

INSPECTION REPORT

JOSEPH WHITAKER SCHOOL

Mansfield

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122886

Headteacher: Mr J P Loughton

Lead inspector: Mrs G Kayembe

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th October 2003

Inspection number: 259243

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

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ERRATUM

Due to recent revision of Ofsted guidance on evaluation of governance, the judgement in the report which identifies overall governance as unsatisfactory no longer pertains. **Under the revised guidelines, governance is judged to be good.** Though there are some statutory requirements that are not met, the governors are aware of them. They have been, and are, working hard to ensure that these requirements are fully met. For example, a sub-committee was formed to look at how the school could ensure religious education was provided in the sixth form. This went some way to providing a solution, though more work needs to be done to produce schemes of work and ensure enough time is allocated to it. Issues of accommodation hinder efforts to provide an act of collective worship on a daily basis for all pupils. In other respects, the inspection found the governing body to be effective and to provide a strong role in strategic development and in monitoring the overall performance of the school. Hence, it is appropriate that the overall judgement on governance is **good**.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1280
School address:	Warsop Lane Rainworth Mansfield Nottinghamshire
Postcode:	NG21 OAG
Telephone number:	01623 792327
Fax number:	01623 792419
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Wakefield
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a larger than average secondary school serving three village communities, two of them being ex-mining villages, near Mansfield. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds but, overall, social and economic backgrounds reflect national norms and the school has a comprehensive intake. The proportion eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Whilst the vast majority of the intake is of white British heritage, about two per cent are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Virtually all these students are fluent in English, and there are only one or two beginners. The proportion of students who have identified special educational needs is average, though the proportion with statements is well below average. Attainment on entry to the school is in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science but more variable, often low, in other subjects. The school has a strong reputation in the local community and is oversubscribed. It is in the process of seeking Sports College status and currently has the Artsmark, Careermark and Sportsmark awards. The school took part in a national pilot of the literacy, numeracy and science strands of the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2901	Mrs G Kayembe	Lead inspector	
9779	Ms S Smith	Lay inspector	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team inspector	English
20832	Dr M Galowalia	Team inspector	Science English as an additional language
31879	Mr D Rhodes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31688	Mr B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design
12331	Ms V Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology Special educational needs
22849	Dr R Catlow	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
14633	Ms J Bannister	Team inspector	History
31687	Ms H Singh	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
23323	Dr J Harvey	Team inspector	Music
23030	Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
20719	Ms A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education
3735	Mr A Webb	Team inspector	Physics (sixth form)
30746	Mrs J Woolley	Team inspector	Vocational health and social care
12191	Mr C Moxley	Team inspector	English (sixth form) Drama (sixth form)
17279	Mr D Barry	Team inspector	Sociology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school which enables students to achieve well and grow into responsible and mature young people by the time they leave. Individuals are valued and very well supported, for example, all Year 11 students are mentored by senior staff. Leadership by the headteacher and other staff with responsibilities is good because it places due emphasis on high standards. Management is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and **the school provides good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a positive ethos which helps to promote students' very good attitudes.
- Teaching is good in most subjects and makes a significant contribution to students' good achievement.
- Girls are achieving significantly better than boys.
- The headteacher provides good leadership, which ensures a clear direction for development.
- Governors work well in partnership with the school and monitor performance well. However, governance is unsatisfactory overall as statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education are not met.
- The provision for design and technology and physical education is very good.
- Though provision in most subjects is good, there are variations in standards and achievement across subjects, especially in Years 10 to 11.
- Though management is satisfactory overall, there are some weaknesses, such as insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching or development of use of computers.
- The support, advice and guidance given to students are very good and make a significant contribution to their academic development.
- There are too few learning support assistants for students with special educational needs.

The school has improved well since the last inspection. Teaching is better and achievement is now good in most subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources have significantly improved. Though there are still a few subjects which do not make sufficient use of assessment, procedures are good and most subjects use National Curriculum or GCSE criteria well to assess work and provide constructive feedback to students. Leadership roles of subject heads are much improved, though aspects of management still require further attention. The requirements for a daily act of collective worship and provision of religious education in the sixth form continue to breach legal requirements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE examinations	D	B	C	A
Year 13	A/AS-level examinations		D	D	

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

Achievement is good throughout the school. Standards in current Year 9 are above average. They are above average in English, mathematics and science where they reflect the results of the National tests for 14-year-olds. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 due to good use of target setting and good teaching. By Year 11, standards are average and on line to improve as the good improvements in attainment lower down the school work their way up. Achievement is good in Years 10 to 11 and, in many subjects, attainment is above average by Year 11. However, there is greater variation in the performance of different subjects, and in food technology, French, German, health and social care and ICT, achievement is only just satisfactory with room for improvement.

Attainment in the sixth form is above average and achievement good. A few years ago, boys performed better than girls, but girls across the school now outperform boys, in line with national trends, but often by a greater margin than nationally. The small numbers of students from minority ethnic groups achieve well and, in the sixth form, are often amongst the highest achievers.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, though opportunities for spiritual development are limited. Attitudes are very good. Behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good. Relationships within the school are harmonious and students from minority ethnic backgrounds are integrated well into the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, particularly in the sixth form. Lessons are well planned, though match of work to individual students' needs is underdeveloped. Curricular provision is satisfactory. The range of courses available in Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form is good, but more needs to be done to promote wider choice for lower attainers. Subjects are making at least some use of ICT, but many are not using it extensively enough. Enrichment activities are good and pastoral care is strong. Students receive very good advice and guidance based on monitoring of their academic progress. Partnership with parents is good and links with the community very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good and management satisfactory. Senior staff are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses, but the drive to systematically pursue and manage change has not been as strong. In part, this has been due to staffing difficulties but, variations in performance across subjects, particularly at GCSE level, are also due to variations in the quality of management of subject leaders. The work of the governing body is good for the most part. They too are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in its work. However, governance is unsatisfactory overall as some statutory requirements are not met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS

Parents show strong support for the school and their views are very positive. In particular, they feel that teaching is strong and that the school is well led and managed. Students are happy at the school and are positive about most aspects of school life and the educational provision.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Close the gap in performance between different subjects by improving the management in subjects where it is weaker and addressing the remaining staffing issues.
- Develop school-wide strategies to improve boys' achievement.
- Provide sufficient support staff to meet the needs of students with special educational needs.

To meet statutory requirements:

- Provide enough time to meet requirements in religious education in the sixth form.
- Ensure there is provision for a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Include required information in the school prospectus and annual governors' report to parents.

SIXTH FORM SUMMARY

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good sixth form, and it is cost-effective. It has improved well since the last inspection and standards are rising. Examination results were below average in 2002 and rose in 2003 to be close to the 2002 national average. Current attainment is above average. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Students achieve well and good leadership and management in the sixth form ensure there is good focus on personal as well as academic development of students.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good overall and much is very good.
- Standards are above average and students' achievement is good.
- Good leadership and management ensure a positive and vibrant ethos in the sixth form.
- Though there is a wide choice of courses, there is little provision for lower ability students.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education or the national requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
- Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum through visits and visitors and participating in extra-curricular activities, particularly sporting events, are good.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English language and combined language and literature. Teaching and learning are good. Students in Year 13 achieve well and reach above average standards.
Mathematics	Very good. Achievement is very good and A-level examination results have been consistently high or very high for many years. However, students could make more use of computers.
Science	Good in physics where enthusiastic and committed teachers have maintained good examination results over time. Students achieve satisfactorily, but less confident students do not participate fully in lessons. Teaching and learning seen in chemistry and biology ranged from satisfactory to very good.
Information and communication technology	Good in AVCE ICT. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and students are reaching above average standards of work.

Humanities	Good in history where students are taught well and achieve well, and good in sociology where standards are average but achievement is good. A-level results in geography improved significantly in 2003, going from below or well below average in previous years to well above average.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in graphics product design. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well, reaching high standards. Work seen in electronics product design was of an equally high standard.
Visual and performing arts	Very good in drama where lively teaching promotes good achievement and students give polished performances. Work in art and design is highly creative and visually captivating.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Teaching and learning seen in sports studies were very good . Examination results in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation are low and a high proportion fail to complete the course.
Business	No work was seen or lessons sampled in this area.
Health and social care	Satisfactory in health and social care . Teachers form good relationships with students which help to motivate and enthuse students. However, standards of work are well below average though achievement is satisfactory. The drop-out rate is high.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good support, guidance and advice, though the use of assessment information to set ongoing targets is not routine in all subjects. Very good support is given to students to help them prepare applications for a university place. Systems for identifying underperformance or drops in attendance levels are very effectively used to keep students on track with their work. Guidance onto courses is generally very thorough so that there is very little non-completion of courses, with the exception of vocational courses, such as health and social care, where students are not made sufficiently aware beforehand of the demands of the course.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is good monitoring of performance, and examination results are carefully analysed. There is a clear vision for development and improvement and a well co-ordinated tutor system to support monitoring of students' work. There is good equality of opportunity and a continued drive to improve standards. Governors have a good overview of sixth-form provision and are involved in key decisions on future development. Spending on the sixth form is carefully monitored to ensure its cost-effectiveness.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views about the school are positive. They are happy to be here and feel that they are taught well and given good support and guidance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall standards are above average by Year 9 and in the sixth form, and average by Year 11. Achievement is good throughout the school, but girls are performing better than boys and the gap between their results in external tests and examinations is wider than the gap nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, achievement is good throughout the school.
- Standards of attainment are above average in English, mathematics and science by Year 9 and results in national tests in these subjects have improved at a faster rate than nationally.
- Achievement in design and technology, physical education and Spanish is very good leading to high standards of attainment.
- Boys are not performing as well as girls.
- Students' performance in vocational subjects is low and achievement not as good as in other subjects.
- In some subjects, there is scope for able students to achieve better.
- Standards of work in French are below average.

Commentary

1. Students begin secondary schooling with average attainment in English, mathematics and science. However, they lack essential skills and sufficient background knowledge and depth of understanding in most other subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.8 (32.4)	33.3 (33)
mathematics	35.7 (33.7)	34.7 (34.4)
science	33.6 (32.3)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 235 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The results of national tests for students in Year 9 have shown a strong trend of improvement over the last few years. By 2002, results were above average. 2003 results are also above average. The school's involvement in piloting the National Key Stage 3 Strategy in literacy, numeracy and science has contributed to raising standards across Years 7 to 9, not only in the core subjects, but across most subjects. Standards of work in English, mathematics and science are above average and students achieve well in all three subjects across Years 7 to 9. Standards are also above average in design and technology and physical education and achievement is very good. In geography, by Year 9, students reach attainment levels that are slightly above average. Attainment in the remaining subjects is broadly in line with national norms and achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good, with the exception of French and ICT where standards are below and students achieve barely satisfactorily, particularly in French.
3. There is greater variation in standards in Years 10 to 11 as the improvements seen lower down in the school are still working their way up through the school. Students' overall performance at GCSE in 2002 was broadly in line with the national average. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was below. Students' performance in 2003 was much improved and a greater proportion gained five or more GCSEs at the higher

grades. In 2002, there was considerable variation in GCSE results between subjects and, though this variation was less marked in 2003, it is clear that some subjects are not doing as well as others, and often it is boys' results that are significantly lower than those of girls. Results were particularly good in physical education, English language and English literature, geography, biology, chemistry, music, electronics, graphics and resistant materials. In the latter three subjects, results have been consistently high for the last two or three years. Results in food technology, French and German were low, and were very low in ICT, child development, and textiles, though in the case of the last three, staff absence was a significant factor. Performance in vocational subjects was also on the weak side due to a combination of the low prior attainment of students taking the course and issues in staffing which resulted in key aspects of provision lacking the rigour to improve attainment and achievement. Though students who take up a vocational GCSE tend to be lower attainers, they should, nonetheless, be able to attain better results. GCSE results in drama were high.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	42.6 (45.2)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88.8 (92.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (97.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	33.8 (n/a)	33.9 (n/a)

There were 197 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Inspection evidence indicates some further improvement in standards and achievement as indicated by the GCSE results of 2003. Standards in ICT and German are now in line with national averages by Year 11, though attainment in French, food technology and health and social care remains below. No lessons or work were seen in child development and only limited observation was made of leisure and tourism, hence no judgement can be made on current standards in these courses.
5. Standards of work in English and mathematics are above average by Year 11 and achievement is good. In science, standards are broadly average and achievement satisfactory. Students' attainment is above average in Spanish, physical education, geography, design and technology, and is particularly high in graphics and electronics. In the remaining subjects, attainment is average. Students achieve very well in most aspects of design and technology, physical education and Spanish, and well in most other subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in ICT and health and social care, whilst in French, achievement is barely satisfactory. In food technology, achievement is not as good as it should be given students' prior attainment.
6. In many subjects, it is noticeable that boys across the school are not doing as well as girls and, where subjects group students by ability, the lower sets tend to be dominated by boys whilst the top groups have much higher proportions of girls than of boys. The small numbers of students from minority ethnic groups are achieving well. The one beginner in English is making good progress in learning it as well as making effective progress in other subject areas. In most subjects, there is little difference in the achievements of students of varying ability, however, there are some exceptions. Though overall achievement is good in geography and music, there is scope for more able students to achieve better. This is also the case on occasion in history. In contrast, in mathematics, able students achieve very well and better than students of average ability, particularly boys.
7. Students' individual education plans have recently been updated, and not all staff have received copies. As there is no school-based analysis of how well students with special educational needs have done against the targets set, there is insufficient evidence to determine their overall progress towards these targets. However, within subjects, most students with special

educational needs are making at least satisfactory progress and often good progress. Their progress is much improved where they are supported by additional trained staff, especially where the level of need is high, or provided with work that is matched to their needs and prior attainment. However, both these occurrences are relatively rare.

