide good leadership.
- The impact of the school's technology status and Training School status has been very good in enhancing pupils' achievement.
- The school development plan is effective in bringing about improvements.
- The school's contribution to initial teacher training is very good.
- Staff development opportunities are very good.

Commentary

64. The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has a very good working relationship with the chair of governors and members of the governing body. Governors appreciate the hard work that has gone into raising achievement and improving the school's standing in the community. They have themselves made a very positive contribution to this improvement and are very effective in helping to shape the vision and direction of the school. They know very well the school's strengths and weaknesses and are quite willing and able to challenge senior managers in ways that help the school improve further. Because governors have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met, governance must therefore be judged to be unsatisfactory. Governors have stated that they feel that as much as is reasonably possible has been done to provide a daily act of collective worship; in the view of the inspection team, more can be done to come nearer to the spirit of the requirement even if it proves too difficult to meet it fully.
65. The headteacher is very committed to school improvement and is seen by others as a listening headteacher. He and the two deputy headteachers have high expectations of both pupils and staff. Their main focus has been on teaching and learning, improvements to which have helped in raising standards in recent years. Two advanced skills teachers (ASTs) have been invited onto the senior management team in order to enhance the emphasis on teaching and learning skills. The school is a very good initial teacher training institution and this has helped in making staff aware of a variety of teaching and learning styles. New staff, including newly qualified teachers (NQTs), are very well supported and guided when they join the school.
66. The school development plan has a similarly strong focus on teaching and learning and on raising pupils' achievement. Actions taken as part of this plan to improve teaching have improved classroom practice and have had a positive impact on learning. Some departments have also started to put a strong emphasis on learning as well as teaching, so that attention is turned to what pupils receive more than on what teachers provide. There are clear and successful strategies and structures for monitoring progress towards the targets and priorities in the school development plan. The technology college development plan is equally precise, with crisp targets, steps and expected outcomes. The impact of the school's technology status has been very good in enhancing pupils' achievement.
67. Leadership and management of subject areas are mostly good or better, with strengths in English, drama, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education and business studies. Management of the provision for pupils with EAL is satisfactory but further work is required to ensure that their teachers are aware of how best to help these pupils acquire English in order to access the curriculum fully.
68. The head of learning support, with his line managers, promotes a clear and inclusive vision for the further development of SEN provision at the school and provides very good leadership. His membership of the senior management team is clear recognition of the importance the school attaches to this area. The overall management of learning support is good. Information about pupils having SEN is available to all staff through the school intranet. The SEN policy includes all required information and reflects recent legislation and the new SEN Code of Practice. Statutory requirements are met apart from the governors' annual report to parents where there is insufficient information; the report lacks detail on the success of implementing the school SEN policy and this was the case in 2002 and 2003.
69. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are plentiful, both in the school as well as outside. The school's very successful links with local universities and other higher and further education institutions offer ample opportunities for staff development. Several teachers in the school are themselves very successful in providing training and advice to teachers in other

institutions, as well as to persons attending adult classes and community gatherings in the school. ASTs are used effectively to support and advise colleagues on improving teaching strategies. Initial teacher training has also successfully brought in opportunities for a variety of developmental experiences, all of which have a clear and positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. Some further work is required to develop teachers' understanding of the needs of pupils with EAL.

70. The school has a successful formal system of monitoring the application of school policies, primarily through the monitoring of teaching and learning and of test and examination results. This is done through tutors checking the contact book, heads of subjects observing teaching and, in some departments, through a highly successful peer observation programme. This monitoring has successfully identified the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the fact that assessment is not yet used well to show pupils and students how to improve their work, or for ensuring that what is gleaned from assessment is used to improve curriculum provision and lesson planning.
71. The school's financial planning is efficient and the governing body's finance committee makes an important contribution to it. It relates well to the school's overall development planning. Best value principles are effectively applied and finances are kept well. The school provides good value for money. The current budget deficit is expected to be eradicated this year.
72. The school's determination to improve provision and outcomes is the main powerful and successful force in raising standards. Technology college status has enabled the school to improve the quality of educational provision. The school's shortcomings in accommodation and lack of funds to improve it significantly are the main barriers to further improvement.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,546,675	Balance from previous year	-78,880
Total expenditure	3,541,276	Balance carried forward to the next	-141,790
Expenditure per pupil	3,133		

Additional note: The figure of -£141,790 deficit was due to a coding error in formula capital which has been amended in this financial year as follows:

Deficit carried forwards	£-141,791
Formula capital not charged properly	£ 95,810
True deficit	£ -45,981

Sixth Form

73. The sixth form is well managed. The sixth-form co-ordinator has been in post for four terms. She has worked hard to introduce a number of new measures for future development and improvement that have gained support and influence. Notable amongst these have been the work of the sixth-form teaching and learning group, improved student referral and review procedures and closer involvement and consultation with heads of department and students over proposed changes in practice and procedure. She has done much to promote and improve the work ethic with the adoption of the sixth-form review week and through more careful monitoring of student responses to deadlines and homework. Strong links and some shared teaching with Alfreton College of Further Education are well established and well managed. The co-ordinator also chairs the school action research group supported by Nottingham University.

74. Both the co-ordinator and the recently appointed deputy head of sixth form have brought new approaches to planning in the sixth form as the result of the professional development courses they have attended. An appropriate development plan is in place and there are strong initiatives aimed at driving up sixth-form recruitment figures and also increasing entries to higher education. Formal monitoring and evaluation procedures that would help to determine any impact on standards and achievements resulting from these initiatives are not yet in place.

OTHER ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The Pupil Support Centre

75. The Pupil Support Centre is an emerging provision at Swanwick Hall School and has been in existence for approximately one year. The head of learning support, supported by the deputy headteacher (pastoral), has overall responsibility for the Pupil Support Centre. An SEN assistant, experienced in working with pupils presenting with a range of behavioural problems, manages the centre on a daily basis, in conjunction with the head of learning support.
76. Although a relatively new provision, the Pupil Support Centre provides very good additional provision for vulnerable pupils at the school. There is potential for this to become excellent provision.
77. The aim of the centre is to provide a flexible, relaxed environment, within which carefully selected pupils presenting a range of difficulties can be helped to acquire the necessary skills to cope better. The pupils who are, or could be, supported by the centre would include those needing to improve their behaviour, those having a temporary crisis or personal difficulties requiring counselling support, those having attendance difficulties or pupils needing support while they reintegrate back into mainstream schooling following absence from school for various reasons.
78. The Pupil Support Centre, referred to as the 'House', is located in the school grounds a short distance from the main school. This recently converted property provides a very good learning environment in which one-to-one or small-group tuition or counselling can and does take place. The centre is well resourced, including good access to ICT.
79. This emerging provision has a number of strengths which include:
- the dedicated and committed day-to-day centre manager who provides a caring and nurturing environment;
 - the clear line-management structure and the support of the senior management team;
 - the controlled referral route through discussion between the head of learning support, pastoral deputy headteacher, heads of year and centre manager;
 - the inclusive nature of the provision with clear links being maintained between the centre and the wider school community.
80. The monitoring team will need to maintain vigilance to ensure that the centre does not become over-stretched in attempting to respond to diverse needs.
81. Areas for further development should include:
- the further development of a data management system so that the success of the centre can be more accurately measured;
 - the establishment of some dedicated administration time for the centre manager to provide greater opportunities for programme planning, liaison with colleagues and record keeping;
 - ongoing training needs analysis and provision of identified training for centre staff;
 - the production of a development plan detailing short-, medium- and long-term targets for the further development of the Pupil Support Centre.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved greatly since the last inspection.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 are extremely high.
- Very good leadership ensures pupils' progress is analysed in order to adjust teaching method and content, where necessary, to meet pupils' needs.
- Boys' very good achievement results from carefully focused teaching.
- Excellent planning provides a variety of stimulating activities in lessons, making good use of national initiatives throughout the age range.
- Good use of additional staff enables pupils with SEN to achieve well.
- Advice given to pupils on how to improve lacks focus on national criteria and standards.

