

INSPECTION REPORT

OLDBURY WELLS SCHOOL

Oldbury Wells, Bridgnorth

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123583

Headteacher: Mr R Davies

Lead inspector: Mr J Plumb

Dates of inspection: 9th – 19th September 2003

Inspection number: 259245

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1034
School address:	Oldbury Wells Bridgnorth Shropshire
Postcode:	WV16 5JD
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs W Condlyffe Phipps
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a Beacon school with science college status. As such it is at the cutting edge of a number of exciting local and national initiatives. These include the 14 to 19 Pathfinder Programme and the Increased Flexibility Initiative. It is an average sized 11 – 18 community comprehensive school. There are 1,034 students on roll. There are 224 students in the sixth form. The school is effectively on two sites split by a road. The grounds are very spacious and attractive but building improvements are impeded by the fact that it is a listed building with a water tower. There is currently a large building works programme going on to improve the accommodation for science and mathematics. When they start the school as 11-year-olds, the students' attainment is above average. The socio-economic mix of the students is broadly in line with the national average even though there are only 7.4 per cent of students eligible for free school meals (there is rural deprivation and low incomes are not uncommon). The proportion of students on the school's register for special educational needs is very low but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of minority ethnic students is low and none are at an early stage of learning English. There are very few Traveller students and only four students in public care.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16930	Mr J Plumb	Lead inspector	
9417	Ms E Owen	Lay inspector	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics
30648	Mr B Skelton	Team inspector	English
20832	Dr M Galowalia	Team inspector	Science
32169	Mr R O'Hagan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32329	Mr A Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
11190	Dr W Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology
22849	Dr R Catlow	Team inspector	Geography
27492	Mr J Barker	Team inspector	History
16950	Dr C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
30297	Mr G Spruce	Team inspector	Music
21957	Mr R Vaughton	Team inspector	Physical education
32122	Ms J Straw	Team inspector	Religious education
16038	Ms J Bavin	Team inspector	Special educational needs
2183	Dr P Thompson	Team inspector	Workplace learning/vocational qualifications
18888	Ms J Boulton	Team inspector	Citizenship Dance, Post-16
4607	Mr D Ward	Team inspector	Biology, Post-16
1819	Mr R Crowther	Team inspector	Psychology, Post-16

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Oldbury Wells is a **good school with a significant number of outstanding features**. It provides a good quality of education for its students and gives good value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the issues identified then have been addressed.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good and very good teaching leads to good achievement in most subjects.
- Good GCSE results and A-level results.
- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent.
- Achievement in English in Years 10 and 11 is not good enough.
- Standards are not high enough in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Extra-curricular activities are stunningly good, particularly in the performing arts and sport.
- Pastoral care and support is very good.
- Students enjoy school and so behave very well and have a very positive attitude to learning.
- The school is a lovely place to be because there is a good balance between being relaxed and working hard. All students are highly valued and the work of all is celebrated.
- The strategic leadership of special educational needs (SEN) at senior level could be better.
- Provision for music in Years 7 to 9 is not good enough due to staffing shortages.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is good. In the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2002 results were in line with the national average in English and mathematics and above in science. Compared with similar schools (measured by prior attainment) results were well below the national average in English and mathematics and in line in science. Results in 2003 are very significantly better. GCSE passes at A* - C in 2002 were above the national average and in line when compared with similar schools. But results overall at GCSE were below similar schools. In 2003 GCSE results improved significantly and the challenging target of 65 per cent passes at A* - C has been reached. The very significant improvement in the national tests for 14-year-olds, particularly at the higher levels, and the GCSE results in 2003 together with the standards seen during the inspection is the reason why achievement is judged to be good. A-level results were above the national average in most subjects in 2002 and the results in a significant number of subjects in 2003 are even better.

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

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

Although the comparative data for 2003 has not yet been published there was a significant improvement in both GCSE and A-level results in 2003.

Achievement by Year 9 and Year 11 in mathematics, French, geography, history, design and technology (DT), drama, physical education (PE), religious education (RE) and citizenship is good. **Attainment** is above the national average by Year 9 and Year 11 in all of these subjects.

Achievement in science and art and design is satisfactory across the school. Achievement in English is good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards achieved in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are too low. Progress in ICT is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but standards attained remain below the national average because of students' low earlier attainment. Because of staffing shortages achievement in music in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory but in Years 10 and 11 it is good because of good teaching. Students with SEN achieve good standards. Minority ethnic students

achieve some of the best standards. Gifted and talented students achieve high standards in French, DT and physical education but standards are not high enough for them in ICT. Achievement in the sixth form is at least good and in many subjects very good. **Students' confidence and self-esteem are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students' attitudes to learning are very good as is their behaviour. Attendance is good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good for students aged 11 to 16 and very good in the sixth form. There are examples of excellent teaching but there is some unsatisfactory and a very little poor teaching. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and cracking pace. The unsatisfactory teaching is pedestrian and characterised by weak behaviour management. In mathematics and science throughout the school and in English in Years 7 to 9 the quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory overall in English in Years 10 and 11. There is very good teaching in history and PE throughout the school and in DT in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in music in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory due to a staffing problem. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in art and design. Students with SEN are taught well. Gifted and talented students are taught well in most subjects but they are not sufficiently challenged in ICT. **The curriculum is good. Students' care and welfare is very good. Links with parents are good and links with the community are very good.**

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good. Management is good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. There is a clear and shared vision which focuses on high achievement for all students. Strategic thinking is robust and decisions are made following thorough consultation with the whole staff. The governing body provides good support and challenge. It meets its statutory responsibilities well except for ensuring that all students receive a daily act of collective worship and that sixth form students receive religious education and so in accordance with the Ofsted criteria **governance is unsatisfactory.**

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school. They consider that the school is very well led and managed. They find the headteacher and staff to be approachable and supportive. They are very pleased with standards and are delighted with the quality of teaching. A few parents expressed concern about bullying. The inspection team investigated bullying thoroughly and discovered that on rare occasions it does occur but students are clear about what to do when it happens and they are satisfied that it is handled well by the school. Students enjoy school and find their teachers to be helpful, supportive and fun. They like the range of clubs and trips. They said that they found their teaching to be challenging. They have an adult they can turn to when in trouble. Students said that they feel valued and listened to. Students say that they are really glad that they chose the school and they are proud to belong to the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Raise standards of achievement in English in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the quality of provision for ICT in Years 7 to 9 and raise standards in the subject across the school.
- Improve the quality of provision and raise standards in music in Years 7 to 9.
- Review the senior leadership role to develop the strategy for SEN within the context of the Code of Practice.
- Ensure that all students receive a daily act of collective worship and that sixth form students receive religious education in accordance with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The quality of provision in the sixth form is **very good**. Because of very good and excellent teaching and learning, standards achieved are good and very good in almost all subjects. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and consider that they are treated as mature adults. Leadership of the sixth form is very good as is management. The sixth form is **very cost effective**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and in some subjects, such as textiles and dance, it is inspirational and so achievement in almost all subjects inspected is very good.
- The atmosphere in the sixth form is terrific and the students consider that they are treated as mature adults.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.
- More could be done to raise the students' awareness of cultural diversity.
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum is very 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	English: Provision is very good . Achievement in Year 13 is very good and teachers' excellent subject knowledge, coupled with the way in which they challenge students, contributes to this high achievement. French: Provision is very good . A-level results are above the national average and achievement for the most talented students is very good because of the demanding teaching.
Mathematics	Mathematics: Provision is very good . Learning and achievement are very good because of the very good teaching.
Science	Biology: Very good provision. Very good achievement because of very good teaching which results in above average standards .
Humanities	Psychology: Satisfactory provision. Satisfactory achievement and satisfactory teaching . The new teacher in charge has turned this subject around.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Textiles: Very good provision. Very good and excellent teaching results in very good achievement.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design: Very good provision. Very good achievement because of the very good teaching and learning. Well above average A-level results.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Dance: Good provision. Very good and excellent teaching. Very good achievement but room for some development in the management of the subject.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students in Year 12 are given very good guidance about what subjects to choose when they are in Year 11. Students who join the school in Year 12 are inducted very well. Guidance and support about applying to university is very good. Due to the constraint of the amount of personal adviser (PA) allocated time by Connexions the school recognises that not every student can access a 1:1 careers interview and students not going to college/university are appropriately targeted for individual career interviews. However, other students can request an interview and the school does purchase extra support for interviews as necessary. Pastoral support is strong and students know who to approach when they have problems with their work but also said that there is at least one adult they could turn to about personal troubles. They find the head of sixth form to be very approachable and most helpful.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The leadership of the head of sixth form is charismatic and innovative. Her vision about creating a very broad and balanced post-16 curriculum has come to fruition. She has empowered a very effective sixth form team of tutors and works very effectively with the deputy head of sixth form. The management of the sixth form is very good. It is a cost effective sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Every sixth form student interviewed was delighted to be a member of the sixth form. They consider that they are treated as mature adults and are consulted by the school about the quality of life for them whilst in the sixth form. They told inspectors that their teachers are always there for them. They said that there are opportunities to work and play hard. They feel that they are challenged by the teaching and are told very clearly about what they need to do to improve their work. Through the sixth form council they have brought about improvements to the accommodation for themselves. The sentiments they expressed are supported by the high retention rate in almost all subjects and the A-level results. Those students following vocational courses also said that they were well supported by the school but that the expertise about certain vocational pathways could be better amongst staff and this is recognised by the head of sixth form (the expansion and building of vocational pathways is a priority on her development plan).

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. Achievement by the current Year 9 and Year 11 is good overall. In most subjects attainment by Year 9 and Year 11 is above the national average. Standards achieved by students with special educational needs (SEN) are **good** and the achievement by minority ethnic students is amongst the best in the school. Gifted and talented students **achieve very high standards** in design and technology (DT), French and in physical education but because of a weakness in information and communication technology (ICT) students do not reach their potential in this subject. Trends in the national tests for 14-year-olds have been broadly in line with the national average in recent years. The good achievement judgement is supported by the significantly improved 2003 results in the national tests for 14-year-olds, particularly in the highest grades, the much improved GCSE results in 2003 as well as how current students in Year 9 and Year 11 are doing. At GCSE results have gone up and down but the results in 2003 are very good. Comparisons against national benchmarks for 2003 cannot be made because the comparative data is not yet published. In the sixth form achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results at 65 per cent A* - C in 2003 are very good.
- Achievement in English in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Achievement in DT and French is good and GCSE results in these subjects are consistently above the national average.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 in ICT and music is unsatisfactory.
- Standards are consistently above and well above average standards in a wide range of A-level subjects.

