

PETERLEE ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Peterlee

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114327

Headteacher: Mrs M J Crossley

Lead inspector: Mr C Sander

Dates of inspection: 29th September – 3rd October 2003

Inspection number: 259230

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	906
School address:	Westway Peterlee
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Raine
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Peterlee St Bede's RC Comprehensive School for boys and girls is of average size with a recently rising roll. Not all families take up their entitlement to free school meals. The average number so recorded does not reflect accurately the very significant local social disadvantage. Less than one per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average with the girls well ahead of the boys. The school has received two National Achievement Awards, in 2001 and 2002. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, as well as those with statements, is broadly average. Nearly all the pupils are white British. The school is part of a cluster of six local secondary schools in the Eastington district of East Durham that shares sixth-form provision, a member of the Newcastle and Hexham diocesan network of Catholic schools and a member of the Peterlee Education Action Zone (EAZ). The newly established Byron College on the school's site is smaller than other sixth forms nationally. Most of the current students were previously members of this school in Year 11.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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27351	M Stanton	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology (post 16)
3827	J Knight	Team inspector	Geography Geography (post 16)
15971	M Pye	Team inspector	History History (post 16)
14851	G Laws	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	M Young	Team inspector	Music
13217	M Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

In this effective, well-led school achievement is now satisfactory. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are rising because teaching is getting better. Both are now satisfactory. Most pupils work hard, particularly the girls. The care provided is good. The proportion of pupils who continue at the school beyond the age of 16 is below average. The school's below average budget and above average staffing costs leave little to spare for other things. It uses its funds carefully to provide satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership of the headteacher – she has put her finger on what needs to be done.
- The good leadership and management of pupils' care – attendance is up significantly and nearly all enjoy coming to school.
- The commitment of the leadership group contributes well to the school's vision and values but particular weaknesses in some aspects of management occasionally reduce the impact on performance.
- The girls' achievement is good but some of the boys do not achieve as much as they should.
- Most pupils' learning is satisfactory but they are not clear enough about what they need to do to make progress.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) and, in Years 7 to 9, in French. Standards in music at Year 9 are lower than those expected nationally.
- Relationships across the school are very good.
- The governors are supportive but do not always ask the hard questions that will challenge the school to improve further and check that statutory requirements are fully met.

Improvement is now starting to accelerate. It has been good in attendance, satisfactory in standards and results and good in those subjects that were unsatisfactory last time the school was inspected. The results of some of the boys remain the biggest barrier to further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are in line with those that pupils are expected to reach in Year 9, Year 11 and in the sixth form. At all stages, they are higher than the most recent results. Where pupils know the standard of their work and how to make it better, progress is invariably good. The biggest barriers to progress are the attitudes and performance of some of the boys, the narrow range of pupils' thinking skills and weaknesses in the organisation of written work, particularly by many less competent pupils. GCSE results have levelled off over the last three years after a period of improvement. Breaking through to the national average presents a significant challenge. Standards on entry and in lessons this year are rising. That breakthrough is now within the school's grasp.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Attendance is good. Most pupils work hard, listening well in lessons and get on well with each other. Many are very sensitive to the feelings of others. Behaviour is satisfactory. A minority of less competent boys sometimes misbehave in lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The things that boost performance are the teachers' good subject knowledge, their skilful teaching of more competent pupils and the good relationships they build in many lessons. The main barriers to raising achievement are teaching methods that sometimes do not match the needs of all pupils, particularly the less competent, some unsatisfactory aspects of the curriculum 14 to 19, the evaluation of learning and some aspects of assessment. The unsatisfactory use of ICT in lessons does not fully meet statutory requirements.

The quality of care is good. Teachers have their pupils' best interests at heart. Expectations are good. The school works hard to involve parents. Their response is satisfactory but only half of the parents regularly attend consultation evenings. There are good networks with other schools and agencies. These are particularly helpful when pupils join the school in Year 7. The impact of links with the local community on achievement and personal development is not strong enough.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the school is good. The headteacher and her highly committed leadership group have defined well the priorities for improvement. Decisive action has been taken on some staffing issues. Management is satisfactory. The description of management roles and some of the objectives of the development plan do not define, with enough sharpness, their intended impact on standards of achievement and the quality of learning across the school. Some management activities, particularly those involving monitoring, are regular but not rigorous enough. Governance is unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are not fully met. Governors are supportive of the school and representative of its community.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are pleased with what the school provides and how well their children do. The pupils shared those views. Most feel they can approach someone at the school when they have a concern or a question.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- **Raise** the boys' achievement.
- **Extend** the range of pupils' thinking skills and their use in lessons.
- **Raise** achievement in ICT, in French at Stage 3 and standards in music.
- **Manage** more rigorously the analysis and diagnosis of barriers to improvement, progress and achievement.
- **Use** assessment information so that all pupils know the standard at which they are working and what they need to do next to improve it.
- **Provide** a well-resourced 14 to 19 curriculum that meets fully the aspirations, needs and future plans of all pupils.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- **Plan and monitor** provision for ICT across the school.
- **Provide** the resources and opportunities for pupils to do computer-aided designing (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) in design and technology.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. The cost-effectiveness is unsatisfactory because there are too many small teaching groups. This stems in part from the need to offer a sufficient range of courses at the launch of the new college. Results are well below average. Standards of work this term are much higher and similar to those usually found nationally. The female students do better. Most students make sound progress. Achievement is satisfactory because most respond well to the good teaching. Attendance and punctuality are good. Students' welfare is well managed. Some courses are not best suited to the prior attainment and competencies of the students. Overall leadership in the sixth form is satisfactory. The head of sixth form provides good day-to-day leadership. Management is satisfactory but some administrative aspects are inefficient. Accommodation and resources are good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Recent examination results are well below average but standards in lessons this year are broadly similar to those usually found nationally.
- Female students achieve well in academic courses and much better than the males.
- Nearly all students obtain a grade in their GCE courses but the proportion who obtain the higher grades (A-B) is well below the national average.
- Good teaching motivates many students because they value highly the expert subject knowledge of their teachers.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all students because there is no provision for key skills.
- The management of assessment data has limited impact on raising achievement.
- There is insufficient joint planning with other local further education institutions for a 14 to 19 curriculum.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Eight subjects were inspected in detail. The evaluation of provision in other subjects is given below. The teaching of most other subjects was also sampled.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English literature	Good. Teaching, learning, leadership and management are good. Achievement is satisfactory. The proportion of students who obtain the highest grades (A-B) is low.
Mathematics	Good. Results were above average in 2002. Teaching and learning are good. Standards in work seen are higher than those usually found nationally. There is very little use of ICT to help teaching and learning.
Geography	Good. Standards are improving as a result of better planning and are now about average. Teaching and learning are good overall. Leadership and management are good.
History	Good. Achievement is good. Results are close to the national average. Teaching is good. Subject knowledge is very good. Leadership and management are good.
Psychology	Good. Teaching and achievement, especially in Year 12, are good. There is a limited access to specialist texts and this affects learning adversely. Good management is improving the use of performance data to monitor good progress.

Sociology	Satisfactory. Standards of work seen are in line with national averages. Achievement is satisfactory. Attitudes are good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships with students are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Engineering	Good. The AVCE Level 3 course is very well taught with good involvement also of professional engineers. There are insufficient opportunities to use computer-aided design and manufacture.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Results in examinations and standards of work seen are below average in GNVQ Level 2 and AVCE Level 3 courses. Teaching and learning in lessons are good. Progress in lessons is good but the coursework of some less competent students is weak. Leadership and management are satisfactory in an improving department.

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

The advice, guidance and support given to students are **good**. Close attention is paid to their care, welfare, health and safety. Students are treated with the respect appropriate to their age and maturity. The recent innovative sixth-form induction course for Year 12 students helped most students settle in well to the new college. The new accommodation has created teaching and other areas which are conducive to effective learning and supportive of social activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and the management of the sixth form are **satisfactory**. The head of sixth form gives good leadership to a caring team of tutors, providing a good role model. Insufficient use is made of ICT to record analyse and use data.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form

- Being a member of the sixth form.
- Teachers who treat them fairly and are very approachable.
- Teaching that is challenging and demanding.
- Help and encouragement with their studies.
- Choice of course suiting their abilities.

What they feel could be improved

- More adults who know them well.*
- The response by the college to their views.

*This was the students' view when they completed the questionnaire immediately at the start of term. A few weeks later, in discussion with inspectors, Year 12 students had changed some of their views. They felt much more strongly that their teachers knew them well and they felt secure. The sixth-form council is generally valued by the students but it is too early for Year 12 to confirm their view.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

- *In this report the word 'competent' refers to those pupils and students whose work is broadly in line with the standards expected or usually seen nationally. On entry to this school in Year 7, they comprise approximately half of the year group.*
- *The phrase 'more competent' refers to those whose work is higher than the standards usually seen or expected nationally. They comprise approximately one quarter of the school. However, the proportion is significantly higher in Year 7 than in Year 11.*
- *The phrase 'less competent' refers to those whose work does not yet reach the standard expected nationally or is lower than that usually seen in other schools nationally. They comprise approximately one quarter of the school. However, the proportion is significantly higher in Year 11 than in Year 7.*
- *Approximately 14 per cent of pupils have identified special educational needs; below the national average.*
- *The word 'results' refers to pupils' and students' performance in public examinations or National Tests. They are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'standards' is used to define how well the pupils and students at this school do when their work is compared with what others nationally are expected to know, understand and do at ages 11, 14, 16 and 18. Occasionally, the term 'work' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of the standards usually found, or expected nationally.*
- *The word 'achievement' defines how much progress and improvement the students at this school have made over time. It indicates whether the students are doing as well as might reasonably be expected and whether they are working hard enough. It usually refers to how well they are doing at age 14 compared with what they were able to do when they started at the school at age 11; at age 16 compared with their National Test results at age 14; or at ages 17 and 18 compared with their previous GCSE results. Evaluations are expressed in terms such as 'very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory'.*

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

What do the pupils and their parents think

- Nearly all parents who sent back a completed questionnaire say their children make good progress. Many pupils said the same to inspectors.