Commentary

82. Standards have risen greatly since the last inspection. In national tests taken in Year 9, standards are extremely high when compared with national standards, and also compared with schools where pupils have similar levels of attainment on entry. The proportion gaining higher grades (Levels 6 and 7) exceeds the national picture. Over three years, results have risen faster than the national trend. Girls do better than boys, reflecting national trends.
83. GCSE English results show a higher proportion reaching higher grades (A*-C) than that found nationally. Unusually for the subject, the proportion of boys gaining higher grades is higher than that of girls. Whilst girls match national trends for their gender, boys greatly exceed it. In English literature, the pattern is repeated for the relative performance of boys and girls, whilst overall results fall below the national picture for the subject.
84. By the end of Year 9, standards of reading, speaking and listening are very good. Pupils enjoy a wide range of fiction and write informative reviews to express their appreciation. Their excellent writing reflects their teachers' good planning to make sure that they read and understand a variety of styles and types of books, stories and plays. Building well on this, pupils produce stylish versions of their own science fiction, detective and romance stories, as well as analyses of plays and examples of persuasive writing. Girls' writing is better than that of boys, but boys speak up for themselves and explain their ideas equally well in class.
85. By Year 11, standards seen during the inspection reflect recent GCSE results. Pupils acquire a rapid understanding of set books because teachers use expert knowledge and good resources to brief them clearly, and help them analyse and think out ideas for themselves. In some lessons, the extremely poor acoustics of the dilapidated classrooms prevent pupils reaching their potential in discussion work. Boys do as well as girls overall because teachers' methods of teaching are such that boys as well as girls are fully engaged in the interesting tasks set and understand clearly what is expected of them. Teachers build pupils' confidence through well-directed questioning.

86. The quality of teaching is very good across the age range. In Years 10 and 11, teachers make very good use of varied methods originally designed for the lower years. They engage interest by using a variety of resources, and rapidly changing activities, questions and using helpful prompts. This ensures that pupils are always involved and stimulated, and never bored. Across the age range, pupils with SEN benefit from the teachers' good planning and effective intervention from additional staff. This ensures that they achieve well. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously. They benefit from useful comments to help them understand their strengths and what they need to do in order to improve. At the same time, however, the comments lack sufficient detail to put them into context of nationally expected standards.
87. Achievement is excellent in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. This is because teachers have excellent subject knowledge, plan extremely well, keep up relentless demands on pupils, measure and check their progress regularly and give them help immediately if they fall behind. Boys achieve notably well because they are consistently exposed to the highest teacher expectations and demands in well-organised mixed-ability groups.
88. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. They have led to improved teaching standards and results over several years so that overall improvement in English is very good. The team has worked well to try out good teaching ideas together and to establish a 'house style' in which the lessons from national and local initiatives have been adapted and used well across the age range. Their careful analysis of the progress of their pupils has been applied judiciously to ensure that teaching style and content have evolved to meet the changing needs of their pupils.

Raising boys' achievement in English

The English department has raised boys' achievement by using a consistent and very effective 'house style' in its teaching. This exploits the lessons of the National Literacy Strategy and applies them across the full age range. It deploys multi-part lesson plans, applied with a distinctive vigour and energy by all teachers. Each lesson is therefore structured around a common repertoire of secure strategies and techniques. When pupils are on form, the results can be excellent. Even when distracted by windy weather or unsettled from a previous lesson, teaching techniques serve to focus them rapidly so that the quality of learning is never less than good. Each English lesson contains a variety of activities which engage pupils' interests and attention. 'Starters' involve whole-class reflection on what has been learned so far. Lessons feature regular plenaries using a flip chart at the front of the class, question and answer sessions and opportunities for pupils to move seats in order to compare and learn from each other's notes. Resources are simple, but varied. Summary sheets, extracts from speeches to annotate, and sequencing exercises are all utilised in turn, so that pupils expect to work from several related resources in a lesson. The pupils' work rate is high, and consolidated by the high expectations which the teacher directs to individuals, both in whole-class question-and-answer episodes and in coaching and prompting pupils as they work in groups. Teachers' questioning is well delineated to engage pupils at different levels of attainment and motivation, and higher-order questioning is applied to pupils in order to stretch their understanding and capacity to express it further. Mixed-gender groupings and the organisation of whole classes in mixed-ability groups are instrumental in raising boys' attainment by exposing them to a high quality experience of texts and discussion.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

89. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are good and used well across the curriculum. The quality of speaking and listening is good in most subjects, as are standards of writing. Discussion work is well developed in ICT, religious education, physical education, design and technology, geography and history. Teachers explain clearly and draw attention to subject-specialist words in music, science, physical education and history. Writing standards are well supported and developed by the quality of help given to pupils to arrange and express their thoughts. In ICT, for example, pupils are encouraged to think independently and organise their thoughts coherently with the help of prompt lists, while geography teachers give pupils helpful suggestions to enable them to structure their written accounts clearly. English lessons equip pupils with a firm structure to understand and use written English, and this is further sustained by other subjects, such as

modern foreign languages, which consolidate pupils' understanding of grammatical principles and practice. A school policy document shares practical teaching methods and suggestions designed to improve literacy, and this is used well across the subjects.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- Standards are above average overall.
- GCSE results in 2003 were above average overall and well above average in French.
- Some teachers do not always show pupils what to do next in order to improve further.

Commentary

90. Standards in the National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average for modern foreign languages overall. In French, they were below the national average and, in German, they were well above. GCSE examination results in 2003 were above the national average for modern foreign languages, well above in French and in line with the national average in German.
91. Standards of work are well above the national average in speaking and listening in Years 7 to 9. Standards in reading and writing are in line with the national average. In German, standards are higher in Years 7 to 9 than they are in French. Pupils achieve very well in both languages because of the department's strong focus on successful learning to which pupils respond well, making very good progress. The position reverses in Years 10 and 11 where standards are well above the national average in French and in line with the national average in German. Pupils make very rapid progress and they can use both languages with some fluency and confidence.
92. The main reason that pupils achieve very well is the very good teaching. The department has had a very strong focus on enhancing teaching and learning. Pupils are given many opportunities to experience different learning experiences, so that all pupils take part in tasks set. Almost all the teaching is in the foreign language which gives the pupils very good opportunities to hear the spoken language and to respond accurately. Teachers structure lessons so that pupils remain on task with interest. As a result, all pupils, including those with SEN, learn very well. Keen to be involved, they all participate and work hard, developing the confidence needed. Teachers set the kind of homework that extends pupils' learning. Assessment of the pupils' work varies, although it is never less than satisfactory. Some teachers do not always advise pupils on how to improve their work further. Teachers use ICT well, although pupils do not get sufficient chances to use computers.
93. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The team is committed to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and works consistently to use an agreed variety of styles. This, as well as good curriculum innovation, contributes much to the very good overall provision. Improvements since the last inspection have been significant: levels of attainment are higher; pupils of all abilities achieve well; and assessment practices are more effective, although not enough use is made of assessment information to help pupils to improve their performance further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising due to the improvements in teaching and learning.
- The leadership of the new head of department is very good.
- There is a talented, cohesive team of experienced and newer staff who support each other well.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils result in pupils' positive attitudes and enthusiasm that contribute to their effective learning.
- Teachers do not always set tasks which challenge the most able pupils or provide opportunities for independent learning; as a result, too few pupils achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
- The department makes a limited contribution to pupils' spiritual development and their achievement in citizenship.

Commentary

94. Standards in mathematics are improving and are currently average overall. GCSE examination results in 2003 improved from previous years but remained below the national average. Standards in the 2003 national tests in Year 9 were above national averages and well above those in similar schools (based on pupils' prior attainment), indicating that these pupils made very good progress. These results have been achieved because the department has focused clearly on raising standards through adopting the challenge, expectations and techniques of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy in mathematics.
95. The standards seen during the inspection are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. Whilst boys have shown slightly better achievement in recent examinations, girls' achievement was comparable to that of boys in the lessons seen. The vast majority of pupils, including those with SEN, are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' skills in computation and in applying taught mathematical algorithms are sound but their investigative skills, whilst generally satisfactory, are not so well developed.
96. Teaching is good overall. It is sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations, know their subject well and use a variety of activities to help the pupils develop their mathematical knowledge and skills. Overall, pupils learn well because they have good, and often very good, attitudes. Most pupils work hard and with enthusiasm because of the good relationships between them and their teachers. Pupils with SEN are supported well by their teachers and learning assistants so they are able to take part fully in lessons. Marking frequently indicates what is right and wrong but does not always indicate how pupils might improve their understanding. A recent good development involves teachers recording progress against sub-levels of the National Curriculum, thus enabling them and their pupils to measure progress more clearly and set more effective targets for improvement.
97. Sometimes the teaching, whilst satisfactory overall, does not sufficiently meet the needs of individual pupils and, in particular, does not sufficiently challenge the most able. Consequently, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades in the GCSE examinations is smaller than average. Teachers are successful in building up pupils' knowledge of facts and developing their skills and understanding but do not always encourage further active discussion and independent enquiry. The department has its own suite of computers and this provides good opportunities for pupils to use ICT. This good facility is not used enough, however, particularly to encourage investigative and independent learning.

