

INSPECTION REPORT

WESTBOURNE HIGH SCHOOL

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124845

Headteacher: Mr Chris Edwards

Lead inspector: Ms M L Glynne-Jones

Dates of inspection: February 23–26th, 2004

Inspection number: 259246

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1271
School address:	Marlow Road Ipswich Suffolk
Postcode:	IP1 5JN
Telephone number:	01473 742315
Fax number:	01473 464825
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Colin Hook
Date of previous inspection:	January 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Westbourne High is larger than most secondary schools with broadly equal numbers of boys and girls; it has grown a little since the previous inspection.
- The sixth form is much the same size as reported at the last inspection and a little smaller than most sixth forms, with equal numbers of female and male students.
- Student mobility - those leaving or joining the school mid-course - is higher than in other schools.
- When they join Year 7 students' standards are well below national expectations and their literacy skills are particularly weak.
- The school draws about half its students from areas where there are high levels of social disadvantage.
- About a fifth of students are from minority ethnic groups with a small number whose home language is not English.
- Thirteen students are at the earliest stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs is above the national average for secondary schools, while for those with statements the proportion is well above average.
- Students' needs mainly relate to mild learning difficulties, dyslexia and autism; a small number has severe learning difficulties.
- There are nine places in a unit for students with hearing impairment.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2918	M L Glynne-Jones	Lead inspector	
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English *
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics *
25743	P Butler	Team inspector	Science
15163	E Deeson	Team inspector	Biology in the sixth form
32169	R O'Hagan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design *
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology Health and social care in the sixth form
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography
23569	D Nicholl	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Special educational needs
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music Personal, social and health education and citizenship
3534	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education *
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	History * Religious education
4351	J Strickland	Team inspector	Media studies in the sixth form
27485	M Sims	Team inspector	English as an additional language

* inspected in the main school and the sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Ltd
Ground Floor
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Bristol
BS8 2BN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school which enables its students to learn and achieve well. Standards improve from students' low base when they join Year 7 to reach standards that are below the national average at the end of each stage. The school is led and managed well with imaginative developments in leadership ensuring good improvement and in particular good teaching at each stage. Value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The vision for the school is being realised by strong and wise leadership by the headteacher supported by the governing body which acts very effectively as a critical friend.
- Good practice in assessment, supported by training for staff in applying national standards and setting targets, is helping to raise standards.
- Provision in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory, a consequence of the school's persistent inability to recruit sufficient specialist staff, although this is achieved for the next academic year.
- In the majority of subjects in Years 7 to 9 students' progress is restricted by their weak literacy skills.
- Students with special needs do well because specific provision for differing needs at different stages in students' school life is being established and kept under review.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills in ICT in all subjects of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- The school's self-evaluation is robust and individual students' progress is tracked very effectively.

Improvement since the previous inspection is good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form. Standards have improved at GCSE and there is good improvement in teaching, very good in Years 7 to 9. There is good improvement in staffing but the weakness in provision for ICT persists.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			Similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	D	D	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	D	E	

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

Achievement in the work seen is **good**: it is good in the main school, by Year 9 and by Year 11, and good in the sixth form. The 2003 Year 9 test results were well below the national average overall, as they were in the two previous years; they were well below the average in each subject, English, mathematics and science. However, when compared with similar schools nationally these 2003 results were average, and showed improvement from the previous two years. They were average for mathematics and science when compared with similar schools nationally, while well below average for English. At GCSE, although below the national average for all schools, the 2003 results are above average compared with similar schools nationally, and the similar schools comparison of B (in the table above) shows improvement from 2002.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **good**. Across the school students show good attitudes and behaviour. Attendance is below the national average for secondary schools and so unsatisfactory in the main school, while good in the sixth form.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. There is **good** teaching and learning overall. The school's arrangements for the care and involvement of its young people, the guidance and support they receive and the links with parents, other schools and the community are all of good quality. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with good provision for special needs and a good range of enrichment activities in Years 7 to 11 which contributes significantly to young people's personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Very good leadership by the headteacher is moving the school forward with vision and outstanding commitment to inclusion. The governing body is very effective, demanding high standards of itself in most aspects of its work for school development and accountability.

Statutory requirements for daily worship, for religious education in the sixth form and for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are not met. Governance has to be judged unsatisfactory because of these statutory breaches.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are positive about the way their children are expected to work hard and as a result make good progress. They think their children are helped to settle into Year 7 well, and they are comfortable about approaching the school when there is a problem. About half of completed questionnaires show concerns about behaviour; and about two thirds show concerns about homework, activities outside lessons, and not being well consulted by the school. Inspectors find that there is room for improvement in arrangements for homework, activities for the sixth form and the involvement of parents through consultation. They find behaviour to be good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that in every area of the school's work across all year groups there is rigorous attention to students' development of literacy skills in reading, writing and speaking;
- implement procedures to ensure effective leadership and management of mathematics in the main school, focused on raising achievement in Years 10 and 11;
- broaden the sixth-form curriculum substantially to provide opportunities for students' personal development through a range of enrichment activities.

action is already underway on the first two areas and the school is aware of the third

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of worship for all students, religious education in the sixth form and ensure that the requirements for the National Curriculum for ICT are met in full in Years 10 and 11.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WESTBOURNE HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good**, cost-effective sixth form. Good leadership and management are providing a good quality of education for students. Teaching is good with none that is unsatisfactory. While standards are below the national average students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. The lack of daily worship and lack of provision for religious education are both statutory breaches.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ among the eight subjects inspected in detail students are reaching the standards expected nationally in mathematics, history and health and social care, and above average standards in art and design and biology;
- ❑ opportunities for personal development through enrichment activities are too limited;
- ❑ there is very good provision in art and design;
- ❑ links with other institutions are not strong enough.

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: good: there is strong partnership between teachers and students, a wide choice of courses, and some good encouragement of independent learning. A Year 12 French lesson was sampled.*
Mathematics	Good: teachers have good knowledge of the subject and how to teach it.
Science	Biology: good: highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff provide encouragement and motivation so that students enjoy the subject and achieve well. A lesson in chemistry was sampled.
Information and communication technology	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. Lessons were sampled in Years 12 and 13.
Humanities	History: good: teachers structure the courses well and make a wide range of scholarship accessible to students. Lessons were sampled in geography and psychology.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design: very good: teachers' very good expertise provides very good support for students' development as artists. Media studies: satisfactory: good teaching, with excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm, although students lack opportunity to show initiative.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Sports studies: good: students do well because of the good quality of teaching, particularly teachers' subject expertise. A lesson in leisure and recreation was sampled.
Business	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson

	was sampled.
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Curriculum Area	Evaluation
Health and social care	Good: teachers' enthusiasm, commitment and good subject expertise encourage good learning and achievement from students although arrangements for co-ordinating provision are lacking.
General education	No sessions of general education were scheduled during the inspection period.

** In some of the subjects not inspected in detail inspectors observed a lesson.*

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

Very good procedures for ensuring students attend school contribute to the high attendance rate on sixth-form courses. Good guidance from tutors during three-weekly reviews enhances the good support they receive from subject teachers to help them improve their work, a feature appreciated by students. Although a high proportion receive an individual interview through the Connexions office on site, others do not have this opportunity because the office is not open when they are available.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The school leads and manages its sixth form **well**. The clear direction for its development shows in the development of vocational courses and facilities for them. There is no evidence that spending on the sixth form disadvantages students lower down the school. Students benefit from the school's outstanding commitment to promoting individual success. Self-evaluation and monitoring are good for the sixth form as a whole, while in art and design, citizenship and modern languages the practice is very good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views are mostly very positive. They enjoy being in the sixth form and appreciate teachers' expertise both in setting them challenging and demanding tasks and in marking their work to show them how to improve it. Over half of their questionnaire returns show concerns about the lack of worthwhile enrichment activities outside lessons. About a quarter show concern about the advice they receive on what to do when they leave school and the feeling that there is not an adult in school to turn to for personal support. However, in discussion, students were clear that staff do know them well and are available to give support when it is needed. Inspectors agree with students' view that activities outside lessons are limited.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11 and in the eight subjects inspected in the sixth form. Standards are below those expected nationally by Year 9, by Year 11 and by Year 13.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good achievement is a consequence of good teaching, underpinned by the strength of the commitment to inclusion and individual success.
- Weak literacy standards are a barrier to students' learning and progress in lessons.
- There is unsatisfactory achievement overall in mathematics in Years 7 to 11, where teaching overall is unsatisfactory although adequate in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement is good overall in 11 of the 13 subjects inspected in Years 7 to 11, including English and science, and in seven of the eight inspected in the sixth form.

Commentary

1. Students did well in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations in 2003. Compared with schools whose students gained similar results in their Year 6 tests, Year 9 students achieved satisfactory test results. This was a significant improvement on the 2002 results which were well below those of schools whose students gained similar results in Year 6 tests. The national value-added measure for 2003, still at an early stage of implementation, shows satisfactory gains compared with similar schools although over time the trend is not keeping pace with the rise in national results. While boys' results have risen, girls' results have fallen. Boys' results are consequently closer to the national average for boys than girls' results are to the national average for girls. The school is well aware of this issue as well as the weakness in students' literacy skills which restricts their performance by Year 9. In mathematics and science the 2003 results were above average compared with similar schools nationally. Targets for English in 2003 were not reached. The results in mathematics and science were closer to the targets.
2. GCSE results in 2003 were an improvement on 2002 in comparison with similar schools nationally: these results were average in 2002 but above average in 2003. As in Year 9 tests, the trend over time is not keeping pace with the national trend. The slight fall in results in comparison to all schools reflects the national results. However, the value-added measure for GCSE shows well above average gains compared with the value added nationally. Over time boys' results have risen. Girls' results have fluctuated but show a fall overall. As at Year 9, boys' results, which were below average in 2003, are closer to boys' national results than girls' results which are well below the national average for girls. The pattern of how well students do in individual subjects varied between 2002 and 2003. For example, in art and design students did better than in their other subjects in 2002 but worse in 2003. In both years, students did less well in French, German and mathematics than in their other subjects. Targets for 2003 were exceeded for five or more, and for one or more grades A*-C, although the target for students' average points was not reached.
3. In most subjects students' achievement is good in the main school, with strength in art and design where students achieve very well. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching, together with targets for improving its quality, are having a beneficial effect on students' learning. Not only are students known very well as individuals but their progress is regularly and thoroughly reviewed with them and their families. However, achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics and music where in both the school is handling circumstances beyond its control. In mathematics the achievement reflects the unsatisfactory quality of teaching, itself the result of continuing difficulty in recruiting specialist staff. There has been a major investment of senior staff time in supporting the mathematics department, which continues. In music, the unsatisfactory achievement is a consequence of long-term staff absence in the

department about which the school has done all that might reasonably be expected to minimise the effects on students' learning. In ICT students' achievement is no better than satisfactory because the school does not ensure that they acquire the range of skills expected within the National Curriculum.

4. Students with special needs generally achieve well, sometimes very well. Teachers know their students well, are well aware of their needs and take account of them in their planning. There is good liaison between teaching assistants and subject teachers. The assistants give effective, often very effective support to students, particularly in ensuring that they understand what they have to do and remain focused on the task. For the small groups of students with special needs in Years 7 and 8 who spend a large part of the week being taught together in the special needs department achievement is at least satisfactory. Sometimes this is good or very good. This is because teachers are skilled in preparing work that caters well for their needs and in managing potentially challenging behaviour
5. The achievement of students whose home language is not English is good. New arrivals including asylum seekers and Travellers have access to mainstream lessons. The assessment profiles of each student are very detailed so that individual needs and progress are monitored effectively. Students make rapid progress because they are well integrated into lessons, receive effective support and are highly motivated to learn. Overall achievement is good for all students at the early stages of learning English, although those with greater English fluency do not receive specific language support. Students from minority ethnic groups are achieving as well as other students. The school's analysis of students' GCSE results shows that overall those from minority ethnic groups do slightly better than other students. However, because gifted and talented students have not been identified the school is not in a position to know whether this group of students achieves equally well as other students. Inspectors were able to identify some individuals in this group in mathematics, ICT and physical education for whom arrangements did not ensure that they were sufficiently challenged by the work.

