

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Upper Newbold, Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112998

Headteacher: Mr T Moore

Lead inspector: Mr David Roberts

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 259262

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1260
School address:	Newbold Road Upper Newbold Chesterfield Derbyshire
Postcode:	S41 8AG
Telephone number:	01246 201191
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr P McGuire
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves the Catholic community of north east Derbyshire. The school has had the status of a specialist languages college since 1998. It achieved the Schools Achievement Award for the third time in 2003. It has been a 'beacon school' and is now applying for Leading Edge status. Pupils come from a mixture of urban and rural backgrounds and a wide socio-economic range, although there is a below average proportion eligible for free school meals. There are 1260 on roll, including 254 in the sixth form, making it much bigger than average. Both figures, but particularly the sixth form, represent an increase since the last inspection in 1998. There are very few non-white pupils at the school and no refugees or travellers. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not the first language is low. The proportion of pupils having special educational needs (SEN) is below average, while the proportion with Statements of SEN at 1.9% is broadly in line with the national average. The attainment of pupils who enter in Year 7 reflects the full ability range and is above average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19698	D Hiron	Lay inspector	
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28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	English (11-16)
10160	R Bagguley	Team inspector	Science (11-16)
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31693	T Hanafin	Team inspector	Art and design
3555	C Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology
21818	T Parker	Team inspector	Geography
24887	Y Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Music
17987	B Coates	Team inspector	Physical education
19183	W Woodcock	Team inspector	Citizenship Business studies and Economics (sixth form)
28002	S Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	History (11-16)
10308	J Paddick	Team inspector	Science (sixth form)
7399	P Roberts	Team inspector	History (sixth form)
32113	J Byrom	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)
31160	I Towler-Evans	Team inspector	English and Drama (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school with an excellent sixth form. Standards are well above average and pupils achieve very well. Their attitudes and behaviour are exemplary. Teaching is very good. Pupils' learning and achievement flourish in response to this teaching and to the very good care and guidance they receive. The school's very good leadership is highly principled and committed to valuing and including every pupil and maximising their achievement, within a strong Catholic ethos. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Consistently well above average results in public tests and examinations, which are continuing to improve.
- Very good teaching, with particular strengths in Years 10-13, with well-qualified staff who retain an abundant enthusiasm for their subject.
- A very strong Catholic ethos which emphasises respect for one-another, the value of learning and sustained effort.
- Excellent attendance and exemplary attitudes and behaviour.
- An appropriate curriculum with the exception, for many Year 10 and 11 pupils, of a suitable information and communication technology (ICT) programme; and arrangements for covering statutory requirements for teaching citizenship are unsatisfactory.
- An attractive learning and social environment, enhanced by language college status, but with unsatisfactory facilities for drama.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities and support for pupils' progress outside lessons.
- Very good leadership by the headteacher and key staff.
- Arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision, particularly teaching, are not consistent enough to ensure that the very good practice which exists is shared.
- The tracking of pupils' progress and setting them individual targets is underdeveloped.

The school has improved well since the last inspection in 1998. The very good standards, which were achieved then by pupils, have continued to rise. The quality of teaching has improved. The school's very positive ethos, resulting in excellent attendance, attitudes and behaviour, has been maintained. The amount of teaching time has been increased. The other issues for improvement in 1998 have mainly been dealt with, although provision for and reporting of pupils' progress in ICT have not been fully addressed. Monitoring arrangements still have some weaknesses.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	A	A	A	A
Performance in GCE AS and A-level examinations in Years 12 and 13	A	A	A	

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

Achievement is very good in all Years 7 to 13. Standards of work seen were well above average in all years. Results reached both in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are consistently well above the national average; they also compare very well with those achieved in similar schools. Results are continuing to improve from this high level in line with national improvements. In the Year 9 tests, English results have not followed this upward trend, having declined since 2000. In GCSE examinations, particularly strong results were achieved in 2003 in art and design, design and technology, French, German, history, ICT and mathematics. All pupils make very good progress regardless of their starting point or particular needs and capabilities. Literacy skills are well above average, supporting pupils' learning across all subjects. Standards

reached in A level examinations are excellent, with the best results in 2003 in design and technology, biology, chemistry, English, French, Spanish, history, ICT, mathematics and music.

Pupils' personal qualities are excellent. Their attitudes and behaviour are exemplary. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. All these features maximise pupils' ability to achieve high standards. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, taken overall, with room for further development in their appreciation of other world cultures.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good overall. It is very good in Years 10 to 13 and good in Years 7 to 9. Excellent teaching dominates in A level French and music, but is also seen in other subjects. No teaching is unsatisfactory and nearly all is at least good. In mathematics, ICT, history, music and physical education, it is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' learning benefits very well from this high quality. In very few lessons is the pace and level of interest insufficient to hold pupils' attention.