98. The recently appointed head of department provides very good leadership and has established effective management systems. The teachers work very well together under her leadership. The development of good schemes of work has enabled the department to ensure a consistent approach to teaching across all the year groups, which has a very positive impact on the quality of learning and the standards achieved by the pupils. Given the improvements in standards, accommodation and the provision for ICT, the department has improved significantly since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

99. Pupils' competence in, and use of, mathematics across the curriculum is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils are competent in basic calculations and wider mathematical skills and are able to apply these successfully in other subjects as needed. For example, they interpret graphs in physical education, use formulae in spreadsheet in ICT and interpret data in science. Good work on developing cross-curricular approaches to mathematics in all subjects and training all staff has been undertaken but, as there is no co-ordinator, further developments are yet to be fully implemented and secured across all departments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations have improved.
- Assessment data are not used robustly enough to raise achievement.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Good leadership of the subject is bringing about improvements in provision.
- Accommodation is dreary; one laboratory is too small, especially for practical activities.

Commentary

100. Current standards are average. National test results for pupils in Year 9 have been rising steadily in line with the national trend in recent years; boys and girls achieved standards that were similar to their respective national averages. GCSE examination results in 2003 were average; both boys and girls achieved slightly better results overall in the other subjects that they studied. Based on test and examination results and also on current work, pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding are sound but, in the main, skills in making and testing hypotheses are relatively weaker because teaching does not routinely and constantly demand that pupils predict or pose their own questions to explore.
101. Teaching and learning are good overall. Although predominantly good, the quality of teaching and learning varies from satisfactory to very good. Very successful lessons include several features that help pupils to learn well. For example, teachers combine their very good subject expertise and effective use of resources, such as the cathode ray oscilloscope, to explain and demonstrate scientific ideas such as amplitude and frequency and their relationship with loudness and pitch. Such teaching excites pupils and makes learning of ideas interesting and easy to grasp. The pace of teaching is also often good and helps pupils to make good gains in knowledge and understanding. Sometimes, however, starter activities are not engaging enough to motivate pupils into scientific enquiry. In some lessons, there is not enough focus on learning and achievement and target setting is weak; pupils do not know their targets or how to improve their work and this impedes their progress. Pupils with SEN make good progress as a result of good teaching and learning. Learning is made easier for them as a result of well-planned and prepared practical activities that engage and interest them. Achievement is satisfactory for the few pupils for whom

English is an additional language, and could be better if teachers gained a greater understanding of how pupils acquire an additional language, and how they can be assisted in their learning.

102. The leadership of the subject is good. The introduction of modular science and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have led to improvements in standards. The introduction of the national strategy for science last year is having a positive impact on learning. Teachers work well as a team. They share their expertise, including that acquired through attending courses, and contribute effectively to make learning better for pupils. Management is satisfactory. Assessment data could be used more robustly in the department to improve learning and raising achievement. Overcrowding in one laboratory hinders learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well overall, attaining standards well above average by Year 11.
- Very good leadership and management ensure very good teaching.
- By Year 11, pupils are very confident when exploring solutions to problems; they do not need telling what to do.
- A very good range of courses meets pupils' differing needs very well.
- Pupils know exactly how well they are doing and what next to develop.
- Teaching of younger pupils focuses too much on teaching skills and not quite enough on using these skills.

Commentary

103. On entry to the school, pupils have achieved standards in line with those found nationally. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well, reaching standards above the national average. Pupils in Year 9 can use conditional statements in spreadsheets and present information well. Most pupils do not yet compare differing solutions to problems. By Year 11, standards of work are well above average and reflect very good achievement in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are very skilled in exploring solutions to problems. They understand clearly that problems may well have several solutions. They justify their choices in extensive detail. Overall, pupils achieve very well in ICT. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with SEN achieve at the same rate as other pupils.
104. Pupils achieve very well because they are very well taught in lessons. Teaching is good in the first three years and very good thereafter. In the first three years, a considerable proportion of lessons focus successfully on teaching specific skills. Consequently, many pupils depend upon their teacher to show them how to solve a problem. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 supports pupils in being able to form and then test their own ideas. Pupils respond very well to this teaching. When planning an advertising campaign for a mobile telephone company, pupils in Year 11 chose several packages to present their ideas without any suggestions from the teacher. Each pupil could say why they had made their choice and spoke persuasively about the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives. They develop levels of independence and self-assurance which will benefit them, not just in ICT. In all lessons, teachers know how well each pupil is doing and how well they should be doing. This means that pupils do not fall behind with their work. Pupils know exactly what they need to concentrate upon for further improvement. They are very well motivated and enjoy their work.

105. The subject is very well led and managed. A much wider range of courses than is normally found is provided in Years 10 and 11. Pupils benefit because they are able to choose the style of learning they prefer. Teachers new to the school, including those new to teaching, receive very good support. Pupils' achievement is very carefully monitored and this information is used very well. This is one reason why pupils do better in ICT than in most of their other subjects. The impressive rise in standards at all ages reflects the very considerable improvement which has been made since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

106. The school has a better than average provision of modern computers. However, because the school has only recently had this level of resource, the use of ICT is still being developed. In nearly all subjects, the use of ICT enhances learning. In physical education, pupils use video film to analyse their gymnastic performance. Good use was seen in a history lesson when pupils in Year 7 used a new interactive whiteboard to explore historical vocabulary and ideas. Pupils manipulate images in art and design when creating collage, and analyse data using spreadsheets in geography. Music is the only subject not making the necessary use of computers. Consequently, pupils do not compose as efficiently as they might and their work is not as well presented as it could be. Pupils have the appropriate levels of skills to be able to use computer packages in their lessons and teachers have a good and still developing knowledge of how ICT can aid their work.

107. One of the ways by which the school benefits from its links with local universities is by offering work placements to three students on 'sandwich' computing courses. These students spend one year at Swanwick Hall. They gain valuable experience, under the tuition of the school's network manager. Their skills lead to the school having a superb level of technical support. Technical problems are rectified very quickly so that teachers and pupils know that they can rely on computer resources. This technical knowledge also benefits other schools as these technicians regularly spend time in local primary schools, providing those schools with support.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are below average.
- Teaching is mostly good, especially of examination technique.
- There is some unsatisfactory non-specialist teaching.
- Arrangements for fieldwork are good.
- Marking is thorough with good diagnostic comments.
- Tasks are not well enough matched to the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Documentation, including revised schemes of work, has improved.

Commentary

108. The latest GCSE results, as in the last four years, were well below average. National Curriculum teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 have been well below average for the last two years.

109. Observed standards in Years 7 to 9 are average, an improvement since the previous inspection and better than the latest teacher assessments. This represents good achievement. Most pupils have good map reading skills and produce clear annotated maps and diagrams. They use simple statistical techniques to interpret data. They understand, for example, the effects of earthquakes in

densely populated areas. Less able pupils describe, rather than explain, these effects and are taxed by any requirement to write at length.

110. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in Years 10 and 11 is below average, but rather better than the latest GCSE results indicate. This difference is attributable in part to improved teaching. By Year 11, pupils extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. They search the Internet when researching projects. More able pupils produce good standard coursework, testing hypotheses by subjecting their fieldwork findings to statistical analysis. Less able pupils are unsure in their analysis of fieldwork data, but still produce accurate graphs. In relation to their prior attainment, achievement is satisfactory. There is no consistent pattern of boy or girl superiority in any year group.
111. Teaching and learning are good overall; they are just occasionally unsatisfactory and sometimes very good. Most lessons begin with well-planned activities that engage pupils' interest and help them to recall and consolidate earlier learning. Interest is sustained through a variety of activities, often requiring pupils to work collaboratively. Very good guidance in examination technique was observed in Year 11. There is a clear expectation that pupils will behave well and settle down quickly. Good classroom discipline ensures a calm atmosphere for learning. Pupils' response is overwhelmingly positive. In some comparatively less successful lessons, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils. Some non-specialist teaching displays insecure subject knowledge, resulting in confusion in pupils' understanding, thus affecting learning and standards adversely. Homework provides valuable reinforcement to classroom learning. Marking is thorough, informs pupils of their standards and advises them how to improve.
112. Current leadership of the subject is good, and management is satisfactory. In the absence of a subject leader, the head of faculty displays vision for the future of the subject and has overseen an effective revision of documentation. The school realises the need to make a good new appointment to head of subject if recent signs of improvement are to be sustained. Most of the points raised in the previous inspection have been addressed, but there is still insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Improvement in the department since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The introduction of a short course GCSE has provided increased access to the subject. Good display work demonstrates the high standards to which pupils can aspire.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE are rising, and the subject is increasingly popular.
- Very good teacher expertise, a range of strategies and good relationships promote pupils' high aspirations and good attitudes; pupils listen well and express opinions confidently.
- Support for literacy and some use of ICT in teaching encourage achievement, notably for boys.
- Pupils are made aware of the need to value different cultures through the balanced curriculum, especially in Years 8 to 11.
- The Year 7 humanities programme hinders the acquisition of historical skills, such as chronology and the investigation of historical sources.
- There is an effective assessment policy but assessment is not yet being used fully to identify gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge and to set targets for improvement.