Sixth form

6. An interpretation of the results in advanced courses in comparison with national results is available for 2002 but not yet for 2003. They show:

Above average results	A-level biology and physics
	AVCE health and social care
Average results	A-level sports studies
	AVCE Leisure and recreation
Below average results	A-level communication studies, economics
Well below average results	A-level art and design, chemistry, English, general studies, history, mathematics
	AVCE science
7. In the eight subjects inspected in detail students' achievement is nearly always good. This applies to female and male students and to students from minority ethnic groups. The exceptions are in art and design where they achieve very well, and in media studies where their achievement is satisfactory. In media studies students' achievement is adversely affected by weaknesses in their oral and writing skills. Where students with special needs were observed in advanced classes their progress was at least satisfactory and sometimes good.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.8 (30.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	32.9 (32.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	31.3 (29.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 217 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	42 (39)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	81 (83)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	30.9 (34.7)	30.6 (34.7)

There were 212 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	84.4 (91.8)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	8.5 (17.7)	36.1(35.5)
Average point score per student	164.3 (219.5)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 44 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, and their attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is below average for secondary schools nationally and so unsatisfactory in the main school. In the sixth-form attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students understand right from wrong and respond well in most lessons where high expectations for good behaviour are established and achieved.
- The empathy students have with the needs of others is shown through their good relationships and charitable activities.
- Although industrious workers, sixth-form students are often passive learners which limits their ability to make progress by exchanging ideas.
- Assemblies and tutor periods make a sound contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development but there are insufficient opportunities for spiritual development.

Commentary

8. The school is an inclusive community. Good relationships among all its members, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity or special need, make a significant contribution to the good learning atmosphere found in most lessons. Generally, across all subjects, students settle well and readily involve themselves in the work. They are supportive of each other and sensitive to the needs of others, for example, collaborating well in science and physical education, and listening quietly so that students with hearing impairment can make a full contribution to oral work. Incidents of poor behaviour, racism and bullying are relatively infrequent and dealt with effectively.
9. In almost all lessons students with behavioural difficulties are well integrated, accepted by their peers and behave well. On occasion, when there are instances of unsatisfactory behaviour these are dealt with effectively by teachers and teaching assistants. The social inclusion unit gives very effective support to students at risk of permanent exclusion. Its success shows in the continued attendance at school of many of these young people.
10. Subjects make a good contribution to the development of students' social, moral and cultural understanding through the topics studied. However, the responsibilities of each department in promoting personal development are not clearly identified so that opportunities, particularly those to enhance students' spiritual experience, are missed. Students are keen to support their community and to take responsibility for aspects of school life through the work of the student council and the recently convened race equality group which highlights issues surrounding racial prejudice and provides a 'drop-in' service for students. Year 10 students help those new to the school in Year 7 and whole-school fund-raising efforts are very successful, in the current year for World Vision.

Sixth form

11. Students are mature, well-mannered young people who respond positively to their teachers and tutors. Fostered by the very good working atmosphere in all lessons, students have good attitudes to their studies. They work hard, with good concentration and interest, listening carefully to teachers and to each other. However, they are reluctant to take charge of their own learning and in lessons they are often hesitant when exchanging ideas or contributing to a discussion. They value the regular progress reviews which enable them to reflect on their personal and academic qualities and development. They have a good awareness of the needs of others which is reflected in their fund-raising for charity, in the current year for sufferers from leprosy.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	0.8
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

12. Following a number of years when the attendance rate was consistently low, attendance improved in 2002-2003 to a level just below the national average. To date, figures for the current year indicate a further improvement. New procedures to monitor attendance and good support for families with attendance difficulties have brought about this improvement. Much of the authorised absence is due to sickness. Sixth-form attendance is good. Punctuality is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Lessons begin promptly.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1037	130	2
White – any other White background	21	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	54	7	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	31	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	40	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	12	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	31	7	0
Black or Black British - African	1	1	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0

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

13. The number of permanent exclusions is low although there is a high number of fixed-period exclusions. A disproportionate number of students from black backgrounds were excluded for fixed periods in the last school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. This applies to teaching and learning, assessment, enrichment activities, the school's care for its students and students and the links with parents, other schools and the community. The curriculum is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Across the school both teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In almost all the subjects inspected in the main school and the sixth form the quality of teaching is good and results in good learning.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in art and design are particular strengths.
- In the main school the quality overall is unsatisfactory in mathematics and no better than satisfactory in ICT and music.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- Some excellent teaching was seen in modern languages, media studies and science.

Commentary

14. The good improvement in teaching since the 2002 inspection and following the intervening period of staffing difficulties is contributing effectively to raising achievement. All the teaching in

the sixth form and a higher proportion in Years 7 to 11 are now at least satisfactory. Compared with the quality found on more recent visits by inspectors, the improvement over the last year is significant. Over the four days of this inspection the proportions of good-or-better teaching and very-good-or-better teaching remained much the same, showing that consistent quality is being securely established.

15. Very good teaching, or better, was seen in the main school in some lessons in English, art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, physical education, religious education and special needs. Two excellent lessons were seen: in special needs science and modern languages. Some of the features of the very effective teaching which successfully promoted very good progress in lessons were:
 - very effective use of video and printed materials to help a lower attaining Year 9 group to come to grips with an unfamiliar and demanding text in English. The lesson got off to a good start with a lively and positive greeting which showed the very cordial and purposeful relationship which continued throughout the lesson. Several students thanked the teacher for the lesson.
 - the very good brisk introduction set a demanding pace for the art and design lesson and grabbed the attention of seemingly weary GCSE students. The teacher's high expectations of effort and commitment galvanised students' sense of purpose and they worked with some urgency. All students received very good individual advice and appropriate guidance for their level of attainment.
 - there was a quick start to GCSE physical education: students logged on and carried out the starter activity confidently. Regular use of computers and the task of writing up their personal exercise plan ensures a good standard in their coursework. Students are well motivated by video material and show a high level of interest, observing carefully. Very good pace was achieved through judging just enough input from the video to move learning on effectively.
 - very good planning of the topic in Year 9 citizenship including a 'big' ideas sheet and numerous appropriate links on the website. All individuals were well challenged by the task to give for and against arguments about hunting. The lesson was very well paced with timed activities so that students worked productively and no time was wasted. There was a very good level of independent working. The marking in their books showed students how to achieve higher grades.
16. The unsatisfactory lessons observed in Years 7 to 11 were in mathematics, core humanities, ICT, modern languages and religious education. The main weaknesses were:
 - unacceptable lack of attention to literacy skills and lack of skills practice;
 - low expectations demonstrated by undemanding, mundane tasks, not enough to do, no evidence of homework in books, and unmarked work;
 - weak planning without a starter activity or review at the end;
 - lack of specialist knowledge or ineffective use of specialist skills;
 - ineffective management of behaviour and time wasted.
17. Teachers know students and their special needs well and adapt the planning to take good account of these. As a result, these students learn at least as well as others in the class. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants who provide very valuable support which 'makes a difference' to students' learning. Teaching assistants provide essential support to hearing-impaired students which allows them to be taught very effectively with their peers in subject lessons.
18. Students whose home language is not English receive good teaching and benefit from very good staff expertise and good relationships between staff and students. While there is good preparation for induction classes there is little collaborative planning with subject teachers however. The department provides good support for new arrivals but the focus on one-to-one intensive support in some lessons restricts students' opportunities to develop independent learning. It also restricts the support that could be available to students with greater fluency in

English. Very good individual language profiles are provided for subject staff, although the extent to which subject teachers are aware of individual language needs is varied.

19. New, powerful systems for assessment have been established within the last 15 months so that staff and students are provided with detailed information on individual achievement. This has contributed to the rise in standards. Teachers have been trained to assess work more accurately against national criteria and to set targets so that each student understands the next steps for improvement in each subject. In nearly all subjects, work is regularly marked. For example, in modern languages students receive constructive comments on how to make further improvement. However, in mathematics a considerable amount of work in the books of some classes is unmarked, and in other classes students have to wait too long for their work to be marked.

Sixth form

20. In the eight subjects inspected in detail teaching is good, and in art and design it is very good. Staff expertise is particularly strong in biology, art and design, sports studies and media studies. No aspect of the teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 12 and 13, but some are just satisfactory. For example, this applies to arrangements for homework in sports studies and media studies. A number of features are no better than satisfactory in media studies, including the level of challenge in the work and the helpfulness of the marking.
21. Two excellent lessons were seen in French and media studies. For example:

Six Year 12 students; brightly coloured resources everywhere. A PowerPoint presentation by one of them engages everyone in discussion in French about aspects of the world of work they have covered. At a word from the teacher they move to use the resources in pairs, matching personality types with jobs; this generates discussion, much of it in French. Students add to their reference file a well-presented sheet - jobs listed against different personality types - which has extended their learning. Then, off again to sort out the advantages and disadvantages of various jobs. Finally, they take the role of careers advisers using a PowerPoint presentation about people's characteristics prepared by the teacher. The consolidation of important grammar points is seamlessly included in each activity. Powerful opportunities to explore vocabulary and language structures are provided through real situations and supported by carefully thought out resource sheets. The use of French throughout the lesson by both teacher and students results in good accents and intonation. A very mixed group in terms of GCSE grades, many quite shy young people. All thoroughly involved throughout, they have spoken lots of French, and are all heading for good exam grades.

Describing the Year 12 students as 'the children of the digital age' the teacher involved them in a lively introductory exercise, recording the technical changes they had experienced in their lives. A superb PowerPoint presentation followed of the changes in his own lifetime, comparing the technology he used as a student with what is now available. The startling contrast provoked comment and questions, students following intently as he made clear the key differences between analogue and real time. Complex technical matters were illustrated with excellent examples, his witty and imaginative approach making these both entertaining and instructive. To sum up, students were asked to discuss and mark several key points on a time line from the invention of the wheel to computer technology. The inaccuracy of their assumptions made them realise the extraordinary pace of change, present and to come. A buzz of excited comment and questions ended a riveting lesson.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 165 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	32 (20%)	80 (50%)	37 (23%)	8 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The breadth of opportunities is satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form. There is a good range of enrichment activities. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good equality of access for students of all levels of prior attainment.
- Provision for ICT in all subjects across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not in place as required.
- A wide range of activities enriches the curriculum in Years 7 to 11, but not in the sixth form.
- Not all subjects plan for students' personal and social education as required by the school policy.
- A good range of courses for the size of sixth form provides good continuity with courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Sixth-form study facilities are inadequate.
- There are no arrangements for a daily act of collective worship or for religious education in the sixth form.

Commentary

22. The headteacher and governing body are active in keeping the curriculum under review to develop provision to meet the needs of students more effectively and so raise standards. Recent innovations in Year 7 are specifically designed to raise the standards of lower attainers. Governors are well informed and involved in these developments. In Years 10 and 11 the good range of GCSE and vocational courses is open to all students and there are very good arrangements with a local college to meet the needs of the small number of students who require an alternative programme at this stage. It is school policy to provide extensive opportunities for ICT through all subjects. However, in Years 10 and 11 the planning and teaching for this are not adequately co-ordinated to ensure that all students receive their full entitlement. Planning for students' personal, social and health education is good. However, in practice the provision is only satisfactory because the planned areas of work for tutorial sessions and subjects are not consistently covered. Satisfactory monitoring of personal, social and health education is in place to evaluate the quality of students' experience. Preparation for the next stages of education or employment is satisfactory.
23. Community languages are not currently taught. GCSE Bengali was offered at the time of the last inspection but was discontinued following staff retirement. Despite efforts to recruit, the school has not found a suitable replacement. Students can be entered for other languages at GCSE if they speak the language at home and are literate, but they do not receive tuition or support for this.
24. Arrangements for students with specific social needs are good. The school carefully tracks the achievement of students with special needs and those from minority ethnic groups. However, because gifted and talented students are not identified by the school it has no way of assessing formally how well this group of students achieves. Provision for students with special needs is good and has improved since the previous inspection. They are usually taught alongside their peers. Those benefiting from alternative provision in Years 10 and 11 are partly taught at local colleges on courses leading to vocational qualifications. While in school they follow GCSE courses as far as possible, and work towards a nationally accredited life skills qualification. This represents very good provision and has had positive effects on both their attendance and progress. In new arrangements in the current year the lowest attainers in Years 7 and 8 are taught as a group in the special needs department for a large part of the week. The success of this pilot arrangement shows in the number of students who, half-way through the academic year, have been able to transfer into the general Year 7 timetable. It represents a good response to the difficulties experienced by the previous Year 7 students which were identified through the school's monitoring.