Commentary

1. In the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2002 results were in line with the national average in English and mathematics and above in science. Compared with similar schools (measured by prior attainment) results were well below the national average in English and mathematics and in line in science. Results in 2003 are very significantly better. GCSE passes at A* - C in 2002 were above the national average and in line when compared with similar schools. In 2003 GCSE results improved and the robust target of 65 per cent passes at A* - C has been reached. A-level results were above the national average in most subjects in 2002 and the results in a significant number of subjects in 2003 are even better.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	60 (79)	66 (64)
mathematics	72 (75)	67 (66)
science	79 (82)	66 (66)

There were 175 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60 (51)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (84)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	36	39.8

There were 171 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	93.7 (87.9)	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	42.1 (30.8)	39.4
Average point score per student	79.9 (14.9 – old UCAS points)	78.6

There were 99 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Achievement in mathematics, French, geography, history, DT, drama, PE and citizenship is good across the school. The good achievement recognised at the time of the last inspection has been improved upon, particularly in mathematics and DT. Achievement in science and art & design is satisfactory across the school. Achievement in English is good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and this is worse than at the time of the last inspection. Standards achieved in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are too low because students in these years are not exposed to sufficient National Curriculum ICT. Although students catch up and make satisfactory progress in ICT during Years 10 and 11 standards remain below the national average because students' earlier attainment is low. Because of staffing shortages achievement in music in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory but very dynamic teaching in Years 10 and 11 results in good achievement.

Sixth Form

- Achievement in all sixth form subjects inspected at depth is good or very good except for psychology where achievement is satisfactory. In psychology the teacher in charge took over a subject that was in a mess and has transformed the subject beyond recognition. Her development plan indicates that the capacity to improve is good and that within a year from now achievement in this subject is likely to be good. In textiles some outstanding and sparkling achievement was observed. Students with SEN and the very small number of minority ethnic students also achieve very well.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **good** and above the national average. Punctuality is **good** and lessons start promptly. Students' attitudes are **very good**, and they are very enthusiastic about school and their learning. Behaviour is **very good** both in lessons and around the school. Personal development of students is **good**, and social and moral aspects are a particular strength. The development of principles to distinguish right from wrong is **excellent**. Relationships in school are **very good**, and are another

area of strength. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students **is good overall but more could be done by the school to raise students' awareness of cultural diversity.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good procedures for following up non-attendance, and a new project is now in place to maintain the very good levels of attendance in Year 7 throughout the school.
- Students are very supportive of their school, are enthusiastic about their learning, and are keen to do their best.
- Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is very good. The school has very good procedures for promoting good behaviour, and does not hesitate to deal in an appropriate manner with the few students who do not behave well.
- Very good relationships are formed between students and teachers, and between students themselves.
- Students are confident and happy in and around school, and know what to do if any oppressive behaviour occurs.
- The social and moral aspects of students' personal development are very good and students' awareness of, and adherence to, principles of right and wrong are excellent.
- There are missed opportunities for students' spiritual development and the school does not do enough to recognise and celebrate the cultural and ethnic diversity of Britain today.

Commentary

4. Students are keen to come to school and most, including sixth form students, have good attendance. Additional procedures have been introduced to more closely monitor and effectively follow up any poor attendance. Parents are aware of the importance of good attendance and are appreciative of the contact they have from the school should problems arise.
5. Students are very enthusiastic about their work and the help and support they receive from teachers and other staff in school. They enjoy their lessons and are eager to join lunchtime activities and after-school sports. The school council is an effective route for students to influence what happens in school and their views are taken seriously by staff and governors. Opportunities for students to take responsibility in school are provided, and there are prefects in Year 9 and the sixth form. Sixth form students, including those with SEN, also link with students in Year 7 with SEN for paired tutoring and plan to establish a drop-in facility for younger students. The school puts great effort into raising students' awareness about potential bullying, and students feel confident about approaching adults in school for advice and help. Any incidents are dealt with seriously and consistently and wherever possible problems are resolved with students. The school has high expectations of students' behaviour, which are familiar to them. Although fixed-term exclusions are quite high, students are excluded only after other strategies have proved unsuccessful. Exclusions contribute to the strong and effective message that poor behaviour will not be tolerated.
6. Students work and co-operate very well together and are sensitive to the feelings of others. Personal development is taken forward through the work of the heads of year, form tutors, the citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and assemblies. The involvement of students in the assemblies seen was minimal; although they listen with interest it is a missed opportunity for them to fully participate and reflect on the issues raised. Some tutor periods were lacking in purpose and direction, and consequently opportunities to further spiritual development were missed. Teachers are excellent role models for students in the way they behave and consequently students have a secure sense of right and wrong. They take great pride in their school and are welcoming and friendly to visitors.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.3
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.7
National data	1.2

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

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 Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
893	93	0
1	0	0
34	0	0
8	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
81	0	0

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

Sixth Form

- Sixth form students state that they enjoy school. They are mature and influence decisions about school life through the sixth form committee. Their actions have led to improved accommodation and access to quality drinking water. They organise charity events and so develop responsibility as citizens. Through their management committee they organise various social events including the leavers' ball. Although the core programme contributes to their spiritual and cultural development the school recognises that more could be done to raise their awareness of cultural diversity. Currently they are initiating a scheme whereby younger students can come and talk to sixth form students if they are being bullied.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. The curriculum is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. Student welfare and guidance is **very good**. Partnership with parents is **good** and with the community it is **very good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall for students in Years 7 to 11. There is a significant amount of very good teaching and a small amount of excellent teaching. There is some unsatisfactory teaching and a very small amount of poor teaching. The best teaching was observed

in history and PE throughout the school and in DT and citizenship in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in mathematics and science is good throughout the school. It is good in English in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The unsatisfactory teaching in music in Years 7 to 9 is due to a staffing difficulty outside of the control of the head of performing arts. There is also some unsatisfactory and poor teaching in art and design. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall but there are shortcomings. **Assessment is good overall** but there is some inconsistency in practice across the school. The quality of teaching is very good in the sixth form with examples of inspirational and excellent teaching in textiles, dance, music, PE and English.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and excellent teaching in the sixth form in dance, music, PE, textiles, design, English, mathematics, art, business & economics, ICT, French and biology.
- Unsatisfactory teaching in some art & design lessons is characterised by poor pace, weak behaviour management and failure to plan effectively to meet the needs of students with SEN.
- Insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of ICT in Years 7 to 9 and the lack of specialist teaching of music in Years 7 to 9 results in unsatisfactory learning and achievement.
- The good and very good teaching in Years 7 to 11 is characterised by very good subject knowledge, detailed and thorough planning and cracking pace; in Years 10 and 11, a significant feature of the very good teaching is an excellent knowledge of what is expected by the examination boards.
- The relaxed atmosphere in almost all lessons combined with the high level of challenge result in good learning and good achievement.
- In most subjects assessment is good and students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work, but there is some inconsistency in subjects across the school.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in [number] lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (6%)	52 (32%)	67 (42%)	24 (15%)	7 (5%)	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.

8. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and detailed and thorough planning of lessons as evidenced in mathematics, history, French and RE. Where teaching is good or better teachers have high expectations of their students, and both challenge and support them at all times. Assessment in these subjects is the key to enable students to make good progress as they are told clearly what it is they have to do to improve their work, as evidenced in PE. Very good relationships between teachers and students contribute to very good learning. For example, in a Year 11 citizenship lesson students' learning was enhanced because they were confident to ask deep questions of their teacher in a secure and safe environment. In French a strong feature of the teaching is the consistent use of the foreign language by all teachers, which enables students to develop listening and speaking skills. The fun element in French results in younger learners enjoying the language games and competitions and as a result making rapid gains in their learning. The quality of teaching for students with SEN by the learning support team is good as is the teaching across the school for students identified as gifted and talented, except in ICT where they are not sufficiently challenged. Minority ethnic students, Travellers and those students in public care are fully included in lessons and taught well; minority ethnic students achieve some of the highest standards in the school.

9. Where teaching has shortcomings, for example in some art and design lessons, the pace of teaching is pedestrian, activities are not planned with sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of students with SEN and behaviour management strategies are poor. In one Year 8 art and design lesson the students started the lesson with a piece of blank paper and ended up with a piece of blank paper by the end of the lesson. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting a temporary music specialist. This has contributed to the unsatisfactory teaching and learning in music in Years 7 to 9. Although the quality of teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall there are shortcomings. There is insufficient challenge for students in ICT, particularly for students who are talented. Some teachers in a few subjects do not make sufficient use of assessment to tell students precisely what they need to do to improve their work. Assessment in ICT is particularly weak, but even in some strong subjects such as French insufficient use is made of the Teacher Assessments to provide a robust baseline against which to measure progress for those students who opt to do the subject as a GCSE in Year 10.

Sixth Form

10. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in the sixth form and there is evidence of quite inspirational teaching. In textiles the quality of teaching is outstanding. The teacher's first-hand experiences of working as a professional designer motivates the students and raises expectations leading to excellent independent working. In dance the teacher's excellent subject expertise enables students to develop a clear visual image and feeling for their movements. The outstandingly good teaching in the sixth form results in good and very good achievement and high standards across a wide range of subjects.

The curriculum

The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is **broad and balanced** and for Years 10 and 11 it is **good**. A vocational alternative package is developing well. The post-16 curriculum is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide-ranging, imaginative programme of extra-curricular activities and excursions enriches students' schooling and widens their horizons.
- With good guidance in Year 9 through the innovative Individual Learning Plans advice scheme, students are able to choose from an unusually broad, forward-looking range of courses and qualifications in Years 10 and 11.
- Although literacy across subjects has developed over the last two years there has not been sufficient development overall since the time of the last inspection.
- Students are well prepared to become responsible members of society through a very well planned citizenship programme
- Students in Years 7 to 9 are given insufficient opportunities to develop their skills in the use of ICT throughout the curriculum.

Commentary

11. Curricular provision for students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students' artistic qualities are well nourished and the performing arts of dance and drama are particularly well provided for, but students are insufficiently exposed to ICT. In Years 10 and 11, students are able to choose from an unusually broad range of courses and provision is therefore good. Traditional academic courses are augmented with a variety of non-GCSE qualifications. The school is a forward-looking pathfinder with its range of vocational courses most of which involve two half-days a week at college. With such diverse provision, ensuring students make the right choices at age 14 is essential, and the innovative programme of discussions known as Individual Learning Plans brings together students, tutors, parents and careers advisers in a model of good practice. However, the wide free-choice options programme comes with a cost to coherence and the complicated arrangements for ICT result in unequal opportunities.

12. The programme of citizenship lessons that has replaced personal and social education is very good and shows particularly thoughtful planning, but the school is still in breach of the statutory requirement for all students aged 14 to 16 to study a technology subject and a modern foreign language. In fact, barely 30 per cent study a foreign language after Year 9 – a figure almost unchanged since the last inspection five years ago. However, this regulation is likely to be relaxed significantly from September 2004. Literacy across subjects has developed in the last two years but overall it has not developed sufficiently since the last inspection. There is some variation in practice of the use of numeracy across subjects but overall standards in numeracy are good throughout the school.
13. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. Overall, resources and accommodation are satisfactory to support the curriculum.

Sixth Form

14. The sixth form curriculum is very good. There is a wide range of AS and A-level subjects. The vocational pathway is developing very well. There are courses at Levels 2 and 3 for students to follow. Only those students who follow computing or ICT courses have formal lessons to develop their ICT skills. Retention on courses is good. Students do not receive their statutory entitlement to RE.