The curriculum is satisfactory taken overall although the statutory entitlement to an ICT course for all in Years 10/11 is not provided for, and the programme for citizenship education is unsystematic and therefore unsatisfactory. Effective arrangements are made with the college for a small number to follow vocational courses. There is a very high quality of care, guidance and support for pupils. Partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are all very effective, playing a significant part in ensuring very good achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is satisfactory. Leadership is very good; in particular, the headteacher provides very strong, highly principled leadership which focuses on high achievement for all within a flourishing, nurturing Catholic community. Management is good, with scope for further improvements in monitoring arrangements. Governance has strengths in the strong support it gives to the school, and weaknesses in not ensuring that all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly satisfied with the provision the school makes, the information the school provides for them and the standards which pupils achieve. Pupils are also very strongly supportive of the school and the opportunities it gives them, particularly those in the sixth form. Those below the sixth form regret that the school has no systematic way of hearing their views and ideas. Any concerns which parents and pupils have about behaviour are unfounded.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Particularly with a view to bringing all teaching quality in line with the best:
 - evaluate teaching quality more systematically and share best practice, and
 - develop further the use of pupil performance data to improve teaching quality and raise achievement
- Promote opportunities to involve pupils below the sixth form in the development of the school

and, to meet statutory requirements, ensure that:

- an ICT programme is provided for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 and that the progress in ICT of these pupils is included in reports to parents
- the National Curriculum citizenship programme is developed

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sixth form provision is, overall, excellent. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good arising out of very good teaching and learning. Cost-effectiveness is excellent, as these results are achieved in relatively large classes. Students are very well cared for and have excellent attitudes to school. Female students achieve results in examinations that are well above those of other post-16 providers nationally. Male students' results are in the highest national grouping. The leadership and management of the sixth form are both very good with effective sharing of responsibilities among the senior team. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in A level examinations are excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good, with teachers showing excellent knowledge of subjects and examination requirements and planning very well for progression.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning, take a very active interest in school life and are willing to be responsible for a wide range of activities.
- The leadership of the head of Years 12 and 13 is very good, with the very good support of the deputy heads of year.
- Students are highly involved in the running of the sixth form through the school council and responsibility groups.
- The proportion of students who complete their courses is very high.
- There are excellent beneficial links with other schools and colleges.
- There are no weaknesses in provision of any significance.

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	<p>English: very good, with very good achievement as a result of very effective teaching, leading to well above average standards.</p> <p>French: excellent. As a result of excellent teaching from fluent speakers of French, students' achievement in writing and speaking is therefore excellent</p> <p>RSA business languages: very good. All students not taking A level in a modern foreign language follow a course in French or German, where achievement is good, or in Italian or Japanese where achievement is very good</p>
Mathematics	<p>Very good. Standards are well above average and are very high in Year 13 further mathematics. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teach very well so that students' achievement is very good.</p>
Science	<p>Physics: good. Standards are above average and students are well taught and achieve well.</p> <p>Lessons were also observed in biology and in chemistry, in both of which standards were well above average as a result of excellent teaching.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p>Very good. Students' achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching, high expectations and excellent structure to the course.</p> <p>Students not taking A level IT are given an opportunity to develop IT capability through a business IT course. One lesson was observed in which teaching was good and standards average.</p>
Humanities	<p>History: very good. Achievement is very good with standards well above average as a result of very good teaching.</p> <p>Geography: very good with very good achievement resulting in standards that are well above average. Teaching and learning are both very good.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Art and design: very good, with very good achievement overall and the highest attainers working well above the standard required for A level as a</p>

result of very good imaginative teaching.

Drama: good, with standards above average and very good achievement. Very good teacher knowledge informs and develops students' understanding, but resources and facilities are limited.