25. Many interesting activities, visits and out of hours classes capture students' interest and extend their learning, such as fieldwork in geography and theatre visits in English. Residential courses and visits are particularly supportive of their personal and social development. Participation in sport, music and other arts is good. There is good extra-curricular provision for students with special needs including a club for autistic students and a 'signing' club for students who do not have a hearing impairment but who are interested in communicating with others who have. After school there is well-focused support for students with low attainment in mathematics. A homework club for students whose home language is not English is available every lunchtime although take up is very small.
26. Accommodation is good for Years 7 to 11, satisfactory for sixth form.
- The new science accommodation is excellent in the main school.
 - Subjects are taught in specialist rooms.
 - The standard to which the buildings and surroundings are maintained is a credit to the school and reflects the hard work of the maintenance staff although the art and design area is in a poor state of repair.
 - A good resources room is used for induction classes for new arrivals from abroad.
- Staffing and learning resources are satisfactory.
- Strengths having a positive effect on achievement are the experienced specialist staff in art and design, drama and geography, and advanced skills staff in science.
 - Support staffing for students with special needs or language-learning needs is good.
 - Practical subjects and ICT are well supported by qualified technicians.
 - There are weaknesses in mathematics because of inexperienced teaching staff and in music because of a long-term absence.
 - Geography is well resourced and in ICT the intranet provision is particularly good.
 - Computer provision per student is better than it is nationally and has a positive effect on learning.
 - Lack of ICT resources in art, physical education and music restricts development work, as does the lack of equipment for media studies.
 - The stimulating library area is satisfactorily stocked but too small. Students are encouraged to make use of the provision and they give positive feedback.

Sixth form

27. A good range of courses enables students to follow their particular interests and aspirations and ensures access for students of widely differing prior attainment. It includes advanced academic and vocational courses as well as vocational courses at intermediate level. A small number of 'new' academic courses such as sociology are offered at this stage. There is satisfactory provision for students' personal development which is mainly offered through the tutorial programme. Students receive a good deal of support through the subjects they study. The rather limited range of enrichment activities is being broadened and currently includes the sports leader award and paired reading with younger students. However, students have a good deal of non-timetabled time that is not being used to best effect particularly as the accommodation for independent study is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for young people's care, welfare, health and safety is good and they receive good advice and guidance. The school involves young people well in its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for the needs of individuals is very well sustained through the work of the inclusion centre, the behaviour systems and the use of an isolation room.
- Very good systems are in place for promoting and monitoring attendance in the main school.
- The ethos of care is strong to which the contribution of child protection procedures is very good.
- Arrangements for the induction of new students into Year 7 and into other year groups are good; for the sixth form they are satisfactory.

Commentary

28. Good and punctual attendance is now encouraged very well; the appointment of an attendance administrator in the current term is already having a positive effect on attendance. All staff are involved with efficient use of school planners to ensure both parents and tutors are aware when a student arrives late. Parents are contacted within an hour of their child marked absent. Good systems are in place for following up unauthorised absence.
29. New systems for managing behaviour have resulted in a consistent approach by staff and an improvement in students' behaviour. Good use is made of an isolation room: this is monitored well and patterns identified which enable remedial action to be taken. A variety of supportive strategies helps students manage their own behaviour including, for the most vulnerable, access to the inclusion centre at times of the day when they experience particular difficulties. The support available in this calm working atmosphere is often just what they need to help them achieve well.
30. There are good arrangements for tracking individual progress and assessing individual needs. The progress of groups of students is well tracked by the school, except for those who are gifted and talented who have not been formally identified as a group. Regular reviews between students and tutors, attended by parents, set targets for development in social as well as academic areas. They enable students across the attainment range to know where they need to improve and the steps needed to make improvements, and to contribute to setting subsequent targets.
31. Good links are established with outside agencies such as the traveller support services and the educational welfare office. Younger students make good use of the drop-in clinics run by the school nurse, Connexions service and youth workers which offer helpful impartial advice on a variety of topics. A drop-in centre run by students in the Race Equality Group, REG, has recently been established where students can speak to their peers about issues concerning racial abuse or bullying and receive support and advice. Very good procedures for child protection include training for teaching assistants on counselling.
32. Induction for Year 6 pupils and at different stages of through the school is a well-established process. Meetings and visits, beginning in primary school, help both parents and students to quickly feel part of the school community. In discussion younger students emphasised how well the process helped them to settle quickly into school routines. Good careers guidance, especially about making choices of GCSE subjects, and appropriate work experience help students make appropriate choices for their future needs. Support and advice are not so helpful regarding sixth-form choices or for moving on to training, an area of work the school acknowledges is in need of improvement.
33. There is very good guidance and support for students with special needs. Teaching assistants are linked with particular students and liaise closely with their teachers to discuss their needs and progress. Individuals are very closely monitored and supported. The social inclusion unit provides very effective support for students with the most challenging behaviour problems to enable them to continue to benefit from their time in school. A 'circle of friends' session is provided for some vulnerable students who have difficulties forming relationships and the school employs a counsellor. There is valuable informal support in the department at breaks and lunchtimes.
34. Results of standardised tests are well used to set targets for every student in every subject and progress is recorded each term. The targets are discussed at termly 'Review Days' to which parents are invited. Four-fifths of parents attend these sessions, a marked improvement on previous parental attendance at parents' evenings. This termly data is used to monitor the relative performance of each subject and of teaching groups within each subject. ICT is well used to assist these analyses.

Sixth form

35. The procedures for ensuring students attend are very effective although monitoring of attendance during the day is unsatisfactory because records of students leaving the premises are not always maintained accurately. Students receive good guidance through three-weekly progress reviews. They enjoy being in the sixth form and particularly appreciate the teaching and the way their work is assessed. They are not so positive about the advice they receive about what to do when they leave school. Although many students benefit from the impartial advice available through the Connexions service not all do so because the office is not always open at times when students are available.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, with other schools and colleges and with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the community support students' development well and groups in the community speak very highly of the school.
- Transfer arrangements for pupils from primary schools are good and satisfactory for students joining the sixth form.
- Opportunities to seek the views of parents are taken on occasion but are insufficiently wide-ranging and systematic.
- The information parents receive about their child's progress through regular review meetings is good while the written information in reports is satisfactory.

Commentary

36. Good links with the local community help young people to mature and develop skills that enable them to become good citizens. For example students regularly assist at a local day centre for the elderly, staffed by volunteers. They form friendships that bridge the generation gap and display levels of initiative and responsibility that belie their years. Students are involved in a hypothermia watch, keeping an eye on the doorsteps of elderly people to check that the milk has been taken in. Such opportunities make an excellent contribution to students' social and moral development. Their development of skills benefits from other initiatives. Those studying for Junior Sports Leadership Awards coach pupils from local primary schools. The students' Race Equality Group recently visited another secondary school to talk about their experience of setting up such a group; there are plans for visits to local primary schools. These wide-ranging links are of benefit to all those involved and contribute positively to students' learning.
37. Students, their parents and other schools appreciate the good links within the local 'pyramid'. These ensure a smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Parents receive helpful written information and the school seeks their views where required, for example over changes to the school day. However, parents feel that their views are not given due consideration by the school. They speak highly of the regular 'review days' where they share in the process of setting targets for their child's progress. Annual written reports about students' progress are satisfactory, showing variation in quality between classes and year groups. While they clearly indicate where children's subject strengths and weaknesses lie and whether their progress is sufficient, not all give a clear indication to parents about what their child needs to do to improve.
38. Parents usually attend the reviews of their child's statement of special needs and the special needs department contacts them if there are causes for concern at other times. Much appreciated support for parents of autistic students is provided through regular meetings to discuss concerns over a cup of tea. There is good liaison with the local primary school and plans to extend this in the near future. Good links are established with the local colleges with whom joint provision has been established.

Sixth form

39. Arrangements to support students' transfer into the sixth form and onto further education are satisfactory. There are periodic opportunities for visits to higher education fairs and university open days and some limited information is available regarding transfer into the sixth form. Advice is available through good quality 'self help' booklets about how to apply for jobs although there are no opportunities for the active involvement of the local business community in advising students. There are plans for improvement. Students have criticisms of the information they receive in preparation for sixth-form study. The school is aware of this and taking action for improvement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership and the contribution of the governing body are very good. However, governance is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not met in full.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Senior staff operate very effectively as a team to bring about school improvement.
- Governors give a strong steer to the work of the school and have very good awareness and knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The school's commitment to inclusion is exceptionally strong as demonstrated by the effective tracking of individual progress; although there has been little training for subject staff on the needs of students at an early stage of English fluency, and gifted and talented students are not identified or tracked as a group.
- Students benefit from very good leadership and management in modern languages, physical education, religious education, and, in the sixth form, in art and design.
- Governance has to be judged unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not met in full.

Commentary

40. There is a relentless and successful drive to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise students' achievement. This goes hand in hand with exceptional commitment to and shared aspiration for individual students. The headteacher's very good leadership is establishing a strong senior staff team which works tirelessly to empower staff to provide the very best opportunities for students' development. Leadership is now 'done with' rather than to staff leaders, at both senior and middle levels. This is bringing about change and development not only at a good rate but also with secure quality. The sense of team is strong: it is evident in the whole-staff team; leadership (senior staff) team; departmental teams for subjects and whole-school provision such as special needs; in the senior-middle manager partnership links; and in the governing body.
41. Governors are strongly committed to the school. They show strength both in giving support to the headteacher and senior staff and in holding them to account for the school's achievements. Their completion of the compliance audit for the inspection for the most part reflected the high standards they expect of their work, particularly in ensuring that the school is truly inclusive in its operation. The shortcoming has been not to follow up the issues of daily worship and religious education in the sixth form. Some confusion over what the requirements are for all students appears to explain the non-compliance in ICT in Years 10 and 11. The school's provision at this stage results from students' choice, so that those not choosing ICT do not cover the skills and knowledge required by the National Curriculum.
42. Key among the priorities in the improvement plan is the quality of teaching and learning. Other targets are aimed at aspects of provision all of which have an impact on this quality. This makes for a coherent programme for improvement. There is strong focus on the outcomes for students, focused on the differing needs of individuals. The plan provides a good framework for managing improvement, with very sharp, clear targets, although it does not always state with

equal clarity how progress on the targets will be evaluated. The plan is demonstrably successful, except that provision for and performance by gifted and talented students as a group are not in place. The developments are set against a position of budget deficit, as reported at the last inspection. Inability to cover staffing costs from income led to an agreed deficit and action to make redundancies. The most recent audit commends the school's financial management. The planned audit visit in the current term to review the progress on pay-back was cancelled as unnecessary in the light of the school's efficient accounting and progress.

43. The school's work in special needs is very well led with clear vision of quality. Very effective strategies are creating a good team of teachers and teaching assistants. Responsibilities are delegated well and good professional development is provided to enable both teachers and teaching assistants to become a school 'expert' in a particular special need. The work of the hearing-impaired unit is very well led and provides valuable support for its staff, those students with some hearing loss but not attached to the unit, as well as for those students in the unit. There is good informal monitoring of the school's provision for special needs, but insufficient rigorous formal monitoring to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The governor with a responsibility for special needs provides good support for the work of the department.
44. Provision for students whose home language is not English is well led and managed. Priority is given to targeting all the support available at the small number of students who are at the earliest stages of learning English. Detailed assessment records and profiles on new arrivals are made available to subject staff and the records used effectively to track students' progress in acquiring fluency in English. The co-ordination shows considerable knowledge and experience which has not yet been fully utilised in training programmes for all staff to improve the planning for students at an early stage of learning English. There are good arrangements for new arrivals, including asylum seekers and Travellers. Progress since the last inspection is good. The school has developed detailed analyses on the achievement of students by ethnic group.
45. Very effective procedures are established for the induction of new staff, including:
- an extensive, well-monitored programme for newly qualified teachers supporting a successful start in the school;
 - a specific programme for the induction of non-teaching support staff.
- Performance management underpins the improvement plan. It is strongly focused on improving the quality of teaching with termly reviews drawing on lesson observations by senior staff and team leaders. Arrangements do not yet include the appraisal of support staff. The school provides good support for trainee teachers, and advanced skills teachers contribute significantly to improving the skill levels of staff. Checks are in place to monitor both the value for money and the benefit to students of off-site professional development activities. Increasingly, the school is able to provide effective in-house training, with recent programmes covering behaviour management and ICT skills. However, there has been no coherent training programme to ensure that the school's new approach to personal and social education is put into practice effectively.