What do the school's results show

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.3 (30.3)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	34.7 (35.2)	34.7 (34.4)
science	30.6 (31.0)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 160 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	40.6 (44.1)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88.1 (85.3)	90.9 (90.9)

How do the 2002 results in national tests compare with similar schools?	BELOW AVERAGE
How do the 2002 results in national tests compare with all schools nationally?	AVERAGE
How do the 2002 GCSE results compare with similar schools nationally?	AVERAGE
How do the 2002 GCSE results compare with all schools nationally?	BELOW AVERAGE
Do the boys and the girls do as well as each other?	NO
Are these results at least in line with the school's targets?	NO

Please note that the latest results for which national comparisons are available are now more than a year old. Much has happened at the school since then, particularly in the latest National Test results at Stage 3. Results at GCSE remain stubbornly below average.

What do the pupils and their parents say

Most parents are pleased with the progress their children make. Most pupils say they are expected to work hard and do their best.

What did the inspector team find

Achievement is now satisfactory across the school. Standards are in line with those that pupils are expected to reach in Year 9 and Year 11 because teaching continues to improve. There is evidence of satisfactory and accelerating improvement. Standards now are higher than the most recent National Test and GCSE results. These were below the 2002 national average for all as well as for similar schools. Results have levelled off recently after a period of good improvement. Good leadership and increasingly skilful teaching in several subjects are starting to drive up standards in lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- When there is good achievement in lessons, this stems from good subject leadership as well as good classroom management.
- Standards and results are highest in engineering at Stage 4 – well above the national average.
- Achievement is good in design and technology and history. It is good in geography, and in mathematics at Stage 3 but unsatisfactory in ICT, science and French, and in mathematics at Stage 4.
- Unsatisfactory achievement usually stems from a combination of pupils' reluctant attitudes and the unsatisfactory match of teaching methods to the pupils' needs.
- Most pupils get off to a good start in Year 7. The pace of learning slows a bit in Year 8. It picks up again in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, it varies between subjects.
- Standards are below those one would usually expect to find nationally in ICT, modern foreign languages, music, GCSE physical education at Stage 4 and history at Stage 3.
- The boys' results are much lower than the girls'.
- Pupils' thinking skills are unsatisfactory and their ICT skills are weaker than one would usually expect to find nationally.
- The attitude of many pupils is good but a minority of the boys are reluctant, and occasionally reluctant to learn.
- Assessment is used satisfactorily to track progress periodically. It is sometimes not used rigorously enough to make sure work is matched to the needs of the pupils. Consequently, they are not always clear about the standards expected and what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

1. There is much in the school's performance that is good. There are also several significant areas for improvement. The school's leadership has identified most of them in its improvement plan.
2. The school has not hit its targets for the last two years. This is mainly because of previously poor results in science. Some aspects of the management of target setting have been unsatisfactory.
3. The school's performance is getting better. Improvement in GCSE results is ahead of the national trend over the last five years. The school has received three National Achievement Awards during that period. GCSE results have levelled off over the last three years. This year results in the National Tests at Year 9 show big improvements in science. There are signs of significant improvement in mathematics at Year 11 compared with the recent well below average results.
4. Many of the girls and a good number of the more competent boys achieve well. Some of the less competent boys do not achieve enough because they come to lessons with the wrong attitude or the teaching methods do not engage them by making learning sufficiently interesting. This becomes more frequent in Years 10 and 11. It is a barrier to their progress in French at Stage 3.

What is boosting standards of achievement?

In what the pupils do:

5. Most want to do well. Their positive attitudes give a powerful boost to learning in geography. They concentrate best in practical activities. In the large majority of lessons, the good relationship with their teachers results in pupils' readiness to work hard. The frequently good listening and speaking skills, particularly of the competent and more competent pupils, help many to make good progress in lessons. The girls' well-organised writing is a good feature of their work in English. The writing skills of the more competent are good. This helps them to achieve above average standards. Most pupils' numeracy skills are sufficient to make progress and give a particular boost to their work in design and technology and in geography. The pupils who have special educational needs make particularly good progress with their reading.

In what teachers do:

6. There are strong links between rising standards of achievement in some subjects and skilful teaching that identifies how pupils will best learn things. This is a strong feature in history, design and technology and in mathematics where achievement is good. There is a powerful link between the use of assessment to make sure pupils know how well they are doing and evidence of good progress. Where pupils know the standard of their work and how to make it better, progress is invariably good. This is an improving feature of lessons in English and already a well-established feature in design and technology, history and geography.

What are the barriers to raising standards of achievement?

In what the pupils do:

7. The biggest challenge faced by some competent and almost all less competent pupils is writing in different styles, organising their thoughts logically and presenting them accurately. For example, most can describe well the actions and events in history but have difficulties when it comes to making judgements. Most pupils make good gains in knowledge and many improve their skills well. They are less confident when it comes to interpreting or analysing or extending their understanding. Many pupils lack the confidence to take their ideas further or apply what they know in a different way, for example in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 and

in French in Years 7 to 9. Many pupils play safe in their learning. There is not enough invention and variety in their musical compositions. Some pupils have a hazy picture of what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. They know they have a target but only a minority know what it means in terms of the quality of work they produce.

In what the teachers do:

8. When achievement is less than satisfactory, the methods chosen are not well enough designed to get everyone involved in the lesson. Sometimes, this is because they do not take account of what the pupils find difficult, do not attack and remedy the weaknesses in their thinking or memory skills and thus exploit the ways in which the pupils are more likely to learn successfully. Weaknesses in these areas result in underachievement in French.

Sixth Form

What do the school's results show?

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	89 (87)	98.4 (n/a)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20 (16)	39.4 (n/a)
Average point score per pupil	174 (11.8)(10.3)	263.3 (5.5)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

How do the results (A-E grades) compare with other schools?	WELL BELOW AVERAGE
How do these results (A-B) grades compare with other schools?	WELL BELOW AVERAGE
How does the performance of each student compare with the national picture (average points scored)?	WELL BELOW AVERAGE

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work this year are significantly higher than in the most recent GCE examinations. They are now broadly in line with those usually found nationally.
- The good achievement of female students.
- Standards in vocational courses are better than those usually seen nationally.
- Year 12 students are achieving well.
- There is a rising trend in results but those achieved on GCE AS- and A2-level courses are not high enough.
- Too few students achieve the highest grades.
- The low entry requirements for AS-level courses mean that subsequent work is not always suitable or well matched to the needs and competencies of the students.
- Skills in ICT are not high enough.

Commentary

9. Standards on entry to the sixth form are lower than those usually found nationally. Careful attention to their individual needs, and the students' positive attitudes, result in satisfactory achievement. Consequently, the standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly in line with that seen nationally and higher than this in vocational courses where the careful structuring of the course and the regular feedback assessments give the students confidence. The most competent students do not achieve the highest grades and insufficient

attention is given currently to their needs. As in the main school, female students achieve higher standards than male students.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

What do the pupils and their parents say?

10. The pupils were more critical than the parents who generally thought the school encouraged their children to be mature. Some parents expressed concern about individual cases of bullying and behaviour. More pupils expressed similar concerns, particularly about behaviour in lessons. In all other respects, pupils and parents shared similar views. Many pupils are strongly of the view that they are trusted to do things on their own, that there is an adult to whom they can turn if they need help and that the school is interested to hear their views.

What did the inspection team find?

Rates of attendance	GOOD
Rates of exclusion	AVERAGE
Punctuality	SATISFACTORY
Behaviour and attitudes	SATISFACTORY
What is the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	SATISFACTORY
Does the school do all that it can to promote good attendance?	YES
Does the school encourage pupils to get on well with each other and do their best?	YES

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.7	School data	0.5
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

A small number of pupils arrive late for school. Some pupils – in particular boys – deliberately arrive late for some lessons. This interrupts the learning of others.

Attitudes and behaviour

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour is better than the pupils say. It is satisfactory.
- Nearly all respond well to the clear expectations about conduct and appearance.
- Pupils relate well to one another and to adults.
- Almost all girls and most boys want to learn and behave sensibly and responsibly.
- The school treats bullying seriously. A significant number of younger pupils have taken advantage of the 'drop-in' centre supervised at lunchtimes by trained pupils in Year 11.
- The good, voluntary arrangements for those at risk of exclusion provide a 'fresh start' and help to raise those pupils' self-esteem.
- Behaviour around the school between lessons and at lunchtime is sometimes boisterous.
- There is too much litter on some of the pathways around the school.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	899	68	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0

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

The number of fixed-term exclusions is similar to that found in approximately two-fifths of schools of similar size nationally. The number of permanent exclusions is low

Pupils' personal development

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Form tutors and pastoral leaders regularly reinforce values such as respect, trust and fairness.
- The weekly PHSE lesson successfully helps pupils to consider their approach to others.
- In class discussions, the pupils often show their opposition to intolerance or racial prejudice.
- Peer mentors, the school chaplain and a learning mentor provide specific, additional support when it is needed.
- Pupils are sensitive to personal tragedies. A display in a Year 11 classroom provides a moving tribute to a pupil who died recently. There was high attendance at a special mass for a former pupil who died accidentally during the week of the inspection.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to display initiative.

Sixth Form

The provision is **good**

Do the students attend and behave well?	YES
Do the students have the personal skills they need?	YES
What is the quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	SATISFACTORY

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance has improved since the last inspection.
- Very positive attitudes towards learning and others, including those of different cultures.
- Good examples of behaviour to younger pupils.
- Strong values relating to spiritual and moral issues are based on Christian principles.
- A harmonious and friendly atmosphere in the social areas.
- The readiness to accept responsibility and support younger pupils in their learning.
- Not enough cultural experiences outside those of the immediate local area.

Commentary

11. Some of these strengths and weaknesses are referred more fully in the commentary on teaching and learning and in the subject reports in Part C of this report.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of provision is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

What are the most important things that are boosting standards of achievement?

- The good leadership of the headteacher.
- Good leadership in most subjects.
- Teachers' good specialist knowledge of their subjects.
- The very frequently good relationships in lessons.
- The confident, assured and frequently challenging teaching of more competent pupils.
- Very good leadership and management of pastoral care that promote regular attendance and positive attitudes in nearly all pupils.

What are the most important barriers to raising standards of achievement?

- The limited range of some pupils' thinking skills.
- Pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and how they might do better.
- The limited impact of some aspects of management, particularly of the curriculum, the monitoring of learning and some aspects of assessment.
- The shortage of basic resources in some subjects.

Teaching and learning

What do the pupils and their parents say?

The pupils and their parents are generally well satisfied and are in agreement about the quality of teaching at the school. Nearly all parents are very pleased that their children are expected to work hard. The pupils agree. At the parents' meeting, many were pleased about the quality and usefulness of homework.

What did the inspection team find?