Sixth Form

- Standards of attainment when students begin in the sixth form are currently broadly average. In the 2002 A-level examinations, students overall results were below average, though girls did much better and their results were above the average of girls nationally. Boys' results were well below average.

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	96.1 (92.2)	94.3 (89.8)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	35.5 (31.7)	42.0 (37.9)
Average point score per student	211.9 (n/a)	263.3(n/a)

There were 31 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The overall performance in 2003 based on average point scores per student was better than in 2002 and the pass rate was 100 per cent. The percentage of entries gaining grades A/B was a little higher than the 2002 national average, indicating good improvement overall on the 2002 results. A-level results have consistently been very good in mathematics, design and technology and physics. In English, results have fluctuated between being well below average and above. In 2003, they were high as was the case in geography, where results in previous years had consistently been low. Results in vocational subjects were low in 2002 and 2003.
- Inspection evidence indicates that the trend of improvement is continuing. Attainment is above average by the time students reach Year 13 and achievement is good. In mathematics and design and technology subjects, achievement is very good and standards reached by students are well above average. This is consistent with the high-level performance of both subjects in A-level examinations over past years. Achievement in drama is also very good, particularly in relation to drama performance. However, in vocational health and social care, achievement is only satisfactory and standards are well below average. This is often because students have unrealistic expectations of the course but also because support for portfolio work is not well enough developed. Achievement is satisfactory in physics. Standards of work are average for current Year 13 students in physics, though Year 12 students are on line to reach higher standards.
- Girls are doing better than boys, and this was reflected in the examination results for 2003. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, though few in number, do well, and are often amongst the highest attainers.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to school are very good and they enjoy their work. They usually respect and get on well with their teachers and each other. This, together with good levels of attendance, has a positive impact on the progress they make. Students value the acknowledgement of their achievements and the activities provided outside lessons. Behaviour is usually good, contributing well to an effective learning environment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn well because they like school, enjoy their work and have good relationships with their teachers.
- Attendance has improved; it is now good across the school and has a positive impact on learning.
- Students develop into mature and responsible adults by the time they reach Year 13.
- Moral and social development of students is good.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.4
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	1.2

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

12. Most students like coming to school and this has contributed to improving levels of attendance that are now good. Most arrive punctually ensuring the school day gets off to a good start. A few students have less positive attitudes to school and are sometimes absent unnecessarily. The school works well with the education welfare service to develop effective relationships with families, and this is having a positive impact on attendance levels. Procedures to record attendance and to identify and follow up unexplained absence are thorough. They ensure parents are aware of the high priority given to their children's presence in school.
13. Nearly all students enjoy their lessons, showing very good levels of interest and commitment to their work. The high levels of mutual respect between them and their teachers lead to effective co-operation in lessons which supports learning well. Although independent learning skills are not well developed on entry to the school, students respond positively to lessons planned to provide opportunities for this. Students say they find school a happy and friendly place to be. They value the range of activities provided for them outside lessons. They get on well with each other, showing thoughtfulness and care towards their peers. There is a good degree of racial harmony. Students are usually polite, well mannered and respect the school environment. The immature behaviour of a few, most often boys in Years 10 and 11, is managed well and usually without disrupting learning for others. Exclusion is used only as a last resort and, on their return, students are supported well, with recourse to specialist help where needed. Students are aware of the few cases of bullying and express confidence in the way the school deals with these. Year 7 students particularly value the support they receive from sixth-formers.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1280	62	1
1	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

14. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, though it is good for social and moral development. The weekly assemblies provide worthwhile opportunities for considering moral and social issues but the school does not comply with the regulation to provide a daily act of worship for all students. There are very good opportunities in religious education, English, music and drama for reflection on the meaning and purpose of life but, elsewhere in the curriculum, opportunities are underdeveloped. The school develops students' understanding of right and wrong well through numerous opportunities for discussing moral issues in subjects such as personal, social and health education, geography, history and science. There is a clear code of conduct which is applied with equity. This fairness is reflected in the way students respect each other and the school facilities. Students have numerous opportunities to develop their social skills through paired and group work and the many sporting, musical and dramatic activities on offer. Their capacity to work well together is a reflection of the effectiveness of these opportunities. Students are also good at taking on responsibilities, such as being a school council representative for their form. There is a narrow range of heritages represented in the school and insufficient opportunity to learn how people in more ethnically diverse areas of the country live so as to prepare students for life in a culturally diverse United Kingdom. Opportunities to learn about other European cultures occur through the study of languages and visits abroad.
15. The majority of students with special educational needs attend regularly. Those who do not are usually the older students. Every effort is now made to provide these older students with a curriculum that is tailored to their needs. The majority of these students have a very positive attitude to school and to learning, behave well and have clear aspirations for their future.

Sixth Form

16. Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes to learning and develop good relationships with their teachers and with one another. Most students take an active part in activities the school has to offer outside lessons and are particularly pleased with the sporting activities. By the time students are in Year 13, they have developed into mature and responsible young people who show concern for the welfare of others, for example through their involvement with fund-raising activities and active support of students lower down in the school. The sixth-form committee is very active in organising activities, social and educational, for their fellow sixth-form students. During the inspection, Year 12 students were electing members to serve on the committee with very good advice and guidance from the outgoing Year 13 committee members. The committee is a good voice for students' needs, and represents their views well to the head of sixth form and the senior management team.
17. Sixth-form students have equally positive attitudes to their studies and approach these with maturity and commitment. They collaborate well in lessons, though teachers do at times miss opportunities to promote group work or independent study. Most students use their study time wisely and make good use of the private study facilities, library or computers to support their learning. Overall, the personal development, attitudes and behaviour of sixth-formers are good.
18. Attendance in the sixth form is good and punctuality satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. It is particularly good in relation to the quality of teaching and the very good level of academic support and guidance provided to students. Students themselves say that they are well supported.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is good and most teachers identify learning aims or outcomes clearly for students so that they know what they are expected to learn.
- Questioning is used well in most lessons to probe and further develop students' understanding.
- In many lessons, work is not sufficiently well matched to the varying needs of students in the lesson.
- Able students are sometimes not stretched sufficiently, and lower attainers, especially those with special educational needs, are not provided with sufficient additional support.
- Teaching and learning are very good in design and technology, physical education and Spanish.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 182 lessons.

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2)	43 (24)	90 (49)	40 (22)	4 (2)	2 (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.

19. The overall quality of teaching is good and this has a positive impact on learning and on students' good achievement. Most students and their parents agree that teaching is good and helps them to make good progress. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects and very good in design and technology, physical education and Spanish. In design and technology and physical education, the strong leadership and management by the heads of faculty have had a significant impact on driving up standards and on supporting teams to develop high quality teaching. In Spanish, a new head of subject has made a powerful impact on standards by providing high quality teaching and learning; lessons move at a fast pace and the foreign language is used assiduously in class. Activities are imaginative and provide students with very good opportunities to practise all the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. They soak up new language and grammar. In contrast, in French and German, teaching is only satisfactory, often because the pace is rather mediocre, there is over reliance on text books and the foreign language is not used extensively enough. As a result, students are not learning as well as they are in Spanish. Teaching in ICT is also satisfactory. Though planning is good, lessons proceed at a slow pace and activities do not allow students to explore or develop their thinking and problem-solving skills at a faster rate.
20. Good teaching in science in Years 7 to 9 has effectively promoted good achievement. However, teaching in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory because of one or more of the following factors: teachers talk for too long; there is insufficient match of work to students' needs; work is undemanding; lessons are not summed up effectively enough or there is insufficient use of models and examples to develop key scientific ideas.

21. The school's involvement in piloting the Key Stage 3 Strategy in literacy, numeracy and science has helped planning across the school and, in most lessons, learning outcomes or aims are clearly shared with students. Hence, they are actively involved in ensuring that these objectives are met. In most subjects, good use is made of the three-part lesson to structure students' learning. Questioning is probing in most subjects and across the school. Students are questioned well to find out what they know and to develop their thinking further.
22. Students respond well to the many opportunities for group work or to work on their own. They make good progress, becoming more self-reliant and learning from one another through debate and discussion.
23. Whilst in most lessons work matches the needs of the majority of students in that lesson, it is rare to see teachers providing different work for students of differing ability in the same class. Effective support from teachers for individuals enables most to achieve well in lessons that are good or better. However, there are occasions when some groups of students do not achieve as well as they could. For example, undemanding work for able students in geography and music means they do not always have enough to do and are not sufficiently stretched. On occasion, in history, those who finish class work quickly are not challenged to think further. Where students with special educational needs receive additional adult support in lessons, they make good progress. In other lessons, their progress depends on the amount of individual support that the teacher is able to provide. Students are withdrawn to receive individual tuition for dyslexia. This is successful, because the course is tailored to their needs, and the assistants move students on quickly.
24. High expectations play a very positive role in enabling students to achieve well to develop their problem-solving skills in, for example, design and technology and mathematics, and to explore new ideas and creativity in art and design, English and music. Teachers also successfully promote the development of enquiry skills in subjects such as geography, history and religious education.
25. The use of target setting is well developed in many subjects, and students, in most instances, are clear about what they need to do to achieve their targets or improve their work, especially when aspiring to raise their GCSE grades. However, in some cases, students, mostly in Years 7 to 9, are not provided with clear enough information about the levels they are working at. For example, in design and technology, science and modern foreign languages, National Curriculum criteria are not used well to share with students where they are and what they need to do to move to the next level or consolidate the level they are at. In most subjects, teachers use assessment information well to support curricular planning, though this needs improvement in geography and music. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent across the curriculum. In some subjects, it is thorough and detailed in others it provides too little information to students on what they need to do to improve.
26. Assessment arrangements for students with special educational needs are satisfactory. Records from the primary schools form the basis of students' initial identification, along with data derived from all tests. Students are also given specific tests, from which the areas of special need can be determined, such as dyslexia. Within departmental meetings, teachers voice concern over individual students, and notes of these concerns are communicated to the special educational needs co-ordinator.

Sixth Form

27. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and, in the great majority of lessons observed, about 85 per cent, was good or better. Only one lesson was less than satisfactory. Most lessons are rigorously planned and teachers' subject knowledge is often well or very well used to enhance the learning experiences of students by drawing out relevant examples, providing expositions which give deeper insights into subject-specific ideas/concepts. Most students agree that they are taught well.