Commentary

113. Standards in GCSE examinations are average. There has been an upward trend over the last few years and 2003 results were broadly in line with national averages, with girls exceeding average performance nationally and boys obtaining lower than average results. There are fewer A* grades than found nationally, however. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection were also in line with national averages, with coursework set, taught and marked well. Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 8, however, suffer from lack of knowledge and experience about how to investigate historical sources because not enough is done to promote this in Year 7. Their general knowledge about the modern period in history is weak.
114. Achievement is good. Almost all pupils equalled or exceeded their expected grades in 2003. Standards of work improve during the Years 7 to 9, demonstrating good achievement, but greater use could be made of assessment information to boost achievement further. Pupils with SEN make similar progress to their peers as a result of some classroom support and good differentiated resources. Good attitudes and behaviour and willingness to listen to each other and to teachers aid the achievement of all pupils.
115. Teaching and learning are good. Years 10 and 11 are taught and prepared well for external examination and coursework assessment. Groups have increased to three recently in both years, as a result of increasing popularity arising from the interesting curriculum and recognised good teaching. Pupils in Years 9 to 11 study a broad range of topics and respond well to the experiences of people in the past, and in different cultures, for example the holocaust, black people of the Americas and the American west. Pupils in all years are encouraged to write and explain their own opinions and, in the process, they develop well their literacy skills. Resources for teaching and learning are good. Teachers employ good strategies in the mixed-ability classes to promote discussion and develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.
116. Leadership and management are good overall. Skilful delegation of responsibility has led to good teamwork; good resources have been developed and teachers are encouraged to deploy a range of teaching practices to bring about improved learning for all groups of pupils. There has been useful innovation in the history curriculum, in the choice of interesting up-to-date world study units and longitudinal studies in the GCSE course, for example. Nevertheless, not enough is done to develop the gifted and talented (higher attaining) pupils to enable them to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**, as statutory requirements are not being met in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed.
- The department has well-developed schemes of work and lesson plans.
- The pupils have a very positive attitude to their learning.
- There is insufficient time to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

117. Standards attained by the pupils in the GCSE examination in 2003 were below the national average. The standard of work seen during the inspection in the GCSE examination group is broadly in line with what would be expected at this stage. The pupils have a sound knowledge and

understanding of many aspects of Islam and Hinduism, such as beliefs and customs. The standards of those not taking the GCSE course are below the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus because not enough time is allocated for religious education for this group, limiting the amount of material they can cover, though the quality of the work that they actually do is sound and sometimes good.

118. The standards reached by the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a sound basic knowledge and understanding of some world religions such as Christianity and Hinduism. Their written work is well developed and pupils can use specialist religious language in a meaningful way. The pupils have an adequate grasp of many concepts which are central to many religions, such as symbols and festivals. Across the years, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils who have SEN make satisfactory progress through the support given to them in class. More extension work would strengthen the progress of the more able pupils. Across all years, in the work that they are able to complete, the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory and often better.
119. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and some of it is very good; just occasionally it is unsatisfactory. All lessons are well prepared and the teachers for whom religious education is not their specialism receive detailed lesson plans and valuable support. The content of the lessons drawn from world religions is strong. Where the teaching is good or better, this content is put across with confidence and a brisk pace. Demands are high and so learning is strong. The satisfactory teaching is characterised by less certainty in the subject matter or by less effective management of the class. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, it is usually the result of a combination of both of these shortcomings. Pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject. The teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; pupils are given, and take, opportunities to reflect upon and discuss the meaning of so many aspects of life and what guides decision making. Homework is set and there is an effective assessment policy. ICT is used in some classes.
120. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The two specialist teachers are insufficient for the needs of the department, as a high percentage of teaching is done by teachers who do not have religious education as their specialist subject. These are often drawn from the humanities faculty and are supported well. The department has very good documentation and schemes of work. Statutory requirements are being met in Years 7, 8 and 9, but there is insufficient time to meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11. Statutory requirements are not being met in the sixth form either. The accommodation is good. Resources are unsatisfactory, particularly in respect of text books.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good achievement overall and to good standards of practical work.
- Good assessment practice enables pupils to know how well they are performing.
- Good practice is shared effectively in the department and with other schools.
- Target setting is used to bring about improvement in standards but the monitoring of progress is not rigorous enough in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision for control technology in Years 7 to 9 is very limited.

Commentary

121. Current standards by Year 9 are average overall. Attainment on entry is below average and pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including those with SEN. Examples of good work were seen in the Year 7 plastics project and in a Year 9 textiles hat project; in such work, pupils expressed their design ideas well, supported by a good range of research, and pupils' own evaluations were good. Where the work is weaker, this is mainly due to work lacking attention to detail and finish or to poorer presentational and drawing skills. Some use is made of ICT, including the Internet for research purposes. In Year 8, a good introduction has been made in using computer-aided design (CAD) packages when generating ideas.
122. Current standards by Year 11 are in line with the national average overall. In 2003, the GCSE results showed varied success across the different specialisms within design and technology. Food technology and graphics results were good but those for textiles and electronics were well below the national average, particularly as regards the proportion of A*-C grades. Pupils often exceed their predictions in this subject and achievement is generally good. In recent years, results have been close to the national average. In lessons, higher attaining pupils produce a good standard of work. Good examples of geometrical drawing were seen in graphics; another group demonstrated good research skills looking into nutritional values in a healthy eating project, and very precisely executed work in an educational toy project in textiles. Middle and lower attaining pupils sometimes find aspects of the work difficult and have difficulty completing coursework, despite the wide range of support strategies used. Their presentational skills are often weak and their research skills are limited.
123. In all years, pupils' literacy skills are usually good and they use technical vocabulary correctly. Their numeracy skills are satisfactory and ICT skills are generally good, including the use of CAD packages.
124. Teaching and learning are good overall, some is very good and some satisfactory. Pupils achieve well because teachers have good subject knowledge, plan effectively, make good use of resources, use a range of teaching styles and manage pupils well. There are, however, instances when lessons lack pace and challenge, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Pupils generally have a sound understanding of how well they are performing, and marking is usually helpful. Relationships are usually good, as are pupils' attitudes to the subject. Pupils respond well when suitably challenged and most show a willingness to learn. There are, nevertheless, some instances of distraction and disruption and pupils being off task when not directly supervised.
125. Leadership and management are good. Good practice is shared across the various specialisms within the department and with other schools in the area and this contributes well to the overall development of teaching. Target setting is used to raise pupils' achievement but monitoring of pupils' progress needs greater attention, particularly in Years 10 and 11, so that any underachievement is picked up very quickly. Good links with industry have been established and used as an additional learning experience. The school's technology college status has led to much improved resources, although those for control technology are still too limited. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and results in some practical classes having to be held outside school hours. All staff give time willingly during lunchtime and after school, and pupils often engage in activities leading to national awards as well as completing school-based tasks. Part-time teaching adversely affects continuity in some areas and technician support is not adequate for the subject. Display of pupils' work is of a good standard.
126. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Every pupil can access all areas of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and all pupils now take a technology subject in Years 10 and 11. Good teaching practice is shared. Safety issues have been addressed, although there are still no safety lines on floor areas around machinery in the workshops.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

127. Drama was sampled. Drama has recently had a new lease of life. The outstanding leadership of a new head of department has created a popular subject, as well as a highly regarded and popular extra-curricular activity. The result has been a large number of pupils opting to study drama for GCSE for the first time. Their standards are well above the national expectation. The attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is also above national expectations. Outstanding teaching leads to all pupils working very hard, responding with enthusiasm and producing very good work. They also think intelligently in terms of drama and can talk about their work with considerable depth. Many theatre and workshop visits are provided, which are followed by excellent feedback and analysis sessions.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved teaching strategies are leading to an upward trend in standards overall.
- A strong team spirit has developed during a long period of staffing difficulty.
- Relationships with pupils are good.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are below national averages.
- Opportunities for personal development through the multicultural and spiritual aspects of art are underdeveloped.
- End-of-lesson reviews are not generally used effectively to evaluate pupils' learning or to give pupils an opportunity to comment on each others' work.
- There is no specific programme for extending gifted and talented pupils.