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Is most of the teaching at St Bede's satisfactory or better?	YES
Is there a lot of very good teaching?	NO
Is learning satisfactory or better in most lessons?	YES
Can most pupils identify accurately the strengths and weaknesses in their work?	NO
Is there a lot of very good learning?	NO
Do all pupils have sufficient knowledge of what they need to do to be more successful?	NO

The inspection team is in broad agreement with the pupils and their parents. Inspectors identified some important things that the school needs to do to improve further. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching and learning is in the sixth form (Byron College).
- The best subject teaching is in design and technology, geography and history.
- Teaching and learning are frequently good in the humanities and in most of the practical subjects.
- Teaching and learning are usually better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The exceptions are mathematics and citizenship.
- The best teaching and learning throughout the school occur when methods as well as materials match the pupils' different needs and stimulate their interest. The pupils know what is good about their work and what they need to do to make it better. The best examples of this were seen in design and technology, geography, history, English and art and design.
- The most powerful feature of teaching that boosts learning is the skilful presentation of good subject knowledge. Knowledge is nearly always taught accurately and skills are particularly well taught in design and technology and engineering.
- The proportion of good teaching is similar to that found in many schools.
- The pace of learning slows in Year 8 but picks up speed in Year 9.
- Many less competent boys lack the necessary thinking and organisational skills to achieve well in their written work.
- The quality of teaching and learning in sets of more competent pupils is invariably good but methods are not always so well matched to the wide range of needs in the sets of less competent pupils.
- The use of questions and discussion is usually much better in groups of more competent pupils.
- Sometimes, the range of learning is too narrow or predictable because it is too strongly directed by the teacher and does not let pupils show initiative.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The strongest features are:
 - The good quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form. This is very good in engineering.
 - The consistently good teaching and learning in history and geography.
 - Good teaching and learning also in mathematics and citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and in science and art and design in Years 10 and 11.
 - Good teaching and learning when pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn for additional help.
13. Learning is invariably good when the sharp opening of the lesson establishes high expectations and captures the pupils' attention. The teacher frequently uses questions that develop good understanding and engage the interest of all. Explanations are crisp. Consequently, all are clear about what they will learn. This is then followed by a series of varied activities that are well matched to the needs of the pupils and sustain their concentration. The setting of short-term goals in the lessons is particularly helpful in sustaining the involvement of less competent pupils. This approach is having a powerful impact on standards of achievement in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, where the switch to a modular GCSE course also provides short-term deadlines for the pupils. It is a very strong feature of many of the very successful lessons in design and technology. The boys like this and it is starting to close the gap between the standards of the boys and the girls.
14. Relationships are invariably good in lessons. These have the greatest impact on learning when more competent pupils work well in small groups. The regular setting of useful homework consolidates and extends this good learning in lessons. These features were observed in slightly more than one third of lessons seen during the inspection.

15. In the best lessons, the good application of the school's assessment policies lets pupils know precisely how well they are doing. Linked to this feedback, the well-planned close of these lessons provides opportunities for the pupils themselves to tie the knot of their learning. These features were seen in approximately one tenth of lessons seen during the inspection.
16. When resources are well chosen and skilfully used to set high expectations and challenge this is helping to narrow the gap in achievement between girls and boys in English at Stage 4 and producing above average standards in mathematics at Stage 3. In geography and design and technology, displayed work is used very well as a resource to set standards and expectations.
17. In approximately one tenth of lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory. On one occasion, it was poor. It was unsatisfactory overall in French.
18. Frequently, these lessons involved the teacher telling the pupils what to do rather than letting them plan, think, decide and review for themselves. Such teaching methods are too narrow to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. The links between different activities are not always made clear to the pupils. Consequently, they do not see where their learning is going. There are too few opportunities to demonstrate initiative or take responsibility, particularly in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, this sometimes resulted in pupils slowing and even stopping the learning of others in the lesson.
19. The narrow range of teaching and learning sometimes restricts the level of achievement, particularly because ICT is rarely used, the skills are neither fully applied nor their development managed across the school. This narrows the range of achievement across all subjects.
20. Sometimes, pupils with special educational needs are given the same work as others in the class and occasionally find it difficult to cope on their own. The targets in their individual education plans are not always interpreted and adapted by subject departments. Assessment frequently does not track progress rigorously enough nor define what needs to be done next

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 150 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	12 (9%)	49 (37%)	61 (45%)	11 (8%)	1 (1%)	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.

In the second half of the inspection, 16 observations of lessons concentrated on the impact of school policies on learning. A teaching grade was not recorded. The above percentages are therefore based on 134 lessons. A small number of subjects where teaching was strong were not observed during the second half of the inspection. The proportion of very good teaching was affected by the decision not to continue observing lessons in the strongest subjects during the second half of the inspection.

Sixth Form

What do the students say?

Nearly all are well satisfied, appreciating their teachers' very good command of their subject. There are some indications that some would like it to be a bit more challenging.

What did the inspection team find?

Provision is **good**.

Is most of the teaching in the sixth form (Byron College) satisfactory or better?	YES
Is there a lot of very good teaching?	YES
Is there a lot of very good learning?	YES
Is students' work assessed thoroughly and constructively?	YES
Do students know how well they are doing and what they are expected to achieve?	YES

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have a very good command of their areas of learning, especially those who teach vocational courses and history, geography, mathematics, business studies and law.
- Good teaching helps most to make good progress but there needs to be sharper identification and better managed support for the most competent students.
- Most students are keen to make progress, respond well to a challenge and set goals to reach achievable targets.
- Most achieve well because they recall previous learning readily and can apply it successfully to new work.
- The few students who underachieve receive effective and timely support.
- The management of assessment is unsatisfactory because too much time is spent recording and analysing information by hand. The links with assessment arrangements in the main school are unsatisfactory.
- Below average standards of literacy, especially in writing and spelling, are a barrier to progress for some male students and those who are less competent in their studies.
- ICT skills are lower than those usually found nationally because too little use is made of them in most subjects.

Commentary

21. Very good subject knowledge lies at the heart of the good teaching and learning. This motivates many students to learn well. Some of these strengths and areas for improvement are covered in greater detail in parts B and C of this report.

The curriculum

What do the pupils and their parents think?

The pupils are satisfied with the range of subjects they can study and their parents are well satisfied with the range of additional activities.

What did the inspection team find?

Provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Does the curriculum meet the needs of all pupils?	NO
Are there enough subjects and activities to meet the needs of all pupils?	NO
Are there enough activities outside lessons to interest and involve the pupils?	NO
Are the buildings, classrooms and textbooks sufficient?	NO
Are all statutory requirements met?	NO
Does the curriculum help the pupils to make progress in their learning?	YES

The findings of the inspection team identify more things to improve than the comments of parents and pupils would suggest. Most involve aspects of its management. In particular, the range of courses needs to be wider in Years 10 and 11 and the range of additional activities is not wide enough nor promotes high levels of involvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements are not fully met because opportunities for all pupils to practice and develop and apply their ICT skills are not available in all subject areas.
- There is much imaginative teaching of the National Curriculum in design and technology but the statutory provision for computer-aided design and manufacture is not fully made.
- Pupils’ needs are well met in Years 7 to 9 with good provision for citizenship but the planning of courses in Years 10 and 11 does not cater well for all less competent pupils.
- Good provision for personal, social and health education.
- The good match of the qualifications and experience of the staff to meet the needs of the curriculum.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in physical education and music. Learning resources are unsatisfactory in design and technology, drama and music.
- Unsatisfactory planned provision for the small minority of gifted and talented pupils.

The issue underlined was in the 1998 inspection report. Improvement since then has been unsatisfactory.

Commentary

22. The management of the curriculum is the main reason why provision is unsatisfactory. The principles and aims that drive its planning are not sharply defined. The range of courses is too narrow at Stage 4. There is a lack of clarity in the planning of continuous provision 14 to 19 and statutory requirements are not fully met. Arrangements at the start of Year 7 are good and the switch to GCSE courses at the start of Year 10 is well managed.
23. Some of these issues are covered in greater detail in the sections on leadership and management, and teaching and learning as well as in Part C of this report.

Sixth Form

What do the students say?

Most students say that the choice of courses matches what they are good at.

What did the inspection team find?

Provision is **unsatisfactory**

Does the curriculum meet the needs of all the students?	NO
Is the range of subjects and courses sufficient to meet the students’ needs?	NO
Are the teachers, accommodation, books, materials and equipment sufficient?	YES
Are the students prepared for furthering their education or entering employment?	YES
Are there enough activities outside lessons to interest and involve students?	NO

The quality of provision for religious education and a daily act of collective worship is reported in the Section 23 inspection conducted by the diocese. Statutory requirements are fully met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

As with the main school, despite some good features, the leadership and management of the curriculum lacks strategic direction.

- Students have positive views about the suitability of the subjects and courses they take.
- Accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.
- The college provides satisfactory subject, course and careers advice.
- Unsatisfactory planning across the 14 to 19 age range with insufficient provision to meet the needs of the least competent students.
- Unsatisfactory provision for the teaching of key skills and general studies and no timetabled provision for physical education.
- The admissions policy allows some students to embark on advanced courses that are too difficult for them, resulting in slow progress and low standards.
- Too few opportunities for enrichment activities.

Commentary

24. Byron College has only just opened. Some of the gaps in provision reflect the early stages of this new venture and the previously small size of the sixth form. Some of the issues are covered in greater detail in the commentary on teaching and learning, leadership and management and in individual subject reports.

Care, guidance and support

What do the pupils and their parents think?

25. Most pupils and their parents think they are treated fairly and well looked after, particularly when they joined the school in Year 7. Parental views were divided on the quality of support given to those pupils with special educational needs. A large majority of pupils find the assessment of their work helpful. Nearly all have a good and trusting relationship with an adult in the school. A similar proportion feel that the school is interested in their views. There were no issues of racial harassment raised by parents.

What did the inspection team find?

Provision is **good**.

Does the school ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety?	YES
Does the school have a written policy on race equality which it monitors?	YES
Does the school monitor the pupils' achievements and personal development?	YES
Does it use this information to support, advise and guide them?	YES
Does the school involve pupils in its work and development?	YES
Is provision for pupils with special educational needs satisfactory?	YES

The main strengths and weaknesses

The following good features are helping to raise standards and promote positive attitudes:

- Well-planned procedures for child protection, but not all staff are aware of the designated teacher for child protection.
- The regular monitoring and analysis of entries in the accident book.
- Regular health and safety inspections round the school site, including risk assessments, but fire instructions are not clearly visible in all classrooms.
- Computers with Internet access are protected from unsuitable material on the net.
- Effective anti-bullying procedures are in place and pupils feel that any such cases will be acted upon.