28. On occasion, lessons are too teacher led or directed giving students insufficient opportunities to contribute or take an active part. In these instances, learning, though satisfactory, is not as good as it could be.
29. Whilst assessment and marking are generally good, there is an inherent weakness in the lack of a rigorous system for analysing value added and for analysing how well the curriculum in different areas meets the needs of different groups of students. The school is about to remedy this with the introduction of a commercial system marketed by a well-known university. The system needs to be implemented quickly in order to provide vital additional information to heads of faculty and department and to work with the other forms of assessment information currently available. Teachers are well informed about the examination requirements and the criteria associated with different grades. This information is very effectively shared with students in most lessons as an integral part of teaching and learning. Information about prior attainment, such as GCSE grades, is effectively used to set appropriate targets for students.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and meets the broad statutory requirements. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is supported well by good staffing and resources. The citizenship curriculum is not fully covered. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular opportunities in sport, art and design, drama and music are very good.
- The school's programme of visits and visitors is good.
- The students are given good advice for future education and there is a good work-experience programme as well as good links with universities for sixth-form students.
- A broad range of academic courses is on offer for students in Years 10 to 13.
- Though ICT requirements are met, many subjects do not make enough use of computers.
- The gifted and talented students are not identified as a specific cohort nor given extra provision.
- The National Curriculum in citizenship is still being developed.
- There are some good vocational courses for a minority of students in Year 10. However, the range available to all students needs to be widened, with improved co-ordination and guidance.

Commentary

30. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 has some strengths and some weaknesses. Drama is taught in addition to the normal subjects and helps to develop students' speaking and listening and social skills. There is good provision for students with special educational needs but too few support staff to meet all of the students' needs. National Curriculum citizenship is not yet taught in full. Whilst ICT meets National Curriculum requirements, there has been too little movement forward in the teaching of these skills in individual subjects. It is very good in design and technology.
31. Students choose from a wide range of GCSE options and vocational options in health and social care and leisure and tourism. In addition, there are some pre-vocational courses for a small number of students who have difficulty coping with a full range of GCSEs. The pre-vocational courses provide well for the students, are well co-ordinated and students' progress is tracked effectively. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory and an annual review establishes where things might be improved.
32. The current arrangements for placing students in sets according to their ability are not effective for lower ability boys. There are few girls in the lower sets and the curriculum and teaching are

not always suited to these boys' needs. The school intends to improve motivation through including further vocational courses which have equivalent status to GCSEs.

33. Students receive full information about the optional subjects, including the views of existing students. The careers advice programme is well thought out, and work experience for Year 10 students makes good use of local businesses. The students are not always aware of all the choices available to them at local colleges.
34. Students who are gifted and talented have not been formally identified by the school. No specific official programme or monitoring policy exist for these students.
35. All students with special educational needs receive their full National Curriculum entitlement. The newly-organised work-related curriculum for students in Year 10 effectively meets the particular needs of some of these students who need a different school experience. Withdrawal sessions for specialist tuition are well organised. The school has committed and experienced teacher assistants. There are, however, too few to meet the needs of all with special educational needs. Relatively small class sizes across the school help teachers to support effectively and give additional attention in lessons to many students with special educational needs. However, there are a minority with specific needs who require additional adult support. This is where the lack of sufficient teaching assistants has an adverse impact. Students with statements are well supported and have good access to the curriculum.
36. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. Citizenship is being taught mainly through the programme for personal, social and health education. This limits the amount of coverage of National Curriculum requirements. Though the school has carried out an audit of where citizenship objectives are already being covered in subjects, it has yet to draw up a clear scheme of work to ensure that all aspects are fully covered.
37. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There is an extensive and very popular sports programme. Older students and a student from the disability unit of Nottingham University help in many lessons. This leads to improved skills and motivation. Good use is made of local clubs to provide coaching and to encourage students to continue physical activity after leaving school. This is especially evident in the Healthy School's programme where innovative courses are run for students who are less inclined towards physical exercise. Students taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award help in local primary schools. Drama and music extra-curricular programmes combine well to give many students the opportunity to perform in school productions. The quality of choral work is very good. Students are able to further their interests in a good range of art clubs. Fieldwork extends students' learning in geography, and the school arts week makes a positive contribution to the students' cultural and social development. There are missed opportunities for extra-curricular or enrichment activities in one or two subjects.
38. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good. There are sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum but the provision of support staff is unsatisfactory. Accommodation in most subject areas is satisfactory; in physical education and modern foreign languages, it is very good because it is spacious, well maintained and has a positive impact on teaching and learning. In design and technology, workshops have been refurbished recently and they now provide adequate space for theory and practical design activities. In history, accommodation is unsatisfactory as there are only three classrooms for four teachers and two are separated by such a thin partition that noise interferes with the adjoining class.
39. Resources are good. In physical education, students have access to good equipment, especially in athletics, which was an issue in the last inspection. Teachers make good use of videos, CD-Roms and ICT-based presentations to enhance learning in many subject areas. However, the range, variety and suitability of books in the library are unsatisfactory. The library is too small for a school of this size. In music and mathematics, ICT resources are

unsatisfactory though, overall, ICT provision has improved considerably since the last inspection and ICT accommodation and resources are now good for teaching and learning.

40. The match of staffing to the National Curriculum requirements is good. Most departments have well-qualified and experienced staff who possess appropriate subject knowledge and skills that enable them to teach effectively in their own specialist areas. However, the provision of technical and learning support staff is unsatisfactory. This has a detrimental impact on teaching and learning in practical subjects and for students with special educational needs.

Sixth Form

41. The curriculum provided is satisfactory overall. It is good in terms of the breadth of courses, although requirements for religious education and for a daily act of collective worship are not met. The range of courses on offer to students in the sixth form is wide and includes a number of vocational subjects as well as many academic ones. However, as with students in Years 10 to 11, the range of vocational subjects available to students of all abilities needs to be widened, with improved co-ordination, guidance and identified progression routes.
42. The enrichment programmes and extra-curricular activities provided to sixth-form students are good overall, and very good with respect to sporting activities. Sixth-form students are involved in organising some of their own activities and this helps to promote their independence and organisational skills.
43. Accommodation and resources are good. The sixth-form centre is a hub of activity and provides good space for private study as well as rooms for lessons and tutorials.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a good level of care, welfare and protection for its students. There are good procedures in place to meet health and safety requirements, although the application of some of these is not up to date. Positive relationships, a strong pastoral system and access to specialist support ensure the very large majority of students feel confident of help when problems arise. Advice and guidance for academic development are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High priority is given to the care and protection of students.
- Academic guidance provided to students across the school is very good.
- Good relationships with staff, together with access to specialist support, ensure students have access to help when needed.
- Although no unsafe practice was observed during the inspection, some health and safety inspection procedures are not up to date.

Commentary

44. The care and protection of students are given high priority. Staff know students well and are alert to their responsibilities. The school works well with outside agencies when this is needed. The personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) raises awareness about issues that could affect students' personal safety or health. Students usually like and trust their teachers and this enables them to ask for help and share concerns. First-aid procedures are effective and the administration of prescribed medicines is effectively supervised. Safety in lessons is given suitable priority and the school has well-set-out procedures for health and safety that fully meet requirements. The use of those related to testing appliances is not up to date and some of the documentation relating to the assessments of risk the school has carried out has not been completed.

45. Students receive very good advice, support and guidance, particularly for their academic development. Students are confident that if they have a problem or worry they can go to their tutors or teachers knowing there is someone they can talk to. In discussion, many say they are not aware of any aggression or bullying, despite the high number who identified it as a concern in the questionnaire. They think this is a good school.
46. The school makes very good use of assessment information to inform tutors and others about students' progress. Comprehensive information is presented in a helpful format so that tutors have a complete academic profile of every individual which they can supplement with information of their own as necessary. Tutors are shown in visual form how different students are likely to prefer to learn and how teachers might best cater for different needs. They can also tell what expectations the school has of their students so that progress towards those targets can be checked regularly and action taken if necessary. This may involve booster classes or, for older students, attachment to a personal mentor. Parents are contacted if necessary and involved with the programme for their children. There are good links between teachers, tutors and heads of year to enable discussion about individual students and appropriate action to follow. The result is that students are well supported and say so themselves.
47. Students benefit from a well-planned induction programme at the end of Year 6 that ensures they settle quickly into school in Year 7. Events such as school visits with parents, the summer school, sporting activities and concerts are followed by meetings for parents with tutors early in Year 7. Students say they have settled happily into school life. They like school and appreciate the considerate treatment they receive from teachers and older students, particularly sixth-formers. The clearly defined social areas for year groups help to create a family atmosphere. Parents, too, consider these arrangements are a strength of the school.
48. The programme for careers or further study guidance is good. It begins in Year 7 and continues through Year 11. Students have good information about options and about education and training after Year 11. Visits to university take place in Years 9 and 11.
49. Students with special educational needs are very well prepared for the next stage of education or employment, with the support of outside agencies. However, the school does not provide sufficient adult support for all students with special educational needs, not only in lessons, but also outside the taught day, in the form of areas where they can work with support, such as homework clubs.
50. The school has very few students who are beginners in English but ensures that individual needs are catered for as and when they arise.
51. There is a well-established student council that ensures views from across the age range are explored fully. Where possible, the school responds favourably to requests and recommendations made. If this is not possible, students are made aware of the reasons. Strong year group identities are fostered well through the provision made for social areas, and heads of year support requests from students where possible, for example, when students wished to raise money for an audio system in their social area.

Sixth Form

52. The advice, guidance and support for sixth-form students are good overall. Students themselves feel that they are well supported and guided. They are given a good level of information on sixth-form courses when making choices in Year 11, and all who express a desire to join the sixth form are interviewed. This ensures that the vast majority make appropriate choices, and this is reflected in the relatively low drop-out rate in almost all courses. Where the school needs to improve its guidance is on the vocational courses to ensure that students are clear about the demands as, currently, a number drop out because they find the courses too challenging.

53. Students have good access to careers advice and to personal advisors from the Connexions service. Very good support is given by the head of sixth form and form tutors on completing applications for university places; a route the majority of students take.
54. Target setting and monitoring of individual students' progress is routine and the internal 'alerts' system works well to identify underperformance or poor attendance quickly so that issues can be dealt with at an early stage. Parents are involved as necessary.
55. The sixth-form committee acts as an excellent conduit for consultation with sixth-form students. Committee members very effectively lobby senior staff, and are encouraged to do this by them, in order to bring suggestions and complaints to their notice. Tutor periods are used effectively as a forum for gathering students' views as necessary. However, the school does not formally survey sixth-formers on their views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has built good links with parents. The very large majority feel welcome in school and value the access they have to key staff. The school provides a good range of relevant information, although some that is required in the governors' annual report and prospectus has been overlooked. Where any aspect of students' lives at school gives cause for concern, the involvement of parents is sought in finding a way forward.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Community links are very good.
- The good access parents have to form tutors and heads of year when they need to discuss problems.
- The school seeks to work with parents in overcoming concerns about any aspect of their children's lives at school.
- Links with the business community could be better developed, especially for the sixth-form students on vocational courses.
- The governors' annual report and prospectus do not include the required national examination data.

Commentary

56. Good links with parents ensure they have easy access to form tutors and heads of year. Concerns about under achievement or behaviour are communicated at an early stage and parents' involvement is sought. This, together with regular consultations at key points in their children's education, ensures they have good opportunities to find out how their children are getting on and supports them in making decisions. Annual reports about progress provide a good range of information, and very effectively communicate what has been studied, attitudes to learning and behaviour. The evaluation of what students know and can do is less clearly expressed and targets for improvement are sometimes not sufficiently specific to help parents understand what their children need to do to improve. The attendance of parents at consultations about their children's progress is satisfactory. Where they do not attend, and subject teachers have concerns that need to be discussed, another appointment is offered. There are good opportunities for new parents to find out about the school. Subsequent consultations a few weeks into the autumn term ensure problems Year 7 students experience in settling in are sorted out. Homework timetables are not used consistently well for all students and this limits opportunities for some parents to support their children at home. The school consults parents where a need is identified, for example about the application for Sports College status, and takes their views into account. There is, however, no regular routine to canvass their views. The parent and teacher association is managed well by a small but active group of parents. It supports the work of the school effectively. The school prospectus and

annual governors' report to parents are well written and informative, but comparative information on national test and examination results is not included.