The extra-curricular provision in the school is very good. During their time at Oldbury Wells, students are presented with an eye-opening array of opportunities to learn outside lessons. As well as countless clubs, there are over thirty sports teams, including for basketball, tennis, swimming and girls' football. There are dance groups for tap and jazz, a film club and the Duke of Edinburgh award to choose from. Local primary school pupils are included in the annual musical production but drama and dance groups also perform publicly each year, for example at the Ludlow festival. When it comes to getting away from school, there are no frontiers. Field trips for history, geography and art reach from South Wales' coal mines via London and Liverpool galleries to Milan, Florence and Paris by Year 11. Geology students go to Arran. There have been recent trips to Morocco, Iceland and North America in the sixth form. Ski trips favour US slopes, while a Year 7 residential to Boulogne builds to a full exchange before GCSE and sixth-formers can do work experience in Germany.

Care, guidance and support

Very good care and support is given to students. The school ethos of valuing all students is a **very strong** feature. **Very good** arrangements are in place for ensuring the health and safety of students and for child protection. Student achievement and personal development are **very well** monitored by staff with a pastoral role, and advice and guidance are **very good**. Students are effectively involved in the work and development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The induction arrangements are very thorough, and students are well prepared before they start school in Year 7.
- Regular health and safety audits are carried out by staff responsible and followed up by the health and safety committee, which reports to the governing body.
- The school child protection policy is based on local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures, and links with the two Shropshire social services departments are good.
- Heads of year give very good guidance and support to students, and are often the person(s) students turn to for advice. They also have an effective role in overseeing and supporting form tutors.
- There are effective arrangements in place for the assistant headteacher and heads of year to monitor and take action over any students causing concern.
- Relationships with adults in school are very good and as well as teachers, students have access to a school counsellor for support and advice.

- Students' views are included in their annual reports, and they have targets for improvement in a range of areas. However, students with statements of SEN do not yet contribute to their annual reviews.
- Students receive very good advice on future careers and employment. This includes careers advice as part of the PSHE curriculum, work experience, work-related vocational learning and good support from Connexions.

Commentary

15. Arrangements for students' health and safety are overseen by the deputy headteacher and the school health and safety committee, who decide on the priorities for action based on a regular audit. Departments, especially in subjects such as PE and DT, also carry out regular risk assessments where all activities are considered. Child protection arrangements follow the Area Child Protection Committee guidance, and the local social services departments give good advice and support to the assistant headteacher who is the lead person in school. He receives regular training, and has familiarised staff with procedures. Staff have also received a useful leaflet giving guidance.
16. Relationships with school staff and students are a strong feature, and students have trusting relationships with a number of adults in school, to whom they can turn. This includes the heads of year, class teachers, the school counsellor, form tutors and members of the senior management team. The school values all students, and frequent praise is given to students for effort and improvement. Merits, which may be given for a range of achievements, are valued by students who respond to the positive encouragement given by staff.
17. Access to careers guidance is through the careers education programme, which will now start in Year 7, through a well-planned and monitored work-experience programme in Year 10, and individual or small group work with Connexions. Older students also have the support of an individual teacher through the careers mentoring programme. There is also a very successful programme of vocational courses for students who find that the curriculum does not meet their needs. The school involves students in the development of appropriate policies and the school council is a means of them putting forward their views and ideas. Students feel confident to express their views and use their initiative, and their views are surveyed periodically through questionnaires.

Sixth Form

18. Students in Year 11 are provided with good information about the range of courses available in the sixth form. New entrants to Year 12 joining from other schools are well inducted. Students aspiring to further education are very well supported. They visit a university fayre and those aspiring to Oxbridge have opportunities to attend open days. A range of employers visit school to talk with students. Due to limited resources not every sixth form student can access a personal adviser through Connexions but the school ensures that those students opting not to go on to university are targeted for 1:1 interviews with their personal advisor.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **good**, and they are very supportive of the school. Parents receive **good** quality information about the school and their children's progress. Their views are sought on important changes and on what they think of the school. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good** and are planned to improve further with the Science College initiative. Links with the community are **very good** and enhance students' learning in a wide range of subjects and areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive well-presented newsletters each term, which contain a wide range of information about school life.
- Parents of any excluded students receive a very detailed written account of the incident, and clear explanations of the reasons for exclusion.
- There are regular parents' evenings and useful written reports.
- An active School Association organises a range of enjoyable social activities, and raises significant sums of money for the school.
- The very good links with a large number of partner primary schools are an important contributor to the successful induction of students.
- Very effective links with a number of local colleges have enabled the successful establishment of vocational programmes for some students.
- Links with other secondary schools are in place which enhance sixth form provision, and all schools in the area co-operate well together.
- The local community regularly uses the school facilities, and the school is the venue for the local folk festival.
- Work experience is provided at local firms, and local business people act as mentors to older students; this makes a valuable contribution to students' development of skills required in the work place.

Commentary

19. Parents are very supportive of the school, and are particularly happy with the high expectations of students, the quality of teaching and the approachability of the headteacher and staff. Teachers are urged to contact parents by telephone if they have any concerns, and parents are actively encouraged to contact school. There are a number of more formal occasions for parents to discuss their children's progress and achievements, and they are strong supporters of school productions and sporting activities. This is particularly important when many students are bussed to school, and parents are relied upon to provide transport. The majority of parents whose children have behavioural problems are very supportive of the measures taken by the school, and are kept fully involved. Any complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively.
20. Links with other schools have been improving and developing over recent years, and are many and varied. A crucial aspect of the science college development is to work closely with other schools, especially primary schools, to raise the quality of science education in the area. A number of secondary schools in the area work collaboratively together and the experienced headteacher of this school makes a valued contribution to the education community. The school has willingly shared its Beacon status expertise with others. A project has commenced with a nearby school to share some A-level teaching, and to provide some A-level courses for each other. Transfer arrangements are systematic and thorough.
21. Community links are also an important aspect of the science college development, and areas have been identified with local employers, where the school can help to meet some local training needs. The school is very much a part of the local community, is used regularly by local groups, and employs a number of local people. The school is actively involved with the Bridgnorth District Community Partnership, and with the Learning and Skills Council. There are many and varied sporting links, which enable students with ability to compete at area, county and national levels. The school uses local facilities whenever possible for the curriculum, and visits to theatres, art galleries and other events are regularly provided.

Sixth Form

22. Parents of students in the sixth form are kept well informed about their children's progress. Community links are very good. Parents of students who join in Year 12 are provided with very good quality information about the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The management of the school is **good**. The governing body provides **good support and challenge**. But, because it does not fulfil its statutory responsibility in respect of ensuring that every student receives a daily act of collective worship and that all sixth form students receive a programme of religious education, governance, in accordance with the Ofsted criteria, is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and vision of the headteacher is outstandingly good. He inspires staff and students so that they feel valued and as a result they aim to achieve their very best. He has successfully created a school with a relaxed but hardworking atmosphere, committed to the highest achievement of all.
- Management systems are good and robust.
- The innovative leadership of the sixth form curriculum.
- The leadership and management of pastoral care are stunning.
- The planning to include more students with SEN with their peers in mainstream classes is not sufficiently well developed.

Commentary

23. The governance of the school is **unsatisfactory**. The governing body provides a good balance between support and challenge. Governors have a satisfactory grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They meet their statutory responsibilities well except for providing for a daily act of collective worship and provision for religious education in the sixth form.
24. The leadership of the school is **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Strategic thinking and planning amongst the senior leadership team are very good. They have created successful middle management teams committed to driving the school forward and all share the vision of the highest achievement for all.
25. The management systems are **good and robust**. Performance management procedures have been well established and have led to improvements and more consistency in the activities of middle management. But there is still a lack of consistency across subject areas in the quality of monitoring of teaching and learning. Although the management of SEN is good there has not been a strategic grasp of the importance of every teacher in the school taking on the responsibility to plan flexibly for pupils with SEN and there has been too great a dependency on the learning support team working in isolation from the English department. The management of pastoral care is very good and contributes very significantly to students' learning. Financial planning is very good. The licensed deficit must be put in the context of Shropshire and there is a plan to claw back the overspend which is rigorously monitored.
26. Although the headteacher is creative and imaginative in his drive to recruit high quality teachers the school has had significant difficulties in recruiting part-time subject specialists in two areas of the curriculum. This has proved to be a barrier to raising achievement in music in Years 7 to 9.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,014,919
Total expenditure	2,936,192
Expenditure per student	2,817.84

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-92,723
Balance carried forward to the next	-13,996

Sixth Form

27. The leadership of the sixth form is very good and has resulted in a creative and imaginative curriculum. Management systems are very good in the sixth form and so students' progress is very effectively monitored. The sixth form is cost effective.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The work-related courses

Provision in work-related courses is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with partner institutions are effective.
- The relevance of courses to the needs of disaffected, low attaining and students with SEN is good.
- Help and guidance given to individual students are good.
- Teaching of key skills, particularly ICT, is not good enough.
- Monitoring and recording of students' progress is not sufficiently robust.
- Co-ordinating the schemes of work used in the school with those in partner institutions is not as effective as it could be.

Commentary

28. The lessons and work seen during the inspection showed that achievement was always at least satisfactory and often good or better. Standards are below the national average. Students opt to take work-related courses in Years 10 and 11 after receiving advice and guidance. The attainment on entry is below both the school and national averages. A significant proportion of students have SEN, many with behavioural difficulties. No assessment of attainment against course standards has yet been made. In 2002, assessment of students' progress on the ABC Certificate in Motor Vehicle Studies course at the end of Year 10 showed that over six out of ten students are expected to gain the award, including some of those with SEN. Assessment in this course is linked to that of the NVQ in Performing Engineering Operations at level 1 in a very innovative way. The NVQ in hairdressing at level 1 and Skills for Life (land based) course at Entry level have just started.
29. The quality of teaching and learning is always at least satisfactory overall. It is sometimes good. All teachers have a secure understanding of the subject. Many have experience in industry, which is used effectively to enrich the learning experience of the students. Most teachers give good help and guidance to students both in practical lessons and in developing their portfolios. This is particularly helpful to students with SEN. More needs to be done to help students develop their Key Skills, particularly the use of ICT. Students on the Motor Vehicle Studies and Foundation Construction courses in Year 10 were seen learning together about health and safety in the workshop satisfactorily. Students in a Year 10 lesson in the construction course were seen learning to use mortar well. The lesson was held in a partner institution. The progress being made by students with SEN in this lesson was good. Students on the NVQ course in hairdressing were seen enjoying a very good lesson in which they played the role of a receptionist in a hairdressing salon.
30. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Effective leadership has been shown in developing both work-related courses and the appropriate curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Much has been done to establish effective relationships with four partner institutions. These partnerships have enabled the school to provide courses relevant to the future employment

needs of many low attaining students including those with SEN. These courses interest some students who would otherwise be disaffected. Those managing the courses are committed and day-to-day liaison with the partner institutions is effective. Much more needs to be done to monitor and record the progress made by individual students and to regularly review progress. The schemes of work used in the school need to be more closely and effectively co-ordinated with those used in the partnership institutions.

31. Changes in provision since the last inspection have been good. All work-related courses have been introduced during the past two years.