- The leadership and management of the inclusion base meets very well the alternative needs of those at risk of exclusion.

The feature underlined above is a big improvement on the findings of the last inspection.

Commentary

26. There is further comment on some of these features in the sections on leadership and management and teaching and learning and also in some of the subject reports in Part C of this report.

Sixth Form

What do the students say?

Most say they get good advice on the courses to choose and are well supported in their studies. A significant minority of students did not feel there was an adult in whom they can confide. They are generally satisfied with careers advice but fewer felt strongly that this was the case.

What did the inspection team find?

Provision is **good**.

Does Byron College care for the welfare, health and safety needs of its students?	YES
Does it monitor the students' achievements and personal development?	YES
Does it use this information to help, advise and guide the students?	YES
Do the students get involved in the life and development of the college and the school?	YES

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-managed support of individual students' current and future needs, including the good advice that follows upon the assessment of their work and supports their personal development.
- Insufficient extra provision for the most competent students.
- The readiness of students to work well with each other and take responsibility.
- The students are treated with the respect appropriate to their age and maturity as young adults but some feel that their views are not always taken on board.

Commentary

27. The students have responded very positively to the launch of the new college, evident not only in lessons but also in their readiness to take responsibility as sixth-form managers and participate in leadership roles in the main school. The current below average size of the sixth form affords good opportunities for close, individual guidance and support. The small number of students who have joined the college from other local schools are quickly becoming full members of the school community. Some of these features are also referred to in other parts of the report, including pupils' and students' attitudes, the curriculum and leadership and management.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

What do the pupils and their parents say?

The very large majority of those who completed the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting before the inspection said they were comfortable about approaching the school on any issue. They are satisfied with the sound partnership between them and the school.

What did the inspection team find?

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good links created with the partner primary schools and the improving links with a wide range of secondary schools through the Education Action Zone and the diocese.
- Links with the community are unsatisfactory but getting better.

Commentary

28. Links with parents are satisfactory. There are important strengths and weaknesses in the partnership with parents that have an impact on pupils' achievement. There is a high level of satisfaction about homework arrangements. The inspection team confirms this. The homework planner is used well to keep parents informed of the work to be done and about attitudes and behaviour. Most parents make sure their children attend school regularly and contact school in the event of absence. However, less than half attend the annual tutor evening to discuss achievements and areas for improvement. This is disappointing, given the school's considerable efforts to modify the arrangements in an attempt to increase the level of parental involvement.
29. There are good links with the widely-spread cluster of feeder Catholic primary schools. This helps to provide a smooth transition in pupils' learning between primary and secondary school. Links with secondary schools are satisfactory and have developed significantly in the past year. The EAZ links and the more recent Leadership Improvement Grant (LIG) links have provided a catalyst for this positive development. Schools' headteachers have now begun to work constructively to use the different strengths in each school to the benefit of all.
30. The design and technology department has good links with local engineering businesses whilst personal, social, health and citizenship education is enriched by links with public services, such as the police and fire services. Links with the wider community across a range of subjects are unsatisfactory, reflecting the somewhat narrow range of curricular provision, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
31. Parents of pupils who have statements of special educational needs work co-operatively with teachers to help their children make progress. Review meetings are well attended.

Sixth Form

32. Parents' views on the sixth form are positive. Nearly all sixth-form students are positive about what their newly established college offers them.
33. Links with secondary schools, colleges and higher education are satisfactory overall. Byron College has just opened. Links with the local college are growing and there is now joint delivery of curriculum subjects, such as art and design, science and sociology. The transfer procedures for September 2003 did not result in the entry to the college of the expected number of students from other schools. Higher education links, primarily with regional universities, are satisfactory.
34. Sixth-form community links are broadly satisfactory overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

What do the pupils and their parents say?

Nearly all of the pupils think this is a well-run school. They know where they stand and are expected to do their best. Their parents think so too.

What did the inspection team find?

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**.

The leadership of the headteacher	GOOD
The leadership of other key staff	GOOD
The effectiveness of management	SATISFACTORY
The leadership and management of pastoral care	GOOD
The governance of the school	UNSATISFACTORY

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's good, decisive leadership has sharpened up the school's understanding of what it needs to do to improve. She has sorted out 'who does what' to start to make this happen.
- All of the strengths and most of the weaknesses identified in this inspection were also identified in the school's self-evaluation beforehand.
- The good, knowledgeable leadership and effective management of the school's pastoral care bring the school's values to life, particularly about including all pupils and managing behaviour. Consequently, attitudes in lessons are usually positive.
- The leadership and management of transfer and induction arrangements at Year 7 for all pupils and for individuals at other times.
- Subject leadership is good following some significant changes but remains unsatisfactory in ICT and modern foreign languages.
- The principles of best value are applied well in the school's consultation with parents and pupils but target setting does not always set the appropriate level of challenge.
- Some aspects of management lack sufficient rigour, incisiveness and technical knowledge to evaluate fully the school's performance.
- The governors are keen to make improvement happen, working well with the headteacher and her key staff. They do not always know the questions to ask that will challenge the school about its performance or inform a rigorous evaluation of results, standards, major decisions and expenditure. Some important statutory requirements are not met in two areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

What features are boosting standards of achievement?

35. Much has been achieved in a relatively short time. A start had already been made before the arrival of the new headteacher five terms ago. Since then, good leadership has resulted in significant strides forward. The impact of the school's new leadership has been strongest in improving attendance and behaviour, smartening the pupils' appearance and improving their attitudes. Good teamwork and increasingly high levels of commitment and expectation across the school have been key factors in this improvement. The school has now found a new sense of purpose and a determination to succeed. This owes much to the revitalised leadership across most aspects of the school's work. The commitment of the leadership team is very high.
36. Several, well-considered actions have been taken to create a framework for improvement. These include a well-focused bursary to raise boys' achievement and good additional provision for those at risk of exclusion. These actions show how the school's additional funding is being used well to target priorities for improvement. Both these features are well led and soundly managed.

37. The headteacher's good leadership has led to improvements in the school's management by addressing issues of workload. The appointment of a bursar 12 months ago has freed up time for the leadership team to concentrate on standards and the quality of the school's work. It has provided additional expertise to manage challenging financial circumstances and establish a firm link between financial and development planning. Consequently, the management of the school's finances is soundly based and controls are rigorous. The appointment of cover supervisors to substitute for absent permanent staff has been well managed with carefully-planned induction to confirm expectations.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£3,081,774	Balance from previous year	£211,000
Total expenditure	£2,915,336	Balance carried forward to the next	£161,000
Expenditure per pupil	£3,176		

38. Good subject leadership and increasingly skilful management have a strong impact in the humanities and design and technology. They are steering improvement well in English and have provided a real fillip to performance and enjoyment in science. In mathematics, they are starting to close the gap between the previously unsatisfactory results at Stage 4 and the standards achieved at Stage 3. The wider impact has not yet been seen in GCSE results but there are good signs that the leadership of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is starting to have an impact on standards, particularly in numeracy and in some aspects of literacy.
39. The good pastoral leadership and management is well illustrated in the newly introduced arrangements to track pupils' progress. This has contributed to improving pupils' attendance and a declining level of fixed-term exclusions and incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour. Pastoral staff are now better informed and supported. Consequently, they are more confident and effective in their role.
40. The good leadership and management of the well-established arrangements to smooth the pupils' transfer from their primary schools mean that they quickly feel at home, make new friends and settle to work hard. A good feature is the care taken to create some good links between the work done immediately before the pupils transfer to this school. This helps the pupils to get off to a flying start in Year 7.

What features are barriers to raising standards?

41. There is no permanent leadership currently in modern foreign languages. Despite teachers' best endeavours, provision is unsatisfactory because strategies for improvement are not clear and the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory, resulting in statutory non-compliance. The lack of ICT in most subjects is a significant weakness.
42. Some aspects of management lack sufficient rigour and penetrating analysis. Consequently, it is not as good as leadership. Nearly all leaders know where they are heading, most have a good idea of what needs to be done but only a few have the full range of professional and technical expertise to make a decisive impact on improving the school's performance.
43. Two features of the school's provision illustrate this. There is a well-established policy and procedure to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Records of such observations

frequently lack a sharp focus on the impact that teaching is having on learning and achievement. Some subject leaders lack confidence to fulfil successfully this very important aspect of management. Similarly, there are periodic checks of pupils' exercise books but the focus and purpose are too general and do not concentrate sufficiently on specific issues or standards of achievement. Consequently, the impact of monitoring on raising standards is not yet fully effective. The significant demands made upon the headteacher and one of the deputies over the last year to lead the establishment of Byron College has, of necessity, meant that less time has been available to lead the monitoring of standards in the main school.

44. The impact of management on standards is sometimes reduced because the links between school policy and practice in the classroom are tenuous. This is well illustrated in the school's strategy for assessment. At school level, this is well led with a sound degree of technical expertise, including good use of ICT in Years 7 to 11. Consequently, the necessary information is made available to all staff in useful formats. Most subject leaders are now competent in analysing the performance of different groups of pupils in their subject.
45. Delegated responsibilities (who does what?) are defined clearly within job descriptions, shared equitably and sensibly across the team and play to strengths and special interests. The roles are defined strongly in terms of the school's distinctive character and ethos. In this they share a common purpose. What the job descriptions do not do is define clearly the role and sphere influence that the postholder has on raising achievement and assuring the quality of provision within and through their areas of responsibility. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has insufficient time to fulfil his role effectively. As a result, monitoring is reduced to a paper exercise using grades rather than a robust assessment of need.
46. In particular, there are not enough opportunities to evaluate the progress of individual pupils. The role is administrative rather than developmental.
47. The unsatisfactory curricular provision illustrates well some significant weaknesses in the management of change. The school's development plan and its own self-evaluation identify the need to address the range of provision in Years 10 and 11. There are some alternative opportunities for a small number of pupils. The strategy for change is unclear, the costings vague with no cost/benefit analysis of possible options. The impact on post-16 provision and the coherence of courses 14 to 19 are not defined.
48. The school improvement plan illustrates both the strengths and the weaknesses of the present provision. It puts its finger firmly on what needs to be done and identifies who will be responsible for it. It does not define clearly enough what the impact will be on standards and the quality of pupils' learning. Consequently, it does not support the rigorous analysis to measure how successful the actions of leaders and managers have been.
49. Governance is unsatisfactory because some of the statutory requirements in the school's provision are not fully met. Governors have a reasonable grasp of the school's strengths and are representative of the community it serves. They have a good grasp of developments in the sixth form. Their knowledge and understanding of the school's strategic weaknesses are incomplete. They are not yet discharging fully their key strategies through their involvement in school improvement planning. This currently takes the form of reviewing the school's draft plan rather than being an active contributor in its creation. Governors work hard through their committees to keep an eye on what the school is doing. Sometimes they question what the school is doing and they check the financial position regularly. Overall, the agendas and minutes of their meetings show that they concentrate on immediate rather than longer-term issues. The evaluation of major spending decisions lacks rigour.