57. Community links are very good, with shared use of facilities, valued support from local employers for work experience placements and sponsorship for departmental projects. The school frequently receives good press coverage for art display work both at County Hall and with the local theatre company. Students sing in a nationally renowned local choir, and the annual school drama production is keenly anticipated, enjoying strong local support. There are many, and varied, sporting links, which enable students to compete at area and county level. Very good contacts are forged with the local professional football club. Excellent sporting links for physically impaired students are provided by the local university. The school uses local facilities whenever possible for the curriculum, and visits to theatres, art galleries and other events are regularly provided.
58. Links with other schools are good and developing. Students in Year 6 visit the school for sporting events and drama productions. Suitable academic and pastoral information is passed from primary schools. Transfer arrangements are systematic and thorough with appropriate opportunities for parental consultation. Of particular merit are the special educational needs links with other secondary schools, with shared financial resources and professional expertise.
59. Every effort is made to involve parents of students with special educational needs in their children's annual reviews, even to the extent of visiting parents in their homes who are unable to attend school. Parents support students in their learning well.

Sixth Form

60. Parents continue to be effectively involved in their son's or daughter's education in the sixth form. Good information is provided on events and about students' progress, and the school contacts parents if there is a concern.
61. Links with the community are generally good. The school benefits from a variety of visits and visitors who are often invited to contribute to the personal, social and health education programme. However, links with the business community in terms of their direct contribution to curricular delivery are limited and this impacts adversely, in particular on vocational subjects.
62. Students make regular visits to universities and the school has close links with some. These help to promote students' awareness of university life and what they can expect when they get there. Students who wish to continue into higher education are encouraged to make visits in order to make informed decisions about where they would like to go.
63. There are good links with other post-16 education providers and the school is involved in developing a local consortium in order to widen the range of courses offered to its students. However, difficulties of transport have yet to be overcome. Some courses at other post-16 institutions were offered to students last year, but there was no take-up, principally because of transportation issues. Nonetheless, the links with other institutions enable sharing of good practice and development of new ideas.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff in management positions is good.
- Heads of year provide good leadership and management of their areas of work.
- Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses even though overall governance is unsatisfactory as statutory requirements are not met.

- The sixth form is well led and managed.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not regular enough.
- Although there has been improvement in the roles of subject leaders, there remain wide disparities in the quality of their management, which ranges from very good to unsatisfactory.

Commentary

64. The governing body fulfils most aspects of its role effectively. It understands the school's strengths and has identified appropriate areas for further improvement. It successfully holds the school to account for the quality of education it provides. However, the school does not fully comply with certain statutory requirements, therefore, according to Ofsted's grading criteria, governance must be judged unsatisfactory.
65. Leadership of the school is good. The headteacher has a good vision for providing as well as possible for the students and he understands what is needed for further improvement. Most school leaders at all levels also know what needs improvement. However, whole-school strategies to achieve improvement, such as for the development of ICT across the school or for raising the attainment of boys, are not in place. Evaluation of the curriculum is not yet systematically used by all subject leaders to plan innovative improvements for raising standards further.
66. Management of the school is satisfactory. Heads of year monitor students' progress well and support them individually through targets which are regularly reviewed. Ample quantities of data are collected by subject, faculty and senior leaders and are rigorously evaluated and analysed by the senior staff. Some faculty or subject leaders use the data to great advantage but this is not consistent across the school. Observation of teaching is done for performance management, to identify development needs of individual teachers, but not to detect and share good practice. Responsibility for school improvement is shared by senior, faculty and subject leaders, but they could work more effectively together to link assessment of students' progress and the development of the curriculum to achieve further improvement.
67. The school has done well to recruit well-qualified staff for all its vacancies. In-service training for teachers and other staff supports school and personal development priorities. The induction of newly qualified teachers is satisfactory and the school is involved in initial teacher training.
68. The school has a well-qualified and experienced co-ordinator for special educational needs, who has advanced this specific area of provision in the school so that now much is in place. Students with special educational needs are identified according to the Code of Practice and placed on a register with some indication of their needs. Individual education plans are in place. Those for students with statements or on the school action plus stage have clear and achievable targets, to which students have contributed. The majority of staff have copies of these. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision of the needs of students and how these can be best met. There is a clear rationale to the allocation of teacher assistants within the limits of the small numbers of teacher assistants.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,742,425	Balance from previous year	206,577
Total expenditure	3,376,408	Balance carried forward to the next	336,017
Expenditure per student	2,759		

69. Finances are managed well. There are good links between budget planning and school development planning, including strategic planning for projected growth in school numbers. Although the school has a large surplus carried over from the last financial year, this was earmarked for the accommodation changes which will be required for the increase in student numbers. Principles of best value are applied well, including at departmental level when purchasing resources and services. Sound use is made of specific grants. The school has taken responsibility for its own catering, cleaning and grounds maintenance, and the improvements are evident. Governors monitor school expenditure rigorously and have a very good strategic overview of major financial investments such as the forthcoming additions to the accommodation. Given the school's improved outcomes, it gives good value for money.

Sixth Form

70. Overall, leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of sixth form works effectively with the sixth-form tutors to provide a positive and inclusive ethos for learning. There is good monitoring of students' work and effective systems are in place to ensure that sixth-form provision is effective. Close partnership between the head of sixth form and the deputy headteacher for curriculum ensures that senior staff have a good overview of sixth-form work. As with the main school, not all subject leaders provide equally good management of their areas and there is room for improvement in the monitoring of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, there is a clear sense of purpose and a strong drive to continue to improve standards and achievement.
71. Governors have a clear vision for the kind of sixth form they want and support the headteacher in providing a clear steer and direction for its development. The sixth-form costs are closely monitored and this ensures that it is cost-effective.

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, and particularly strong in classroom management, relationships and developing an interest in words. As a result, students respond with very good attitudes and behaviour, and learn well.
- Standards have risen since the previous inspection and recent results show good improvement.
- The way students are grouped (particularly in relation to promoting boys' achievement) and provision for students with special educational needs require further review and evaluation.
- Arrangements for sharing good teaching across the department are missing.

Commentary

72. In 2002, results in tests at the end of Year 9 were above average and exceeded the school's expectations. In 2003, provisional results were not as high but still above the school's target and above average overall. The trend of results is a rising one. Comparisons of students' recent performance with their attainment on entry show that most achieved well. Girls have consistently outperformed boys since 1998 and, though the gap between them has only been slightly greater than nationally between 2000 and 2002, it widened in 2003. GCSE results in English have been below average, significantly so in 2002, but provisional results for 2003 were higher. They represent good achievement given standards at the end of Year 9. Girls' performance has been substantially better than that of boys.
73. Standards seen in the inspection are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well and make good gains in knowledge and understanding. They are competent in tackling writing in a variety of styles. Many students write imaginatively and enthusiastically at length in response to their study of stimulating books. Higher attaining students speak confidently and well; they read aloud fluently and accurately, though not always with expression. Quieter or lower attaining students should have more opportunities to gain spoken confidence. Lower attaining students have persistent problems with spelling and sentence punctuation, affecting the clarity of their writing. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well and often show enjoyment of their set texts. They undertake coursework conscientiously and well, supported as necessary by helpful frameworks to structure their work. The best writing is sophisticated and analytical. At all ages, students' attentive listening contributes significantly to their learning. The development of this skill is linked closely with very good attitudes and behaviour arising from strong relationships with their teachers and good classroom management.
74. Most students also achieve well because they encounter good teaching that makes demands on their capabilities. Most develop analytical skills well because they are given techniques to do so. The best teaching produces a strong response, very involved students and rapid learning. Its strongest feature is the constant use of powerful language, drawing attention to expressive alternatives. Students extend and enrich their vocabulary well because of the emphasis given to this by teachers who love words and pass on that enthusiasm to students. Such teaching also uses probing questions that make students think, and teachers employ activities that demand participation and a definite outcome. At times, however, they spend too long on an undemanding activity, or talk too much. As a result, opportunities are missed for students to

discuss or evaluate their work in pairs or groups and the pace of learning slows. Achievement is held back at times because of lack of suitable models or examples of how to do something. Arrangements are not yet in place to ensure that good teaching is shared across the department to eliminate these weaker features.

75. Other factors also affect achievement. Students with special educational needs do not always have work that matches their needs, and review of this area of the curriculum (including the use of library lessons) is needed. So also is the way students are grouped, as present arrangements tend to produce a preponderance of boys in middle and lower attaining sets. This makes more obvious the relatively weaker performance of boys and does not promote boys' achievement.
76. Leadership of the department is good because of the good improvement in standards, teaching quality and curriculum development that has taken place since the previous inspection. Management has not been as strong because the factors referred to earlier that affect achievement have not been completely tackled. Nevertheless, the head of department is aware of these and is supported by a strong team that is capable of taking on the task of improving further. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. Other subjects contribute well overall to the development of students' language and literacy skills. A strong feature is the emphasis given to important subject vocabulary and its use in spoken and written work. As a result, students, particularly in design and technology, art and design, music, physical education, modern foreign languages and drama but also in mathematics and history, gain considerable confidence in their ability to tackle their work effectively. These subjects also promote writing skills and offer frequent opportunities for students to research and evaluate and participate in talk about their work. Where contributions are less strong, it is because key words are not sufficiently referred to or explained, students lack models for writing well and have few opportunities for extended writing or reading, and work does not meet students' needs or lacks challenge. At least one of these weaker features is apparent in science, geography and religious education.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages overall is **satisfactory**. Provision in French and German is **satisfactory** but provision in Spanish is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in Spanish with some excellent practice.
- Too much teaching in French and German is just satisfactory.
- Results in the different languages are not looked at carefully enough and important information about teaching and learning is missed.
- The faculty has its own suite of computers which are beginning to make a positive contribution to teaching and learning.
- Students who are following the certificate of achievement course in French take pride in their work and achieve well.

Commentary

78. GCSE results in French were well below average in 2002 and, although there was considerable improvement in 2003, were still below the 2002 average. In German, results were below average and declined further in 2003. In Spanish in 2002, results were well below average but improved to above average in 2003. Overall, girls and boys do better in Spanish than they do in other GCSE subjects but the reverse is the case in French. Standards in current Years 10 and

11 are above average in Spanish, average in German and below average in French. Standards at the end of Year 9, where most students study French, have improved but are still below average. Girls do much better than boys.

79. Achievement is very good in Spanish. This is directly linked to the very high quality of teaching to which students respond with enthusiasm and interest. The features of the very best teaching are swift pace, high expectations and challenging work. Teachers of Spanish speak Spanish almost exclusively in lessons and expect students to follow their example. Spanish lessons are not dependent on textbooks, always include a wide range of activities and find opportunities for students to use the language in meaningful situations which allow some degree of choice. Teachers plan well for students of different abilities. These strategies motivate all students and are particularly effective with boys. Currently, standards of those students in Year 10 who study both Spanish and French are higher in Spanish, although they have been studying French for longer. Achievement in French at GCSE level is barely satisfactory, whilst achievement in German is good. Students taking the certificate of achievement course have very positive attitudes and achieve well. The course is a positive learning experience for them.
80. Teaching in French and German from Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. However, students do not learn enough because the pace of lessons is slow and the content unimaginative. Teachers plan around the textbook, failing to vary methods or resources. In some lessons, students do not have enough opportunity to practise their speaking skills, resulting in weak pronunciation. The content of some lessons in Years 10 and 11 lacks challenge. Students acquire more vocabulary but do not become more skilful in using the language for themselves.
81. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection as standards and the quality of teaching and learning have declined. There is a clear vision of what constitutes high quality teaching and learning and the new national Framework for Modern Foreign Languages has been embraced. Leadership of the department is, therefore, satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory as monitoring of the work of the department is weak, there is little sharing of good practice and results are not analysed thoroughly enough.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained by capable students are very good and improving.
- Attainment of Years 10 and 11 students, particularly boys, is low.
- Teaching is good; as a result, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is above the national average.
- Assessment is very helpful to students in informing them of current performance and guidance towards target grades.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to assist students with their learning in mathematics.
- Opportunities for sharing good practice through mutual observation of lessons are very limited.