Sixth form

46. Effective leadership and management have ensured that students' achievement is well supported by a good range of courses and by procedures for reviewing progress and setting targets. There is good use of data to track progress over time. The development of vocational course provision is currently being enhanced through refurbishment to provide suitable environments, for example for business studies. Students' attendance is relentlessly chased up, to good effect as shown by the high attendance rate. The rigorous programme of lesson monitoring has improved the quality of teaching in the sixth form since the last inspection although there is scope for further improvement in students' skills of working independently. There is no evidence to show whether there is detrimental effect on provision in the main school from expenditure on the sixth form, or vice versa, except for the difference in provision of enrichment activities.

Financial information for the whole school

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,322,779
Total expenditure	4,297,678
Expenditure per student	3,424

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	- 34,789
Balance carried forward to the next	-141,407

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' skilful management of learning and behaviour leads to good achievement in classwork and examinations.
- Lessons are well planned and resources carefully prepared so that students can build on existing skills and organise their ideas well.
- The programmes of study for different classes are not always sufficiently balanced to give them equal experience of all aspects of the curriculum.
- Positive and cordial relationships create a good climate for learning.
- Very effective partnership between teachers and teaching assistants enables students with special needs to be fully included in lessons.
- Students have too few opportunities to use ICT to enhance their work.
- In a minority of lessons students lose concentration when the teacher talks for too long.

Commentary

47. Results in 2003 in GCSE English and literature were below the national average overall. Although boys achieved average results in English, girls' results were considerably below those in other schools. Over time, however, attainment in both subjects has substantially improved. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 the overall level was well below average, while below that for similar schools. Since the last inspection, levels have improved from a very low position.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

48. Students enter the school with literacy skills that are well below the expected standard. They listen well to the teachers but less well to each other. Most speak in short but clear sentences. Little reading aloud was heard during the inspection. Written work often has major weaknesses in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Presentation is poor initially, although this improves over time. By Year 9 most students have made good progress in all four skills. Higher attainers prepare and deliver well-structured speeches, for example on capital punishment. Most students gain a basic understanding of plot and character in the books they read, but few write extended pieces on literature. They have begun to understand the concept of writing in different ways for different purposes. Students with special needs make good progress because they are well supported and given manageable tasks. Those whose home language is not English improve their language skills and most take a full part in lessons. By Year 11 students are working towards standards that are above expectation given their prior attainment. In their essays on 'An Inspector Calls' and 'Our Day Out' the most capable students show sound understanding of themes and dramatic impact as well as of plot and character. Students are less confident in explaining the effect of language and imagery in poetry than they are in writing about content and attitude. There is a tendency for boys to dominate the discussion in some Year 11 classes.
49. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- a well-planned variety of activities enables students to build on previous knowledge and skills;
 - students are given structures for writing tasks to enable them to organise their ideas;

- teachers manage learning and behaviour very well, particularly in Years 7 to 9, so time is well spent and students can concentrate on their work;
 - positive and humorous relationships encourage students to take part and want to learn;
 - most teachers have high expectations to which students respond well;
 - very good partnership between teachers and teaching assistants enables all students to succeed;
 - in a minority of lessons too much talking by the teacher leads to lapses in concentration;
 - assessment is regular and constructive so that students improve their work through redrafting;
 - students do not have sufficient opportunities to use ICT in the production of newspaper pages, pamphlets and other media publications;
 - good use of display creates an attractive and stimulating environment in classrooms.
- Overall, students respond well to the good teaching and their behaviour and attitudes are good in most lessons.

Leadership and management

50. Under new leadership, the English department has reviewed its results and practices and drawn up action plans that have already been partly put into place. These initiatives include literacy maps for all year groups giving guidance on key vocabulary and structures for approaching writing and study tasks. This drive for improvement is well-evidenced in classroom practice and agendas for meetings. However, the monitoring of the programme of each class is not close enough to ensure a good balance between original writing and responses to literature, non-fiction texts and the media. Experience of theatre visits, book weeks and stage productions such as 'Grease' enriches the curriculum. At all levels, students are encouraged to consider serious issues such as the morality of war, crime and punishment, and the plight of the homeless. In this way, English makes a valuable contribution to students' development as young citizens.
51. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have substantially improved at GCSE and in the work seen in Years 7 to 9. For the whole school, achievement has risen through more effective teaching. There is scope for improvement through extending opportunities for teachers to share good practice and for students to write more extensively about the literature they study.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. In the majority of subjects in Years 7 to 9 students' progress is affected by their lack of literacy skills. There is an effective partnership between English, the humanities and science to raise standards in Year 7 by setting individual literacy targets based on information from primary schools. There is little concerted action to raise standards in Years 8 and 9, although there is good practice in citizenship, history and modern languages. In Years 10 and 11 students' literacy skills are adequate for the demands of GCSE in most subjects.

Modern foreign languages

All students study French in Year 7. Those who reach the highest standards by the end of the year begin a second language in Year 8. In the past this has been German but now Spanish is introduced in alternate years. In Years 10 and 11, some students for whom a vocational course is more appropriate discontinue their study of a language.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some very good, occasionally excellent teaching leads to very good learning and attitudes and promotes very good achievement.
- Unsatisfactory teaching in a small number of lessons leads to negative attitudes and unsatisfactory behaviour and learning.

- The leadership has a clear understanding of departmental strengths and weaknesses and is putting effective strategies in place to bring about improvements.

Commentary

53. GCSE results in 2003 in both French and German were well below the national average. In French, boys' results were below girls' results but by a smaller margin than nationally. Too few girls took German to make valid comparisons with other schools. French results have risen significantly over the past three years. German results have fallen as a result of staffing problems, now resolved. No students have yet been entered for Spanish. Standards in speaking and writing have been lower than those in other skills and the department has put in place effective strategies to raise the standard. In 2003, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were below the national average. They have shown a rising trend keeping pace with the national rise.

<i>Achievement Standards</i>	<i>good average by Year 9 below average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good in Years 7 to 9 very good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

54. Students enter the school with levels of general attainment that are well below those expected nationally and the average standards in the work seen show they have achieved well. Higher attainers are often challenged by extra work. Lower attainers and students with special needs enjoy their lessons and learn well because teaching is good. No students with a particular gift or talent for languages were identified in lessons. Those from minority ethnic groups are very well integrated into lessons and achieve as well as their peers. Those whose home language is not English attain higher standards than others in their class because of their wider experience of learning languages.

55. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- there is often very good planning of well-structured, interesting activities which are conducted at a brisk pace using excellent resources; they gain and keep students' interest and motivate them to work hard and learn well;
 - on occasion, where teaching is unsatisfactory, mundane activities and insufficient active practice of new language structures result in unsatisfactory learning;
 - generally, careful matching of tasks and teaching methods to individual needs ensures that all students, including those with special needs, take part successfully;
 - teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning;
 - there is very good assessment of students' work and very clear explanations about how to improve both through written comments in books and oral feedback in lessons;
 - generally very good relationship and management of behaviour encourage students to contribute orally in lessons;
 - on occasion, where teaching is unsatisfactory, weaker management of students results in poor behaviour, strained relationships and little learning.

Leadership and management

56. There is a strong, shared commitment to raising standards and very effective monitoring of results and teaching and learning to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. Both the head of department and advanced skills staff give effective support where there is a need to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Very good strategic planning is clearly focused on raising attainment. The department's commitment to providing equally well for all students is evident in the good arrangements for teaching lower attainers in Years 7 to 9, and the attention paid to lower attainers in Years 10 and 11 in classes where students have a wide range of prior attainment. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The rise in standards has been further consolidated. Achievement has moved from satisfactory to good and teaching has improved. Students with special needs are now receiving appropriate

support in lessons. The excellent resources created and used by teachers and very high quality materials used in displays have very positive effects on students' learning.

MATHEMATICS

For over two years the school has been unable to recruit and retain sufficient, qualified teachers of mathematics. This has been a significant reason why students do not achieve more than they do despite the school's best efforts to minimise the adverse effects. The staffing situation is resolved for the next academic year.

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do not achieve enough because teaching is not good enough.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 largely a consequence of the school's inability to recruit and retain sufficient specialist staff.
- Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour contribute to unsatisfactory learning in too many lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- Students learn well in about half the lessons seen because they are well taught.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to help students learn.

Commentary

57. In 2003, GCSE results were below average for all schools nationally, although above average in comparison with those of similar schools. Girls gained considerably better results than boys. In recent years, GCSE results have declined. Students do less well in mathematics than in English, science and most of their other subjects at GCSE. In the Year 9 national tests in 2003, students' results were well below the national average although above average when compared with similar schools. Boys' results were better than those of girls. In these tests, students gained results similar to those they gained in science and better results than they gained in English. Year 9 results have risen much as results have nationally.

Achievement

unsatisfactory overall

satisfactory in Years 7 to 9

unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11

Standards

below average by Year 9 and by Year 11

Teaching and learning

unsatisfactory overall

satisfactory in Years 7 to 9

unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11

Leadership and management

both unsatisfactory

58. Students joined the school with standards below those expected nationally in the current Year 7. Boys reach higher standards than girls because they have more positive attitudes to the subject than girls. Students in the higher teaching groups make better progress than others because they receive better teaching where the work is relevant to their needs. Students from minority ethnic groups, including those for whom English is not their home language, achieve better than other students because they also have more positive attitudes to their work. The achievement of students with special needs is equal to that of other students with similar prior attainment. In Years 7 to 9 this is because they are well supported in their work, especially those taught by learning support staff. Students with special gifts or talents do not achieve as much as they should because in Years 10 and 11 only a very small number has the opportunity to enter GCSE at the most challenging level. Overall, standards of literacy are below the expected standard. Although students have a secure knowledge of mathematical terms, many do not readily describe their work either orally or in written form. Many students do not listen attentively to other students and so do not learn from each other. Students' ICT skills are below the standard expected. On the rare occasions when computers are used in lessons students do not learn as quickly as they should. For example, Year 9 students had difficulties

entering a formula into a spreadsheet. The standard of work by students in Year 11 seen during the inspection reflected that of recent GCSE results. The below average standards seen in Year 9 work are better than the standards achieved in national test results over recent years. This is because the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is now having a beneficial effect on teaching and learning at this stage.

59. The areas of strength and weakness in the teaching are:
- a lack of training or experience means that several teachers do not yet know how best to meet individuals' needs although all show a genuine desire for students to succeed;
 - in about a third of lessons where teaching is good, students are presented with a stimulating challenge which they enjoy;
 - the best teaching makes good use of time so that students do not spend too long on unnecessary practice but move on to the next step of their learning.

In too many lessons:

- standards of acceptable behaviour are not clearly established or achieved;
- work is not tailored to students' needs and is either too easy or too difficult;
- students are unclear of what they should be achieving;
- large amounts of work are not marked or not marked soon enough after completion.

Leadership and management

60. Although the school has extensive data on examination and test results, full use is not being made of these, for example to investigate reasons why girls are not doing as well as boys. Although support is being given to new teachers this has not yet produced teaching of a sufficiently high quality in Years 10 and 11. Clear links with the special needs department, which contributes to the teaching of mathematics, have not been established so that the contribution is too limited. Students do not use computers sufficiently in their work so they do not appreciate the advantages ICT can bring to learning. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection because:
- GCSE results have declined and students now do less well in mathematics than in their other subjects;
 - the quality of teaching has declined;
 - weaknesses identified at the last inspection particularly in assessment and ICT have not been tackled effectively;
 - students' attitudes have worsened;
 - leadership and management are now unsatisfactory although reported as satisfactory last time.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Students' mathematical skills were not observed to restrict students' learning in their other subjects. In some subjects there is good use of students' skills. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson students analysed data about hurricanes, taking account of the relationship between the strength, the amount of damage and the cost. In English, students in Year 7 enjoyed using information about waste, producing a range of charts to illustrate their report. In physical education, students in Year 9 measured the effects of exercise on their heart rates. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, there is no co-ordination of the use and development of mathematical skills across all curriculum subjects. This still results in opportunities being lost because teachers in subjects other than mathematics do not know what mathematical skills students should acquire at different stages. Students' appreciation of the importance of mathematics to their studies and their lives is insufficiently developed as a consequence.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is imaginative and interesting teaching in all years to which students respond with good behaviour and a positive approach to the subject.
- Students put commendable effort into their work and learning is good.
- While standards are below those expected nationally, increasingly effective teaching is leading to improving achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Good leadership and management and shared commitment of staff are identifying and implementing action for improvement.
- In some lessons there is a need to challenge students, particularly higher attainers, and expect them to take on more responsibility for their own learning.