Sixth Form

Provision is **satisfactory**.

What do the students say?

They are very satisfied.

Is the leadership helping the students to make progress?	YES
Is the management of the sixth form raising standards and assuring quality?	YES
Is the sixth-form provision adequate?	YES
Is it cost-effective?	NO

The special circumstances of the newly established Byron College mean that some courses have only a small number of students. Its funding is separate to that of the main school but St Bede's is currently making up the shortfall in income from its own funds. This shortfall stems mainly from the lower than planned number of students entering the college from other local schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body takes an active interest in strategic matters but this is sometimes at the expense of challenging the college about the current standards of achievement.
- Satisfactory leadership that provides a good level of care and very good role model to students but needs to focus more on the longer-term development of current provision.
- Good subject leadership motivates and influences students to achieve well by setting and monitoring individual students' targets.
- The management of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- The partnership between teachers and students in jointly managed initiatives to help younger pupils achieve better and the development of sixth-form managers from within the student body.
- Assessment procedures are too time consuming because they make too little use of ICT.
- The small numbers on some courses and the smaller than planned size of Year 12 mean that it is not cost-effective.

Commentary

50. The day-to-day leadership of the sixth form is particularly good. This provides a secure setting for learning, which the students value highly. The college is at an early stage of its development and the current provision is not planned to extend beyond the next five years. Communication is satisfactory between the head of sixth form, the area co-ordinator and the leadership team.
51. Some of these strengths and areas for improvement are covered in greater detail in other aspects of work in the sixth form such as teaching and learning, the care and guidance of students and their personal development.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work placed learning

Provision is **good**.

52. A small number of Years 10 and 11 pupils follow NVQ Level 1 courses in construction, hairdressing, catering and horticulture.
53. Examination results have improved for this group, representing good achievement. Attendance rates and attitudes to learning have also improved for the significant majority. However, the number of units studied in the construction course is too few.

54. The pupils attend the local college of further education where there is good quality teaching and good pupil/teacher relations. An effective induction programme prepares pupils well and they are well supported by the vocational assessment systems.
55. The arrangements are well managed. Their day-to-day organisation is good. A local consortium of three schools, the college and pupils' parents collaborate well so that individual pupils' needs are taken into consideration when offering a programme.
56. There are very good specialist resources and accommodation provided by the college.
57. Termly review meetings are used to discuss pupil progress and management issues. There is good day-to-day contact between institutions so that any pupil issues can be dealt with promptly.

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 **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The girls achieve well, attaining standards higher than those expected nationally.
- The boys underachieve; the standard of most boys' written work is not high enough.
- The very good relationships in lessons are raising standards.
- The planned monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not rigorous enough.

Commentary

58. GCSE and National Test results in 2002 were both broadly average, the girls doing very much better than the boys. GCSE results are better than at the time of the last inspection, those in the National Tests broadly similar. The pattern of results in GCSE English literature were broadly similar to those in English. The girls' achievement in these examinations and National Tests is good, the boys' unsatisfactory. The gap between the boys' and girls' GCSE results narrowed significantly in 2003. It widened in the National Tests. There is no valid data yet published to make national comparisons for these latest GCSE results.
59. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards of work at Year 9 and Year 11 are now broadly similar to those usually found nationally. The girls' written work is better than this. They achieve well because their extended writing is well organised, fluent and accurate. The work of the more competent boys is similar. Skilful teaching is narrowing the gap between these groups of the boys and the girls, an improvement reflected in the latest GCSE results. The majority of the boys still lag behind the girls because their understanding of paragraphing are hazy, their knowledge of sentence grammar is poor and their spelling and punctuation is inaccurate. Consequently, they do not achieve well enough. Reading standards for boys and girls are similar to those seen nationally, as are the standards of speaking and listening. Many pupils, until this year, have entered the school with poor literacy skills. They make significant progress in developing their understanding of a range of increasingly difficult texts and in gaining confidence when speaking in groups and in formal situations. They have a satisfactory command of standard English. Achievement in these three skills is good.
60. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject and identify well the teaching methods most suitable for different groups of pupils. The very good working relationships and teachers' high expectations are driving up standards and starting to improve the boys' standards of writing. A great deal of work has been done in developing resources and teaching strategies to challenge girls further and to engage and motivate boys. Assessment is used effectively to inform pupils about their current performance and what they must do to improve. In the lessons seen, however, there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience different ways of learning and to develop an independent approach to their own way of working. Lessons are tightly structured and this inclusive approach means that all pupils make satisfactory progress. What was lacking, however, was that stimulating and consistently challenging teaching approach which generates an enthusiastic response from pupils of all competencies and is the hallmark of very good teaching.
61. Leadership is good. There is a sense of purpose and direction to the work of the department. The commitment to raise standards and to foster the personal development of all pupils is

raising standards. The management of the subject is satisfactory and the skills of the head of department have been successful in securing change. There have been significant improvements in the provision of schemes of work and in record-keeping. Strategies to improve the boys' standards are well managed and starting to have an impact. The management of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is insufficiently rigorous.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Pupils' skills are broadly sufficient to meet the requirements of the subjects that they study.
63. Most pupils' listening and speaking skills are sufficient for them to make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Many write sufficiently well to cope with the range of tasks in their different subjects. Some of the less competent boys do not organise their thoughts well on paper. Most pupils' reading skills are sufficient to understand a wide range of specialist subject texts. Their discussion and listening skills are sufficient to enable them to benefit from small-group and paired work and they share ideas well, using the correct terminology of their subject disciplines.
64. Leadership is satisfactory. The school has defined well what needs to be done to improve matters further. Only recently has a co-ordinator been appointed to manage the consistent application of policy. Some subject departments are much further ahead than others. Strategies are well managed in history and geography with support and improvement strategies identified in schemes of work, including a good range of learning and thinking skills. Consequently, both subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen and both encourage them to write in a range of styles. The high-quality classroom displays in design and technology contain technical vocabulary which pupils can refer to in lessons, thus consolidating their understanding of the terms. The management of improvement across the school is less secure. Such good practice is not a feature of all departments. Many pupils do not evaluate their own work because their knowledge and understanding of specialist vocabulary are limited.
65. Planning for further improvement is satisfactory. Most of the foundations are now in place. The recent investment in computer resources provides the necessary technology to improve pupils' research and analytical skills. Strategies to improve the reading, speaking and listening skills of less competent pupils have been identified. The management of provision is not yet rigorous enough in the monitoring of the impact on pupils' learning across the school.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement in Spanish.
- The commitment to improvement.
- The positive attitudes of more competent pupils, particularly in Year 10.
- Unsatisfactory leadership results in undefined responsibilities.
- Unsatisfactory management means that the monitoring of pupils' work does not diagnose which particular skills require improvement.
- Disaffected boys disrupt some lessons. This sometimes affects the standards attained by the rest of the class.
- Lessons do not always incorporate a variety of tasks to challenge the diverse needs of the pupils.

Commentary

66. Achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in French at Year 9 and Year 11 are lower than those usually found nationally. The girls generally produce much better work than boys.

Some more competent boys produce work of a high standard. Many pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons. Many do not make sustained progress over time because they forget what they have learned previously. Teaching methods do not recognise or remedy this weakness. Written work usually involves adaptation of a model. Most pupils manage this successfully. When they have to write at length, they often make grammatical mistakes and find it difficult to break free from the straightjacket of set phrases. The same applies in speaking. All pupils from the beginning of Year 7 onwards can convey personal information quite clearly. They struggle to maintain conversations in other topic areas because the planning of lessons provides too few opportunities to regularly go over key constructions after they have been introduced.

67. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. There is not enough opportunity for the pupils to participate orally. Many lessons start well but often begin to flag in the development phase when new constructions are being introduced. When this happens, teachers almost always revert to the use of English as some pupils become restless. In the one good lesson seen, pupils in Year 10 who have opted to continue with French approached their work seriously and enthusiastically. They asked questions, supported one another and formed a productive learning partnership with the teacher. Less competent pupils show much less commitment because teaching methods do not engage their interest or invite their participation. Sometimes, the boys are deliberately awkward and a significant proportion of pupils remain passive observers, only contributing when directly questioned.
68. Leadership and management are both unsatisfactory. Standards are lower than those reported at the last inspection. There is no current head of department. Co-operation between teachers in these circumstances is good but little guidance and advice are available. In particular, the monitoring of pupil performance does not lead to a diagnosis of particular skills that require improvement. Resources are spread thinly. Most work emanates from the course book. There are few authentic materials and the potential of new technology has not been harnessed.
69. Spanish was also sampled. Two lessons were seen. Both were well taught and pupils were highly motivated. Standards match expectations and overall achievement is satisfactory. The school has managed a difficult period very well, recruiting well-qualified staff to cover for temporary absences.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding.
- Above average results in the Year 9 National Tests.
- Good leadership is narrowing the gap in girls' and boys' standards at GCSE.
- Good relationships between students and teachers produce good attitudes to learning.
- The boys' unsatisfactory achievement.
- Unsatisfactory use of ICT.
- Unsatisfactory use of assessment data to identify what is helping or hindering pupils' progress.