Commentary

82. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. The most recent results indicate a marked improvement at the very highest grades. Achievement across the school is good. At the end of Year 11, attainment is below national averages at A* to C and above national average at A* to G, however, the 2003 results show an overall improvement on those of 2002. This is particularly marked at A*/A grades. Performance at this level now exceeds recent national averages. However, the results of middle ability Year 11 boys are well below the national average. The department is acutely aware of this and has now targeted particular groups to be taught by key staff. Elsewhere, other students of varying abilities demonstrate sound understanding of mathematics. This was seen with a lower ability

Year 10 class where students were able to grasp the concept of scales, accurately read different calibrations and confidently discuss their work. The overwhelming majority of students successfully complete their GCSE studies. The needs of higher ability Years 10 and 11 students are very well met. In a Year 11 class, students swiftly understood details of the number system and competently applied strategies for identifying rational and irrational numbers. By the end of the lesson, the work was increasingly demanding, and discussions revealed a sharp and enquiring approach to new mathematical concepts. Achievement for able students is good and represents sound preparation for sixth-form studies.

83. In Years 7 to 9, teachers effectively follow the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy. A particular strength is the way they start the lesson with a variety of mental arithmetic exercises; this sets a positive tone to the lesson and is a welcome and anticipated aspect of the students' work.
84. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is currently insufficient use of lesson observation to enable good classroom practice to be more widely shared. Good and very good teaching is characterised by well-planned lessons and sound rapport that aids classroom management, thus enhancing learning. Teachers are alert to students with special educational needs and teaching is appropriately pitched to their needs. This increases their self-esteem and makes work enjoyable. The improved monitoring of student performance enables targets and current performance to be shared with students and has improved the sound lesson planning now clearly in evidence. Insufficient use, during lessons, is being made of ICT to support students' learning.
85. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has recently put into place the modular GCSE, which after its first full cycle has seen an improvement in results. Staff are responsible for a wide range of departmental responsibilities, providing opportunities for professional development. Key issues from the last inspection have been effectively tackled, hence, there has been good improvement since then.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. Although the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well in terms of the mathematics lessons themselves, departments have not systematically planned development of numeracy into their subjects. Nonetheless, most subjects where mathematics is a necessary part of the curriculum make effective use of it. For example, evidence of four- and six-figure grid referencing was seen in geography and suitable use of graph work displaying population change and chronology time lines was seen in history. Comparisons of the speed of light and sound were attempted well in science. The use of formulae is good in physics, and formulae in spreadsheets were appropriately used in ICT. Unusually, good use of numeracy was seen in religious studies when moral issues were statistically measured.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well owing to good teaching.
- Planning does not provide for steeper learning for all students.
- Modelling is not used enough to explain scientific ideas and processes.
- 'Student friendly' language and familiar contexts, where provided, help students to learn and achieve well.
- Good leadership and management are bringing about changes for improving standards, especially in Years 10 and 11.

- Assessment criteria from the National Curriculum have not been broken down sufficiently to evaluate year-on-year progress and the action needed to improve.

Commentary

87. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well. Their attainment improves from average on entry in Year 7 to above average by the end of Year 9. Achievement for students in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory.
88. Students' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 has improved more sharply than the national trend since 2000. Results for 2003 were above the national average. Boys and girls achieved similar results. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average. Year 11 GCSE results in 2002 in the separate sciences were average but combined double and single science awards were below. In 2003, results improved in all GCSE examinations, except in the double award GCSE, where they were marginally lower.
89. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and leads to effective learning. For example, in a lower ability Year 7 lesson, students developed good understanding of investigation skills, such as predicting and hypothesising, as a result of effective demonstration, discussion and explanation followed by well-designed activities that enable students to practise these skills. Overall, there is now a good focus on developing students' skills in investigative work, though some teachers still over-direct what students do. Models and demonstrations are used well to assist students' understanding. In a Year 11 lesson, effective demonstration, followed by students' testing and observing, improved their grasp of exothermic and endothermic reactions. Use of models deepened students' understanding of the structure of molecules. One teacher's use of 'student friendly' language and contextualisation of scientific principles within students' everyday experiences promoted effective learning of how babies inherit their characteristics. Whilst teachers' subject knowledge, management of students and use of resources are consistently good, there are areas which require attention to make learning more effective. Lesson planning does not promote steeper learning because activities do not match the diverse learning needs of students in each class. The language of learning objectives is sometimes too complex and teachers do not explain the scientific meaning of words such as 'pure', 'barrier' and 'random' to ensure effective learning. Lessons are not summed up well and, sometimes, the conclusion is missed out altogether. Students display very positive attitudes to learning. This helps them to learn well.
90. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Staffing difficulties of recent years have been resolved with new appointments including the head and the deputy head of faculty. As a result, collaboration and teamwork are improving. Effective implementation of the national strategy for teaching science in Years 7 to 9 is being revived. Provision of science in Years 10 and 11 is also under scrutiny in order to provide the best deal for the students. The use of ICT for teaching is improving, but could be better. The use of literacy could also be improved. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is much good and enthusiastic teaching by well-qualified staff.
- There has been a major problem with long-term absence of key staff.
- Overall, standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 have been below national expectations.
- The scheme of work in ICT for students who do not follow an examination course in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate.

- Cross-curricular provision of ICT is patchy and insufficiently rigorously monitored.
- ICT resources and accommodation are good.

Commentary

91. The 2003 teacher assessments of students in Year 9 give levels that are well below national averages. However, the quality of work seen both in lessons and in students' written work gives a clear indication that the current cohort will improve on these assessments.
92. Results at GCSE have been well below national averages. However, for the last two years, the students have been taught by a succession of supply teachers which has had a profoundly adverse effect on their examination results. Since the appointment of an acting head of department, measures have already been taken to improve the situation, and a scrutiny of the work being done by students in the present Years 10 and 11 indicates that a marked improvement in performance is likely to occur next year.
93. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below national averages, but all students now follow a challenging course with a suitable time allocation over Years 7, 8 and 9 that enables most students, including those with special educational needs, to make at least satisfactory progress. Hence, achievement is satisfactory overall.
94. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory. About one third of the students in Year 10 and Year 11 follow a GCSE course whilst all follow a course designed to improve their generic ICT skills. National Curriculum requirements are met by the additional opportunities provided in other subjects, for example the students effectively apply the concepts and techniques of using computer technology to measure, respond to control and automate events in science and in design and technology. Standards attained by the students in the GCSE groups in Year 11 are around national expectations. Coursework is satisfactory, well presented and organised. Students apply their knowledge and understanding of ICT systems effectively to their design work, for example linking records for customers, suppliers and products when designing a database. Most students annotate their work to indicate a critical awareness of what they have achieved and what they can do to improve. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but could be better if computers were more widely used across the curriculum.
95. Teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall. The full-time teachers in the department have a good level of knowledge that underpins their work. Much of the teaching is done by non-specialists, whose knowledge levels are certainly more than adequate and who are well supported by the acting head of department. Lesson planning is generally good with clearly stated lesson aims so that students know what they are expected to learn. Students are given good-quality support material, which helps them to become more independent, and targets for completion of tasks. They are well motivated and keen to learn. The best teaching features energy and enthusiasm, giving students the clear message that ICT is well worth the effort. The setting of homework is not consistent; many students have homework set only occasionally.
96. Management arrangements are now satisfactory. The long-term absence of the head of department created a very difficult situation. There was very little departmental documentation and the short- and medium-term planning had been left to individual teachers. The problem has been alleviated by the appointment of the head of the technology faculty to be acting head of ICT. He has already introduced measures which are having a demonstrable effect, but which have yet to impact on results. One highly capable technician provides essential support, keeping the extensive school-wide network of approximately 210 computers functioning fairly smoothly.
97. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, but there is still no whole-school strategy for the provision of ICT opportunities for students in all curriculum areas. Completion of the national training for teachers has considerably extended the capability of the whole staff to

deliver skills in this area. The school is now adequately resourced in terms of hardware, although there is some deficiency in the software available to subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. The cross-curricular provision of ICT is satisfactory overall. It is good or very good in some subjects where computers are used effectively as a tool to aid learning, but this level of provision does not extend to all subjects, and some subjects make limited use of ICT. There is no whole-school scheme of work or school-wide procedure to monitor provision and assess students' performance.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and religious education were inspected in depth and sociology was sampled. In Year 11, GCSE results in sociology have been below the national average but, on the limited evidence of scrutiny of students' work, achievement is satisfactory.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- The use of fieldwork has had a significant effect on the learning of students in the classroom.
- The use of computers is underdeveloped and does not, as yet, support learning and research.
- Curricular planning does not take sufficient account of students' learning needs.
- Not enough use is made of analytical marking to give students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Commentary

99. GCSE results took a dip in 2002 to below the national average but, in 2003, returned to a level above the 2002 national average.
100. Standards in the current Year 9 are just above national expectations. For most students, this represents good achievement in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7 and a slight improvement since the last inspection. Students with special educational needs come closer to meeting their targets when supported by learning support staff. Their achievement overall is satisfactory. Whilst students of all abilities demonstrate good geographical knowledge, higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and require further opportunities to extend their writing. The subject needs to provide a sufficient range of texts and activities to address the different levels of ability within teaching groups. As students progress through Years 8 and 9, they show some confidence in finding information from text, maps and diagrams but skills in using computers are not so well developed. The use of key words displayed on word walls is having some effect on students' learning.
101. Standards in the current Year 11 are just above national expectations. Students' achievement relative to their standards of work at the end of Year 9 is good. Students make some good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. Most have a steadily increasing geographical vocabulary and knowledge and use these well in their work. For example, in a Year 11 class, students were considering future developments for Mansfield. Higher attainers with more challenging work could have advanced further. Students with special educational needs went some way to achieving their targets but were able to achieve more when supported. The high ratio of boys to girls was very pronounced and this diminished the contribution to the lesson of the gender with smaller numbers.

102. The quality of teaching is often good with some that is satisfactory. The quality of learning was similar. Lessons are usually well prepared and the aims shared with students. Teachers draw on an appropriate range of resources and activities but do not make sufficient use of computers. A strong feature of the teaching that was good was the clear questioning that forced students to think and then clearly explain their ideas. Where teaching was no better than satisfactory, it was often due to insufficient match of work to the varying needs of all abilities within a group. Marking is regular but there is a lack of constructive comments which inform students on how they can improve their work.
103. The leadership is satisfactory. Geographical visits in all years extend what is learnt in the classroom. Curricular planning does not reflect the needs of all abilities. Further curricular planning and monitoring of students' work and teaching are now needed. The subject has dealt with some of the key issues in the last report and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress as a result of good teaching, planning and support.
- They show good attitudes to learning, and work well individually and collaboratively.
- Students understand what they should do to improve and are set realistic and challenging personal targets.
- Accommodation is insufficient for the number of staff and classes in this increasingly popular subject.
- Occasionally, students who can easily do class tasks are not challenged to think further.

Commentary

104. Standards, by the end of Year 9, are in line with national expectations. Current achievement is good. In Year 9 classes, students discovered facts about conditions in the trenches on the Western Front, presented these as a display, including cartoons of their own, and each group reported back, giving and receiving feedback from the teacher and other class members.
105. Standards in GCSE history are improving, and broadly in line with expectations. Achievement is good. Girls achieve higher grades than boys. In Years 10 and 11, students build effectively on prior knowledge with strong support from teachers. Students with special educational needs make good progress when they have assistance in the classroom. Some students, often boys, respond well to challenges to attain grades in GCSE in line with the standards of most girls.
106. Individual students, on occasion, lack challenge, where work is not targeted to cover the wide range of attainment in a class. Student attitudes contribute well to the progress they make in learning throughout the main school.
107. Good learning is strongly supported by well-planned lessons using national initiatives to support the development of speaking, listening, reading and writing for all students. Very good teaching uses expertise and enthusiasm to inspire students to achieve well. Good use of resources supports learning through a variety of teaching techniques. History is becoming a more popular option, permitting some setting of GCSE groups to target individual potential, especially for higher grades. Staff know and use the criteria for National Curriculum levels and GCSE to help all students to focus on the skills they need to practise, including recall and response to questioning.

108. The curriculum is good at promoting progression, but not broad enough to facilitate cultural awareness of European or worldwide differences before the twentieth century. Good leadership builds on an experienced staff team, driving forward initiatives and encouraging all members to contribute to improving achievement for all.
109. Aspects of the subject have improved since the last inspection, but the use of ICT is not built into the history curriculum and visits are less frequent. Weaknesses in accommodation impact adversely on teaching and learning.
110. Improvement in history has not recently kept pace with other subjects at GCSE and, although boys' attitudes are now good, this has not yet shown effects in standards in examination at age 16. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students are successful in obtaining a GCSE short course qualification and this is a good achievement for the school.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching is good and is raising attainment.
- Not enough use is made of ICT.