Special educational needs

The provision for students with special educational needs is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students with SEN are encouraged and taught well; consequently most students with SEN make good progress and some make very good progress.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning and well-being and there is good team work between teaching assistants and subject teachers.
- The two SEN co-ordinators manage the day-to-day provision well.
- The provision for students with SEN in the sixth form is very good.
- There has been no-one in the school with the understanding, the time and the authority to lead the school in developing provision consequently little progress has been made in involving students and parents in determining targets for learning.

Commentary

32. One of the most significant strengths in the school is the extent to which teachers welcome students with SEN. There are countless examples of extra care and consideration from staff that make all the difference for students. These include:
- seating students near the front so they hear, see or concentrate better;
 - using practical tasks, games and techniques that appeal to students, for example in subjects such as French, art and design and religious education; and
 - having extra rules in football to ensure that students with physical disabilities have the same opportunities as their peers to develop skills and play a game.
- Additionally the teaching assistants forge good relationships with students. This enhances students' confidence and helps them learn more effectively.
33. As a result of the extent of good quality teaching and support throughout the school most students with SEN achieve well. Those students with specific learning difficulties and sensory impairments often achieve very well and join the sixth form with very pleasing GCSE results and high aspirations. Those students with SEN who are in the sixth form are very complimentary about the high quality support they receive. On those rare occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, a contributory factor is often one of inadequate control. This often arises from insufficient planning to respond flexibly to students with challenging behaviour. While there are several thoughtful procedures for identifying behaviour difficulties and how to help, the system is not watertight. No-one is in a position to oversee what happens throughout each day for the most difficult students, or to direct and monitor how all staff deal with such students.
34. The two SEN co-ordinators provide useful information for colleagues and are very supportive of the teaching assistants. This has a direct and positive bearing on the successes in classrooms. The format of individual education plans, allowing departments to add subject specific targets and to review students' progress against all targets, is good and mostly used well. However, there has been a lack of vision and clear planning to improve and develop

provision for students with SEN. This is because no one at a senior level has had the time, understanding and authority to plug this gap. Consequently, the school has been slow to respond fully to the requirements in the Code of Practice. This is most apparent in the insufficient involvement of students in setting and reviewing their learning intentions.

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

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because the pace and challenge in the teaching is not good enough to raise the standards of attainment of the middle attaining students at GCSE.
- Literacy across subjects is not sufficiently well developed.
- Teachers' good knowledge of their subject, good management of students and good relationships with students in Years 7 to 9.
- Good progress and achievement from Year 7 to Year 9 and good results in National Curriculum tests at age 14.
- More consistent use of the marking policy for Years 7 to 9 is required so that students learn from their mistakes and understand what is needed to improve.

Commentary

35. Attainment on entry is above average. By the end of Year 9, students make good progress and results in National Curriculum tests are well above the national average. In 2002 attainment fell, with only three-fifths of students gaining Level 5 or better. In 2003 it rose back to four-fifths of students gaining Level 5 or better and was similar once more to attainment in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. Standards seen in lessons and in students' work confirm a high level of achievement. Students collaborate well and benefit from good relationships with teachers. Speaking and listening skills are good. Students answer questions accurately, but not particularly enthusiastically. Reading and writing skills are well above average for most students. At this age girls achieve better than boys, although the difference is less than the national difference.
36. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory overall in relation to students' prior attainment. Progress made in Years 7 to 9 is not maintained by a significant proportion of students in Years 10 and 11. At GCSE at age 16 standards attained are broadly in line with national levels and despite minor fluctuations have not changed in the last three years. Girls and boys achieve just above national levels in English language. In English literature 77 per cent of girls achieve grades A* - C which is well above the national figure for girls. Only 58 per cent of boys achieve those grades. This is close to the national average for boys but is well below the attainment of girls. One in five candidates obtains a grade D. These patterns have been recognised by the department as targets for improvement.
37. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good. In the six lessons inspected only one poor lesson was seen and that was taught by a teacher on a short-term, part-time contract. The majority were good and one excellent lesson was seen in Year 7. The best lessons were lively and challenging, with a well-planned sequence of varied individual and group tasks, and with appropriate elements of the National Literacy Strategy and the Key Stage 3 English Strategy. Lessons cater well for students of different ability levels and the best teaching made very good use of the data available about individual students' abilities and needs. Marking includes pertinent and personal recognition of students' achievements and effort but the marking policy is not consistently used across the department to include marks or levels of achievement and

targets for improvement. Reading records and the more recent self-evaluation sheets are not being used consistently by all teachers.

38. In the lessons inspected in Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning were at least satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In three of the five lessons observed the teaching was satisfactory, in one it was good and in one it was very good. However, the satisfactory lessons contained elements which caused enough concerns to prevent them being judged good. These concerns were to do with excessive time spent in teacher-directed activities and in teachers talking so that students were not required to take enough responsibility for their own progress. Some parts of lessons lacked pace and challenge. The scrutiny of work from Years 10 and 11 provided clear evidence of some good teaching, which had helped many students produce high quality assignments. Work is well marked for GCSE with clear indications of the grade achieved and what needs to be done to improve.
39. The curriculum is good and includes a wide range of learning experiences to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are well planned with due regard to National Curriculum attainment targets, the Key Stage 3 Strategy in English and the National Literacy Strategy. A major review of schemes of work begun in 2002 by the new head of English is continuing with good team effort from the department. At GCSE the syllabus specifications are met well and work is planned and assessed with good attention to assessment objectives and to students' examination skills.
40. The new leadership is very good. The new head of department is ambitious for the subject and has clear educational aims needed to move the subject forward. There is now good collaboration in a department which shares those aims. Management of the subject is good. However, although some performance management work is done successfully with appropriate staff training, there is a need for more, especially in the teaching of the 14 to 16 age range to determine precisely what steps to take to make teaching more effective for students in Years 10 and 11. The shared enthusiasm for the subject and the progress since 2002 in Years 7 to 9 suggest a strong basis for continued improvement but there is still much work to be done in Years 10 and 11.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. The school's planning recognises the importance of improving students' reading and writing skills to raise standards in all subjects. Good management structures are in place. Following a survey in 2002, a literacy policy was introduced and a literacy co-ordinator was appointed. All teachers have received training. All subject departments have been required to write their own policies, although not all subjects have yet done so. For example, there is no statement of a policy for literacy in ICT. All subjects are represented on the literacy management group. Students' planners now include lists of key words and guidance on spelling and sixth form students help younger students in a system of paired reading. The inspection of lessons confirmed that good strategies are being used in some subjects, for example art and design, RE and English. In most subjects, policies have not developed into consistent good practice and the quality of the provision depends largely on the effectiveness of the relevant head of department and the line management from the senior team. Literacy across the subjects has not developed adequately since the last inspection and the school needs to build on the basis established in the last two years.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- For the relatively small numbers who take the subject in Years 10 and 11, GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
- Only one third of the students in Years 10 and 11 take a modern foreign language.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students achieve well because of their very good behaviour.

Commentary

42. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average in French, but only a third of all students have taken languages in Years 10 and 11 in recent years. Currently this situation is against statutory requirements, although these will cease to apply from September 2004. GCSE results for German, which is begun by a small group as an option in Year 10, fluctuate, but are generally good.
43. Standards in the current Year 9 are above national expectations. This represents good achievement for all, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Higher attainers learn quickly how to use the past tense and write at length very accurately, for example about themselves, their school or their holidays. They develop good accents and fluency in speaking. Other students write for a more limited range of purposes, but with support they write with care and attention to detail. Students should be required to correct their work after the teacher has marked it carefully. A few students are very reticent in speaking French and do not participate fully.
44. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average. This represents good achievement for the relatively small number of students, about a third of the age group and most of them higher and middle attainers, who choose French as an option. The small number of students who are talented in languages achieve exceptionally well. Higher attainers write long descriptions and accounts with accuracy and express their opinions with imagination and even flair. All students rise to the challenge of the demanding, but interesting, tasks in all four language skills required in the examination.
45. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is often very good or even excellent. A strong feature of the teaching is the consistent use of the foreign language by all teachers, which enables students to develop listening and speaking skills well. Teachers understand the requirements of the examinations fully; they plan carefully and choose materials and language tasks that are relevant and interesting. The fun element is often present and younger learners particularly enjoy the language games and competitions. A relative weakness is the lack of intensive language speaking practice to support the less confident students. ICT work, and assessment using National Curriculum Levels, are not emphasised sufficiently.
46. The leadership of modern languages is very good. The head of department leads by example, insisting on a forceful and challenging teaching approach that wholly engages students. Management is good and the whole team of highly committed teachers work very well together. The departmental handbook still lacks some important details, however. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good, resulting in high standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and sometimes very good and as a result achievement is good.
- New leadership, which in identifying issues, has immediately set the tone for change.
- Self-assessment is not used enough by students and so they are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets for improvement.
- Greater use of ICT to help students learn is needed.

Commentary

47. Results are in line with national expectations in both Year 9 and Year 11. Student achievement is now good overall, a judgement that takes into account the significantly improved 2003 results, particularly in the highest grades, as well as how current students are doing. Students of all abilities demonstrate good understanding in recalling and applying facts as demonstrated by a lower attaining Year 8 set, including students with special education needs. They are able to work competently with algebraic terms, which visibly increased their self-esteem and provided a sound base for further work. Both standards and teaching in current Years 10 and 11 are above average. This represents an upward trend. Middle attaining Year 11 students, are able to successfully collect, analyse, represent and interpret data. Students very confidently explain their work with clarity using suitable mathematical vocabulary. This was particularly marked in a high ability Year 10 class where students very quickly recognised the difference between shapes which are similar and those which are congruent.
48. In Years 7 to 9 teachers are following the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy well. 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. The focus on mental arithmetic is paying dividends in improving students' general understanding. For example, students in a low ability Year 9 set were able to improve their understanding of decimal place values and in a high ability Year 7 set students were successful in dealing mentally with negative numbers. However, insufficient use is made of practical equipment in the implementation of the strategy. The need to extend the use of additional numeracy material for lower attainers has been identified by the head of department, and training is planned for teachers.
49. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good overall. Good and very good teaching is characterised by very good rapport, student-centred, well-planned lessons, sound subject knowledge and effective question and answer sessions. Most lessons strongly emphasise the need for students to think, explain their reasoning and to share in their learning. On rare occasions, timing weakened the pace of learning. Teachers are alert to students with special education needs and as a result needs are met which made mathematics enjoyable. Students overwhelmingly display a positive attitude to the teachers and their work.
50. The newly appointed head of department has been swift to analyse priorities and new strategies are poised to take place. The strong departmental teamwork is helping to raise standards, which is an improvement since the last inspection. More regular monitoring of teaching is likely to enable the current good classroom practice to be more commonly shared. Insufficient use is currently being made of ICT. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and standards since the time of the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. Standards of numeracy are good overall but a lack of a co-ordinated approach is resulting in some variation amongst subjects. There is a very thorough planned approach in design and technology and students cope well with measuring accurately, using spreadsheets and drawing to scale. There is good use of numeracy in science with evidence of the competent use of substituting values in formulae. Students in religious education were capable of converting percentages in their assessment of their work. The representation of data in graphs and use of formulae in spreadsheets are used well in ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and the standard of attainment by Year 9 is above average.
- Monitoring of performance is effective. Students and their parents are kept well informed of progress.
- The curriculum is good. It helps students of diverse needs to follow three separate sciences, double science award or agricultural and rural science according to need and aspiration.
- Leadership and management are good; a collaborative and supportive ethos is complemented by all teachers aspiring to move the proposed science college forward.
- In Years 10 and 11 the structure of lessons is not as effective as it should be.
- Literacy is not used effectively in the teaching and learning of science.