Commentary

70. Achievement was unsatisfactory in the below average GCSE results in 2002, continuing a declining trend since 2000. This is confirmed by the comparison between the results in National Tests two years previously. Students with special educational needs and the most competent pupils make satisfactory, similar progress to other pupils. Achievement in the National Tests in 2002 at Year 9 was satisfactory with results broadly in line with the national average although lower than in the previous two years. Results improved again in 2003 and

were above average with a significant narrowing of the gap between the girls' and the boys' performance. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory. It is good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

71. Standards are in line with the most recent National Tests at Year 9 and GCSE results at Year 11. There is strong evidence of continuing improvement as a result of the well-managed teaching of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. The change in the choice of GCSE examination course is raising standards in Years 10 and 11. Some patches of boys' underachievement remain.
72. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in Years 7 to 9. All good or better lessons have brisk pace and a realistically high level of challenge that are starting to overcome underachievement, particularly amongst boys. The pupils are told, and most can remember, their target grades but those who currently underachieve do not get involved in setting their own targets or know clearly enough what they need to do to improve.
73. Leadership is good. It is producing improvement in results by setting a good example, changing the choice of course at GCSE and developing consistent expectations and good teamwork. Learning is also well supported by the good quality of learning resources. Management is satisfactory. The organisation and use of resources are good but the lack of equipment has hindered developments in the use of ICT. The evaluation of learning needs is insufficiently rigorous when lessons are observed as part of the strategy for improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. The skills acquired in mathematics support well progress in most other subjects. Most use calculators efficiently. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities in most subjects for pupils to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills. In science, they interpret well a wide variety of tables, charts and diagrams. They successfully use algebra when needed. In physical education and geography, a wide range of statistical techniques are practised. Estimation, measurement and numerical skills are applied well in design and technology. This results in good standards of accuracy.
75. The leadership and management of provision are unsatisfactory. There is no designated co-ordinator. The head of mathematics fulfils this role on an informal basis. Arrangements to monitor the consistent application of the national strategy and evaluate its impact on improvement are unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Below average results in National tests and GCSE examinations.
- The unsatisfactory use of ICT.
- Good relationships between students, and between students and staff.
- Good marking and indicators in pupils' books that help them to track how well they are doing.
- The excessive use of worksheets in Years 8 and 9.
 - Good support provided for teaching by the science technicians.

Commentary

76. Results at GCSE over the past three years have been below average. Both boys and girls do less well in science than in their other subjects. Results in the National Tests at the end of Year 9 have also been below average. This year they have improved significantly with almost two-thirds reaching Level 5 or better, a quarter of whom exceeded the standard pupils are

expected to reach nationally. This is because the planning is much better in the greatly improved teaching and leadership of the department.

77. Achievement is satisfactory at Year 9 and Year 11. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are now broadly similar to those usually found nationally. Practical skills are sound in Year 11, for example in the accurate measurement of acceleration due to gravity. The excessive use of worksheets in Years 8 and 9 restricts the range of pupils' scientific thinking.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10 and 11. Good subject knowledge combines well with an enthusiasm for science that is stimulating and fosters good relationships in lessons. It has the strongest impact on achievement when it is also well matched to the pupils' individual needs. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory. Good features include the helpful comments in the marking of work and some useful recording in pupils' books that helps them to track how well they are doing.
79. Leadership is good. The new leadership is already starting to raise expectations and produce better results. Previous staffing difficulties have been largely resolved. There is a renewed sense of purpose and teamwork that has established firm foundations for sound management.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Unsatisfactory achievement leading to standards below those expected nationally at Year 9 and Year 11.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met.
- The recent much needed improvement in the quality and quantity of resources and equipment. These are now above average.
- Poor provision and unsatisfactory management of ICT across the different subjects of the curriculum.
- The good application of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 despite the limited time available.
- Unsatisfactory assessment procedures that do not inform pupils of their current standard and what they need to do to improve.
- Unsatisfactory support for teachers to help them use ICT to raise achievement.

Commentary

80. Achievement is unsatisfactory at Year 9 and at Year 11. The girls generally achieve better than the boys as a result of more positive attitudes. Standards are below those that the majority of pupils usually reach nationally. The results in the GNVQ examination in 2002 were well below average. They were better in 2003. Standards are improving in Years 7 to 9 because the application of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9 is starting to result in the satisfactory acquisition of skills. Pupils can combine text and graphics in a multimedia presentation, but do not yet consider the needs of a range of audiences nor adequately evaluate the effectiveness of their work. Standards are rising in Years 10 and 11 following the switch to a GCSE course. Most pupils use advanced skills to merge data from a database into wordprocessed letters. They recognise the issues in the solution of a problem, but do not state in detail how they may be solved.
81. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is slightly better in Years 10 and 11. A good range of tasks extends the range of pupils' knowledge and skills. Some tasks are not challenging enough. Sometimes, too much emphasis on the technicalities of managing data prevents pupils making more progress. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most work well by themselves and sort out what they need to do but they are not

involved in target setting and are frequently unclear about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

82. Leadership and management are both unsatisfactory. Secure procedures are not in place to co-ordinate the effective teaching of ICT across the curriculum, the assessment of standards and the evaluation of achievement. These aspects of management are unsatisfactory. There is confusion about the management of the network manager and support technician.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving GCSE results are now above average.
- Good leadership, much improved since the previous inspection.
- Consistently good teaching and the pupils' good response result in very good GCSE coursework.
- Unsatisfactory fieldwork arrangements in Year 9.
- Unsatisfactory provision for ICT.
- Pupils are sometimes insufficiently involved in assessing their work.

Commentary

83. Achievement is good. Standards in Year 11 and Year 9 are in line with those usually found nationally. They are similar to the broadly average GCSE results in 2002 and the most recent statutory teacher assessments at Year 9. Many pupils in Year 11 demonstrate a good range of skills. Reading skills are good. All extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. Coursework is very good. In it, they test hypotheses by analysing their fieldwork observations, using a variety of statistical methods. Some less competent pupils are unsure in analysing their findings, but still produce accurate graphs. Good planning and methods, particularly the use of questions, ensure that pupils develop good thinking skills when classifying and sorting logically diverse geographical facts. Such skilful teaching is an important reason why the boys do as well as the girls in this subject. Nearly all pupils in Year 9 have a good technical vocabulary and demonstrate good factual knowledge and understanding. For example, they describe and explain accurately the link between volcanic activity and movements in the earth's crust. The progress of less competent pupils is slower because they find it difficult to write at length.
84. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good. It is never less than satisfactory. All teachers use their good subject knowledge well to explain things clearly and accurately and guide the pupils skilfully in their use of resources. Progress in lessons is good because the pupils' response to this good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. The pupils behave well, stay on task and work collaboratively when required. The management of time in lessons is sometimes unsatisfactory. The teacher's introduction to the lesson is occasionally too long, leaving not enough time for the pupils to complete the tasks. Occasionally, these are not well matched to the range of needs and competencies of the group. The planned use of ICT is unsatisfactory.
85. Leadership is good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, especially in improved examination results and schemes of work. A good start has been made on improving procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Well-organised fieldwork gives opportunities to enjoy the practical aspects of the subject. These opportunities do not occur currently in Year 9. Displayed work illustrates to pupils the high expectations of their teachers and the standards to which they should aspire.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good progress and achievement because good teaching uses a range of methods to get pupils fully involved in lessons.
- Good leadership and management.
- The testing of pupils' understanding in the final part of lessons is unsatisfactory.
- The use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

86. Achievement is good. The girls do better than the boys. Pupils' history skills on entry to the school in Year 7 are below those usually seen in the majority of schools nationally. Many make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 but standards remain below those that pupils nationally are expected to reach at Year 9 and similar to those in the most recent statutory teacher assessments. Most recently, there are signs of significant improvement. Progress and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are good. Standards are in line with those usually seen nationally, and consistent with the broadly average GCSE results in 2002. The more competent write at length and knowledgeably about changes in agriculture in the 18th century. The competent and less competent achieve lower standards than those expected nationally because they tend to describe events and actions rather than make judgements about them. They demonstrate satisfactory understanding of the nature of World War One and why it happened. They distinguish between short- and long-term causes of such events.
87. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Occasionally, it is very good. A powerful feature is the skill with which methods are adapted to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. Very good subject knowledge is used very well to challenge pupils' thinking in Years 10 and 11. Different approaches and activities are well introduced and involve and hold the pupils' attention. Good relationships promote good collaborative work and nurture pupils' confidence to participate well in lessons. There is some inconsistency in the re-inforcement of the specific vocabulary required and the sharing of lesson objectives. Not enough time and emphasis are given to pupils' reflection on their work in the last part of lessons. Marking is regular and generally helpful but does not identify precisely what the pupil next needs to do to improve.
88. Leadership and management are good. This has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. There is a good grasp of what needs to be done to improve provision and standards still further. Teaching guidance is well documented to support consistent practice but the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. Good teamwork encourages teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of teaching methods and concentrate on how the pupils will best learn. Assessment procedures are good, including the use of pupil-friendly grade descriptions, but the management of assessment data to inform evaluation needs to be more rigorous.

TECHNOLOGY

Design & technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average GCSE results in engineering.
- Good teaching results in good achievement.
- Good leadership and management, characterised by enthusiasm and strong teamwork.
- The good impact of assessment on achievement.
- Unsatisfactory provision for ICT.

Commentary

89. GCSE results are well above the national average in engineering and below the national average in resistant materials and food technology.
90. Achievement is good. Standards on entry to the school are below those that pupils nationally are expected to reach. In Year 9, standards are in line with those expected nationally. The girls do better than the boys. The competent and more competent pupils achieve higher standards because they can find out information for themselves. Less competent pupils are beginning to choose materials and construction methods for themselves and detailing this in a manufacturing specification. They are generally less confident about doing things for themselves. Most pupils do not make enough preliminary models to explore and test their design thinking. This is done well in food technology, for example when Year 9 make Indian samosas.
91. Standards in the range of courses in Year 11 are broadly in line with those that pupils are expected to reach nationally and have improved since the last inspection. They are very much higher than this in engineering. Progress is good. Significantly, the boys do better than the girls, largely because the GCSE engineering course is particularly well matched to their needs and very well taught. Some good GCSE food technology coursework by more competent and competent pupils in Year 10 showed good skills in designing and making bread, an awareness of different cultures and good investigative skills of market research. Less competent pupils working in resistant materials and graphics produce satisfactory coursework, including the investigation of storage and packaging design problems. They research and analyse design issues to a satisfactory level prior to writing a manufacturing specification.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The most effective lessons have clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils, are well managed and organised and have good pace, for example when Year 11 pupils are involved in design activities. The very good lessons are a lively and stimulating combination of high expectations, very good use of questions and expert subject knowledge. Homework is used well to extend and consolidate learning. Marking and on-going assessment provides constructive comments that raise standards because they make pupils aware of what they need to do to improve their work.
93. Leadership and management are good. There is an effective, well co-ordinated, team approach to management. The head of department is particularly enthusiastic and sets a good example to her colleagues. There are systems in place that enable her to monitor teaching and learning. Regular departmental meetings focus on improving standards by evaluating the design and technology curriculum and assessment issues. Much has been done to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by way of high quality classroom displays of technical vocabulary and the provision of well-structured written guidance that provides a framework for pupils' designing. Statutory requirements are not fully met because there is no provision for computer-aided design (CAD) or computer aided manufacturing (CAM). Responsibility for this weakness lies beyond the head of subject.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in recent years have been above the national average.
- The good use of assessment to set and monitor targets.
- Good achievement by pupils with special educational needs because expectations are high.
- Unsatisfactory provision for ICT.