Commentary

62. GCSE double science results in 2003 were below average overall, with boys' results remaining at the national average as in 2002, but girls falling from above average in 2002 to below the national average in 2003. Over the last four years boys' results have improved, while girls' results have remained at the same level. Results from the small numbers taking GCSE single science remain well below the national average. The 2003 Year 9 test results were below average when compared with all schools nationally but above average in comparison with similar schools. There is an improving trend in these results overall but, as at GCSE, boys are performing better than girls. Revision packs, extra homework and booster lessons are being used to tackle the difference between boys' and girls' results.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average by Year 9 below average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

63. Students enter Year 7 with below average standards. They settle quickly and soon show good scientific thinking. Encouraged by supportive teaching they make good progress in lessons showing that they can both develop their learning and enjoy science. The department has recognised that students in Years 10 and 11 need to be challenged to think for themselves and not rely always on teacher direction. Students are expected to consider various approaches and make decisions about which experimental procedures to adopt. An alternative curriculum Year 11 group showed a pleasing maturity as they discussed different ways to investigate how the body cools. These students are benefiting greatly from the part school- part college-based provision designed specifically to cater for their learning needs. Students with special needs receive good support in lessons with staff well aware of their particular requirements. The small number of students whose home language is not English achieve well. No differences in achievement were noted among groups of students in lessons.

64. The key features of teaching which help students to learn include:

- teachers' good subject expertise and their skills in presenting information to students;
- effective planning which incorporates clear learning intentions shared with students who therefore know what is expected of them;
- good review and checking of processes at the end of lessons for example through students in the 'hot spot' being questioned by other students so that they can measure their own progress;
- use of a variety of teaching approaches which draw on familiar experiences such as using mobile phones to maintain students' interest;

- setting appropriate homework which effectively reinforces and extends work covered in class linked to a good standard of marking which contains constructive and evaluative comments so that students know what they should do to improve;
- constructive relationships between staff and students leading to a good atmosphere for learning.

Leadership and management

65. Recent improvements in science have been led and managed by a head of department with a clear sense of direction for the future of the subject. All staff have a strong commitment that has already raised standards and teachers work well as a team. Schemes of work now include an emphasis on science investigations and students confidently plan, carry out and evaluate experimental work. Technicians provide a good service to support this approach. Line managers undertake regular and systematic monitoring of teaching which followed by evaluation and identification of actions for development has been important in taking the department forward. There is a strong emphasis on improving literacy skills in Year 7, and plans for focused work building on this from Year 8. Numeracy skills adequately support work at all levels. ICT is used satisfactorily to research information but is not used for analysing and evaluating experimental work.
66. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Staffing problems have been solved leading to a much higher quality of science teaching. Assessment systems are thorough and target setting is well developed. Accommodation is now excellent. Laboratories are well designed with impressive wall displays and have a positive effect on students' enjoyment and learning of science. The improvements made are providing students in Years 7 to 9 with a good grounding in science and leading to good achievement. It is too early for these effects to be fully in evidence in Years 10 and 11. However, there are numerous instances of good progress in lessons and workbooks, and overall achievement at this stage is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

All students follow a common course in ICT throughout Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 they are able to choose a course leading to a double award GNVQ in ICT.

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Knowledgeable, committed teachers help students to make sound progress in lessons.
- The GNVQ course does not meet the needs of lower attainers.
- Homework is not used to promote independent learning in Years 7 to 9.
- Accommodation and resources are good and motivate students.
- In Years 10 and 11 provision overall does not meet the minimum requirements.

Commentary

67. In 2003 students did significantly less well in GNVQ ICT than in their other subjects. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 were below the average reported nationally.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>unsatisfactory overall and in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average by Year 9 and by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>

68. On entry to Year 7 students' skill levels are below the standard expected nationally. Standards are improving, however, and achievement is now satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, but not yet by Year 9. Students whose home language is not English make good progress as a result of particularly effective support. However, talented students do not progress as well as they should because they are not given sufficiently challenging work. In Years 7 to 9 students' skills are stronger in selecting and presenting information and modelling but weaker in data handling and control. Boys and girls achieve equally well, but few girls go on to take GNVQ ICT. In Years 10 and 11 the standard of work in the new intermediate GNVQ course is below the expected national standard, although improving. Achievement is satisfactory except among lower attainers for whom the qualification is not well suited.
69. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- good lesson planning, enthusiastic encouragement, a positive approach to managing behaviour and skilful use of resources enable students to make steady gains in knowledge and skills;
 - there is insufficient adaptation of tasks to meet different individual needs and differing previous attainment;
 - opportunities for discussion and collaborative working are restricted so that students' enquiry skills and independent learning skills are underdeveloped;
 - talented students are not challenged enough;
 - in Years 7 to 9 homework is rarely used to extend what has been learned in lessons;
 - the GNVQ course is taught by an established team of specialist teachers who ensure that students have a good appreciation of how well they are doing and how to do even better;
 - in all years the grading of work is accurate but marking is often perfunctory in Years 7 to 9, giving students little guidance on how to make improvements.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership has a clear focus on improvement and thoughtfully considered priorities. Management is satisfactory, with a good appreciation of strengths and weaknesses, use of data for evaluation and considered deployment of staff. However, effective team-working is not established and there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and lessons planning, for example to check on opportunities for students' literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. The policy of entering all GNVQ students for the intermediate award leads to unnecessary failure since a pass requires performance equivalent to four C grades at GCSE. Nevertheless, the department now has good accommodation, resources and technical support and the school's own Intranet is a strength. Teachers are committed, voluntarily providing daily lunchtime clubs and many revision lessons for Year 11 students after school. Since the last inspection, improvement is good. There is substantially more time for ICT in Years 7 to 9, new schemes of work and assessment procedures in Years 7 and 8, and the GNVQ has been introduced to provide a qualification in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. Students have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills in ICT in the other subjects in the curriculum, echoing similar criticisms in successive previous inspections. Nonetheless, there has been considerable improvement in accommodation, hardware, networking and technical support since the inspection in 2002. Teachers' skills and confidence are now similar to that found in other schools.
72. In Years 7 to 9 the provision is satisfactory because in other curriculum subjects students practise the skills they learn in ICT lessons, such as Internet research, word processing and desk-top publishing. However, less than half the boys, and hardly any girls take the GNVQ ICT course in Years 10 and 11. Provision for those not taking GNVQ is poor. The compulsory course for all students in Years 10 and 11 was discontinued in the current academic year and the shortfall in provision has not been taken up by other subjects. Consequently the statutory requirement for ICT to be taught to all students is not being met, and the disadvantage falls disproportionately on girls since few have chosen to take the GNVQ course. Students' use of

ICT in other subjects has increased recently but for the most part they simply practise elementary skills learned in Years 7 to 9. These skills are not developed further and they do not acquire new skills for example in the areas of modelling, control and data handling which are required in Years 10 and 11.

73. This area of the school's work has lacked informed leadership. Management has been better, as shown by the considerable improvement in resources and hardware. Provision has not been audited, planned or monitored coherently. While the best use of ICT is in citizenship and geography, there is very little use in mathematics, art and design and music.

HUMANITIES

The humanities faculty comprises geography, history and religious education. Each subject is led and managed by a specialist teacher.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is leading to good learning and improving examination results.
- The variety of tasks given to students in each lesson, coupled with the creative and purposeful use of new technology, captures students' interest and helps their learning.
- Good assessment procedures track individual progress effectively and teachers' constructive marking indicates clearly the areas for improvement.
- The department mostly uses examination data well to evaluate the subject's overall performance although in Years 7 to 9 it is not being used sufficiently to analyse the effect of teaching and curriculum changes on students' progress.

Commentary

74. In 2003 all students entered for the GCSE examination gained a pass grade and results overall rose above the national average for the first time, maintaining geography's good performance relative to other subjects. This shows good achievement relative to students' prior attainment. By the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments show standards that are close to those reported nationally.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both good

75. Entering Year 7 with attainment levels that are below those expected nationally for students of a similar age, students of all capabilities, boys and girls, make good gains in knowledge and geographical skills. By the end of Year 9 the overall standard of their work is broadly as expected nationally. Students use ICT confidently for example to depict Maasai life, and interpret data well when studying rich and poor countries. However, all students have difficulty manipulating information and applying it to solve problems. This difficulty is being tackled by the newly designed curriculum and supporting materials thereby helping students develop these skills from the beginning of Year 7. In written work, higher attainers write convincingly about the difficulties facing cities in less economically developed countries. They are not so skilled at evaluating the impact of international aid schemes. Students from minority ethnic groups, those for whom English is not their home language and students with special needs make good progress aided by well-prepared classroom assistants and guidance for recording, mapping and writing.
76. The working atmosphere in classrooms is very good.

- Teachers share their enthusiasm for the subject with their students who often respond with thoughtful questions.
- Teachers use their knowledge about the way students learn very effectively overall but there are too few tasks that encourage students' independence.
- Students behave well because teachers set clear boundaries and have high expectations.
- Work in lessons is planned effectively to meet the needs of individual students.
- Lessons have well-focused starter activities, learning objectives are clearly stated and key words are emphasised with good effect; students' learning is reviewed at the end.
- The recently introduced 'subject specific targets sheets' and the newer assessment tasks lack a sufficiently detailed mark scheme but are helping to raise achievement because students have a very good knowledge of their attainment and areas for development.
- Students' opportunities for learning are enhanced by field-work in every year, a weekly geography club and targeted revision classes.

Leadership and management

77. The good leadership and management support the development of the subject well. Established monitoring arrangements are effective in maintaining good teaching and reviewing overall performance. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been re-written in response to earlier analysis and are successfully providing students with a greater range of learning opportunities. However, systems are not yet in place to use the annual data on students' performance to assess the effectiveness of the changes that have been made. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated, students are now managed well and jointly planned lessons utilise ICT as a very good tool for learning.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, particularly in Year 11, has been successful in raising examination results above the national average.
- Effective use is made of a range of resources and a variety of activities to promote good learning.
- A rigorous process of assessment sets high standards for students but tends to underestimate their attainment by Year 9.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop the skills of independent learning through homework assignments and use of ICT.

Commentary

78. Results at GCSE rose dramatically to above the national average in 2003 after being below the previous year. There was little difference in the achievement of boys and girls and both exceeded their national averages. History recorded the highest value-added measure at GCSE and on average students did better than in their other subjects. The 2003 Year 9 teacher assessments showed below standards compared with national results.

***Achievement
Standards***

***Teaching and learning
Leadership
Management***

***good
below average by Year 9
average by Year 11***

***both good
satisfactory
good***

79. Students enter Year 7 with standards below those expected nationally in history, difficulties over literacy affecting the accuracy and amount of relevant detail in their writing. By Year 9 their standard of work is broadly at the expected level and better than shown by the 2003 assessment of Year 9 students. The First World War assignments in Year 9 develop students' writing well, requiring them to write newspaper reports, letters and essays analysing the effects of the war. Higher attainers show good understanding of cause and effect but many students concentrate on description rather than analysis. Lower attainers and students with special needs make good progress, particularly when teaching assistants are present to give assistance. Students use historical sources well, especially photographs and newsreel footage. They are less skilled at questioning the reliability of evidence or carrying out their own enquiry into events, completion of homework being the problem with a number of students.
80. In Year 11 students are reaching their target grades and have produced a good standard of coursework on the civil rights campaign in America. Most students have kept a detailed note record of their studies that will provide a good basis for examination revision. Some students are negligent about completing practice essays for homework, which is necessary if the significant improvement in results is to be sustained. Most students maintain a serious approach to their work in class but a few are inattentive.
81. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- a wide range of learning resources, balancing textbooks and worksheets with video material is a feature of good lessons;
 - the exception is ICT, which, although planned to support learning in the subject, is still at an early stage of implementation;
 - well-planned lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with interesting presentations, and include a series of activities that build progressively to give students a good understanding of the topic;
 - teachers establish good relationships in their classes, managing their students well, except on occasion for some background chatter;
 - detailed marking of assessed work provides clear guidance as to how students can improve;
 - good arrangements for homework, although these do not always require independent study to extend learning.