Commentary

128. By Year 9, pupils reach standards that are broadly in line with the national average, having entered the school with below average standards overall. This represents a good achievement as the result of the good teaching, planning and organisation. Following a useful benchmarking exercise in Year 7, drawing and painting techniques, as well as knowledge and skills in ICT and three-dimensional media, are extended and improved in Years 8 and 9. The ICT exercise based on cubism in Year 8 is a good example of pupils' improved skills. Pupils also learn how to identify and interpret different forms of painting; the painting and graphics work in Year 9 is a good example of this. Homework is set and marked regularly, but diagnostic comments need to be more helpful. Pupils are informed of their levels and are familiar with the assessment procedures, but not always clear on how to improve their work. End of Year 9 assessments in 2003 showed further improvement on previous years.

129. Overall, pupils, by Year 11, are working at levels that are below the national average; pupils in 2003 generally did better in other subjects they studied at GCSE than in art and design. GCSE results in 2003, however, showed a further improvement on previous years, due to some good teaching and planning. Some pupils have developed good drawing techniques, as well as skill and sensitivity in handling a range of media. Overall, there is a shortage of well-finished and original work. Preparatory studies are insubstantial in many cases and there is little evidence of the influence of famous artists or other cultures in the development of pupils' work. The GCSE expressive arts course continues to be successfully managed and results are good. Pupils' attainment is better than their performance in other subjects that they take.

130. Teaching overall is good and, on occasion in Years 7 to 9, it is very good. Well-planned teaching strategies and schemes of work are helping to improve standards. These take account of the shortcomings in pupils' attainment mentioned previously because the department has identified

these as areas of improvement. Plenary sessions are still too few and fail to reflect on, or evaluate routinely, learning outcomes. Pupils with SEN are well integrated and make satisfactory progress. There is no planned provision for gifted and talented pupils. More can be done to improve standards through careful data analysis to determine underachievement; this should be linked to more effective target setting in Years 10 and 11 as a further aid to raising pupils' achievements. Attitudes and relationships are good. Many pupils respond to work with interest and enthusiasm. They behave well.

131. During the long-term absence of the head of department, art and design has been satisfactorily co-led and managed in the past 14 months by two experienced, long-serving specialists who have done their best to maintain provision and improve standards in difficult circumstances. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Art and design makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development but very little is planned to promote pupils' multicultural and spiritual awareness and appreciation.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving in all years.
- Pupils are achieving well in all years in response to good quality teaching.
- Curriculum planning meets the needs of all pupils.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The provision for instrumental tuition is inadequate.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped in all years.
- Accommodation is poor.

Commentary

132. Overall, standards achieved by Year 9, based on teacher assessments and in lessons and work seen, are in line with the national average. A small minority of pupils in Year 9 is working at above average levels in playing and performing. In GCSE examinations, results have fluctuated and entry numbers have been too low to compare with those nationally. However, in 2003, most entrants exceeded expectations. Numbers of pupils taking GCSE music have increased considerably in the present Years 10 and 11.
133. In Years 10 and 11, there is a considerable range of attainment. The current Year 10 GCSE group contains many pupils who are inexperienced players and performers; the shortage of experienced pupil musicians is having a negative impact on the overall quality of learning for this group. However, almost all pupils are gaining in confidence and achieving their expected targets in Years 10 and 11. They are able to evaluate their work and the work of others. Overall, compositions are satisfactory and show imagination and individuality.
134. Pupils in all years are currently achieving well. Most pupils arrive at the school with a limited knowledge of the elements of music and very little experience in playing and performing. They show enthusiasm and respond well in lessons. The three per cent of pupils who receive instrumental tuition are making good progress and are encouraged to use their instruments in lessons. This number is too low, however, to have a noticeable impact on raising of standards for all pupils. There are many good quality opportunities for pupils to improve their skills outside of lesson time.
135. Teaching and learning are good overall. One excellent lesson was seen in Year 7. Strengths lie in teachers' subject knowledge, lesson planning and thorough assessment systems. The pace in

lessons is purposeful and begins with starter activities that have a positive effect on the engagement of all pupils and of boys in particular. Teachers encourage pupils to share their work with the rest of the class. There is insufficient space for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to work in groups and refine their work when using instruments other than keyboards.

136. Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of department has revised schemes of work and introduced thorough assessment systems which enable pupils to have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve. The development of singing and ICT skills is built into schemes of work. Previous staffing difficulties have now been resolved. The effective teaching team meets regularly to evaluate new systems, and consideration is given, in planning, to the needs of the present population. Resources have improved with the exception of ICT. This is underdeveloped in all years because there is a lack of space and little or no access to computers and this impedes learning, particularly in composition. The inadequate provision for instrumental tuition is a barrier to learning, for example, in Year 10. Accommodation is poor and is having a negative impact on standards. The surrounding storage and practice areas, with the exception of one practice room, are damp and have no heat. Instruments and orchestral music are stored in these areas. The smell of dampness spreads to the main teaching room during the day and is most unpleasant.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good, producing positive attitudes and effective learning.
- Achievement is good and pupils work well.
- Leadership and management are very good, resulting in consistency of approach and a clear sense of purpose.
- The curriculum for pupils in Year 11 is enhanced considerably by the use of facilities off site.
- The limited indoor facilities on site restrict the range of activities that staff can offer.
- There is no formal system in place for identifying gifted and talented pupils.

Commentary

137. Teachers' assessment indicates that in 2003 the attainment of pupils by the end of Year 9 was above average. Standards in the present Year 9 are also above average, overall. Pupils are progressing well in games and gymnastics. Most are confident in their practical work. Under guidance, they are able to comment constructively on the performance of others.
138. Standards reached by pupils in Year 11 vary greatly and are average overall, although some individual pupils achieve above average standards in football, girls' football, athletics, cross-country running and cricket for both boys and girls. In theory work, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the safety issues in all aspects of sports activities but not all are able to articulate this clearly, orally or in writing. In the 2003 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades was slightly above average.
139. Pupils' achievement is good across the school. Standards on entry vary considerably. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have made good progress in a range of activities. The majority of pupils taking the GCSE examination, including several with SEN, also achieve well.
140. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is good. Teaching in GCSE examination classes is very good. In most lessons, practices that are carefully planned, progressive and challenging result in pupils making good progress. Class management is very effective. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently and in close co-operation with others. Relationships

between teachers and pupils are very positive and encourage learning at all levels. Expectations are high and this consistency of approach means that pupils know exactly what is expected of them, and they respond accordingly. Several pupils with SEN receive very good in-class support. Participation rates are good throughout the school.

141. Extra-curricular provision is good. Cycling and dance are proving to be very popular additional activities outside normal lessons. Standards achieved by some students in cycling are very high and the school has recently been designated as a cycling academy. The range of indoor activities that can be offered is constrained by the limitations of available facilities. This shortage of specialist indoor accommodation is also having a negative impact on the development of sports such as badminton.
142. Good improvement since the last inspection has seen the implementation of new schemes of work and the development of a more comprehensive assessment system. This includes an element of self-assessment and target setting. Curriculum changes have resulted in the introduction of the Junior Sports Leaders award in Year 10. Regular use of two local leisure centres allows pupils in Year 11 to experience a much wider range of practical activities than would otherwise be the case. The purpose-built theory room is making a positive contribution to pupils' learning in examination classes. The department has yet to formally identify gifted and talented pupils so that they can be set additional challenges in lessons where appropriate.
143. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work very well together and roles are clearly defined. There is a very good team spirit and a clear sense of common purpose. Examples of good practice are shared. Last year, the department received the Sportsmark award with distinction. The commitment to further improvement is evident.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

144. The business studies course was sampled and a well-designed lesson was seen in which pupils learnt about industrial disputes by taking on the roles of employers and trade union officials. Pupils were actively involved although not all understood fully the briefing notes they had been given. The classroom assistant present in this lesson made a good contribution by helping pupils with SEN make notes.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

145. A good and well-established life skills course is taught fortnightly to all pupils by senior staff, heads of year and some form tutors. This programme was sampled and was judged to support personal development well because teaching and learning are good. A wide range of strategies is used to enable pupils to grow, not only in understanding issues about personal, social and health education but also in developing their skills in forming and articulating opinions backed by convincing arguments. Pupils also learn to understand and respect the views of others. In a few lessons, pupils expressed their views rather too briefly or reluctantly.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has already done a lot of work on citizenship and some good elements are in place but overall provision does not meet requirements.
- A current audit of subject departments to show where they can or do contribute to citizenship has yet to be carried out, to build on the audit of two years ago.
- Systems for the monitoring, assessment and recording of citizenship are not yet fully in place.