Commentary

94. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards on entry to the school are lower than usually seen nationally. In Year 9 and Year 11, they are broadly similar to those found in most schools nationally and in line with the GCSE results in 2002. Good features of the pupils' work in Year 9 are their manipulation of clay to express their ideas and their skills in handling oil pastel. Good features in the work in Year 11 include a high standard of observation using shape and light and dark tones and the readiness of many pupils to suggest ways of developing their work further in textiles and clay. Target setting motivates pupils well in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well on the GCSE course.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10 and 11 where the level of challenge and the involvement of the pupils in developing their ideas are particularly good. The good teaching of technical skills gives many pupils the confidence to explore different solutions to problems and a range of interpretations. This extends the range and quality of their learning when they interpret a self-portrait by silk-screen printing, clay relief or oil pastel. Regular feedback in lessons lets the pupils know how well they are doing. Homework is used well to develop earlier work completed in sketchbooks. The display of National Curriculum level descriptions tells pupils what they have achieved and how they can improve. Literacy skills are well taught but the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
96. Leadership is good. Challenging standards are set and the steps needed to bring about further improvement are well defined. Management is good. Teamwork is strong and the implementation of agreed policies is good. Data is used well to inform target setting, and procedures to track pupils' progress are in place. The display of artwork in the department and around the school make a significant contribution to their ethos.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work seen and in examinations are too low.
- Assessment is not used to monitor and evaluate progress and inform pupils of how well they are achieving.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject because of the strong relationships established in the classroom.
- The inadequate accommodation and lack of resources restricts what can be taught.

Commentary

97. Achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are below average. GCSE results have not improved since the last inspection. In Year 11, compositions are carefully developed but simplistic in style, reflecting a lack of musical invention and variety. Pupils

often struggle to notate their pieces or describe musical characteristics. Standards in Year 10 are better and closer to those usually heard nationally, especially, and significantly, amongst the boys. They demonstrate good rhythmic awareness when improvising as part of an ensemble. In Years 7 to 9, the boys are often more willing to answer questions and give musical opinions during lessons. The more competent pupils can play chord patterns accurately and improvise melodic fragments in small ensembles. They are able to apply previously learnt skills to other work. However, for all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs, their inability to use language accurately hinders their evaluation work. The lack of correct finger technique often impairs melodic fluency in keyboard pieces.

98. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. In lessons seen, it ranged from good to unsatisfactory. A strong feature in the good teaching is the good encouragement of pupils and their positive attitudes when working in paired and group situations. Short, focused activities are used well to reinforce pupils' learning. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lesson planning for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because it does not fully meet their needs. This results occasionally in pupils becoming disheartened by too difficult tasks or not being challenged sufficiently. The end of unsatisfactory lessons is sometimes rushed so pupils do not have time to look back on what they have done. Sometimes, the linking of different skills, including singing, is unsatisfactory. Accommodation and resource restrictions mean that some lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms where the varieties of musical activities taught are limited. There are insufficient resources, including computer equipment, so the department does not fulfil statutory requirements for ICT.
99. Leadership is currently unsatisfactory because of a lack of clear vision and direction for the department. However, there is a strong commitment to pupils' musical development. This is evident in the small number of extra-curricular activities, which are enjoyed by those who participate. Assessment is not being used with sufficient rigour and clarity to monitor pupils' progress. It is not used to make pupils aware of how they might improve the standard of their work. There has been uncertainty and discontinuity in staffing since the last inspection. Recently, there have been some significant improvements despite the meagre level of funding.

Drama

The quality of provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' personal and social skills in working together work well but weak communication skills, poor accommodation and meagre resources are barriers to raising standards.

Commentary

100. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Year 11 are below those usually seen in most schools nationally but higher than the well below average GCSE results in 2002. These were broadly similar to the pupils' results in their other subjects. Results in 2003 were similar. Given the pupils' lack of experience in the subject when they start the course, and their weak communication skills at the beginning of Year 10, they make satisfactory progress.
101. Strong features include the pupils' good personal and social skills that help them work well together and the challenging issues they are asked to explore which stimulate well their interest. These contribute much to their personal development. Consequently, they often make good progress in lessons. Their weak communication skills are the most significant barrier to higher standards.

102. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good subject knowledge promotes good planning and relationships in lessons are very good. This encourages good teamwork, interest and enjoyment. The pupils lack the skills and understanding to reflect upon their work, decide what works and then identify what needs to be improved.
103. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The commitment to raising standards and personal development is strong. Achieving this is hampered by the very poor accommodation, the lack of adequate resources and the limited extra-curricular opportunities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well below average GCSE results because of the unsatisfactory supervision of coursework.
- Good subject knowledge and the emphasis on the importance of good behaviour.
- The good relationships in lessons.
- Pupils work hard, get on well with each other in lessons but have too few opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative.
- The limited opportunities to participate in competitive sport.
- Poor accommodation and unsatisfactory resources have an adverse effect on learning.

Commentary

104. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are broadly similar to those seen in the majority of schools nationally. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, improving their basic skills and tactical awareness in a range of games. They understand how exercise affects their bodies. The standard of practical skills in Year 11 is in line with those found nationally but progress in the development of tactical awareness is unsatisfactory. The coursework and revision skills of the small number who study the GCSE course are weak.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It ranges from good to unsatisfactory. The good relationships in lessons result in good progress because everyone gets involved. Occasionally, learning objectives are not identified but, when they are shared, the pupils work well, with both enthusiasm and purpose. In Years 10 and 11, the teachers sometimes dominate the lesson, preventing pupils from showing initiative or taking the lead. The planning and management of homework are unsatisfactory in the GCSE course.
106. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The new leadership this term has quickly established strong team spirit. Day-to-day organisation is good. Serious weaknesses in resources and accommodation are a major barrier to the department's commitment to drive up standards.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Commentary

107. No subjects are reported in this area of the curriculum. Some of the work by pupils in Year 11 was analysed during the inspection. Standards are broadly similar to those seen nationally and achievement is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good features that help the pupils to make sound progress are the full coverage of topics in well-planned assignments and the pupils' sound note-making skills. Marking is regular and identifies promptly any significant areas of misunderstanding. It does not define sufficiently what the pupils need to do to improve the standard of their work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

The quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership in planning the introduction of the subject in Years 7 to 9 in line with identified priorities.
- The school council involves all pupils well in proposing and planning improvements in the school community.
- Unsatisfactory arrangements for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of participation and responsibility through community work.

Commentary

108. Achievement is satisfactory. It is good at Year 9 where standards are higher than those usually seen nationally because good leadership has driven rapid progress in establishing the subject. Standards in Year 11 are similar to those usually found nationally. The subject is not as well established as it is in Years 7 to 9 where the pupils can identify elements taught in their various lessons. Most pupils in Year 11 have good understanding of rights and responsibilities and can explain why rules are needed in a democratic society. They have a good knowledge of law and order and the role of the police. Many pupils are confident and articulate in discussion.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in Years 7 to 9 where most pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding about the operation of central and local government. Good planning and the good use of resources are strong features of the teaching in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is unsatisfactory because procedures are not in place and the intended standards for each year are not defined.
110. Good leadership and satisfactory management have resulted in rapid progress in establishing the subject in Years 7 to 9. Progress in Years 10 and 11 has been slower. Good features of management are evident in the provision of a range of additional activities to promote citizenship and in promoting social awareness and responsibility through the school council. The provision of local community activities is unsatisfactory.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	10	90	94.4	0	37.9	22.0	38.9
Spanish	1	100	87.5	0	36.1	20.0	35.9
Information and communication technology	11	9.1	78.2	0	20.6	1.8	28.5
Geography	9	66.7	88.3	11.1	36.4	22.2	36.3
History	6	100	91.8	0	37.2	36.7	37.8
Religious education	3	66.7	90.9	0	38.9	20.0	37.9
Law	9	88.9	83.2	33.3	32.5	36.7	33.6
Sociology	9	66.6	83.7	0	33.6	16.7	33.8
Psychology	11	72.8	83.4	18.2	32.3	27.3	33.4
Art	2	100	90.0	0	42.7	30.0	39.0

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
English literature	11	100	98.5	27.3	43.7	74.5	84.3
Communication studies	5	100	98.3	0	36.8	72.0	81.1
French*	4	100	96.2	25.0	46.1	85.0	83.0
Spanish*	4	100	96.2	25.0	47.3	70.0	83.6
Mathematics	3	100	93.3	100	52.2	100	84.7
Information and communication technology	7	85.7	89.1	0	22.4	48.6	64.1
Geography	4	100	97.1	0	40.5	55.0	80.9
History	8	100	97.1	50.0	41.0	87.5	81.2
Religious studies	5	100	96.3	60.0	44.0	88.0	82.2
Law	9	100	94.3	55.6	38.9	88.9	77.7
Social studies	15	100	94.3	33.3	38.9	77.3	77.7
Psychology	6	100	N/A	0	N/A	60.0	N/A
Engineering V	8	87.5	81.0	0	19.7	45.0	58.6
Art	3	100	96.1	0	33.3	48.7	85.1

Music	1	100	97.7	0	41.8	80.0	82.2
Business studies V	1	100	96.4	0	32.8	60.0	76.5

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies V+	7	86	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
Early Years V+	5	100	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The proportion of students who obtain the highest grades (A-B) is low.