Leadership and management

82. Leadership has made a satisfactory contribution to recent curriculum changes and is managing the subject effectively within a more centralised humanities faculty. The introduction of modular humanities has meant more non-specialists teaching history in Years 7 and 8 but the commitment of the humanities team to this initiative has avoided any diminution in the quality of teaching. The assessment criteria for Years 7 to 9 are sometimes interpreted too harshly so that the assessments do not paint an accurate enough picture of the standards students reach. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching and learning are now good across the school and standards are closer to national expectations by Year 9. The most notable success has been the marked improvement in the GCSE results in 2003, giving teachers and students confidence that they can aim high.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students are entered for GCSE and achieve results above the national average.
- Innovative leadership is leading to improving standards in Year 8.
- Highly efficient organisation of resources and schemes of work equips non-specialists to teach the subject well.

- There are rigorous assessment procedures but the new criteria for establishing levels of attainment in the subject are not yet securely in place.
- ICT is insufficiently used to support students' learning.
- On occasion, in a small number of lessons, behaviour is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

83. The school recorded its best GCSE results in 2003 from its largest number of candidates, and considerably exceeded the national average for grades A*-C. While girls outperform boys the school difference is much smaller than the national difference which indicates how successful the school has been in motivating boys to do well in the subject. More A* grades were awarded in the subject than in any other.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory in Years 7 to 9</i>
	<i>very good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average by Year 9</i>
	<i>above average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>satisfactory in Years 7 to 9</i>
	<i>very good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

84. Standards on entry to Year 7 are below those expected nationally. The new curriculum pattern in Years 7 and 8 with emphasis on humanities is already having a noticeable effect on standards in Year 8 where students are using history skills effectively to examine evidence that Jesus existed. Their extended writing is closer to the level expected than the work seen in Year 9 where literacy difficulties prevent many from completing a timed assessment. Higher attainers research information on the Holocaust for homework but many are not completing such assignments. Teachers and teaching assistants give particular attention to students with special needs and lower attainers, adapting the work to their needs and ensuring that they make satisfactory progress. There are no significant gender or ethnic differences in students' performance. In Years 10 and 11 higher attainers follow a full GCSE course. The standard of coursework in Year 11 is impressive, most students word-processing their final report. Students keep detailed notes, express their views clearly in writing and use their initiative to research information. Half the year group is following a short course. Motivation is high and shown in thorough, well-presented notes, useful for revision.

85. GCSE teaching, where staff expertise is concentrated, is strong. It is weaker in Years 7 to 9 where staff new to teaching the subject are reliant on prepared materials. While teachers expect high standards of behaviour and concentration a small number of lessons are disrupted by students talking out of turn. Plans to make more use of ICT have only been implemented piecemeal. The main features of the good teaching are:

- well-planned lessons, around clear objectives stated at the outset, explored through interesting activities and discussion, and reviewed at the end;
- effective use of a variety of resources, particularly video material, supported by worksheets tailored to the needs of students;
- optimum use of time in the best lessons, working through a series of tasks at a brisk pace that effectively engages students with weighty issues, challenges their thinking and promotes their spiritual and moral development;
- examination preparation built into the design of GCSE lessons, targeting religious ideas on issues and training students to see both sides of an argument;
- highly constructive marking of students' work, showing them how to improve.

Leadership and management

86. Highly effective leadership and strong team work are leading to good GCSE results and raising standards in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is monitored and supported well but opportunities for professional development are insufficient, particularly on attainment levels in the subject. There is superb organisation of resources but still some shortage of books in Years 7 and 8. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are being raised in Years 7 to 9 and the numbers taking GCSE have paved the way for reinstating studies at A-level.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' careful planning, preparation and good organisation of group work enable students to achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11, particularly in practical work.
- All students are included effectively in lesson activities and their positive attitudes to their work and good behaviour contribute to their good learning.
- Very proactive leadership and very effective support for members of the department are having a positive effect on attainment.
- Students' weak literary skills in Years 7 to 9 limit their achievement, affecting the pace of work and their ready use of technical language.
- Insufficient relevant resources hinder the use of ICT by staff and students.

Commentary

87. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average and show a dip on the previous year's above average results. The main reason for the fall was the non-completion of coursework. Students' perform best in electronics and food technology where results were above the national average. Boys performed significantly better than girls. Teachers' assessments in 2003 overestimated students' attainment at the end of Year 9.

Achievement	good
Standards	below average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership	very good
Management	good, with some very good features

88. Standards on entry to Year 7 while variable are well below those expected nationally overall. They rise steadily to reach standards below those expected nationally by Year 9. Systems for recording and monitoring students' progress are now good and give a more accurate picture of students' attainment than the 2003 assessments. Students design and make simple products using wood, food and card satisfactorily, and all incorporate simple mechanisms and different structures such as towers in card. Higher attainers quickly solve practical problems and aid others. Students use computer-aided design satisfactorily to design a pen layout, although adult support is needed. Making skills are better developed than designing skills. Students with special needs and those from minority ethnic groups are well integrated into lesson activities and achieve well because teachers have good knowledge of their individual needs. Students in Year 9 with hearing impairment are very well supported by teaching assistants who, with the aid of sign language, ensure that teachers' instructions are quickly understood. Most students have difficulty giving extended oral answers to teachers' questions and weak literacy skills restrict their ability to convey technical knowledge. In Years 10 and 11 higher attainers produce work that shows detailed research, good drawing techniques and good making skills. They use technical vocabulary accurately. Lower attainers' work shows limited design and organisational skills. Literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory. Through thoughtful redrafting coursework is improved and shows satisfactory use of ICT.
89. The main strengths and weakness in the teaching are:
- students benefit from working with knowledgeable and committed teachers who plan activities that capture their interest;
 - lessons are mostly well managed; time is well spent and all students are fully included;
 - good collaborative work by students helps their learning;
 - students' individual needs are well known to the teachers who work in effective partnership with support staff to develop students' skills;

- good assessment procedures throughout the department ensure that students, particularly in Year 11, know their target grades well;
- students' attitudes are usually good, but in a very small number of lessons too much chatter or lack of challenge from teachers restrict progress.

Leadership and management

90. Leadership demonstrates enthusiasm and vision. The strong team ethos and commitment to improvement are having a beneficial effect on standards of work. Technical support is good. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. All teachers are careful to ensure that every student has access to a wide-ranging experience of the subject and results are monitored well to check that this is maintained. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have improved, good assessment systems are in place and accommodation and staffing are now good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in detail. Lessons in drama were also sampled. Drama has recently been re-introduced into the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The school intends to extend it to Years 8 and 9 and eventually to offer it at GCSE subject.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students understand the disciplines of the drama studio and they work with enjoyment and intense concentration. They collaborate very well and their use of mime, movement and speech is imaginative and increasingly confident. They evaluate their own work and that of others. Boys and girls, students for whom English is not their home language and students with special needs were all taking a full part in the lesson observed. Lesson planning and class management are very effective. The scheme of work recognises the contribution drama can make to students' personal and social development and to their citizenship skills. Good teaching is making this happen.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive leadership and a practical approach to management are proving very effective in raising standards.
- Staff have very good expertise across a range of media which provides a very secure and balanced base for students' learning.
- Very well structured activities and opportunities for Years 10 and 11 are raising standards at GCSE.
- Inadequate facilities for ICT within the department restrict students' progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Each project in Years 7 to 9 is planned in detail to cover all strands of the National Curriculum for art and design but as a consequence there is often duplication so that progression from year to year is not always clear.

Commentary

91. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average. Students did significantly better in art and design than in their other GCSE subjects. On average girls attained about one grade higher than boys and their results were above the national average overall. This was a notable improvement from recent years where results had been well below the national average. Teachers' Year 9 assessments for 2003 were well below national expectations although these appear rather severe in light of the standards in the work seen.

Achievement	good overall and in Years 7 to 9 very good in Years 10 and 11
Standards	below average by Year 9 above average by Year 11
Teaching and learning	good overall and in Years 7 to 9 very good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership Management	very good satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 very good in Years 10 and 11

92. Students enter Year 7 with standards well below those expected. In Years 7 to 9 they gain experience of a wide range of techniques and materials. Projects are closely directed leading to some uniformity in the finished work but they form a firm foundation for more individualised development in later years. Participation in an annual carnival parade results in very large, fanciful creations on willow frames made by teams of students and teachers, celebrating students' efforts and raising their self-esteem. Over Years 10 and 11 students show growing confidence in drawing and painting from observation and by recreating examples of artists' works. Girls attain higher standards than boys overall, although this varies between groups, and they show particular strengths in well presented research.
93. The significant features of teaching are as follows.
- In Years 7 to 9 students of all levels of attainment achieve well as a result of teachers' very good demonstrations of techniques and an emphasis on individual guidance.
 - Support teachers linked to the hearing impaired unit make a valuable contribution to lessons enabling the full participation of students in their charge.
 - Very good management of behaviour maintains a good orderly working environment for all students.
 - Teachers use their very good knowledge of examination requirements and assessment procedures effectively in Years 10 and 11 to inform students of their progress and negotiate suitable targets.
 - Year 10 and 11 students join sixth-form students on workshops and gallery visits which are effective in raising their self-esteem, motivation and involvement.
 - The inadequate facilities for ICT within the department slow students' ability to explore and manipulate imagery.

Leadership and management

94. Very good leadership is very supportive of staff and students and creates a positive ethos for the department that promotes achievement and values all. The subject is well managed with a proactive approach to reviewing the curriculum and examination structures for Years 10 and 11 in order to best meet the needs of the students. Work has begun on reviewing the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 where progression is not sufficiently clear. The staff form a very competent team with a well-balanced range of expertise. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Music

As a consequence of long-term staff absence and the difficulties encountered in recruiting musically qualified temporary staff, students in Years 7 to 9 are taught by a music teacher once a fortnight instead of once a week. Owing to the exigencies of the inspection timetable, the teaching judgements in the report are based on the lessons taught by music staff, which represent the best of the current arrangements.

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because insufficient time is allocated to practical music making.

- ❑ A high proportion of lessons in Years 7 to 9 are taught by teachers lacking the appropriate subject knowledge owing to the long-term absence of a member of staff.
- ❑ The quality of resources is unsatisfactory: there are insufficient percussion instruments and a lack of ICT equipment.
- ❑ Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of students in Years 7 to 9 have a negative effect on the quality of learning in some lessons.
- ❑ There is a good range of extra-curricular activities offering opportunities for students to improve their performance standards.
- ❑ There are good opportunities for students to take instrumental lessons. No charges are made and there is good access for all students.

Commentary

95. The number of students entered for GCSE in 2003 was too small for valid comparisons with national averages or identification of trends. However, a substantial proportion of those entered gained higher grades and generally did better in music than in their other subjects. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 were low compared with those reported nationally.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average by Year 9 and by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Learning</i>	<i>unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership and management both satisfactory</i>	

96. Standards on entry to Year 7 are varied but generally below national expectations. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls or between students of differing ethnic groups. In Years 7 to 9 students' keyboard performances lack fluency and use of systematic fingering techniques. Their understanding of musical notation is very limited and most are entirely dependent on the use of letter names to identify notes on the keyboard. In Years 10 and 11 all the small number of students, whatever their previous attainment, achieve satisfactorily. Their attainment is varied. Some students achieve high performance standards and play well together with a good sense of rhythm and style. However, a substantial number struggle to perform even at a basic level. Composition standards are below the standards expected. Students' pieces are limited in scope usually consisting of short melodic phrases and lacking extended structures. Students' literacy and numeracy standards are adequate for the requirements of the subject. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 has been seriously affected by long-term staff absence which has had a negative effect on the continuity and quality of provision.

97. The teaching has strengths:

- good planning and well-structured lessons with a good variety of activities;
- effective use of resources and accommodation which engages students' interest;
- a good level of individual attention;
- support assistants are used effectively.

Areas for improvement are:

- insufficient use of ICT, a result of inadequate resources, means that students do not gain sufficient experience in the use of computers for composing;
- the quality of learning in Years 7 to 9, which has been affected by unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of students and long-term absence of staff;
- lack of pace in lessons, sometimes due to the time taken up by managing behaviour and sometimes due to weaknesses in organisation.

Leadership and management

98. In the long-term absence of the head of department the school has made strenuous efforts, without success, to recruit appropriately qualified temporary staff. It has done all that could reasonably be expected to maintain the music curriculum. The timetable has been adjusted to

allow as many students as possible in Years 7 to 9 to have a lesson with a music teacher every other week with work set and supervised on alternate weeks. A good range of extra-curricular activities has been maintained and the instrumental teaching programme has not been interrupted. Instrumental lessons are provided without charge to participating students.

99. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment are lower as is the quality of teaching. Some progress has been made in establishing an effective assessment process and there is now more a satisfactory emphasis on the music of differing cultures. However, there has been little improvement in resources for ICT. The staffing context in which the school has been unable to effect satisfactory improvement since January 2002, when music was reported as a strength, is that of long-term absence of the head of department and the appointment of a newly qualified teacher as second in department from September 2002.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching leads to good achievement.
- Very good behaviour and attitudes support good learning.
- Very good leadership and management of a committed team of teachers ensure a strong sense of common purpose.
- Students' individual differences are not taken into account clearly enough in teachers' planning.
- Requirements for ICT in general lessons in Years 7 to 11 are not met in full.

Commentary

100. GCSE results in 2003 were average and reflect national figures for the higher grades gained. All students passed the examination. These results follow the pattern of recent years. Girls did not do as well as boys in 2003 because of weaker practical grades. This was particular to this group of girls and the usual pattern is of no difference in standards between boys and girls. Standards in Year 9 are at the national expectation. Teachers' assessments show standards below those expected; as at the time of the last inspection this is an underestimate. A new system of assessment aims at giving data that is more accurate.

Achievement	good by Year 9
General PE	good by Year 11
GCSE PE	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both very good

101. Students enter Year 7 with standards just below those expected nationally. Teachers quickly establish enthusiasm and good levels of participation in students. Both boys and girls reach the national standard in Year 9. This good rate of progress continues in general physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11. The very good behaviour and positive attitudes of all students make a significant contribution to their achievement. In GCSE classes achievement is good because of the clear focus on examination requirements. In 2003 students did as well in physical education as in the other subjects they studied. Students achieve particularly well in coursework and use ICT well to enhance their work. They have satisfactory skills of literacy and numeracy to support their examination work. Teachers know students well and give good individual support, so that good progress is made by students with special needs and those whose home language is not English.

102. The main strengths of teaching are:

- teachers have very good subject knowledge;
- lessons are well-planned and have a clear structure for developing skills;
- very good relationships with teachers' insistence on good behaviour and involvement create lessons where all can succeed;
- students work hard and there is a good pace to the learning;
- teachers give helpful encouragement and advice during lessons that helps students improve;
- marking of examination assignments is good and guides students on how to improve their next piece of work.

The main weaknesses are:

- assessments in Year 7 to 9 are not yet accurate enough nor shared with students so that they can be involved in their own improvement;
- planning does not take sufficient account of individual differences including students with particular talents in physical education.

Leadership and management

103. The very good leadership of the committed and hard-working team contributes to the success of the department. Leadership of the curriculum is very good with a new system for monitoring teaching that is helping to raise standards. The thoughtful management of short-term staffing and accommodation issues has ensured that the standards and ethos of the subject are maintained. There is a good range of opportunities in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. The contribution to students' personal development is good but not yet planned within the schemes of work in accordance with school policy. Opportunities for students to develop and apply their skills of ICT are insufficient in general physical education lessons across the school. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The good features reported at the previous inspection have been sustained. Staffing is more stable and non-participants are now involved in lessons.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught in four ways: through tutor periods, through days 'off-timetable' for PSHE, through specific citizenship lessons, and through all the subjects in the curriculum. No PSHE days were scheduled during the inspection.

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's programme is effectively organised and well led and managed.
- There are very good monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Citizenship teaching is good.
- There is some inconsistency in the quality of the personal and social education provided in the short form-time sessions.
- There is insufficient time allowed for citizenship in Years 10 and 11 which limits what the students can achieve.

Commentary

104. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme and is a comparatively new subject. As yet the school does not offer a GCSE course in citizenship.

Achievement

good in Years 7 to 9

satisfactory in Years 10 and 11

Standards

above average by Year 9 and by Year 11

Teaching and learning

both good

Leadership and management both good

105. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls or between students of differing ethnic groups. Students of all attainment achieve well in Years 7 to 9, but in Years 10 and 11 achievement is restricted by lack of time and is satisfactory. Students show a good understanding of citizenship issues. For example Year 9 students explored very effectively how the media presents issues in various ways through researching on the Internet and presenting differing viewpoints.
106. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups, with many strengths, particularly:
- very good use of ICT to enhance and support learning;
 - good examples of citizenship across the curriculum such as a Year 7 English discussion of the issues involved in recycling waste;
 - the quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is consistently good in both the specific citizenship lessons and in the humanities lessons which contribute to the citizenship curriculum;
 - very good teaching resources are provided for personal, social and health education lessons; these engage the students well and encourage independent learning;
 - there is good use of outside speakers and agencies.
- Areas for improvement are:
- students' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory in some tutor-group sessions;
 - the quality of teaching and learning is variable in personal and social education sessions in tutor groups; the best lessons are highly focused with maximum use of the limited time but not all staff show equal commitment to the subject and this results in ineffective use of time;
 - there is inconsistent use of homework to consolidate and extend the work done in class;
 - marking in personal and social education is insufficiently informative to help students know how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Leadership and management

107. The department has very committed leadership and management with clear ideas for development identified from a careful analysis of what is currently being provided. There are well thought out schemes of work covering all the strands of citizenship in Years 7 to 9. However, in Years 10 and 11 the strands are not clearly identified in the schemes of work in all the contributing subjects. The school council provides good opportunities for students to take responsibility and contributes well to their understanding of the democratic process. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Personal, social and health education is much better organised with carefully structured schemes of work to ensure coverage of all the aspects, either in contributing subjects or in tutor periods. Provision is monitored very effectively through lesson observations, looking at students' work, and through the students themselves evaluating what they are doing. Citizenship planning is also better structured. There is a clearer vision and sense of direction for the subject achieved through designating curriculum leaders and a core group of teaching staff.

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 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	66.7	74.2	0.0	34.3	15.0	31.3

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	100.0	91.6	80.0	36.3	100.0	74.1
Chemistry	6	100.0	96.4	66.7	32.8	100.0	76.5
English/English language	4	100.0	98.3	50.0	36.5	100.0	80.1
Geography	5	100.0	90.1	60.0	29.1	88.0	69.3
History	7	100.0	97.1	28.6	41.0	77.1	81.2
Information technology	10	100.0	89.1	0.0	22.4	64.0	64.1
Mathematics	8	100.0	93.3	87.5	52.2	100.0	84.7
Physics	7	100.0	92.8	57.1	42.8	91.4	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English language and English literature. A Year 12 lesson in French was sampled. Excellent teaching resulted in excellent learning with students achieving very well indeed given their levels of attainment at GCSE. Excellent resources, most produced by the teacher but many generated as a result of individual students' research on the Internet, provided the basis for sophisticated study of aspects of the world of work.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between teachers and students establish a partnership in learning.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge gives students confidence in them.
- A good choice of English-related options enables students to follow a course that matches their strengths and interests.
- Students are effectively guided through regular individual tutorials.
- In some lessons students are not sufficiently encouraged to develop and express their own ideas.

Commentary

108. In 2003 the results in A-level English language were well below the national average although every candidate gained a pass grade. Over time results in both subjects, language and literature, have been well below the national average.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>

109. In the work seen in both subjects standards are below those expected nationally, but because they began the course with GCSE grades that were well below average for A-level candidates the students have achieved well. In literature in Year 13 they show good knowledge of the characters and situations in 'The Handmaid's Tale', and they discuss issues such as sexual relationships with maturity and perception. Few students are able to extend and develop their ideas in speech or writing and consequently written work is generally too brief and superficial to gain the higher grades. Exceptions to this include those whose home language is not English who have detailed understanding of the historical and religious context in which 'Doctor Faustus' was written. In the language course in Year 12 students are starting to use linguistic terminology with accuracy and confidence. Most of them deduce the purpose of unfamiliar texts and comment briefly on their use of language. In the current Year 12 there has been a healthy increase in the number of male students undertaking the course. Students have a positive attitude towards English and most complete the two-year course. They value the subject for its interest and usefulness and consider that they are well taught and guided.

110. The teaching of English is good because:

- teachers use their good subject knowledge well to clarify students' understanding;
- the relationships between teachers and students create a strong sense of partnership and positive attitudes towards the subject;
- individual guidance gives students good knowledge and understanding of their progress;
- although in the best lessons students are given responsibility for their own learning, in others they are not sufficiently challenged to think and speak for themselves;
- teachers plan lessons well to give the students a variety of activities to maintain their interest.

Leadership and management

111. The department is under new management. Past results have not been reviewed in detail in order to develop identify strategies to raise standards and so enable students to achieve the higher grades. In half the lessons seen the students were given good opportunities to develop their independent study skills, but there is no departmental checking to ensure consistency of approach. The curriculum gives a good range of subject options, including language, literature and media studies so that individual needs are well met. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

112. Standards in the key skill of communication are as expected nationally for most students in the sixth form, and in most subjects they meet the requirements of GCE AS-level, A-level and GNVQ courses. In English, biology and ICT however, weaknesses in spoken and written communication are preventing students from attaining the higher grades.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was mathematics. Lessons in further mathematics were also sampled. Teaching is satisfactory and standards are above those expected nationally. No student was examined in the subject in 2003.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers have **good** knowledge of the subject and how to teach it.
- ❑ Students enjoy the challenge presented by the subject.
- ❑ A significant number of students have not covered the expected range of topics before starting the course and so have to cover additional material in Year 12.
- ❑ Only a very small number of female students choose the subject.
- ❑ Offering further mathematics allows students to study the subject in greater depth.

Commentary

113. A-level results in 2002 were at the national average. The 2003 results were similar. In both years, too small a number of students took the examination for comparison of the relative standards of female and male students.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both satisfactory

114. Students start Year 12 with standards below those expected. A significant proportion has not taken the higher GCSE paper and so has not covered material normally known by this stage. Importantly, these students are less skilled at applying their mathematics. This is one reason why almost half the candidates did not gain a grade in the AS-level examination in 2003. Work seen shows that students in Year 13 achieve equally in all parts of the course. Students, especially in Year 12, do not always think to apply their previous learning to help with current work. Only a very small number of students from minority ethnic groups take the subject, so meaningful comparison of their achievement with that of others cannot be made. Students are reluctant to contribute to discussions unless they are very confident that they have the correct answer. This reduces opportunities to learn through exploring ideas. Students' ICT skills are more than sufficient for the needs of the course. Students have positive attitudes to their work. They describe the subject as hard but clearly enjoy an additional sense of achievement. Nearly all students who start the course take the examination.

115. Good teaching leads to students learning well because:

- teachers use their good mathematical knowledge to help students learn well;
- teaching is consistently good, even though students are taught by more than one teacher;
- work is well chosen to meet students' needs and students are provided with helpful advice on the progress they are making and how to improve yet further;
- teachers work hard to try to ensure all students succeed.

Students speak highly of the commitment of their teachers, praising the fact that teachers readily give of their time to help students. Good examples were seen of teachers developing students' independence. Year 13 students made good use of model answers to questions so that they found for themselves the exact point of any error. However, there are occasions when teachers do too much for students, for example in asking them to copy notes rather than make their own records. This leads to over-dependence upon the teacher.

Leadership and management

116. The course has been appropriately chosen and runs smoothly. However, there is little formal co-ordination of teaching. Students' achievement is a result of teachers' experience and expertise rather than the leadership and management of the course. Students wishing to continue with the study of a mathematical subject beyond the age of 18 are well supported by the option of being able to take AS-level further mathematics in Year 13. However, not enough has been done to make the subject more attractive to female students. There is satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection: standards have been maintained as has the quality of teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

117. Students' mathematical skills are adequate for the demands of their subjects and courses. For example, students of media studies use a range of charts to explore and record the development of digital technologies. In no subject does a lack of mathematical skills restrict students' achievement.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was biology. Lessons in chemistry were also sampled. In the chemistry lesson observed students were taught well and learned well, showing the standard expected nationally in their work.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff provide encouragement and motivation so that students enjoy the subject and achieve well.
- There is scope for improvement in the good teaching through a wider range of approaches, clearer learning objectives and more frequent use of ICT.

Commentary

118. In recent years, results have improved from well below the national average to above average, although it is only in the last two years that numbers have grown to a healthy level.