Commentary

111. All Year 11 students study the GCSE short course. Results for 2003 are below the 2002 national average for higher grades but above for the numbers gaining a qualification as all students obtained a grade. By Year 11, the majority of students achieve well but girls achieve slightly better than boys. In a Year 11 lesson, students were considering life and death issues and using a writing frame to help them to practise an evaluative examination question.
112. Standards of knowledge and understanding seen at Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus. The majority of students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well. Girls take more care with the presentation of their written work but boys provide good oral answers. Most students respond positively to the well-prepared lessons and behave very well. They sustain interest because of the variety of tasks and the good pace of lessons. The attention to oral and group work involves them well as active learners. In a Year 9 lesson, students used their religious knowledge and thinking skills to show Jesus' awareness that he was a Jew. The match of work to the capabilities of students and the help they receive in lessons ensures students with special educational needs and English as an additional language succeed. Opportunities for using ICT are limited and this hinders independent learning. Assessment tasks are an integral part of learning, and sympathetic and constructive marking is consistent throughout the department.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the lessons observed, it was always good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan together to share best practice. They give emphasis to speaking and listening and this enables students to use specialist vocabulary and test and try out ideas before writing. Every opportunity is taken to develop students' self-worth by valuing their efforts and respecting their views. There are very good opportunities for reflection on the meaning and purpose of life. The study of aspects of different world religions increases students' cultural awareness and understanding of how belief influences lifestyles. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

114. The department has consolidated standards seen at the last inspection and further developed assessment procedures. The use of ICT is still not developed throughout the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
115. Leadership and management are good. The subject has a clear direction, is well managed and monitored and the department works well together. There is a drive to raise standards, and assessment is focused on ways to improve subsequent work.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and students' achievement is very good overall, although standards and achievement in food technology in Years 10 to 11 are not high enough.
- Leadership and management are very good, and give a clear direction to the subject.
- Teaching is very good and, with very good relationships, students are motivated to succeed.
- There are insufficient sewing machines and ovens to allow students to make good progress.
- Not all teachers assess work according to National Curriculum levels, and students in Years 7 to 9 are not always aware of how to improve.
- There is no technical support for food technology, and inadequate technical support for the other subjects.
- ICT is used very well.
- Visits are not organised, hence missing opportunities to extend students' understanding of the subject.

Commentary

116. Teacher assessments of students in Year 9 have shown a fluctuation over the last three years. In 2003, they showed high standards. These standards were seen during the inspection, and show very good achievement, as students enter the school with low standards, due to an incomplete experience of the subject in the primary schools. They gain these high standards very quickly in five separate subjects taught in design and technology. GCSE grades have been high overall and over time, and girls have tended to achieve better than boys. Results are high in graphics and resistant materials. GCSE results tend to be lower in food technology and textiles. Students in Years 10 to 11 maintain the high standards gained in Year 9, and their achievement is very good overall, especially in resistant materials and graphics. However, achievement in food technology is not as good as it should be.
117. The high standards are due to very good teaching. There are high expectations that students will listen, therefore learn, and apply themselves when working. Questioning is probing to determine if students know and understand, and they are consistently reminded about how they can improve. In Years 7 to 9, not all students are clear about the National Curriculum level at which they are working, and they have an incomplete understanding of the level descriptors. In contrast, GCSE students are given very good advice and guidance on what is required for each grade and how they can improve their work to match grade requirements for grades A* to C. This knowledge helps students to attain higher standards. In food technology in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE groups, too much time is spent on theory, as inadequate oven space precludes whole-class practicals. In addition, there is too little challenge in GCSE to move students on. In textiles, too few sewing machines restrict the progress that students make. Consequently, in these subjects, standards are not as high as in the other subjects. ICT is used very well in the department, and this was seen when Year 9 competently used a program to design in three dimensions.

118. Leadership and management are very good. The department is very well organised, with regular monitoring of students' work. A major difficulty is the lack of a technician in the food department, and restricted assistance in the other areas taught. This, of necessity, encroaches on time that teachers normally spend on activities allied to their teaching. There is insufficient teacher assistant support for students with special educational needs, who require much attention in a practical subject. In addition, visits are not organised for students. These could bring the subject alive to students by seeing it in action in the real world. There has been very good improvement in the department since the time of the last report.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department has created a very good working environment.
- Teachers possess good subject knowledge and are well informed.
- Most students settle readily to their work and enjoy art and design activities.
- Insufficient use is made of modern technology, photography and ICT.
- Class sizes are sometimes too large for available studio space.

Commentary

119. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations, with girls' attainment being much higher than boys. Achievement from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is good. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the number of students that achieved the highest grades was well above the national average, with girls' attainment remaining much higher than boys'. In 2003, there was an apparent decline in the number of students that achieved grades A* to C which is due to the fact that not all students on the course were entered for the examination in 2002.
120. Students in Year 7 settle readily to the tasks that are set by their teachers and produce work of a satisfactory standard. Year 8 students work well and produce interesting studies. By Year 9, a significant minority of students have acquired the capacity for working independently and work well to develop their art skills. The standard of work is in line with national expectations. Students with special educational needs make good progress and work to the best of their ability. Achievement from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is good.
121. Students in Year 10 enjoy the subject and work well to acquire new knowledge and skills. The majority are producing work of a standard that is broadly in line with national expectations. In Year 11, students work quietly with a sense of purpose and application. A significant number are beginning to demonstrate independence in their research work and final pieces. The majority are working at a level that is in line with national expectations. Achievement from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 is good.
122. Teaching is good and there are some very good features. Teachers come to lessons well prepared and make very good use of exemplar material. Planning is very good and clear objectives are set for students who know what they are expected to do. Expectations are high and teachers demand high standards of behaviour from students. The recent appointment of a new member of staff has contributed significantly to the raising of standards in the department.
123. Leadership is very good and management good. The head of department provides a very good role model for others in the department and she has a very clear vision of how the department

should develop. Systems are in place to monitor and record students' performance and achievement. At present, these lack rigour and, in Years 10 and 11, need to be much fuller so that more informed feedback can be provided for students.

124. Accommodation is good. There are two large multi-media studios plus another that is used mainly by the sixth-formers. However, there remain issues concerning class sizes that are too large for the available studio space and this hampers learning. Storage of students' work, equipment and resources remains a difficulty. There are only two computers in the art studios which means that there are few opportunities for students to produce images during their art and design lessons in a work-related, vocational context.
125. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is broadly in line with national expectations and sketchbooks are now used much more effectively. Teaching has improved and is now good overall.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is planned well and has a strong focus on development of skills from a low base in Year 7.
- There are variations in achievement. Boys make faster progress than girls and the most able musicians could be stretched more in Years 7 to 9.
- There is good help for individual students in class.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good and is popular with students.
- Leadership of the department is good. The subject leader has a clear vision of what is needed for further improvement, but aspects of management are not robust enough, such as use of assessment and monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The lack of software for composing places less able GCSE students at a disadvantage.

Commentary

126. In Year 9, most students are attaining below expected standards for their age. Girls' work is slightly better than boys'. From Year 7 to Year 9, students achieve well because they arrive with skills well below expectation, and they make good progress in listening, composing and performing. Boys arrive with lower levels of skill than girls and make faster progress, particularly in singing. However, the most able musicians are not stretched as fully as they could be.
127. In recent years, the percentage of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE music has risen faster than the national average. The large majority of students gained grades for music as good or better than in other subjects. Most students in Year 11 studying music at GCSE are reaching expected standards for this stage of the course. They are better at performing than composing. Less able musicians struggle with composing because they have no access to appropriate composing software. Across Years 10 and 11, students achieve well. Girls and boys are attaining and achieving equally well by the end of Year 11.
128. Teaching is good. Strengths of teaching include careful planning for development of performing and composing skills and ample individual support for students which helps them to improve these. Singing, in particular, rapidly improves as students progress through the school. Appropriate posters around the classroom walls remind students of musical information which they need for composing. The main area for improvement of teaching is wider provision of tasks for students of different levels of attainment, particularly to stretch the more able musicians.

129. Departmental leadership is good, having led to improved lesson planning in Year 11 which contributed to recent very good GCSE results. There is appropriate planning for improvement, including introduction of much needed composing software, and overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. Management is satisfactory. Information provided by the good-quality assessment of classroom work could be used more effectively to plan teaching materials which challenge all students. There is not sufficient formal monitoring of teaching focused on raising standards through sharing good practice.
130. In class, and through the broad range of extra-curricular groups, music makes a very good contribution to students' personal development, particularly their social development. The annual musical production is popular, involving well over 100 students of all ages in a social and artistic experience which they value greatly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management provide a challenging and caring environment for the students.
- Consistently very good teaching results in above average standards and very good achievement.
- A well-designed curriculum makes a positive contribution to students' personal and social development.
- The planning for numeracy and ICT is underdeveloped in the schemes of work.

Commentary

131. The students' standards are above average in all years and they achieve very well. This is because of the consistently very good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students which promote a rapid rate of learning.
132. When the students arrive at the school, they have had very different experiences of physical activities. Standards are mostly below average. By the time they reach Year 9, they are above average. They have good ball skills in a variety of games and are able to perform complex gymnastic sequences. Their understanding of skills and their ability to evaluate and make constructive remarks about each others' work are good. This, combined with good use of assessment by teachers, ensures that students are challenged with tasks to meet their own particular needs. The teachers extend a high level of independence to the students who work well on their own and in small groups. They are often well supported by sixth-form helpers.
133. All students in Year 10 follow the GCSE course and then choose to take either the full or short course in Year 11. Results of the short course are satisfactory but for the full course are consistently above the national average with most students gaining better results than in their other subjects. Few students however, gain A* or A grades. Girls achieve very well in practical activities and theory and are particularly well motivated. Good links are made between practical and theoretical aspects which ensure a good depth of understanding. The marking of the students' work is not well focused on telling the students what they do well or what they need to do to improve. The most able students are not given extended written tasks. The planning for use of ICT and numeracy skills is not yet well developed.
134. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve very well. They respond to the high level of challenge and practise hard in order to improve their skills. Those with special educational needs are often talented sports players. Their success in the subject adds to their self-esteem and they appreciate the additional support offered by the disability unit at a local university.

135. Leadership is very good and has ensured very good improvement since the previous inspection. Careful monitoring has significantly improved teaching and standards. The curriculum has been thoughtfully developed to meet the needs of different groups of students at poignant moments and links effectively with the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme. Dance is now taught to all students in Years 7 to 9. Courses, such as the Junior Sports Leaders Award, are especially beneficial in effectively engaging and challenging less able students in Years 10 and 11. The popular extra-curricular programme encourages a 'sport for all' approach and links well with the local community. High standards are reached in sports such as athletics, football and netball. The most effective feature of this department is the day-to-day management which leads to close teamwork and provides a challenging and caring environment for the students.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocational health and social care

Provision in vocational health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Developments in provision have suffered from the lack of a full-time co-ordinator over an extended period of time.
- Standards are below average and, though achievement is satisfactory, there is much room for improvement.
- The teaching methods used do not sufficiently encourage students to become independent learners, though when students are required to carry out their own research, standards of work are much better.
- Teachers establish good relationships with students and this helps to motivate and enthuse them.
- Assessment and monitoring of students' work and subsequent support and guidance, especially on developing portfolio work, are inadequate.

Commentary

136. Though standards for the subject are below national expectations by Year 11, they are in line with expectations for the ability of the students. The standard of work is considerably improved when students complete their own research, such as case studies of health and social care work in the wider world. They are also better motivated and more enthusiastic when engaged in such work.
137. There is insufficient support for portfolio building to help students take responsibility for their own learning and see their progression, thus raising standards. In addition, the use of monitoring and assessment is underdeveloped as a tool for learning. As a result, too many students do not complete coursework.
138. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Those of average ability and who complete the course achieve satisfactory results. There is too little higher level work. Boys and the more able do not achieve as well as might be expected. In some lessons, students with special educational needs do not receive the additional support they require and, therefore, achieve less than they should.
139. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers produce clear lesson plans. A variety of methods are used, including discussions, research and use of visitors, ICT and video materials but, overall, teachers direct work too much in lessons. In some lessons, good use of knowledge concerning students' learning styles is being used to improve learning. Work

placements have been set up for the students and these are effective in bringing a useful, interesting dimension to the subject. They help students research their subject and provide up-to-date information. There are some good examples of research skills being used. Good use is made of careers information. The teachers have good relationships with the students and this keeps the majority on task, facilitating their learning. Some teaching, however, is lacking the richness brought by specialists in this subject.

140. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning is underdeveloped and needs to be more rigorous in order to improve standards and achievement within the department. The allocation of time for the course is low and this also affects the rate of completion of coursework. There is a clear vision for the future and outline plans for its development. The acting co-ordinator, in place for only a few weeks, has worked hard to maintain the department in difficult circumstances.
141. Improvement from the last inspection has been slow. Hence, it is unsatisfactory. The department has adapted to the new courses but there is still considerable development required. The instability of the staffing has had an adverse affect on the achievements of students.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of the teaching helps students to become responsible citizens.
- The school council enables students to receive the opportunity to take part in a democratic body.
- The assessment and recording system does not, as yet, provide teachers and students with a clear enough picture of standards achieved.
- After completing an audit, the school has not finalised a scheme of work for citizenship but there is a full scheme in place for personal, social and health education.
- The small number of activities that involve community partners are insufficient to allow all students the possibility to take part in citizenship activities.

Commentary

142. The school is at the earlier stages of introducing a citizenship curriculum, though much has been done to enhance the development of citizenship through the programme of personal, social and health education. There was no written work available to make a scrutiny of work. However, from lessons observed and discussions with students, they are making good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of citizenship and, hence, their achievement is good.
143. Standards are average at the end of Year 9. Students display a sound knowledge and understanding of various aspects of society. This was demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson when students effectively engaged in a discussion on the causes of crime and gave their views on the appropriate punishments for perpetrators. In Year 7, students analysed the key features of friendship well and then discussed its importance.
144. By Year 11, students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship are just above average. They have a good understanding of the problems that afflict our society. For example, students in Year 10 made good contributions to discussions, in groups and at whole-class level, on the effects of tourism on the environment. In a Year 11 lesson, students who have experienced difficulties with their learning in the past increased their ability to plan an exercise and improve

their communication skills.

145. Some students of all ages actively participate in the school council and some in community activities. However, because the school is having difficulties organising activities for all students because of its location, this aspect of citizenship needs improvement.
146. Much of the teaching is good or very good but there is some that is satisfactory and one lesson that was unsatisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of their students' learning and clear aims for their lessons which they share with students. In the better lessons, teachers encourage students to have informed opinions and challenge the opinions of others. Controversial issues are, on the whole, dealt with sensitively. In the weakest lesson observed, the discussion was pitched at a very low level and, hence, did not extend students' knowledge of the subject.
147. Assessment and recording do not, as yet, give sufficient feedback to all involved about what has been learnt and how to target future teaching towards meeting all students' needs. The school has a scheme of work for personal, social and health education and this covers much of the citizenship programme. The school is in the process of completing a separate scheme of work for citizenship to encompass the additional elements not covered in personal, social and health education.
148. The senior manager responsible for this area of the curriculum has done well with the introduction of the subject so far. While there is satisfactory coverage of citizenship, the school needs to have a separate set of aims and objectives for citizenship, as those for the programme for personal, social and health education do not cover all that is within this new subject. Whilst a number of other subjects, particularly religious education, science and geography, cover key citizenship topics, these are not identified as such for students. Resources rely on much which exists but there is a need to assess what additional resources are needed to fill gaps.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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
Biology	1	0	91.6	0	36.3	0.0	74.1
Chemistry	1	100	94.0	0	45.9	80.0	81.1
Design and technology: Communication	1	100	95.3	0	35.3	60.0	76.5
Drama	1	100	98.1	0	41.5	60.0	82.9
English language and literature	2	0	98.3	0	36.5	0.0	80.1
French	2	50	96.2	50	46.1	90.0	83.0
Geography	1	100	97.1	100	40.5	100	80.9
Mathematics	3	100	93.3	66.7	52.2	100.0	84.7
Music	1	100	97.7	0	41.8	60.0	82.2
Physics	1	100	92.8	0	42.8	40.0	78.6
Sociology	4	100	95.4	100	39.6	115.0	79.1
Spanish	1	100	96.2	0	47.3	40.0	83.6

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
A-level							
Art and design	5	100	96.1	60.0	48.7	100.0	85.1
Biology	4	75	91.6	50	48.7	65.0	85.1
Business studies	3	100	96.4	33.3	32.8	86.7	76.5
Chemistry	4	100	94.0	0	45.9	65.0	81.1
Design and technology: Communication	4	100	95.3	0	35.5	65.0	76.5
Drama	3	100	98.1	0	41.5	53.3	82.9
English language and English language	8	100	98.3	25.0	36.5	70.0	80.1
English literature	4	100	98.5	50.0	43.7	85.0	84.3
French	4	100	96.2	50	46.1	90.0	83.0
Geography	5	60	97.1	20.0	4.05	40.0	80.9
German	1	100	96.3	100	44.3	120.0	82.1
History	3	100	97.1	33.3	41.0	73.3	81.2

Mathematics	6	100	93.3	100	52.2	110.0	84.7
Music	4	100	97.7	0	41.8	55.0	82.2
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
A-level		School	England	School	England	School	England
Physical education	4	100	95.4	50	29.5	90.0	73.2
Physics	5	100	92.8	40.0	42.8	88.0	78.6
Spanish	2	100	96.2	50	47.3	80.0	83.6
AVCE							
ICT	4	100	-	0	-	65.0	-
Travel and tourism	3	100	-	33.3	-	86.7	-

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school offers French and German at AS- and A-level as well as a number of English courses – English language and combined English language and literature. The English language and English language and literature courses were examined in depth. There was insufficient time to sample any of the others.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of English-related courses is offered.
- Standards are above average and achievement in Year 13 is good.
- Teaching is good, with lively and focused lessons.
- Marking of students' work is helpful but insufficiently related to the published assessment objectives.

Commentary

149. Standards at A-level were below average until 2002, but they rose in 2003 to be broadly in line with the 2002 national average. Above average standards were seen during the inspection. The great majority of students wrote competently with sound general knowledge of their texts, while many were able to evaluate perceptively and consider issues critically. Girls outnumber boys in the subject but, whereas nationally girls attain higher grades than boys, there is no difference in this school.
150. On entry to the sixth form, students' attainment is slightly below average, but the fact that they have reached higher standards in English literature than in English at GCSE gives them a sure foundation for their A-level studies. Their achievement by the end of Year 12 is satisfactory and, by Year 13, it is good in both the English literature and the combined English language and literature courses.
151. Students learn well as a result of lively and well-targeted teaching. Teachers' good knowledge of their subject and of the examination requirements is communicated well, so that students develop an ability to evaluate and improve their own work. They made perceptive comments about a sample essay comparing two texts and related it well to the assessment objectives in the subject specification. Able students are suitably challenged to extend their studies; the less able are not always supported enough, especially when the lesson has moved at a fast pace. The marking of work gives many pointers to students for improvement. It is more developmental than focused, with insufficient references to assessment objectives.
152. The department is well led and managed, with two different courses offered at AS- and A- level, as well as the recent addition of media studies. The assessment of work is satisfactory. While individual teachers know how well their students are achieving, the overall progress of different groups is not analysed with sufficient sharpness to monitor the effectiveness of each course or to plan for even better achievement.
153. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, with the combined English language and literature course becoming fully embedded, the introduction of media studies and an increased uptake by boys in both English courses.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. Students have good literacy skills and teachers make good use of language and literacy across the curriculum. Students' note-taking skills are generally good and, in most subjects, students' literacy skills stand them in good stead to produce written work such as essays or reports on research they have carried out.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and, as a result, students make very good progress and attain very high results.
- The subject is a popular option within the school.
- Students do not use computer technology enough to support their learning.
- The range of courses offered needs extending.

Commentary

155. Results at A-level mathematics have been consistently very high. Provisional 2003 results are also very high. AS-level results follow this pattern, with most students continuing their studies into Year 13. Students in Year 12 are appropriately recruited having secured the highest grades at GCSE and have then reliably continued to achieve the higher A or B grades at A-level. Achievement is, therefore, very good.

156. Standards of work seen reflect the most recent pattern of results. Written work of students in Year 13 is of a high standard with note taking forming a prominent feature of their work. This provides a very good resource for revision and reflects the excellent attitude students have to this subject. Very good work was seen in the various modules, with sound grasp of probability distribution and arithmetic/geometric progressions, together with good work in mechanics. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, however, the standards are high, understanding is good and attitudes towards their work very positive. The overwhelming majority intend to complete the full two-year course to A-level. No evidence was seen of the use of computers in lessons or in students' work.

157. Teaching is very good. Teachers plan their work methodically, they display very good subject knowledge and explain the work from first principles which, together with additional support, is well received by students. Teachers are very well respected; as a result, the climate for learning is very good and contributes to the continuing popularity of the subject. A very good Year 13 lesson began by a useful review of recent homework followed by a development of the current topic involving mechanics. Explanations were clear, suitable questioning encouraged student participation and, as the lesson continued, students applied previously- taught topics to support their work, so that learning was very good.

158. The subject is well led and has a very good reputation with students and parents. The range of courses offered includes mathematics AS- and A-level together with GCSE resits. Given the deserved reputation of this subject, a wider range of courses may well need to be offered to meet the differing needs and career intentions of students.

Mathematics across the curriculum

159. In subjects which require numeracy skills, students cope well with the demands. Teachers ensure that they provide appropriate support for the development of numeracy in subjects such as physics, technology and sociology. Students are competent in using statistical models to analyse data in subjects such as sociology, and they manipulate equations, handling both very large and very small numbers, in subjects such as physics.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on physics, but chemistry and biology were also sampled. Both biology and chemistry provisional results for 2003 are in line with national expectations. Three lessons were seen in these two disciplines and ranged from satisfactory to very good. Group sizes in Year 13 are small, but there has been a large and encouraging increase in the number of Year 12 biologists in 2003.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic and committed teachers maintain an enviable record of good examination results.
- Good teaching leads to good learning which builds students' knowledge and skills but less confident students sometimes do not participate fully in lessons.
- Thorough and constructive marking helps students to focus on examination requirements but assessment does not yet extend to individual target setting, and records of results are not centrally stored.
- There are good study and ICT facilities which encourage independent working.

Commentary

160. A-level results in 2002 were above average and the provisional results for 2003 sustain this level, continuing the standard of the past four years. The department accepts students with GCSE grade C for the A-level courses, although most students have exceeded this. Recruitment to the AS-level course in Year 12 is low for a large school, but reportedly, this is due to a perceived lack of physics-related careers in the area. Female students are, unfortunately, a rarity. The majority of students complete the courses they embark upon, but the transfer of students from AS- to A-level is rarely 100 per cent.
161. Standards in the work seen are average at this early stage of Year 12 but below average in Year 13, and lower than A-level results of recent years. This is because the group is small and there are wide variations in the attainment of individuals in the group. The written work is presented well with careful and extensive notes. Year 12 students are coming to terms with the demands of the course and for the need for independent learning and are rapidly growing in maturity and confidence, attributes already developed by their Year 13 counterparts. Mathematical skills are necessarily developed to meet the requirements of the course since not all students begin Year 12 with the same mathematical background, and this can sometimes lead to the more experienced mathematicians 'coasting' for short periods. Oral communication is good and students use correct scientific vocabulary. ICT facilities are good for both lesson use and for independent work and the examples of its use seen were of a high standard. All the lessons seen were theory based, but Year 13 students reported frequent and interesting experimental work. Achievement is satisfactory for both year groups. There are no students who are still learning English as an additional language, and students from minority ethnic backgrounds are achieving well as every student has equal access to staff and resources.
162. Teaching is good with experienced and committed teachers who motivate and enthuse students. Their collective experience in examination preparation is of considerable benefit to students. The quality of lessons that result is good, and sometimes better than this, for instance when a new technique is mastered quickly or a topic generates particular interest. Progress towards the end-of-module tests is steady, with previous examination questions being used to test understanding but, with long timescales for the completion of some modules, there is a need for intermediate formal testing and personal targets based on the results of these. More accurate monitoring would be enabled by a central computerised record of results.