Commentary

52. Results in 2002 were better in Year 9 than in Year 11 where they were average. The previous inspection found that the standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 were above average. The school has maintained the above average standards in Year 9 but not in Year 11. Results of the national tests for 14-year-olds and the GCSE examination results in 2003 are better than those of recent years but national comparisons are not yet available. This improvement results from a good curriculum, strong leadership and the shared aspiration of all teachers in the science department. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is evidence of the department's commitment to improve standards further. The students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. It is important to recognise that as the school does a mixture of separate and combined science GCSE courses, this is very likely to impact on the overall standard of attainment in the double award because the highest attaining students are likely to follow three separate GCSE science subjects. This makes it incredibly difficult to compare like for like and the benchmark tables must be treated with a considerable degree of caution as a result. Overall, achievement is at least satisfactory throughout the school.
53. Years 7 to 9 students learn well as a result of good teaching. For example, they know how more reactive elements displace less reactive elements in compounds such as iron oxide. Very good emphasis on safety and structured guidance enable lower ability students to learn through experiments, such as testing if green leaves really contain starch. However, their understanding of complex biological processes such as photosynthesis remains limited because of insufficient revisiting and consolidation of the process. The students achieve well in lessons that are thoughtfully planned and teachers make effective use of time. For example, a clear and structured illustration improved students' grasp of how to work out moments from numerical information on force and distance to the pivot. On occasions, lack of focus on literacy, especially in lower sets, keeps knowledge and understanding of processes such as respiration superficial.

54. The current Years 10 and 11 students learn well as a result of good teaching. Monitoring of performance and teachers' command of the subject are particular strengths. In one lesson the showing of a video on the structure and function of the heart, punctuated with very effective discussion, resulted in good achievement even though the lesson was conducted in a classroom in the English suite of rooms. It is likely that the students would have achieved more if simultaneous use had been made of a dissection of a heart. This was not possible because of shortage of laboratory accommodation. Very effective use of resources in a very well planned lesson helped students to achieve well in a lesson on the blast furnace and of properties of iron and steel and what makes the difference in their properties. Good curricular range enabled a group of students to learn well about the common farm tools and their functions and the habitats such as soil. Effective support from a teaching assistant helped some students with special educational needs achieve as much as others in the group.
55. Overall, the teaching is good but the use of plenary sessions is not always as good as it should be. The planning is not always successful because activities sometimes do not match the different needs of students especially in mixed-ability classes. Overall, the leadership and management of the subject are good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of achievement are too low, especially among students with a talent for ICT.
- Students are given insufficient opportunities to show initiative.
- Procedures for assessing students' work and progress in Years 7 to 9 are unreliable.
- Students behave well, guided well by a dedicated staff team committed to equality of opportunity.
- Students and teachers have ready access to high quality ICT resources.

Commentary

56. Students' attainment on entry to the school is in line with national expectations. During Years 7 to 9 their progress is unsatisfactory, so that their skills are underdeveloped by the end of Year 9, with unsatisfactory quality of learning and standards of achievement. Attainment, particularly of the more talented ICT students, is therefore below national expectations. In Years 10 and 11 students follow courses leading to ICT qualifications either in single award GCSE, double award Applied GCSE or Key Skills certificates at Levels 1 or 2. This constitutes an impressive range of ICT qualifications. Here, they make satisfactory progress but they do not make up lost ground so that the quality of their learning and standards of achievement are satisfactory but their standards of attainment in ICT skills remains below average. Again, the more talented are most affected, with few awarded A or A* grades. The proportion leaving Year 11 without a pass grade in the subject is high.
57. The main reason for students underachievement in Years 7 to 9 is the limited exposure they have to ICT teaching, with only one lesson in fifty devoted regularly to the subject, and very little opportunity to develop their skills in the other forty-nine. This represents half the recommended minimum time for the government's ICT programme, and this deficiency was clearly highlighted in the last inspection report five years ago.
58. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout. The good classroom support and guidance students receive from a dedicated team of teachers secures good standards of behaviour. Moreover, experienced teachers promote equality of opportunity and personal development very well. However, much of the teaching is over-directed. Students are allowed insufficient opportunities to discuss each other's solutions, to show initiative in their own learning, or to

explore and experiment with the technology. This affects the higher attainers most, and accounts for most of the underachievement among students with a talent for ICT, both by the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Homework has not been set regularly to Years 7 to 9 students during the past year, but a programme has now started. The new Virtual Learning Environment ('Digital Brain') funded by the local educational authority will enable students to access their schoolwork from home.

59. Students have a weak awareness of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. The software used by teachers to assess students' ICT knowledge does not test their skills and is therefore unreliable as a basis for accurate teacher assessments in Years 7 to 9.
60. Since the last inspection, the provision of hardware and software resources has improved markedly to a good position, but there has been insufficient urgency about tackling the causes of underachievement, and GCSE results remain below the national average. Leadership and improvement since the last inspection are therefore unsatisfactory. However, the department is now well managed by the recently appointed head of department; staffing and resources are deployed efficiently, the network manager and ICT technician are very effective and a 'can-do' spirit is now evident among the teachers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. Although resources for ICT are good, students are offered insufficient opportunities to develop their skills across a number of subjects and this is a weakness. Not all subject teachers are sufficiently confident in using ICT to support their teaching and there is no overarching plan to map the ICT skills across the subjects of the curriculum. They make good use of subject-specific software in art and design and design and technology and they use computers in science for data logging and drawing graphs. ICT resources have improved recently in mathematics, but no evidence was found that they have been in use yet. The library is very well equipped with computers and available after school until 5.00 pm. During lesson times, its fifty computers are reserved for sixth form students, which paradoxically have further reduced opportunities for Internet research in history for students in Years 7 to 11.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching based on very good subject knowledge and relationships is beginning to return standards to their former levels.
- The use of computers is underdeveloped and does not as yet support learning.
- Insufficient use is made of analytical marking to give students clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Texts do not always match all levels of prior knowledge in the subject and so the work set does not always sufficiently match student need.

Commentary

62. GCSE results have suffered a dip recently but are still above national averages but not at the level the school should expect.
63. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Overall, this represents good achievement in relation to their attainment levels on entry. The school takes students from a large number of primary schools and their experience of geography in Year 6 varies from

hardly any at all to a reasonable amount; due to the emphasis on preparing for the end of Key Stage 2 national tests. Students of all abilities demonstrate a good understanding of the processes involved in both physical and human geography and their related effects both on the environment and human activity; this was clearly seen in a Year 9 lesson on tectonic processes and hazards. As students move through Years 7 to 9 they show considerable confidence in finding information from text, maps and diagrams but their skills in using computers are not so well developed. Students with special educational needs make significant progress in meeting their targets when supported.

64. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above national expectations. Students' achievement, relative to standards at the end of Year 9, shows a much improved performance than in recent years. Students make good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. The fieldwork attempted on the River Onny is reinforcing work done in the classroom. Lower attaining students while requiring a different approach need to be fully challenged in their work. Students' with special educational needs work satisfactorily towards their targets.
65. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and include a good range of activities and resources. The use of question and answer is particularly strong to check previous work and ensure new learning is understood. The use of computers would add a new dimension to support learning. All levels of ability need to be fully challenged in their work. Marking seen was regular but often lacked constructive comments on how students can improve their work.
66. The leadership in geography is good. A new head of department has a clear vision about where he wishes to take the department and a strong commitment to improving standards. He has a strong team who will assist in the raising of standards and will improve student performance. While improvement since the last inspection has slipped there are signs that it is returning to former levels. The monitoring of lessons is helping new members of the department to accelerate their development. The provision of resources is improving but the textbooks used need to be reviewed to ensure they reflect student ability.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently above the national average.
- Very good relationships between students and specialist teachers.
- Very good support and challenge for students at all levels of ability, with effective assessment and monitoring of work.
- Access to and utilisation of ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

67. GCSE results are consistently above the national average. In 2003, they were well above, with 84 per cent of grades at A* - C, compared to 64.5 per cent nationally.
68. Standards at the end of Year 9 are consistently above national expectations. In the current Year 9, they represent good achievement in relation to entry to the school in Year 7, including those students with special educational needs. Students of all abilities demonstrate good levels of factual knowledge and understanding, with well-developed skills of analysis and judgement when working with source materials. This was seen during the inspection in lessons examining conditions over time in the coal mining industry. Interpretations of events and ideas are often thoroughly pursued.

69. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement during the course, including by those students with special educational needs. Questions are consistently and thoughtfully raised during lessons to take forward the analysis and interpretation of historical evidence, such as in the supernatural ideas which the Greeks had about illness. Coursework researching local history leads to a wide range of significant related avenues of exploration.
70. The quality of teaching and learning in history is very good. There are many strong features in what is very effective teaching by specialist historians who are knowledgeable about their subject and committed to developing the interests and skills of their classes. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and both challenge and support them at all times. Advantage is taken of questions raised to extend the learning of the whole group. Marking and assessment are of high quality, and they are seen as the key to enable students to make progress. There is presently too little access to, and utilisation of, ICT. Students' sustained interest and enthusiasm, together with very good relationships and behaviour, are major factors in promoting involvement and progress.
71. The leadership and the management of history are very good. Close teamwork has ensured continuity in the subject's aims and strategies and also in the challenges set to further raise standards. Since the last inspection, teaching has continued to be very good in the majority of lessons observed. The quality of the planning and the conduct of assessment have been consistently sustained. There is continuing development in the already very effective approaches to target setting and the monitoring of work. However, the use of ICT is not now so effective in Years 7 to 9.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average because teaching and learning are good.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leadership is inspiring.
- The tasks set for students in Years 8 and 9 are not always sufficiently challenging.

Commentary

72. GCSE results in the recently introduced short course have been consistently above the national average. Results for the full course at GCSE are also above average.
73. Standards in the current Year 9 are above the average as measured against the locally agreed syllabus and achievement is good. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys. Students of all abilities are able to recognise the similarities and differences in the world religions they have studied. They can give their own views about religious issues and clearly reflect on what they have learned. Students communicate well and offer ideas in a mature and sensible way. The important contribution of religious education to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in many lessons.
74. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. The achievement of students is good. The students respond well to the work they undertake which is made interesting and relevant for them. Class discussions are lively and focused and take learning forward. All students are encouraged to participate and all have contributions to make.

75. Teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers offer praise and encouragement and have built up very good relationships with their classes based on firm discipline and mutual respect. Much emphasis is placed on improving the literacy skills of students and a wide range of interesting and creative teaching strategies is used. Students are taught to think deeply. Occasionally, however, in Years 7 to 9, the pace slackens and on these occasions students are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to share their enthusiasm and capture the imagination of their students.
76. Leadership of the department is very good. The teachers' high aspirations and care for every student shines through. Management of the department is good. There is a strong sense of teamwork and shared vision. The department is currently changing the way in which work is assessed in Years 7 to 9 and this is likely to improve matters further. Students in Years 10 and 11 could be made more aware of the progress they are making. The department has maintained the high standards noted at the time of the last inspection and made good improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- GCSE results are consistently well above average.
- The quality of leadership and management are very good.
- The profile of food technology at GCSE level could be raised.

Commentary

77. GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
78. Standards in the current Year 9 are above the national expectations. This represents good achievement for all students, including those identified with special educational needs, in relation to where they started in Year 7. Boys and girls demonstrate good drawing skills and increasingly good factual knowledge. This was evident when students were investigating trouser construction as well as when they were developing a specification for a mobile phone.
79. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average. All students achieve well in textiles and resistant materials. The majority of students have a clear understanding of the designing and making process. They use a wide range of skills acquired in Years 7 to 9, in order to produce quality products for the current lighting project. Although they admit to enjoying food technology in Years 7 to 9 current students are reluctant to study the subject at GCSE.
80. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons are very well planned. In the most effective lessons strategies engage minds and fully involve learners. Most lessons start on time. When they do not, as in a Year 7 food lesson, it is difficult to complete the planned work. In most sessions students listen well and communicate clearly. Well-planned worksheets support literacy and numeracy development. Group work is a strong feature of most lessons. Students understand the dangers, as designers, of not using sustainable resources. Good use is made of computers for teaching and learning. The quality of marking is generally good, although spelling inconsistencies are not always corrected.

81. The leadership and management of design and technology are very good. The leader has vision and is innovative in leading a strong team of teaching and non-teaching staff. Teachers share a common belief that all students can succeed. Recent achievements have included major successes in aerospace competitions. Very good progress has been made on those issues highlighted in the previous report. A minor health and safety issue has yet to be resolved. The dull corridor outside the design and technology rooms does not adequately celebrate the quality of activities taking place behind the closed classroom doors.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

82. This is a very popular course. Standards reached at GCSE level are above average. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were very good and the all-girl group achieved well. Students quickly absorbed new knowledge about multiple births, with higher attainers making sound links with knowledge gained in biology and outside the school. An area of weakness is the lack of opportunity to experience caring for a 'virtual' baby.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are above the national average.
- High quality use of data to track students' progress and set targets that improve students' achievements.
- In some lessons the planning and preparation that provide a variety of tasks to keep students engaged for the whole time are lacking.

Commentary

83. GCSE results are above the national average.
84. Standards in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement for the students in relation to when they started at the school in Year 7. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress. Students of all abilities demonstrate standards of drawing in line with national expectations, as demonstrated by Year 9 students in using the guidelines method to plan creative lettering accurately. Students demonstrate an increasing skill in using drawings to develop their ideas for ceramic work, and then manipulating the clay effectively to realise these intentions.
85. Standards in the current Year 11 are in line with national expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement that is in line with their prior attainment. All students are set GCSE targets based on the teacher assessed National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9. This motivates all students, including those with special educational needs, to achieve well. Middle and high attaining students draw accurately from observation using high quality technical skills. They are able to utilise their drawings in a graphic context. Overall, the achievement of students is satisfactory because they have the opportunity to develop work based on their personal interests. This is supported well by the study of artists from diverse cultures.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but it varies from very good to poor when lesson planning is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of teaching and learning is good. It ranges from good to very good. A strong feature is that students learn that, by adding accurate details, the quality of their outcomes will improve. Students are taught to use several aspects of ICT to express their ideas.

87. The leadership of art and design is good and there is a vision for improvement for the future. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, most notably in making ICT part of the curriculum. The very strong departmental management is helping to raise standards by thorough analysis of data and target setting to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve well. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

DRAMA

Drama was not inspected in depth. However, on the basis of the evidence gathered the provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject knowledge and teaching methods result in high levels of achievement.
- Very good relationships with and management of students.
- Very good extra-curricular provision and co-operation within the performing arts faculty.
- The accommodation is a weakness.

Commentary

88. Standards attained are above average and achievement is good. In 2002, three-quarters of the 20 students entered obtained grades A* - C at GCSE. Standards seen in the lessons observed were good and students were achieving well in relation to their prior ability.
89. In the three lessons seen teaching was good in two and very good in one with no unsatisfactory teaching. Very good subject knowledge resulted in a range of challenging activities, with effective strategies for the teaching and management of students who were fully engaged, creatively, intellectually, emotionally and physically. Students gained acting skills and knowledge of drama theory and theatre history. They also gained personal and social skills, working together very well and evaluating their own and others' achievements. The pace of the lessons and the teacher's sense of when to intervene and direct were very well judged and the students responded well. Lesson plans were adapted appropriately to meet the needs of different ability students and different class sizes.
90. The teacher with responsibility for drama is newly qualified and new to the school. He already shows very broad educational vision and is ambitious to develop the subject within the context of expressive arts. He is well supported by good leadership within the faculty. Curricular opportunities are good and planned development is very promising. Extra-curricular provision is good and over 200 students participated in the last school production. Accommodation for drama is poor. The room principally used suffers from a lack of sound insulation and lessons are disturbed by dance in the nearby hall. The opening up of screen doors as the hall is set up for lunch would be a further distraction if the lessons were not so good. The drama area would benefit from curtains, rostra, blackout and a simple lighting system. Video and a digital camera are used so students can literally visualise their performance to enhance their understanding of their work. Greater use of technology would develop the science college potential of the drama curriculum.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for music and standards in Years 7 to 9 are weak.
- The breadth and quality of extra-curricular provision is good.

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- The leadership of the head of performing arts is good.

Commentary

91. GCSE results at A* - C are consistently above the national average.
92. In the year prior to the inspection, the school was unable to engage a music specialist to cover for the long-term absence of a member of staff. During this period, most students in Years 7 to 9 had very limited access to the music National Curriculum. Consequently, achievement at the end of Year 9 is well below the national expectation and below the standards of which students are capable. Students have difficulty maintaining a steady pulse and an independent musical line. Compositions are very basic and performances lack fluency. Few students are able to use appropriate keyboard fingering and many do not understand basic musical terminology.
93. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good. Since the last inspection significantly increased numbers choose to take GCSE courses in music. The teacher has very good musical knowledge and is able to speak with authority and enthusiasm about music of many styles and cultures. Planning is detailed and has clear learning objectives. Lessons are well paced and informal support given to students with special education needs is sensitive and effective. Teachers' questioning strategies are a particular strength. Students' learning in Years 10 and 11 lessons is good. In these lessons students apply themselves in whole class situations with enthusiasm and commitment and attain above average standards. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good reflecting the dynamic teaching based on very good subject knowledge and a high level of challenge.
94. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Although the lessons observed demonstrated good classroom management skills, planning in those lessons lacked a clear focus and learning objectives were too general. Learning aims were not made explicit to students and students spent too long in groups in order to accomplish simple tasks.
95. The leadership of the head of department has been good during a period of extended instability within the department. She has a clear vision for the development of music and the performing arts within the school. A scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been developed which, when implemented, has the potential to raise standards and provide students with a rich musical experience. A range of high-quality, extra-curricular groups provides musical opportunities for many students across the entire age range. The head of department's commitment to the performing arts provides an excellent role model for other teachers and students. The decline in standards in Years 7 to 9 means that improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An experienced and well-qualified team that is used and deployed for the benefit of the students and each other.
- Teachers create a learning environment in which students want to be involved, want to please and want to succeed. This fosters very good student attitudes towards the work and each other.
- The very effective links with local and regional centres of sporting excellence to which those gifted and talented students are directed and supported.
- There is a lack of use of ICT to support teaching and learning, and for student use.
- There is a tendency to move into a game situation when skills could be even further developed.
- Some of the gymnasium equipment is becoming worn.

Commentary

96. GCSE results have been consistently above the national average.
97. Standards in Year 9 are above national expectation. This shows good achievement for many students in relation to when they started in Year 7, including those with special educational needs who make very good progress. Students of all abilities develop precision and control in a range of basic skills. Many are able to link skills and techniques accurately. They are able to analyse their own and others' performances and suggest improvements. Many are able to apply their knowledge to develop strategies and tactics in mini games. Students are given many opportunities to draw on their own knowledge to develop advanced movement and plan ways to improve their own and others' performance. All students expect to warm up and cool down.
98. Standards in Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement during the two years, including for those students with special educational needs. Students can select and combine skills, ideas and techniques, adapting them accurately to the needs of the activity. They can explain the benefits of regular, planned activity on health and fitness.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers cater for students of all abilities and builds by setting appropriate challenges and giving positive feedback which enables all students to make good progress and experience success.
100. The leadership of physical education is very good. More time-related tasks in the department's development plan would further increase the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. The good work reported in the last inspection has been built upon especially in examination results. A significant number of students achieve very good standards in sporting activities at local, regional and national associations and clubs.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

101. Business education and economics were not inspected at depth. However, both subjects were sampled. Examination results in GCSE in economics and business showed that over four out of ten students obtained the higher A* - C grades and nearly nine out of ten A* - G grades in 2002. Overall, this was a satisfactory achievement. The unconfirmed results for 2003 are better. One very good lesson in Year 11 was seen in which students learnt about marketing by learning key terms and watching and discussing the video 'Brand it like Beckham'.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The school has appointed a committed and enthusiastic co-ordinator and given the subject sufficient taught time.
- The schemes of work for each year group are thorough and well considered and include an examination course for all students in Years 10 and 11.
- A thorough audit has highlighted subject areas where citizenship is being taught and has identified assessment opportunities.
- The school council has a high profile and the school is proud of students' involvement in the school.
- The school makes very good use of external support agencies.
- There is a need to provide a consistent group of staff to deliver the course and monitor their teaching.
- It is necessary to ensure all teachers take every opportunity to promote citizenship.

Commentary

102. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Overall, students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress and are on target to reach at least average standards by the end of the school year. Most students know what citizenship is about and can see the relevance and importance of the topics to their future lives. Students in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE citizenship short course and their standards are above average, this represents very good achievement. Year 11 students have a good grasp of the cause and effect of crime and their written tests show a good understanding of democracy and politics.
103. Elements of the citizenship curriculum have been part of the PSHE course for some time but the explicit focus on citizenship only commenced in September 2002. In this short time, students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have increased their knowledge and understanding of many aspects of citizenship and their achievement is good. Their skills of enquiry and communication are not yet as well developed. However, representatives on the year and school councils are enthusiastic about their achievements and the opportunities they are given to bring about changes.
104. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In the most effective lessons a variety of good quality resources are used and these give students the opportunity to learn from up-to-date relevant material, including videos and outside professionals. Students have positive attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers. This allows students to ask sensitive questions which deepen their knowledge and understanding. Teachers are not sufficiently confident and aware of highlighting aspects of citizenship in other areas of the curriculum.
105. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department was appointed eighteen months ago and has successfully overseen a complete change of staff, curriculum and planning. He provides a very enthusiastic role model for the department and has clear vision for future developments. Teachers work as a team, are well supported by the senior management team and thorough plans for assessing Years 7, 8 and 9 are currently being trialled. The citizenship provision and the extension activities very effectively promote students' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection eight subjects 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 the year 2002.