Commentary

111. Standards of work seen during the inspection were higher than those usually seen nationally. These standards are reached because teaching is good, students' attitudes are very positive and teachers' expectations are very high. Achievement is satisfactory.
112. GCE A-level results in 2002 were above average. In the 2002 GCE examinations, nine out of ten AS-level English literature students attained C - E grades. Results improved in 2003, when one in five students attained the higher grades of A and B. In 2002, one out of ten A-level English literature students attained grades A and B. Nine out of ten students attained C - E grades. This was below the national average. The school's figures indicate that results declined in 2003. No students attained A and B grades.
113. Teaching and learning are good. The students respond well to the well-prepared and challenging materials. However, gifted and talented students need further challenge and support so that they can gain higher GCE grades. The use of talk is central to all lessons as teachers extend students' communication skills and encourage them to adopt a critical approach. Students enjoy speaking and listening. Most make significant contributions to oral work. They express their viewpoints and ideas clearly, explaining and illustrating them with evidence. They appreciate and criticise alternative interpretations put forward by other students. Year 13 students write effectively, showing control and great confidence when expressing their ideas. The skills of intellectual enquiry through research and effective questioning are used well in lessons.
114. Leadership and management are good. Planning for success is at the heart of the department's work. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

115. Standards are satisfactory. The reading skills of most students on GCE and vocational courses are good, enabling most to complete necessary research tasks. Some students are less confident in the planning and development of essays. Good skills in speaking and listening frequently support a good level of discussion in lessons. This supports good levels of understanding. There is no planned provision to monitor and evaluate the development and application of communication skills across the curriculum as part of the management of key skills.

French

116. French was sampled in the sixth form. For the first time in many years, the subject is being taught beyond Year 11. Overall provision is satisfactory. Two weeks into the course, standards are still below average. However, the desire of students to learn and their sense of

initiative ideally complement the thorough planning of lessons. Teachers responsible for the course are managing it satisfactorily. The capacity for improvement is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good because the very good relationships in lessons have a strong impact on the quality of learning.
- Very little use of ICT by teachers or students.

Commentary

117. Results in examinations have fluctuated considerably over the years. The GCE A-level results in mathematics were above average in 2002. They were lower in 2003 for which no validated national comparisons are currently available. The AS-levels results were well below average in 2003. The school's results in 2003 were similar to those in 2002.
118. Standards this term are higher than those usually seen nationally. Achievement is good. They are higher than at the time of the last inspection and reflect higher standards also on entry to the course. All students have the necessary, very competent algebraic manipulative skills. Standards in statistics, particularly probability theory, are higher than those found nationally.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers subject knowledge is very secure and informs challenging use of questions that results in the students asking probing questions themselves. Good questioning is used to challenge the students. As a result, they make good progress in understanding mathematical concepts. The emphasis on accuracy brings rigour to their work in the use of correct notation and vocabulary. Other features that have a strong impact on standards are the setting of challenging homework and marking that identifies the aspects for improvement and is linked to target setting. Motivation is high and students request challenging targets. A high level of confidence to succeed stems from the good relationships in lessons. Barriers to learning include the insufficient use of ICT and missed opportunities to use the graphing facilities of graphics calculators.
120. Leadership and management are good. Records are well maintained and programmes of work planned carefully to meet syllabus requirements. Sound reviews of performance, including the analyse of data, determine the value-added factor in students' performance.

Mathematics across the curriculum

121. There is no planned provision for the development of key skills. Consequently, the management of mathematical skills across the sixth form is not co-ordinated across subjects, and standards are not monitored or evaluated.

SCIENCE

122. No science subject was inspected in detail because, prior to this September, no courses were offered. GCE courses at AS-level are now taught in Year 12 and there is provision for a small number of students to take GCSE mathematics again. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A small number of lessons was sampled. Standards in AS-level physics, chemistry and biology are broadly similar to those usually found nationally at the start of the course. Students' subject files are well presented with coursework carefully marked. During observation, students measured the radius of curvature of a lens, demonstrated the difference between ionic and covalent bonding and successfully dissected a pig's heart.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

123. ICT was not inspected in detail. A small number of lessons were sampled. Teaching and learning were satisfactory but did not always challenge the students sufficiently. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the range of courses does not meet the diverse needs of the students and there is no co-ordination of the teaching of the necessary skills across other subjects and no provision for key skills.

ICT across the curriculum

124. Provision is unsatisfactory. There are limited opportunities for students to develop and apply these skills. There is no planned procedure to monitor and evaluate the impact of these skills on students' performance in their chosen subjects as part of the management of key skills.

HUMANITIES

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good relationships in lessons promote positive attitudes towards learning.
- Students' written work is rather brief and does not always reflect the complexity of issues studied.
- The links between the assessment of work and the national standards are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

125. The pattern of recent A level results has been below the national average with few students obtaining the highest grades A-B. Recent GCE A-level results in sociology are below the national averages. All students entered. Most students, the very large majority of whom are female, complete the course.
126. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 are significantly higher than the pattern of recent results. They are broadly similar to those seen nationally. Achievement is satisfactory. Year 13 students have a satisfactory grasp of key concepts but are less confident in their recall of theory. Year 12 students are making good progress. They have good analytical skills but conclusions and comments often lack sociological reference and context.
127. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teacher promotes discussion and debate and critical inquiry of issues such as deviance, race and ethnicity. Students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning as a consequence of this teaching approach.
128. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Line management accountability is currently unclear. Schemes of work have been well revised. Assessment is regularly conducted but the links to national standards are not secure. Resources are limited but do meet the present requirements for the subject.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned teaching motivates the students to learn well.
- Much improved monitoring and assessment based on the analysis of previous results.
- Unsatisfactory resources.

Commentary

129. Achievement is good. Standards are broadly in line with those usually found nationally and similar to those in the most recent GCSE results at A2-level in Year 13. They are higher in Year 12 than in the most recent AS-level examinations in which approximately only one half obtained a pass grade. This was because some students failed to attend regularly and did not take advantage of the good revision programme. Good induction to the course and more rigorous monitoring have remedied these weaknesses.
130. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learning is particularly good in Year 12 because the students are highly motivated to prepare well for lessons. Lessons concentrate on developing understanding and providing interesting, enjoyable, short practical tasks to obtain data and evaluate theories. The range, quality and availability of resources are unsatisfactory, with limited access to the Internet. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
131. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The best features are the new procedures for tracking progress and identifying promptly any sign of underachievement and the identification in the development plan of how best to use the new college facilities. The links between assessment procedures and national standards is unsatisfactory.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good retention rate on the AS-level course.
- Students achieve well with high standards in practical and fieldwork assignments.
- Good teaching provides a well-planned framework for learning.
- Unsatisfactory essay writing and independent learning skills.

Commentary

132. Achievement is good. Standards this term are broadly similar to those usually found nationally and higher than in the most recent, below average GCSE A2-level results. They are broadly similar in Year 12 to the most recent AS-level results which were in line with the national average. All results show an upward trend over the last four years.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Good teaching is driving standards up. Well-planned lessons provide a good framework for progress. Guidance in fieldwork methods is very good. Good features of the students' learning include their notetaking and research skills and their grasp of topics in both human and physical geography, including, for example, good understanding of urban development. They apply statistics well in the analysis of data. Their weak essay writing skills are a barrier to reaching the higher grades. Sometimes, their learning is too directed, affording too few opportunities to make decisions or work things out for themselves. Sometimes, the less confident students remain too passive and are not drawn into the lesson.
134. Leadership and management are good, setting high standards for both teaching and learning. Consequently, the subject is growing in popularity. The development of high quality resources is well managed. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

History

Overall provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and subject knowledge.
- Very good marking supports students' good progress.
- Good leadership and management.
- Insufficient opportunity to take stock at the end of the lesson of what has been learned.
- Not enough use of visits and visitors to broaden students' knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

135. Achievement is good. Standards are similar to those usually seen nationally and also to the most recent GCE results. Retention rates are good in this popular subject. The more competent students achieve very well. Most students demonstrate good essay skills when handling a range of evidence but they do not always strike the correct balance between knowledge and evaluation.
136. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The most powerful features are the teachers' very good subject knowledge that underpins the challenging use of questions, the development of historical study skills and the detailed marking which provides very good feedback to the students. Consequently, the rate of progress over time is good. Insufficient opportunity is afforded at the end of lessons for reflection and the evaluation of what has been learned.
137. Good leadership and management concentrate on assuring the consistent quality of teaching and learning by providing clear guidance on methods as well as the content of lessons and setting high expectations by good example. A strength of the subject is its commitment to ensuring that all students are enabled to learn and achieve. Staff and students respect this and respond well. Resources are good but the range of visits and visitors is unsatisfactory.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Engineering

Provision in engineering is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good-quality teaching, including the application of key skills.
- Good management of the course so that it meets students' needs well.
- Good assessment supports good achievement.
- The course meets well the needs of all students.
- Unsatisfactory provision for ICT.

Commentary

138. Achievement is good. Standards are satisfactory. Currently, only male students have chosen to follow this course.
139. The more competent and competent students apply practical and technical skills well and use well their good grasp of vehicle engine technology to analyse and discuss design

problems with each other and with visiting engineers. Less competent students can provide a final design solution with the potential to work and write valid conclusions that describe what has been achieved. All students value the course highly because they feel it is tailored to meet their needs.

140. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. High expectations inform lively and stimulating methods that use excellent subject knowledge and industrial expertise to pose probing questions and engage and motivate the students very well. Consequently, relationships in lessons are excellent. Assessment and marking provide the students with regular and accurate feedback and are well linked to the negotiated setting of targets.
141. Leadership and management are good, particularly well illustrated in the strong links with the local engineering community and in the development of key skills. Teamwork is strong. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The provision of computer-aided design and manufacture is currently unsatisfactory.

BUSINESS

Provision in business is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained are lower than those usually found nationally.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it provides too few links with business and other employers.
- Unsatisfactory provision for ICT.

Commentary

142. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards this term are similar to those in the below average results in 2002. The range of performance is wide. Good features include the understanding of different aspects of business and skills of research, organisation and presentation of work. Standards in the work seen, particularly that of those who completed Year 12, reflect the wide range of attainment of students. Less competent students' analytical skills are weak. The discussion of theory lacks illustrative practical references. Lower attaining students lack analytical skills and do not provide enough practical detail to support their discussion of theory. Standards therefore remain below average.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Progress in lessons is good. Good subject knowledge is used well to challenge students to think. Good features of the students' learning are the regular opportunity to take the lead in discussion, activities that promote teamwork, tasks that develop research skills and opportunities to develop the skills of analysis in the presentation of arguments. The coursework of some less competent students is weak.
144. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good features include the management of coursework arrangements to nip underachievement in the bud. Within the sound procedures for assessment, the feedback arrangements are insufficiently detailed to meet the requirements of the higher grades. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. Links with local businesses are insufficient. The department has only recently subscribed to the local business enterprise partnership.

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	4	4
How inclusive the school is		4
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	5	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well pupils learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		5
Accommodation and resources	3	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	5
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	5
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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