Relationships between staff and students and between students themselves are of a high order, and teaching in small groups is largely tutorial in nature, enabling additional support to be given where needed and additional depth provided for faster workers. An additional benefit of such good relationships is the confidence students gain in seeking information and in advancing their own ideas informally.

163. Both the leadership of the department and its management are satisfactory, with a new head of department recently appointed, and the department continuing to maintain its commitment to securing the best possible result for each student. Despite the outstanding issues of assessment and target setting from the previous report, examination standards have risen and the quality of both learning and teaching has improved. Improvement since the last inspection is, therefore, satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers AVCE in ICT in Years 12 and 13 and A-level has just started in Year 12.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have an extensive knowledge of the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Independent learning is encouraged.
- Access to ICT resources is limited in lessons in other subjects for most students.

Commentary

164. The work of students seen in lessons and in their portfolios confirms that standards are above average. They are confident and skilful in creating and testing complex database applications and recognising the high standards of ICT work demanded by local companies. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.
165. All the students observed showed interest, enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject. Their attitudes are good. When they are working individually on coursework, they help each other, and discussion, sometimes with their teacher, is common. These discussions are always relevant to the work and contribute to the quality of learning. The students can continue working on their computers at home and are able to transfer files by e-mail between college and home. Students reported learning resources available to them within the school to be good.
166. In all the lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory. Teachers have a strong command of the subject. Continuity and progression are both strong qualities in lesson planning. The good teaching draws out the students who are very well motivated and keen to succeed.
167. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The AVCE course meets the needs of the students. There are similar numbers of boys and girls studying ICT, and neither gender significantly outperforms the other. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

168. Students indicate that they have good access to computers to help with coursework and research. They make good use of ICT to support their learning outside lesson time. The Internet as a learning resource is widely utilised. Most teachers and students are familiar and confident with the use of presentation software, and most use desktop publishing software effectively to enhance their written work. In lessons, there is satisfactory use of ICT by teachers, but access

difficulties are cited as preventing more widespread use by students. Use is very good in design and technology. For instance, in electronics, students use computer programs to generate and test circuit designs for their products.

HUMANITIES

The school offers geography, history, psychology and sociology. History and sociology were inspected in depth. A-level results in geography were good in 2003, and a good improvement on those of 2002. Results in psychology were broadly in line with national averages of 2002. There is no award-bearing course in religious education currently but various topics are covered through the Year 12 enrichment programme. A conference on a religious education theme has been organised but not yet taken place. Overall, there is insufficient time allocated to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There are no schemes of work in place and statutory requirements are not met. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection and the school has not done enough to improve the situation.

History

Provision in history is **good**. Students achieve well because they are very well prepared by their teachers for external assessment. The popularity of the subject at GCE AS- and A-level is improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students value highly the expertise of staff and the support and guidance they give.
- A wide range of teaching techniques encourages students to work well individually and collaboratively and enjoy their lessons.
- Recent high standards in AS-level give students confidence to continue to study the subject in Year 13.
- Year 13 students lack opportunities to study independently, in order to achieve their full potential.

Commentary

169. Results in 2002 were above national expectations for girls, below for boys. Group sizes have fluctuated but have generally been too small to note trends over time up to 2002. The current Year 13 achieved high grades overall at AS-level in 2003. Value added data collected for these statistics shows good achievement beyond expectations, especially for girls. Students build on prior learning and develop essay writing, note-taking and source analysis skills over the two years. Year 13 show interest in the phenomenon of twentieth century dictatorship under Lenin and Stalin in contrast to Russia under the Tsars. A new module on the Holocaust tests their growing ability to search behind documentary evidence for political motivation, and the concept of wider national and international responsibility for genocide. Understanding about the changing role of women in twentieth century Britain informs students about the process of gaining equal rights.
170. Teaching is always good and often very good, leading to enjoyment for students and confidence that they will be well prepared for external assessment. Careful questioning develops students' capacity to analyse and synthesise, as well as to understand new concepts. A wide range of teaching methods are employed so that students experience different ways of learning. Good interaction with staff, including analytical marking, helps students to improve their own performance.
171. In Year 13, students would benefit from the development of better library facilities, and opportunities outside school through lectures, revision seminars, or visits, to encourage independent thinking and learning

172. Good leadership and good management have strengthened history in the sixth form, supported by its increasing popularity as a GCSE option. There are currently two viable groups in Year 12 and one in Year 13, each with a mix of boys and girls. Both boys and girls in the current Year 13 gained high grades at AS-level showing good improvement since the last inspection in sixth-form provision.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and contribute to students' mature and enthusiastic attitudes to learning.
- Schemes of work are not detailed enough to show progression and assessment of progress.
- There is no subject-specific assessment policy and process for AS- and A-level courses.

Commentary

173. Recent A-level results show that, despite small numbers of students entered for the examination, students are successful in achieving pass grades but the sample is too small to make clear comparison with national averages. In 2003, results were good with two of the four students attaining a grade A and one a grade B.

174. In 2003 at AS-level, all seven students entered achieved a pass grade; one student achieved an A grade. The pass rate is good but standards in relation to national expectations cannot be accurately measured because of the small numbers of students entered for the examination.

175. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 are average, although students' achievement is good because of effective and experienced teaching.

176. Year 13 students have a satisfactory understanding of sociological theory; they show interest and awareness of its purpose and its link to research. However, students reveal a lack of confidence when explaining or describing a particular theory in classroom discussion.

177. Year 12 students have made a promising start to the course. They demonstrate good analytical skills and an eagerness to share their thoughts and views with peers. Listening skills are good and students are tolerant and respectful towards each other when discussion occurs.

178. Teaching and learning are good because teachers promote discussion and debate within the classroom. They are keen to engage the students through targeted questioning and challenging them to express their sociological knowledge. Consequently, students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

179. The teacher in charge of the subject provides satisfactory leadership and management, though clear systems of responsibility and accountability need to be clarified. Schemes of work for AS- and A-level sociology lack depth and detail and there are no effective assessment and monitoring procedures in place to assess students' progress. Resources are limited but do meet the present requirements for the subject.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on graphics product design, though the school also teaches resistant materials and electronics product design. One lesson in electronics was sampled and discussions held with some students. There was also an opportunity to sample sixth-form work. The quality of teaching and learning in electronics is very good and the standards of work are high. Students achieve very well because of the expert support, advice and teaching they receive.

Product design - graphics

Provision in product design - graphics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high.
- Teaching is very good.
- High expectations result in students striving to succeed.
- Students are very good, independent learners.
- Relationships are very good.

Commentary

180. Results in the AS-level examinations were not as high in 2003 as they were in 2002 when they were above average, but the 2003 A-level examinations were high, and had improved on the previous year. Good standards were seen during the inspection. These include both the design and the making elements. The two teachers, who cover different elements of the syllabus, liaise very well together to the benefit of the students. Overall, students achieve very well.
181. The high standards are due to the very good teaching, where the highest standards in both design and making are expected. In an intensive introductory lesson on the use of the MicroRouter, students were later questioned. They had rapidly learnt the details included in the explanation, because it was expected that they would concentrate and learn. Students are encouraged to experiment, and thereby become good, independent learners. This is reinforced when they give presentations on their research. Lessons are pitched to fully extend students' knowledge. In lessons given to both Years 12 and 13 where the content was the same, in the Year 13 lesson, students' knowledge was extended further to include greater detail about molecular structure and the manufacturing processes. Students use ICT effectively to enhance their designs and their made products. Assessment is detailed, and individual tutorials ensure that students are given every possible support.
182. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and support continuous improvement very well. The courses currently offered were not taught at the time of the last inspection. The high standards then seen in technology courses have been maintained and improvement has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The school offers art and design and music as well as drama and theatre studies. However, only the latter course was inspected in depth. From observations of students' work on display, standards in art and design are high. It has immense visual impact and is highly creative and innovative.

Drama and theatre studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good. It is lively and well focused on improving students' quality of work.
- Students give high-quality, polished performances.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Commentary

183. Standards in drama and theatre studies are at least in line with national expectations. There are indications that at A-level in 2003, they were well above average as they were well above the 2002 national average. Girls outnumber boys in the subject, and reach a slightly higher standard than boys, but the boys are less far behind them than is the case nationally. Students write very well to show their understanding of themes and issues in the plays that they study. They are articulate and thoughtful when discussing a performance that they have seen, and they perform very well in their polished plays. Current standards are high.
184. When students start in the sixth form, they already have above average standards in performance and writing skills. However, the course is demanding and students and staff work hard to maintain high standards. Because of this, the overall achievement they make in their progress to A-level is very good. Their achievements within individual performances, of which several videos were seen, are of a very high standard. These included 'Oh what a lovely war', 'Shakers' and 'Two'.
185. Teachers mark students' work carefully, so that they know how to improve. Thorough, targeted teaching introduces a solid theoretical basis for performance early in Year 12, which is very well developed in Year 13. The lessons seen during the inspection were imaginative, lively and well focused; in one, students produced thoughtful freeze-frames to portray parts of the play, 'The Kaos Alice', that they had been to see in a theatre during the previous week.
186. The department is very well led and managed, with clear documentation that explains the course to both students and teachers. School plays are produced; students from a range of year-groups were seen rehearsing with stage presence and confidence for the musical 'Oliver'.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The school offers a range of courses in this area including AVCEs in travel and tourism, leisure and tourism and health and social care, and A-level sports studies. Two lessons of sports studies were sampled in the sixth form. The quality of teaching was very good and the standards reached are above average. There is an improved programme of recreational activities for all sixth-formers and students also have the opportunity to follow the Community Sports Leaders Award.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Vocational health and social care was inspected in depth.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Developments in provision have suffered from the lack of a full-time co-ordinator over an extended period of time.

- Standards are well below average and a relatively large number of students fail to complete the course.
 - The teaching methods used do not sufficiently encourage students to become independent learners, though, when students are required to carry out their own research, standards of work are much better.
 - Teachers establish good relationships with students and this helps to motivate and enthuse them.
 - Assessment and monitoring of students' work and subsequent support and guidance, especially on developing portfolio work, are inadequate.
187. Standards are well below average, though, due to the satisfactory quality of teaching and learning, they are in line with expectations for the ability of the students. Where students are required to complete their own research, such as compiling case studies of, and social care in, the wider world, standards of work are better and students are well motivated by this type of activity.
188. Achievement is satisfactory. Too many students do not complete coursework. This is a result, at least in part, of a lack of rigour in assessment and irregular monitoring of their progress. Students have little detailed, written feedback about the quality of their work and ways to improve. They do not have portfolios of completed work and important monitoring documents and, therefore, do not have an overview of how they are progressing through the course. Additional support is needed with portfolio building so that students can take responsibility for their own learning and see their progression, thus raising standards. Many students, particularly boys, do not complete the course, and those who do usually obtain the lower grades. This is a result of the lack of feedback relating to the quality of work and an unrealistic understanding by some students of the demands of the course. Additional pre-course advice is needed to help students understand the commitment they are required to make. In addition, some tasks are directed too closely by the teacher. Some of the more able students are given undemanding tasks but some less able students would benefit from additional support materials.
189. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers produce clear lesson plans. A variety of teaching strategies is used, including discussions, research, visitors, ICT and video. In some lessons, good use of knowledge concerning students' learning styles is being used to improve learning. Work placements have been set up for the students and these are effective in bringing a useful, interesting dimension to the subject. They help students research their subject and provide up-to-date information. There were good examples of research skills being used, but some students need more support in this aspect of their work. Good use is made of careers information. Teachers have good relationships with the students and this keeps the majority on task, facilitating their learning. Some teaching, however, is lacking the richness brought by specialists in this subject.
190. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning is underdeveloped and needs to be more rigorous in order to improve standards and achievement within the department. There is a clear vision for the future and outline plans for its development. The acting co-ordinator, in place for only a few weeks, has worked hard to maintain the department in difficult circumstances.
191. Improvement from the last inspection has been slow and, therefore, unsatisfactory. The department has adapted to the new courses but there is still considerable development required. The instability of the staffing has had an adverse affect on the achievements of students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