Level 3 GCE A level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	85.7	48.7	100.0	96.1	105.7	85.1
Biology	30	23.3	36.3	100.0	91.6	76.7	74.1
Business studies	13	46.2	32.8	100.0	96.4	84.6	76.5
Chemistry	11	27.3	45.9	100.0	94.0	72.7	81.1
English literature	28	39.3	43.7	100.0	98.5	80.0	84.3
French	7	85.7	46.1	100.0	96.2	108.6	83.0
Design and technology	18	33.3	35.5	100.0	95.3	83.3	76.5
General studies	6	50.0	29.1	100.0	90.1	83.3	69.3
Geography	24	66.7	40.5	100.0	97.1	100.8	80.9
German	5	20.0	44.3	100.0	96.3	68.0	82.1
History	17	58.8	41.0	100.0	97.1	88.2	81.2
Mathematics	19	57.9	52.2	94.7	93.3	87.4	84.7
Other sciences	16	56.3	40.1	93.8	94.7	87.5	78.7
Other social sciences	13	0.0	38.9	100.0	94.3	58.5	77.7
Physics	5	80.0	42.8	100.0	92.8	100.0	78.6
Religious education	13	53.8	44.0	100.0	96.3	87.7	82.2
Sociology	7	57.1	39.6	100.0	95.4	97.1	79.1
Sports/PE studies	6	33.3	29.5	100.0	95.4	73.3	73.2

Level 3 GCE AS level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	35	63	33.2	97	81.6	46	33.2
Business studies	5	0		100		28	
Chemistry	15	53	36.9	93	84.8	40	35.2
Dance	3	0		100		33	
Drama	6	0		100		28	
Environmental science	10	30		90		33	
English literature	31	48	37.9	94	94.4	43	38.9
Design and technology	16	50	32.0	100.0	89.2	46	35.7
French	8	50		88		40	
General studies	4	25		100		38	
Geography	32	50		100		45	
German	5	100		100		56	
Geology	10	30		90		37	
History	27	48	37.2	100.0	91.8	43	37.8
Information technology	9	33	20.6	56	78.2	21	28.5
Mathematics	11	18	34.3	73	74.2	26	31.3
Music	4	75		100		53	
Physical education	13	54		100		43	
Physics	12	17	36.2	83	82.0	31	34.3
Psychology	22	27		55		24	
Religious education	3	0		100		27	
Sociology	12	58		92		46	

Level 3 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No entered	% A - B		% A - E		Average Points Score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	12	25.0	16.5	91.7	87.1	70.0	60.1
Information technology VQ	8	62.5	24.5	75.0	84.3	75.0	64.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in depth. German was sampled. German results fluctuate, but a group of high attainers in 2003 gained above average results. Students consistently achieve well to gain the grades forecast for them. In the one lesson seen, in Year 13, standards were below average overall, but students achieved satisfactorily. They listened very well to the teacher talking rapidly in German about German political parties. However, their speaking and writing skills were not as good. Overall, the subject is very well organised.

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge leads to very good results at A-level.
- There is a very good range of appropriate teaching techniques with high expectations and challenging lessons pitched at a very high level.
- There are excellent relationships with students resulting in a confident exploration of ideas and texts.
- The development of individual learning and research skills could be better.

Commentary

106. Attainment on entry to the AS level course is high, with almost all students in some groups having gained grades A or B at GCSE. Students make good progress and achieve well. The retention rate is very high and students continue to make very good progress in Year 13. In 2002, 10 of the 29 candidates obtained the higher grades A or B. In 2003 nearly three-quarters of the 25 students entered obtained the higher grades A or B and no student gained a grade lower than a C. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work confirmed these high standards.
107. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It ranges from good to excellent. The secret of the high quality of the teaching lies in the teachers' excellent subject knowledge, coupled with a very effective range of teaching strategies to challenge students to think deeply and take responsibility for their own learning. An exceptionally good discussion of Shakespearean tragedy showed students at the start of Year 12 already able to give presentations and compare with admirable breadth of knowledge and maturity aspects of tragedy in the '*Othello*', '*Macbeth*', '*Julius Caesar*' and '*Antony and Cleopatra*'. The scrutiny of completed folders from last year's sixth-formers was further evidence of very high standards and very good progress over the course. However, there was very little evidence of research and wider reading to support otherwise very good assignments. The development of the Virtual Learning resource is intended to address this area for improvement. The small group of students retaking GCSE was making satisfactory progress, although hampered by timetabling constraints. Students in Years 12 and 13 are pleased with their progress and value highly the quality of the teaching that they receive.
108. The curriculum is good. The range of learning activities offered is lively and challenging and good opportunities exist for experiences like theatre visits. Good use is made of film and video recording where appropriate, for example '*The Remains of the Day*' or '*Death of a Salesman*'. The curriculum should encourage more research skills both to enrich students' assignments and to equip them for higher education.
109. Leadership and management are very good, both from the head of department and from the teacher with specific responsibility for co-ordinating work in the sixth form. The good teamwork which characterises the department is especially valuable in the sixth form where teachers

share the teaching of groups very successfully. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

FRENCH

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are generally above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of examination requirements and choose relevant and interesting materials.
- Students in Year 13 achieve very well.
- Teaching time has been reduced, affecting students' listening and speaking skills, especially in Year 12.
- The work-experience programme is currently in abeyance.

Commentary

110. A-level results fluctuate, but in 2002 were well above average and were similar in 2003. AS results are average. Overall, students achieve at least in line with expectations. Standards of attainment in the current Year 12 are average. Students are only a little way into the course but they have made a satisfactory start; their speaking skills are developing satisfactorily after the long holiday break, and they are beginning to absorb new vocabulary and re-use it well in the demanding new areas of the syllabus. In one lesson seen, students were very interested to learn about the various strands of the French Baccalaureat examination and the complex lives of their counterparts in France. Most tackled the reading text well, but some students needed more support in recording new work for future revision.
111. Achievement in Year 13 is very good. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. Students respond very well to the stimulating teaching. Teachers use rapid French consistently and they frequently use challenging question and answer sessions to elicit an immediate response from students. The most talented students benefit particularly well from this demanding approach and their achievement is very good. Students are expected to do independent work regularly and a study room is to be furnished for this purpose. Monitoring of this independent work should be more rigorous.
112. The quality of teaching and learning in French is very good. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is the very sharp teacher questioning which forces students to think and re-use the words and phrases they have just learnt. Teachers understand the demands of the examination thoroughly and choose relevant and up-to-date materials of real interest to students. Teachers give time to students to express their own ideas and opinions. In Year 12, not all students are involved in this interaction as much as they should be; more support is needed for these less-talented students.
113. The leadership and management of French are very good. The department has high aspirations for every student and teachers consistently impart their own commitment to the subject to the students. Many students have already benefited greatly from the French exchange programme. Currently, opportunities for work experience in France are in abeyance. A French language assistant is to support students' speaking and listening from October 2003; this is particularly important, given the recent reduction in teaching time. Overall, however, improvement since the last inspection is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The most competent students reach high standards.
- Students do not use ICT enough to support their learning.

Commentary

114. Results at A-level are above national averages including very good results at further mathematics. Provisional 2003 results are also very good. AS results are marginally below national averages, provisional results reflect this pattern.
115. Achievement is good. Standards of work seen reflect the most recent pattern of results. The written work of students in Year 13 indicates full coverage of the course content. Note taking is inconsistent; when excellent it provides a sound base for revision purposes. Very good work was seen using the binomial theorem and functions, which were well explained, applied and clearly understood. Limited evidence of the use of computers was seen in lessons or in students' work.
116. Teaching is very good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. They have good subject knowledge and explain principles clearly. Teachers are well respected, the additional support they give is well received and as a result the climate for learning is extremely positive. In many lessons students display a high degree of independence. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students were introduced to the principles of equilibrium of plane lamina. Students display keen interest, involving themselves in logical reasoning and their opinions are valued and encouraged. As a result learning is very good.
117. The subject is well led and is increasingly popular, a testimony to improvements made. Retention is good and close to half the current Year 12 students are from other schools. A full range of courses is offered to meet the differing abilities and career intentions of students. Improvement in the quality of provision and standards since the last inspection is good.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was biology but chemistry and physics lessons were also sampled. The school offers an extensive range of science subjects - biology, chemistry, environment science, physics, geology and psychology at AS and A-level. The school has recently introduced a Level 2 BTEC First Diploma in Science.

Over the last five years, biology has been the most popular subject in the sixth form with an average of over 30 students in each year group; however in September 2003 over 60 Year 12 students started biology studies at AS level. Chemistry and physics attract smaller numbers with year groups typically 8-15 in size. Physics has attracted some 32 AS students in Year 12. This growth arises from a renaissance of interest in complementary subjects, including mathematics and design and technology, coupled with students' greater confidence in physics arising from specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11. There has been an influx of students transferring from neighbouring 11 - 16 schools that are swelling the numbers of students taking science subjects. Whilst biology attracts boys in approximately equal numbers as girls, in Year 12 there are only three girls studying physics.

Retention rates in biology are excellent. In chemistry and physics retention rates vary, but in a typical year, one in three students exit their studies at the end of Year 12; their reasons ranging from concepts being too abstract to a lack of confidence in their mathematical skills. The rapid expansion

in the popularity of sciences has required the formation of additional teaching groups resulting in many lessons occurring away from the suite of science rooms. This is restricting practical work; staff and students traipse around the school carrying equipment and teaching materials with a subsequent loss of teaching time.

In a Year 12 chemistry lesson students were successfully tackling an investigation of molar volume of a gas. This was an appropriate transition and bridging exercise as students begin their sixth form studies. In a physics lesson students were correctly and confidently manipulating numerical data based on the passage of light through vacuums and different materials. Teaching in both lessons was good. One student with dyslexia receives unobtrusive attention and support from his teachers.

BIOLOGY

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Major strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced, enthusiastic and committed teachers.
- Interested and diligent learners with a desire to succeed.
- Students confident that their teachers have their best interests at heart.
- Very high retention rates in both Years 12 and 13.
- More specialist rooms to alleviate shortages of space are needed.