Commentary

146. The school has already taken many steps in its programme of implementing citizenship into the curriculum but it still has much to do for it to be effective. The school has identified many subject areas and opportunities where they can make contributions to citizenship. These include English, history, religious education, art and design and ICT. This audit, however, was conducted two years ago and is incomplete.
147. During the inspection, opportunities, when they arose in the lessons, were not generally used to their best advantage to promote pupils' learning in citizenship. Teachers frequently failed to draw to the attention of pupils those aspects of what they were learning which were relevant to the notion of citizenship; many pupils seem unaware that citizenship is important. Much work has been done by the school on the life skills programme in order to equip its pupils for life in and beyond the school. Many of the themes relate to citizenship but the potential of the course to contribute to citizenship is not being realised, mainly because, as in other subjects and courses, teaching does not overtly draw out these contributions to raise pupils' awareness of them.
148. Pupils, when questioned about their knowledge and understanding of citizenship, are often uncertain and show limited awareness of its meaning and if and when they have received teaching about it. It is not yet possible to make judgements about the pupils' standard of attainment and achievement in relation to citizenship. It is similarly not possible to make judgements about the teaching of citizenship seen during the inspection as it was often insufficiently identifiable. In view of this, overall provision is unsatisfactory.
149. The leadership of citizenship is satisfactory because there is a clear vision as to how the subject should be developed. The management of citizenship is unsatisfactory, as systems which would make the provision effective are not yet in place. These include a scheme of work which more clearly identifies how the National Curriculum for citizenship is to be covered, monitoring of the teaching of citizenship and suitable assessment and reporting arrangements.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight 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 tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 and for which national comparative data are available.

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	8	87.5	90.0	37.5	42.7	33.8	39.0
Biology	7	42.9	81.6	0.0	33.2	11.4	33.2
Business studies	10	83.3	89.1	33.3	31.7	35.0	24.1
English literature	10	90.0	94.4	0.0	37.9	32.0	38.9
General studies	18	50.0	78.6	11.1	25.7	18.3	30.0
Geography	9	66.7	88.3	0.0	36.4	16.7	36.3
Information and communication technology	15	60.0	78.2	20.0	20.6	21.3	28.5
Mathematics	14	14.3	74.2	0.0	34.3	3.6	31.3
Other social studies	19	47.4	83.2	5.3	32.5	12.6	33.6
Religious education	5	40.0	83.7	0.0	33.6	10.0	33.8
Sports / physical education studies	10	80.0	88.2	20.0	27.7	28.0	33.8

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	87.5	96.1	25.0	48.7	67.5	85.1
Biology	6	67.7	91.6	33.3	36.3	53.3	74.1
Business studies	8	100.0	96.4	37.5	32.8	85.0	76.5
Chemistry	5	80.0	94.0	40.0	45.9	68.0	81.1
English literature	36	97.2	98.5	50.0	43.7	85.6	84.3
General studies	44	93.2	90.1	29.5	29.1	69.1	69.3
Geography	13	100.0	97.1	23.1	40.5	76.9	80.9
Health and social care	15	93.3	90.1	40.0	16.3	72.0	62.5
History	10	100.0	97.1	20.0	41.0	72.0	81.2
Information and communication technology	14	100.0	89.1	28.6	22.4	71.4	64.1
Leisure and recreation	6	100.0	86.9	0.0	12.7	53.3	58.3
Mathematics	13	84.6	93.3	38.5	52.2	72.3	84.7
Other social studies	10	100.0	94.3	40.0	38.9	76.0	77.7
Physics	7	85.7	92.8	28.6	42.8	68.6	78.6
Religious studies	17	88.2	96.3	41.2	44.0	76.5	82.2
Sports / physical education studies	11	100.0	95.4	9.1	29.5	56.4	73.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Modern foreign languages were sampled

Students' standards of work in the lessons seen were average overall. The numbers entered for AS- and A-level examinations were too small to make any significant comparisons with the national averages in French and German. Students make good progress. Teaching is good overall and includes some excellent teaching in German.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching employs a good mixture of methods to promote mature understanding and reflection through discussion, practical acting and varied written exercises in class.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is used well to challenge and prompt students and to engage their curiosity and enthusiasm.
- Students' learning is very good and includes thoughtful, original and autonomous thinking as a result of the teachers' very high expectations.
- Very poor library provision limits the range of students' experiences required by the course.

Commentary

150. Results in A-level English literature in 2002 were in line with the national average overall and above average for those reaching higher grades (A or B). Girls did better than boys in both respects. The A-level results in 2003 remained stable overall, but the proportion gaining higher grades declined. Results in AS-level examinations were above average in 2002 and they improved in 2003.
151. Based on current work, students' standards in both the AS-level and A-level courses are above average. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve very well because teachers organise lessons to keep students' minds active, to question what they are told and to learn from each other's ideas. Achievement is very good, both in the rapidity with which students master difficult texts and the skill they develop to build up and express their own ideas. This is particularly encouraged by the teachers' marking methods, where students are given good advice on the strength of their work and how to improve further.
152. Teachers ensure that students are constantly challenged to think independently and work together in teams. As a result, students demonstrate enjoyment and enthusiasm. In Year 12, for example, they acquire a rapid, thorough understanding of the motivation of characters in a play such as 'Much Ado about Nothing'. They produce well-structured assignments with detailed reference to the text which reflect the habits of independent thought so well inculcated in class by teachers. In Year 13, students develop mature insights into the themes, imagery and distinctive dramatic techniques used in plays such as John Webster's 'The Duchess of Malfi'. In the process, they rise fully to the teachers' expectations for them to put forward thoughtful, autonomous and original ideas of their own, and illustrate them with good references to what they have read. This is underpinned by the teachers' judicious promotion of varied classroom activities, including discussion, practical acting and brief written exercises. Work on poetry further embodies the results of high-quality, well-informed teaching. Here, students show great maturity as they reflect on William Blake's contemporary world, for example, while appreciating his unique visionary insights.

153. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers' infectious enthusiasm for their subject alone is often enough to inspire students' enthusiasm and involvement. Teachers deploy their excellent subject knowledge within a stimulating, planned variety of activities. They have the knack of arousing students' curiosity and interest in challenging texts, while stretching them intellectually and making sure that their achievement is very good in each lesson and over time. The quality and quantity of reference books available in the library is very poor. Students' study skills and familiarity with the range of perspectives required by the course are limited as a result.
154. Very good leadership and management of the subject have led to a consistently high quality of teaching which engages, excites and challenges students to do their best. Examination results have been maintained at above average levels in most years since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

155. As in the main school, standards of literacy are good across the curriculum and are promoted well in the sixth form through a range of strategies. Students use their literacy skills well in presentations, in their writing and also in their speaking. A good example of this was seen in a Year 12 physics lesson in which students took on the role of an energy company representative to present arguments for the use of their particular form of energy. The teaching and learning skills promoted by the school as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy are applied with equally good effect in the sixth form to develop students' skills in literacy and also their skills as learners generally.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are in line with national averages and improving.
- Good teaching enables students to learn well.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of teachers encourage good student attitudes and active participation in lessons.
- Students are not given enough opportunity to tackle problems independently or collectively in order to strengthen their research skills and their ability to discover how to learn.