Standards	above average
Achievement	good
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both good

119. When students start the course in Year 12, standards are below those expected, some students having gained a C grade at GCSE. Students are learning fast as they move through the sixth form. Year 13 students are on target for results above national averages in the current year. This applies equally to all students on the course although girls lack the confidence to contribute fully and learn actively.
120. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- all the teachers have excellent subject knowledge and great enthusiasm so that the students work hard and with enthusiasm too;
 - marking is very thorough and helpful and the teachers discuss with their students how they can make improvements;
 - there are effective strategies for improving the students' ability to work on their own and in small groups in lessons, for coursework and during the very productive field trips;
 - sometimes there is very good use of the assignments done for homework so that learning is consolidated well;
 - while planning is good, learning objectives are not always sufficiently clear; consequently, neither staff nor students can fully evaluate how successful teaching and learning have been from day to day;
 - sometimes teachers intervene too little to check students' understanding so that learning is too passive.

Leadership and management

121. The teaching and technical staff make an effective team. Despite the fact that the accommodation is spread over two different blocks the students gain a sense of unity and some feel part of the subject team. There is very good use of data that leads to a clear vision for developing provision that better meets students' needs and aspirations. There are some instances where levels of resourcing restrict what can be done in lessons and coursework, and as yet there is insufficient use of ICT both for teaching and for learning outside lessons. Provision has improved well since the previous inspection, with more qualified teachers, better teaching and better accommodation. The students' attitudes are now positive and examination results have improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. Lessons in Year 12 and Year 13 were sampled in the A-level, new AVCE, and Intermediate GNVQ courses. Teaching was satisfactory in the three lessons seen. Students made satisfactory progress, their learning supported by sound introductions and well-structured worksheets. There was little opportunity for students to use initiative or to experiment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

122. Students have sufficient opportunities to practise their ICT skills in other subjects and courses. Many use ICT to present their work effectively through word processing, slide presentations and statistical graphing. They are confident in conducting Internet research. Their access to suitable computers has improved considerably, although they are sometimes denied access when computers that are intended to be readily available to them are diverted for use by classes.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history. Lessons in geography, psychology and sociology were sampled. Good teaching in a Year 13 geography lesson on global futures employed effective strategies for the small student group. Students learned well and made good progress so that they were working at the expected standard nationally. In psychology, Year 12 students learned well and made good progress, particularly about theoretical principles, because of the good teaching. In the

Year 12 sociology lesson seen students made satisfactory progress because the satisfactory teaching had a clear structure, well-paced questioning and a helpful worksheet that required them to think. Opportunities were not taken, however, to deepen their understanding of theory and develop their speaking skills through discussion.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers structure the courses well and make a wide range of scholarship accessible to students.
- Students benefit from personal tuition in the small groups, make good progress on courses and achieve their target grades.
- Some of the teaching does not allow sufficient opportunity for independent study.
- Recruitment to the AS-level course has been maintained but the number of students progressing to A-level has fallen in recent years.

Commentary

123. A-level results were below the national average in 2002, with most students gaining a pass grade. All students gained a pass grade in 2003, achieving a higher points score than the previous year, but results were still below the national average.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both good

124. The small number of Year 13 students achieved average grades at AS-level. They show good understanding of historical interpretation when considering the presidency of J F Kennedy. The work in files shows improvement in essay style and students are making good progress in researching their personal studies. Target grades for students on the AS-level course are too low as they do not take account of the high grades that most of them achieved at GCSE. These GCSE grades show the potential for reaching standards at the national average. Year 12 students' files are well organised covering the courses in the required detail. Regular essay practice is developing their essay style well on the American course. Students are making good progress but find it more difficult to engage with the issues on the English history course.

125. Strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:

- teachers structure their courses well and prepare well, carefully selecting articles and sources that will widen their students' appreciation of historians' views and develop their critical thinking around issues of interpretation;
- sometimes not enough scope is given for students to pursue a line of enquiry for themselves and report their findings;
- on occasions they are given references to websites but this research tool is not being tapped effectively;
- teachers monitor students' work closely and make particularly helpful, diagnostic comments on their essays;
- the degree of tutorial support for individuals is very good ensuring that all students make the necessary progress.

Leadership and management

126. Most aspects of A-level work are managed well and the subject leader sets high standards for the department. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, with a slight improvement in examination results. Levels of recruitment have been maintained in Year 12, helped in the current year by the improvement in results at GCSE in 2003. The proportion of

Year 12 students continuing into Year 13 has fallen since 2002. The department has analysed the causes but lacks a specific action plan for post-16 history to reverse this trend.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was art and design.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive leadership and a realistic, practical approach to management are proving very effective at raising standards at A-level.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and their practical expertise provide very good support for students' development as artists.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities broaden students' experience of the subject and promote individual development well.
- Inadequate facilities for ICT within the department hinder students' exploration and development of imagery.

Commentary

127. A-level results in 2002 were well below the national average. This represents an upturn from very low results in 2001 that appears to continue with the 2003 results and in the work seen during the inspection. Boys have performed consistently better than girls in recent years except in 2001 when the results of both were very poor.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>both very good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

128. The small current group of Year 13 students entered the A-level course with below average results at GCSE, a legacy of the difficult circumstances reported at the last inspection. The standards in their work which are above those expected nationally reflect very good achievement over the sixth-form course. The much larger group of Year 12 students with above average GCSE results illustrates the rising fortunes of the department. Strengths at this stage are the very well presented folios showing research into artists' work alongside drawn and painted studies from observation. Very high quality, innovative work results from contact with original artworks through visits to galleries and exhibitions locally and abroad. Students make good use of their knowledge of a wide range of materials and techniques, learned in earlier years, to create pictures and sculptures, often on a large scale. They use the Internet effectively for research but facilities for ICT are inadequate for creating and refining their own images.

129. The significant features of teaching are as follows.

- Very knowledgeable and committed teachers, including a number of practising artists, make very good use of their expertise to meet students' individual needs and aspirations.
- Very good assessment procedures maintain a verbal and written dialogue between teachers and students that is very effective in evaluating work and setting targets for development.

Leadership and management

130. The head of department leads by example and has established a very positive ethos that is very supportive of both staff and students. He is very proactive in reviewing the curriculum and examination structures to best meet the needs of the students. A realistic and practical approach to management with a clear initial focus on examination technique is beginning to prove successful in raising results. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are rising and assessment procedures have improved considerably, although provision for ICT remains unsatisfactory.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff show excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Results and the numbers taking A-level have declined since the previous inspection although numbers in the current Year 12 show a recovery.
- Students respond well but show a lack of initiative and independence in their learning.
- Inadequate accommodation and resources limit the scope of practical work.

Commentary

131. Results declined from well above the national average in 2001 to below average in 2002, with a further fall in 2003. The school's records show that in relation to their previous attainment at GCSE students' achievement in 2002 was good and in 2003 was satisfactory. The small numbers make comparisons with national results insecure.

Achievement	satisfactory
Standards	below average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership	very good
Management	satisfactory

132. Year 13 students entered the sixth form with generally below average results across their GCSE subjects. Their written work in Year 13 has weaknesses in structure, ideas and references and is below the expected standard in both content and presentation, despite students' good knowledge of some aspects of media. Similar limitations in students' range of reference and vocabulary were evident in lessons. Practical skills were not demonstrated in any of the lessons seen, although students have worked independently on the film projects required by the syllabus. The majority of students in Year 12 attained average or above average GCSE results. There is good potential for A-level success. At this stage their achievement is satisfactory, although with considerable variation in the range and quality of their writing. Their analyses of films made by past students show good understanding of technique and genre.

133. Students benefit from high levels of subject expertise and enthusiasm in the teaching which is generally good and sometimes outstanding.

- Lecture demonstrations stimulate interest, provoke thought and encourage investigation.
- The teaching does not promote enough varied and active involvement by students who are not expected to do enough themselves.
- Students answer teachers' questions but do not make presentations to the group, lead in discussion, argue or make sustained contributions.

- In the larger Year 12 group there was more lively interaction when students were required to tackle programme planning in groups.

Leadership and management

134. Expertise, experience and commitment are strengths of the leadership. Not enough use is made of data from assessments to evaluate students' progress and the effectiveness of the course. The school's management has not ensured that students' studies are adequately supported by resources. The course is taught in a classroom without computers or facilities for practical work and students have insufficient opportunity to develop ICT skills in lessons. There have been few visits or involvement with communities outside the school. At the last inspection the subject was not reported. Since that time standards have fallen and the key issue for the school concerning students' independent work is still a weakness of the course. Improvement is therefore unsatisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was sports studies. A lesson in A-level leisure and recreation was sampled in which standards were below those expected. Good teaching and learning were supporting good achievement as students worked on improving their presentation skills. The small number of candidates taking the examination in 2003 achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment.

Sports studies

Provision in sports studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do well because of the good quality of teaching, particularly teachers' subject expertise.
- Good quality coursework is a strong feature in students' progress.
- Students do not contribute enough to class discussions.
- Good marking of students' work helps them make improvements successfully.

Commentary

135. In 2003 the number of students taking A-level was very small; national comparisons are therefore unreliable. Students taking sports studies did better than in the other courses they followed. Results for Year 12 examinations are not recorded. Most students wish to re-sit their examinations to try for higher grades.

Achievement	good
Standards	below average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both good

136. The attainment of students entering the course varies and is often below the expected standard. Students achieve well given their previous results at GCSE. Higher attainers gain good grades. Coursework is of a good standard and contributes well to students' final grade. Students clearly enjoy following a topic of their own choice but find the work on historical and social aspects of sport more difficult. Satisfactory skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT support their studies.

137. The main strengths of the teaching are:

- teachers have good knowledge of syllabus requirements and prepare students well for examinations;
- in many lessons there is a good range of activities that sustains students' interest;

- relationships are very good, teachers support students well giving them the confidence to succeed;
 - work is marked carefully with good guidance to students as to how they can improve.
- These features ensure that students make good progress in their studies. The main weakness is the lack of planned development of students' skills of discussion and debate. Class discussions are limited and students are reluctant to express ideas or opinions. Their written work reflects this when answers are often brief, lack examples or show limited understanding of current issues in sport.

Leadership and management

138. Leadership of a team of permanent staff is committed to helping students achieve well. Students report that they enjoy the course and find it challenging. They feel well supported. Numbers in Year 12 have increased in the current year. There is thorough monitoring of teaching although some lesson gradings are rather too generous. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Library resources have improved. Practical elements introduced into the course help students to make better links between theoretical principles and practical performance. A well-taught Sports Leader course in Year 12 provides good opportunities for students' personal development. This course involves very good links with a local primary school.

BUSINESS

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson in A-level business studies was sampled. Good teaching, with good subject competence, motivated students to learn well so that they made good progress. Work was at the expected standard.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was the AVCE health and social care course in Years 12 and 13 and the intermediate level GNVQ course in Year 12.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm, commitment and good subject expertise encourage good learning and achievement from students.
- Work is well matched to students' needs and promotes good, thorough learning.
- Assessment is well understood by students and carried out well by teachers; this ensures that students produce assignment work of a high standard.
- Students' oral contributions in lessons are weak.
- There is no evidence of students' use of ICT to enhance their work other than through word-processing.

Commentary

139. The 2002 AVCE results were above the national average. Comparison of students' 2003 AVCE results with their GCSE grades show that they achieved well, although results were not as high.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	both good
Leadership and management	both satisfactory, with good features

140. Students' coursework is thoughtful and well presented, with the majority making effective use of word-processing. Their knowledge and understanding of topics currently being studied are

secure. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students have good listening skills, but show reluctance to enter into discussion; often teachers talk too much. Students' ability to gather first-hand information was clearly seen in the coursework for different units. Their use of the Internet and texts for researching information is satisfactory. Technical language is used well and there is good evidence of extended writing. The achievement of students from minority ethnic groups is good. Higher attainers show good critical ability in their coursework. Discussion with students indicates that they have good understanding of the assessment criteria for their assignments.

141. The good teaching helps students to learn at a good pace.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and thorough planning bring about focused learning.
- Individual needs are well known to teachers who work in effective partnership with students.
- Students are given good guidance on the assessment criteria for the different units and this is raising their achievement.

There is no specific base for health and social care and resources are basic. This results in some limitations on what students can undertake in the different course units.

Leadership and management

142. The courses are run satisfactorily overall. Different units are run effectively with a number of teachers from various curriculum areas contributing to the teaching. This rather fragmented approach works satisfactorily, although no overview of the courses is available. The teaching is very inclusive in approach and this support students' achievement well. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No courses offered in this area were inspected in detail. General studies is taught through off-timetable days, none of which were scheduled during the week of the inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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