Commentary

118. Results have been consistently above or well above the national averages over the last five years. This track record has led to the sustained popularity of biology.
119. Achievement is very good. Analysis of candidates' prior attainment and consideration of the science courses taken pre-16 show that, over the last five years, their progress overall is very good. The high attaining students at GCSE retain the top grades at AS and A-level. Students with grades CC at GCSE science are encouraged to join the subject, enjoy their studies and are appropriately successful.
120. Standards of attainment are above the national average. Over half of the students gained A or B grades in the AS examination in 2003. A-level results are well above the national averages with 26 students out of 32 gaining grades A - C in 2003. Students' grades are commensurate with prior attainment, attendance and efforts throughout the year. Overall these results are well above the national averages. Few students who start biology courses do not continue throughout Year 12 or Year 13. The achievement and attainment of both males and females is similar.
121. The standards of work of students currently studying biology are good in both Years 12 and 13; scrutiny of assignments and discussion with students indicate that their work is marked systematically and annotated with constructive comments. As a consequence students feel that they enter into a symbiotic relationship with their teachers when they study biology.
122. The subject is taught by three experienced and committed teachers. In the three lessons observed teaching was very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is very secure and as a consequence offers a real challenge to their students. Sessions are structured through short steps. Students' progress and understanding is checked every few minutes. This was particularly noticeable during a very good lesson on glycosidic bonds where students had access to molecular models and were expected to demonstrate how condensation occurs and oxygen bridges are formed. Practical and investigative activities form a significant feature of the programme of studies.

123. No lessons were seen where ICT equipment was used but students say that they have sufficient access to computers and to the Internet in the department's mini computer suite, the sixth form centre and the library. Assignments are wordprocessed and graphs appropriately constructed from spreadsheets.
124. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject's teachers share an impressive bank of commercial and school prepared materials that reinforce their teaching. There is a notable spirit of co-operation and a united vision that is a major factor in the subject's success. Students' work is closely monitored through Years 12 and 13 and their progress shared with students. Students appreciate their residential fieldwork at the University of Wales, Bangor that occurs annually in the summer term. The good platform that the subject held at the time of the last inspection has been consolidated and steadily improved upon over the last five years. Biology is a major contributor to the school's successful bid for Science College status in 2003.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT was sampled in the sixth form. Standards are above average and the quality of teaching is very good. A Year 13 lesson in single award AVCE ICT was sampled. The students were well suited to the practical course and they made good progress. Achievement was good. The students developed good routines of individual and collaborative learning styles and the teaching combined clear expectations and deadlines with extensive opportunities for independent study and experimental initiative. In 2002, two-thirds of AVCE students were awarded grades A or B. Unvalidated results for 2003 show this proportion rising to three-quarters which is well above average. Results for computer studies A-level were good between 1998 and 2001 and though they dipped in 2002 when one-quarter attained A/B grades, unvalidated data for 2003 show that the three candidates were awarded grade A.

HUMANITIES

Psychology was inspected in depth. In addition sociology was sampled. In an AS lesson careful and thoughtful selection of source material, combined with very skilful deployment of teaching methods and challenging questioning, created a very stimulating learning environment. Lively students seized the ambitious opportunities with a thirst for understanding some complex and contentious issues. In the A-level lesson, a more limited range of teaching methods and less well chosen source material meant that students made satisfactory rather than rapid progress. Overall the quality of teaching and achievement in sociology is good. Results in sociology A-level improved steadily from 1999 to 2002 when over half of the students were awarded grade A; well above average. AS results were also above average and over half of the students gained grades A or B. The unvalidated data for 2003 indicates that A-level results continue to be above average, with half of the students gaining A or B grades.

PSYCHOLOGY

The provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation of lessons and use of objectives is good as is the subject knowledge of the teachers.
- There is good emphasis on examination styles and techniques.
- Regular marking and feedback.
- The consistency of student outcome is not as good as it could be and the linking of objectives, activities and methodology in schemes of work is not as robust as it should be.
- Use of external resources in subject delivery is not always strong.

- Specificity of improvement targets as part of feedback is not always in place.
- Use of small group work is not as good as it could be.

Commentary

125. Attainment at A-level has been inconsistent, ranging from below average to average over the last five years. Entry numbers have been small up to 2001 but are now larger and more evenly balanced between boys and girls. Attainment in 2002 at A-level was below average, no candidate achieving A or B grades. Average points scores were also below average and below those achieved in the candidates' other subjects. AS attainment in 2002 was average. The results for 2003 suggest a rising trend in overall pass rates and in candidates whose performance exceeds that predicted on the basis of their GCSE results.
126. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 12 and 13. Standards in current Year 12 and Year 13 classes are in line with expectations for this stage of their courses. Written work is clear, well-presented, uses appropriate terminology and generally provides accurate information. Files are not paginated and indexed or linked to module objectives to aid their use in revision.
127. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well structured. Teachers show good subject knowledge. There are clear objectives for lessons and the work covered is usually revised at the end of the lesson. Teachers work hard to reinforce learning and to ensure references and terms used are accurate. The amount of content to be covered in a lesson was sometimes over-ambitious leading to hurried conclusions. Students generally responded with correct and occasionally thoughtful answers to questions when prompted; only half of each group participated actively in discussion and fewer than this demonstrated an ability to think round the subject and produce their own ideas. The format of some lessons, which alternated between whole class questions and answers and individual written work, did not allow the opportunity for group research and feedback to the rest of the class. Many students have not acquired the skill of note-taking from teacher input or when watching video clips.
128. The leadership and management of psychology are satisfactory. There have been recent staff changes and a move from one teacher of the subject to a team approach. The writing of schemes of work is a current target. There are useful subject statements on issues like assessment, which have scope for further detail in order to make them working documents that staff can follow throughout the year. Resources for the subject are being developed. Some lessons take place in rooms which are unsuitable for the subject and where resources are not accessible. The teacher in charge of the subject reports directly to the deputy headteacher and there are regular formal meetings to review progress and set targets for subject development. There have not been any observations of teaching in the subject in the last year but there have been opportunities for staff development.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Textiles was inspected in depth. Design and technology was sampled. Design and technology is a demanding course where students are challenged and achieve well. Standards reached at AS and A-level are above average. The quality of teaching and learning in the lesson sampled was very good. Challenging problem-solving assignments lead to greater understanding of what is involved when designers adopt a moral stance in the world of product design. Exciting current investigations include designing flat-pack cardboard furniture for student accommodation.

TEXTILES

Provision in textiles is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reached at AS and A-level are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The provision of audio-visual equipment is in need of improvement.
- The access area outside the textiles room requires improvement.

Commentary

129. A-level results are above the national average.

130. Achievement is very good in Year 12. Standards attained in the current Year 12 are above the national expectations. This represents good achievement for students who are in a catch-up situation. Prior teaching has equipped them well for designing and making but not for acquiring in-depth knowledge and understanding of fibres and fabrics. Current teaching, through the provision of well-planned workbooks, has ensured a better balance between the students' experience of the scientific as well as the creative aspects of textile technology.

131. Achievement in Year 13 is very good. Standards attained in the current Year 13 are above average. Personal studies focus on investigating such topics as the use of lycra in clothing. They are well researched and presented and written in a lively and informative style. In their projects students not only study the work of professional designers but gain knowledge and understanding of recent industrial developments such as the use of 'smart' materials. Students, for example, are interested in a fibre that is very water absorbent. One identified use is to help post-menopausal women prevent the sweating that occurs when using a conventional bra. Unfortunately further achievement and progress is limited by access to these fabrics. They are too expensive for the school to purchase in the quantities they would need to meet student requirements.

132. The quality of teaching and learning in textiles is very good. During the inspection two outstanding lessons were observed. In these lessons the teacher's first-hand experiences of working as a professional designer motivated the students and raised expectations, leading to excellent independent learning. Very good use is made of computers for word processing, data analysis and machine embroidery.

133. The subject leader has vision and understanding of what needs to be done to further raise the profile of the subject. The focus on improving students' knowledge and understanding and the production of excellent workbooks to support their learning has led to other schools seeking access to these resources. The lack of television and video equipment limits opportunities for sharing current happenings in textile design. The space outside the textile room is wasted as a display area. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good; standards have improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was inspected in depth. Drama and music were sampled. The sixth form work seen in drama was very well taught and students achieved very well. The school is attracting able sixth-formers from other schools to study drama and performing arts. In an excellent AS music lesson, inspirational teaching ensured that students developed their understanding of difficult theoretical concepts in a way which emphasised their musical impact.

ART AND DESIGN

The provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are well above the national average.
- Extensive teacher subject knowledge stimulates students to achieve highly.

Commentary

134. AS results are well above the national average.

135. Achievement in Year 12 is very good. Standards in the current Year 12 are well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for these students in relation to their GCSE grades at the end of Year 11. All students approach the new technique of oil painting in an experimental and investigative way to produce paintings in an expressionist style.

136. A-level results are well above the national average.

137. Achievement in Year 13 is very good. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above national expectations. Students starting their personal investigations choose a wide range of topics, as demonstrated by one student studying zoomorphism in modern architecture and another who admires the paintings of an uncle. This is the students' response to the stimulating teacher knowledge and the opportunities it offers.

138. The quality of teaching and learning is very good at both AS and A-level. Students learn the examination requirements and make good efforts to achieve highly. This was seen in life drawings with emphases ranging from the use of negative shape with charcoal to pastel work in bright colours. Students are helped by written comments on how to improve their work. The use of ICT plays a prominent part in students' progress in all aspects of their art work.

139. The leadership of art and design is good. The head of the subject displays great energy, effort and commitment to quality. The management of accommodation, resources and curriculum opportunities is well matched to the diverse needs of the students. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Dance was inspected in depth. Physical education was sampled and the lesson seen was excellent. Achievement in this lesson was very good.

DANCE

Provision in dance is **good** because, although there are significant very good features, there is some room for improvement in the management of the subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in Year 13 is well above the national average.
- Very good teaching is characterised by a very high level of subject expertise.
- Students are totally committed to the subject and their attitudes are very positive.
- Many extra-curricular opportunities are provided.
- Low numbers of students, especially boys, involved in the subject.
- There is a lack of variety and number of resources.

Commentary

140. Results in A-level examinations since 1998 have been well above national averages for the small numbers involved. Almost one third of the number of students entered for AS and A-level examinations have achieved the higher grades in previous years.
141. Present students in Year 13 are working to standards that are well above average and standards attained by Year 12 students are above average. The achievement of students in both years is very good. Students in Year 12 are extending their knowledge and understanding from GCSE dance. One girl who had no dance experience before joining the course has made very good progress in her practical work. A student in Year 13 was able to pick up a completely new technique very quickly and dance a short sequence using this style. Students are prepared to practise and repeat movements to achieve technical precision and accuracy. They are totally committed to their subject and spend time in the department, working independently and attending extra activities. It is these factors linked to the very good teaching that lead to students' very good progress.
142. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was very good. The teacher has excellent subject expertise and this gives students the opportunity to increase their understanding of all aspects of the course. The teacher is able to lead technique sessions and give students a clear visual image and feeling for movements. As a result of practical accuracy and an insistence on high standards very good learning takes place. The teacher has improved the resources but more and varied materials are necessary to further assist students' learning.
143. The department is led by a recently appointed teacher who provides clear direction and good leadership for the subject. She has a determination to raise attainment to an even higher level and to involve more students in the post-16 courses. There are very good relationships between the teacher and students as well as between the students themselves. This gives rise to a co-operative working atmosphere and a commitment to improving standards in the department.

BUSINESS

A post-16 business & economics lesson was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was very good. A good AVCE lesson was also sampled.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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