Commentary

156. Results in A-level examinations in 2002 were below average. In 2003, results were much better with 93 per cent achieving a pass grade and 40 per cent achieving grades A or B and are broadly in line with the national averages in 2002. Results in AS-level examinations were well below average in 2002 but recent results show an upward trend, although a small number of students did not achieve their predicted grades.
157. Students currently following mathematics courses are working at average standards and are achieving well. Standards of work seen and teachers' assessments indicate that AS-level students are on track to achieve results at least in line with their prior attainment at GCSE, and A-level results should be comparable with those of 2003. Achievement is good overall as students achieve not only what could be expected given their GCSE grades, but sometimes better. Girls are now well represented and many are achieving the highest grades. Students from minority ethnic groups also achieve well.
158. Students learn successfully because teaching is good. Teachers know the A-level material very well, are experienced in teaching at this level and match work to meet the needs of the students. Day-to-day assessment of students' work is good and thorough and this helps them to understand

the more difficult topics. Students appreciate the support they have received in preparation for starting the course and the overall quality of teaching, advice and guidance they receive. They show mature attitudes to learning and support each other well, as in a Year 12 lesson on statistics, where students were teaching each other how to use statistical functions on the calculator, enabling all to complete a long and involved problem. Teachers are successful in building up students' knowledge of facts and developing their skills and understanding, taking account of the students' wide range of prior knowledge. Teaching does not always, however, provide for sufficient active collaborative research and independent enquiry. The department has its own computer suite and, whilst this is used reasonably well, it could be further used to encourage investigative and independent learning.

159. All teachers are enthusiastic about their teaching and this, combined with good levels of motivation from students, promotes good learning. Some of the most able students are very confident in their mathematics and are very fluent in explaining concepts and topics. Students who start the course with average GCSE results are supported well by sensitive and well-paced lessons, which enable them to access the more difficult topics and achieve well in relation to their prior achievement.
160. The department is very well led and successfully managed by the recently appointed head of mathematics. The work of the team of teachers who contribute to A-level work is well co-ordinated and is being developed and improved. The range of courses offered in the department is satisfactory and the department provides courses for students from other local schools.

Mathematics across the curriculum

161. Overall, students' mathematical skills are at least satisfactory and are sufficient to allow them to follow the demands of the courses they follow. The majority of students studying in the sixth form has secured a pass at GCSE grade C or above, which gives them access to the range of mathematics required by the subjects they study. Students without a higher grade in GCSE mathematics usefully follow an effective course after school aimed at improving their GCSE grade. A good feature of the school's continuing professional development programme is that members of the school's support staff are attending the same course in order to gain a mathematics qualification.

SCIENCE

The main focus was on biology. Chemistry was sampled. Chemistry results have remained well below average during the recent years. Results of 2003 were similar to those of 2002, but cannot be compared with the national average, as the comparative data is not yet available. The school data shows that the chemistry results in Year 12 are expected to be above average. One chemistry lesson was observed. The lesson had several strengths, including: expert explanations of scientific ideas such as covalent and ionic bonding within molecules; brisk pace; engaging interactions with students and a good focus on raising students' awareness of how examination papers are marked. The checking of learning and the subsequent adjustments to teaching could be better.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Homework and independent study are not used effectively enough to release time for more productive learning in lessons.
- ICT is not used enough for teaching and learning.
- Attitudes of students towards learning are very positive.

Commentary

162. Results in A-level biology in recent years, including 2002, have been below, and mostly well below, the national averages. However, recent improvements in students' standards on entry to the course and in teaching and learning have started to have a positive impact on standards. Examinations results in 2003 were much better than the results in 2002 (comparative figures are not yet available for 2003).
163. Current standards are getting close to the national average of 2002. Students' rising standards are evident from their knowledge and understanding of structure and functioning of muscles and epidemiology of influenza, for example. The number of students is too small to comment on the relative performance of male and female students.
164. Teaching is good and leads to good learning. Students' use their literacy skills well and demonstrate very good motivation to learn. Particular strengths in teaching are teachers' use of their very good subject knowledge and expertise in explaining scientific ideas such as those relating to the structure and functioning of the eye, the heart and that of the striated muscle. Teaching is effective in keeping students well informed of the examination marking system. This develops students' awareness of how to make discriminate use of their knowledge and understanding of the subject for improving their performance in the examination. Assessment and support are also effective in helping students to make progress. However, teachers do not use homework and independent study effectively enough in order to release time for more dynamic and productive teaching in lessons. Opportunities are missed to use ICT in order to enliven learning. Other resources are used effectively.
165. Leadership of the subject is good. The biology team works well together. The curriculum is good and further development of the scheme of work is planned. Provision for teachers' in-service training is good. This has made a positive contribution to the quality of provision for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on the A-level course. The Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) course was sampled. In a very good AVCE lesson, students developed their evaluation skills as well as their confidence to speak to an audience as they assessed electronic presentations they had prepared about how different companies used computers.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn very well because of their high levels of independence and excellent attitudes.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and how to teach it.
- An excellent range of courses allows students to choose one which meets their preferences.
- Few female students take ICT.

Commentary

166. Results in 2002 examinations were above average at A-level and average at AS-level. In both Year 12 and Year 13, the current standard of work is above average. Students have good technical skills. For example, they can construct a complex database to meet the needs of a customer. They also have detailed knowledge of the social effects of ICT, such as potential health risks and how these might be minimised. The standards attained represent very good achievement. Too few female students take the course for any meaningful comparison to be made between the attainment of male and female students.
167. Students' very good learning is underpinned by the very good teaching they receive. Teachers have a very thorough knowledge of the subject matter. They know the most effective way in which to teach each topic. Teachers also have very detailed knowledge of examination requirements and use this knowledge expertly to assist each student individually. Teachers know how each student prefers to learn so that students are guided in differing ways. Of key importance is the fact that teachers recognise that learning is most effective when students explore problems. A group of Year 13 students found a solution to a problem with their databases because the teacher structured a series of activities so that, firstly, they appreciated the problem they had and then, step by step, produced solutions. Through this approach, students realise that there is rarely an ideal or unique way in which to solve a problem. Students develop their evaluative skills so that they can identify the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Their highly-developed skills of decision making have the potential to serve them far beyond their work with computers. This high level of maturity is reinforced by excellent attitudes and very purposeful work in groups.
168. The A-level course is one of a number of ICT courses offered in the sixth form. This range of courses has been very well chosen to cater for those requiring either a more practical or a more theoretical approach. Courses are offered at differing levels. One consequence of this is that some students say they would not have continued their education beyond the age of 16 had a certain course not been offered by the school. This is one manifestation of the very good leadership and management of the subject and is also evidence of the very good improvement made since the previous inspection. Another telling example is the way in which courses are changed when more appropriate ones become available. The head of the subject monitors individual students and groups very carefully.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

169. ICT is used well in many subjects to help students to learn. One very good example was seen in a physics lesson in which students took on the role of a representative of an energy company, making an electronic presentation to customers. In doing so, students developed an understanding of energy sources, gained experience in making public presentations and practised their computer skills. In English, students are advised how they might efficiently search the Internet for the extensive research involved in the subject. Students have more than adequate ICT skills for the tasks with which they are presented across the curriculum in the sixth form.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history. Geography and religious education were sampled. In religious education, teaching is excellent and is characterised by a dynamic style which places considerable demands on the students. Strong confidence in the subject matter and very effective preparation combine to ensure that learning and achievement are both very good. In geography, students' learning is secure and resources are used well but teaching does not always demand that students pose questions and take initiative. Geography fieldwork is followed up well with teaching providing good help for individual students.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to students' enthusiasm and commitment and the growing popularity of AS- and A-level.
- Good curriculum breadth, balance and innovation prepare students well for higher education and informed world citizenship.
- Assessment is not yet being used to full effect to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each student's skills and understanding.
- Planned use of independent study outside lessons is not incorporated frequently enough into the courses to develop students as active and confident learners.

Commentary

170. A-level examination results in 2002 were below the national average. Based on current work seen in lessons, standards are average. Girls' performance is better than that of boys overall. Achievement is good because students are well prepared in both Year 12 and Year 13 with structured notes in each unit studied. Students are given good opportunities to develop their skills in analysing evidence, mounting convincing arguments and in writing.
171. In Year 12, students improved their capacity to argue articulately about the role of Martin Luther King in the civil rights struggle in the USA, for example. They formed their own clear opinions, gathered evidence effectively in independent preparation and discussed their own and opposing views in groups, listening attentively to each other and to the teacher and drawing up their own plan for extended writing on the subject. All were able to understand that there is a range of judgements to be made about how far the civil rights movement depended on individual charisma.
172. An innovative teaching unit in Year 13 used students' awareness of the collapse of communism and issues like current US hostility to North Korea to focus on the cold war, developing skills in analysis, examining conflicting evidence and detecting bias, including the use of propaganda on both sides of the political divide. Students are given breadth of knowledge including British history, alongside US, European and world developments in the modern period.
173. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and considerable expertise in planning lessons and encouraging and engaging students. Careful planning avoids overloading the students, whilst maintaining pace and challenge, and gives opportunity to all students to achieve their potential. Assessment is generally sound but teachers do not identify clearly enough, and target, the specific skills each student needs to develop from an early stage in the course. The teachers' appropriate focus on examination preparation is aimed to give students a greater understanding of the examination assessment criteria with which some students have difficulty.

174. Leadership and management are both good with a clear commitment to raising further students' standards and achievements. Staff generally provide excellent role models for other teachers and students. Schemes of work are well organised and include a good range of activities, including the use of ICT for presentations by students and teachers. The involvement of history teachers in the Training School Initiative has made a good contribution to the development of teaching and learning. Students are enthusiastic for the subject, talk maturely about how good teaching helps them to learn, and some seriously consider teaching as their own career.
175. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The concentration on developing teaching, learning and the curriculum has led to the recent growth in popularity of GCSE and subsequently of AS- and A-level.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Food technology and product design AS-level were sampled and some good and very good teaching and learning were observed. In the food technology lesson, standards were average. Students were able to work independently and in groups and good oral contributions were made by all students. They made good gains in learning when looking at the properties of ingredients and the effects of any changes made. In the product design lesson, standards were above average overall. Students increased their learning considerably through experiencing a hands-on approach when looking at design features of a modern vacuum cleaner.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Very good teacher/student relationships encourage learning and result in the students' excellent attitudes.
- Students' achievement is good.
- Teachers and students make good use of ICT to support learning.
- Students do not have the opportunity to take accredited coaching or refereeing courses.

Commentary

176. A-level examination results in 2002 were well below average but the AS-level results were above average. In the 2003 A-level examination, 14 of the 16 students entered gained pass grades with seven obtaining the higher A-B grades. Whilst the AS-level results in 2003 were not as high, they were broadly in line with the teachers' expectations. Analysis by the department shows that students achieved well in examinations overall.
177. Standards of attainment among students currently in Years 12 and 13 are at least average overall and, in some cases, are well above average in both year groups. The ability range is wide but most students are achieving well. Teachers have already identified a small number who are underachieving and they are taking steps to remedy this through careful and consistent monitoring. Students' folders are well organised and show clearly that the requirements of the syllabus are being met. Although it was not possible to observe any practical lessons, teachers' records indicate that students have a good range of skills in a variety of activities including athletics, football, gymnastics, tennis, swimming and sailing.

178. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Most students are confident in talking about different aspects of their work. Most are eager to answer questions and they do so confidently and accurately, displaying a good depth of knowledge and understanding. One or two students remain very passive in class and are content to allow others to contribute to discussions. Teachers' planning is thorough, lesson objectives are made clear and teachers' subject expertise is very good. Topics are frequently introduced in an imaginative and creative way. This was evident, for example, in lessons on biomechanics in Year 13 and the cardiac control centre in Year 12. Relationships are particularly cordial and students respond very positively to the teachers' good-humoured but carefully-structured approach. Marking of written work provides helpful advice on how students can improve. Students value the contribution made by their teachers. Most apply themselves conscientiously to their studies. In some lessons, students make good use of ICT to improve their learning, including PowerPoint presentations. The increased availability of ICT, and its use, has resulted directly from the school acquiring technology college status.
179. Leadership and management are very good. Resources are used and managed very well. The department is outstanding in the way it creates effective teamwork. The provision of a permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the syllabus contributes positively to the standards being achieved. All students in Years 12 and 13 take part in physical education at different times during the year as part of the extension studies programme. At present, however, there are no opportunities provided for them to gain accreditation in coaching, umpiring or similar related courses.

BUSINESS

Combined advanced economics and business studies

Provision in the combined economics and business studies course is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The department arranges conferences for students of economics and business in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding.
- The students work very hard.
- Greater use could be made of ICT by the students in the classroom.

Commentary

180. In 2002, AS- and A-level results were both well above the national average. Results in 2003 were good but not quite as high as those in 2002. There is an upward trend in the numbers taking the economics/business course.
181. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. The students apply themselves well to their studies and so their written classwork and coursework are of a good quality. The students can talk meaningfully about many aspects of economics and business, such as competitiveness and efficiency. There is scope for students to make greater use of ICT in their lessons. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Extension work built into many units of study enables the more able students to progress well. Overall, the achievement of the students is good and sometimes very good, as much of the work encourages them to develop their own ideas. They are also expected to think in a critical way.

182. The teaching is very good. All lessons are well planned and an effective range of methodologies is used to teach the subject matter. The topics are presented with confidence because the teachers have very good subject knowledge. The students' very good learning is supplemented by their participation in conferences which have business and economics as their theme. This is a particularly valuable part of their learning and it is part of the philosophy of the teaching to ground the learning firmly in the reality of the economic and business world. Coursework is similarly orientated to the practicalities of business rather than just the theory of how things work. Displays in the teaching rooms are changed every week to reflect this insistence on an up-to-date awareness. Visits also broaden students' experience. The teaching makes significant demands on the students, both in terms of the brisk pace of the lessons and the level at which students are expected to work. As a result, much ground is covered in the time available. Consequently, the achievement of the students is good and sometimes very good. The students respond positively to this approach and have mature and sensible attitudes in the classroom. They are attentive and well behaved. The subject makes a very good contribution to the reinforcement of students' numeracy skills.

183. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The teachers are well qualified and regularly update their own skills and knowledge. The resources are very good as the department has a good range of text books and access to laptop computers. The accommodation is satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The AVCE in health and social care was the focus subject but the CACHE Diploma in childcare and education was also sampled. Both of these courses are taught at Alfreton Further Education Centre (AFEC) and contribute to the partnership arrangement with Mortimer Wilson School. Students remain members of their own institution.

CACHE Diploma in child care and education

This programme was sampled. Teaching was good as a result of careful and thoughtful lesson planning and the close links made with the student placements. Students were confident in their approach to the difficult subject of child abuse. The topic was handled with sensitivity and the members of the mixed-age group helped each other with different perspectives and insights. The teacher stressed the importance of a balanced approach to each possible case. The session was handled sensitively.

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Good leadership ensures that the experienced teaching team brings relevant expertise to the teaching.
- Enthusiastic students engage fully with the programme.
- Some students' portfolios are excellent but others lack critical analysis.
- Students' research techniques are not generally sufficiently well developed.

Commentary

184. Standards overall are above average. Students achieve well, given the grades they obtained at GCSE. Results in the examinations in 2002 were above average overall and well above average for those gaining A/B grades. The results for 2003 were lower, with most students gaining grades in the C/D band.
185. There are currently eight students in Year 12, five from Swanwick Hall School, and in Year 13 there are six students, all from Swanwick Hall. Given the relatively small numbers, the teaching group has been combined and this is both educationally feasible and efficient.
186. In the lessons and work seen, standards are currently above average. Students demonstrate clearly a good grasp of the concepts that are used in the different social services. In one session, students were encouraged to consider alternative forms of communication that could be used with different clients. Some portfolios are well written and material is well presented and shows an excellent grasp of both theory and its application. Weaker presentations indicate that students have a basic grasp of the concepts but are not able to apply sufficient critical analysis to a given topic. Most students find the research unit difficult. Many portfolios provide useful charts and statistics on the chosen topic but present only a limited range of hypotheses and little evaluation of the research methods used.
187. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well qualified and have worked together for some time as an effective team. Sessions are well organised with clear objectives. Students are fully informed of the work that needs to be completed, with what evidence and to what deadline. Time is allocated for students to work on their own and develop their skills in independent work. Good tutorial support is available to individual students. Suitable use is made of the students' own information about the range of social services and care settings. Relationships are very good and students have considerable confidence in their teachers. Marking is appropriate and students receive good guidance on ways in which work could be improved.
188. Curriculum leadership and management are good, with staff contributing from the different partner institutions. Teachers work closely together and hold regular meetings in the informal setting of the centre to monitor students' progress. Close contact with subject developments are maintained and shared within the team. Resources are appropriate, with all students having a text book and access to ICT facilities and a small library.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

A good programme of sixth-form extension studies is provided and includes physical education but not religious education. The programme also offers additional help with key skills where required, and opportunities to enter A-level general studies. Results in general studies A-level were average in 2002.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' and students' achievement	3	3
Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	3
Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well pupils and students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' and students' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' and students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils and students	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' and students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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