Music: very good. Because of the excellent quality of teaching students are highly motivated, show excellent attitudes and learn very well.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	A very good recreational activities programme is provided for students, which is well supported and very appropriate to their needs. The lack of examination and Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) courses prevents some students from pursuing their sporting interests at a higher level.
Business	Business Studies: good. Standards in class are average, although results in 2003 were below average. Achievement is good in relation to the students' lack of prior experience. Economics: good. Examination results in 2003 were below average but achievement is good in relation to prior experience.
General education	Several lessons of general studies were observed. Overall, students are performing at a standard above average, and their needs are well catered for by this course.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students in the sixth form receive excellent guidance and support from their tutors and from the head and deputy heads of sixth form. As a result, they are able to make informed decisions about their future. Students indicate form times to be too short which result in them having to seek out their tutors when requiring advice and guidance. This places significant additional demands on these very committed staff who willingly make sacrifices of their own free time in order to be available for them. Students are unanimous in praise of their teachers, tutors and the sixth form management team, and value their advice and guidance immensely.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is very good, with the head of sixth providing an excellent role model both for his team and also for the students. The ethos of the school is reflected in the commitment of leaders to the spiritual, social and intellectual development of students. The management of the sixth form is very good, providing close attention to the needs of individual students. There is very beneficial involvement with other schools, colleges and businesses, providing opportunities for students to study a wide range of A level subjects, to be involved with professional organisations and to mix with students from other schools and colleges.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

All students are highly motivated and eager to learn. Their attendance is excellent as is their punctuality to tuition sessions. They are extremely willing and keenly committed to accept roles of responsibility. They are very positive about the extent to which they are helped by their teachers and by the sixth form pastoral team. Given the heavy study workloads of these students, their commitment to working with and encouraging other pupils in the school is exemplary, enhancing and promoting the Christian ethos that pervades the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The overall standards achieved in national tests and examinations by pupils in this school are **well above average**. To reach these standards, they achieve very well in all years. Standards of work seen across the curriculum are well above average in all years. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are well above average and their competence in mathematics and ICT are above average at all ages. Both boys and girls do well compared with the national median for their gender. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) as well as the most capable pupils also achieve very well. The very small number for whom English is not the first language achieve as well as their peers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently well above national average results in GCSE examinations.
- Significantly high proportions of pupils attained good grades in art and design, design and technology, French, German, history, ICT and mathematics in the 2003 GCSE examination.
- Consistently well above national average results in the tests at the end of Year 9.
- A very high proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in the mathematics test in 2003.
- Compared to similar schools, the proportion reaching higher levels in the English test in 2003 was below average.
- The trend of improvement in test and examination results is broadly in line with the national trend – a significant achievement at these high levels.
- All pupils make very good progress, including those with SEN and the most capable.
- Well above average literacy skills and good competence in mathematics and in ICT across the curriculum.
- The positive impact on achievement of the school's development as a languages college.
- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory for the many in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow an examined course in the subject.

Commentary

1. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, pupils have achieved well above average standards over recent years; the comparison with schools with similar starting points has been equally very good. While the school's trend of improvement continues upwards, average results in English since 2000 have had a downward trend. Nevertheless, results in all three subjects tested (English, mathematics and science) have been well above the national median, overall and for both boys and girls. Higher proportions of pupils achieved level 6 in mathematics and science than in English; the proportion achieving level 7 in mathematics was remarkable at 40 per cent. The less good results in English may reflect a number of staffing changes recently. Standards of work seen towards the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in about half the subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and above average in the rest, including in ICT.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (36.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.4 (39.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	37.8 (37.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 201 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. There have been consistently well above average results in GCSE examinations over recent years, both in terms of the proportion of good grades achieved and the average performance of pupils. Comparison with schools with similar starting points is equally very good. Pupils achieve well in most subjects and build very well on what, for most of them, are somewhat above average standards when they enter Year 7. Of the higher entry subjects in the 2003

examinations, only in geography were results not significantly better than the national average. Within these overall very strong results, significant numbers of pupils did not perform as well in English, science and geography as they did in their other subjects. Pupils who do not follow an examination course in ICT are not achieving as well as they could in this subject due to the uneven opportunities open to them to develop their ICT capability in their other subjects. Standards of work seen were well above average in nearly all subjects, including in English, mathematics and science.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	78 (78)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45.0 (45.6)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 199 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Pupils with SEN achieve very well overall. Those with identified behavioural difficulties make very good improvements with modifying their behaviour due to the consistency of approach of all members of staff and the respect with which they are regarded. Pupils who enter the school with poor literacy skills have made very good improvements in their reading and spelling by the time they are aged 16 years. Some pupils who have Statements SEN achieve so well in relation to their Statement objectives that their Statement is removed. Monitoring shows that the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. None of these pupils is at an early stage of learning English. Overall, pupils who are more able achieve very well due to the high level of challenge in their lessons and the range of extra-curricular experiences.
4. The international dimension of the school, stemming from its language college status, contributes very effectively to pupils' very good achievement and interest in languages learning. Almost all pupils leave Year 11 with qualifications in two foreign languages and most Year 12 students study at least one foreign language.
5. Pupils' very good achievement at all ages in this school is in response to:
 - The quality of the teaching which is very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7 to 9.
 - The very strong Catholic ethos which emphasises good relationships, the value of learning and sustained effort which all have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
 - The very high attendance rate and very good links with parents.

SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average standards in work seen in nearly all subjects inspected.
- Excellent achievement in ICT and very good achievement in almost all other subjects inspected.
- Lower than average results in A level German, business studies and economics in 2003.

Commentary

6. The performance of students in public examinations over the past three years has been very high in relation to the national average. Almost all students attain a grade in all examinations. Female students' results are well above the average for their gender, although they are a little

below the level of the male students' results, which are in the top five per cent nationally. Results in business studies are consistently below average, but in design and technology, mathematics, history and biology attainment is consistently very high. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average in most subjects, although students in economics, and some in ICT, have no prior experience of the subjects. Overall, therefore, achievement is very good in relation to prior attainment.

7. In 2003 students' performance at A level was exceptionally high in biology and design and technology, and very high in chemistry, English language and literature, French, general studies, geography, history, ICT, mathematics, religious studies and Spanish. Results were above average in art and design and physics while they were average in drama. In business studies, economics and German, results were below average. In most subjects at AS level the results ranged from average to high in the recorded results where students did not continue the subject into Year 13. There was an improvement in the results in economics over 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	99.1 (98.2)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	56.3 (47.6)	36.1 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	331.6 (312.7)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 130 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

8. In work seen during the inspection, most students achieve well above average standards that are consistent with the results from 2003. In almost all subjects, therefore, achievement is very good in relation to attainment on entry to courses. This is true of English language and literature, mathematics, geography, history, art and design, music and ICT. Physics students struggling with complex mathematics achieve well in relation to their mathematical understanding as a result of careful guidance from teachers. In business studies and economics achievement is satisfactory. Students with SEN achieve very well academically and in relation to their specific difficulties. There are no pupils in the sixth form who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The few students for whom English is an additional language are competent language users and are achieving very well overall. It is school policy that each pupil should have their gifts and talents identified within subject areas and that the subject teachers should provide them with an appropriate level of challenge. This is very high with the result that the highest attaining students achieve very well.
9. Students' standards of literacy are very good. They listen well, articulate their views very well in discussion and in writing. Their mathematical skills are good overall, but some students struggle with the complex mathematical ideas in A level physics. Students use ICT well to support their learning when they research using Internet, organise their writing and use subject-specific software competently, for example in mathematics.

Pupils and students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance of all pupils is **excellent**. Their **attitudes** to work and **behaviour** are **exemplary**. Pupils arrive on time in school and lessons start promptly. There have been no permanent exclusions. Personal development, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance rates are excellent.
- The behaviour of all pupils in lessons and when moving around school is exemplary.
- The whole school community promotes an ethos of politeness, courtesy and respect.
- Pupils want to do their best.
- There is insufficient focus on the diverse cultures that make up modern Britain.

Commentary

10. Attendance rates for pupils over the past three years are excellent and remain consistently well above national averages. This reflects pupils' keenness to attend school, be punctual to lessons and undertake their studies with enthusiasm. Their attitudes to learning are excellent as exemplified both in lessons and in the way they participate in assemblies when given the opportunity.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.7	School data	0.5
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.

11. The behaviour of pupils is excellent and plays a significant and influential part in creating an excellent ethos of courtesy, consideration and politeness that is a hallmark of this school. This enables pupils to mix easily and socially at break times and during lunch, free from bullying and all forms of harassment. There is good integration of the very small number of pupils for whom English is not the first language. Some areas of the school are congested as pupils move from one room to another. However, pupils deal with this very calmly and sensibly. Pupils' excellent behaviour maximises teaching and learning opportunities which impacts positively upon their ability to achieve high standards. Inspection evidence fully supports the extremely positive views of pupils and parents that unacceptable behaviour is not an issue.
12. The following table applies to the whole school, including the sixth form. The rate of exclusion is very low. In total, 26 pupils were excluded last year, marginally more boys than girls.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1152	35	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	49	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	20	0	0

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

13. Pupils with SEN show positive attitudes to their work and behave very well when they are taught in small groups which focus on their areas of difficulty with literacy or numeracy. They remain focused and show positive attitudes despite finding the work hard.
14. Pupils display great interest in the life of the school. The rich source of available extra-curricular activities enthuses, excites and stimulates pupils so that the school is a hive of activity during the day, during break times and after school. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in and demonstrate their skills, abilities and talents. A significant number achieve very high individual or team standards. This enhances pupils' personal, moral and social development. Pupils attending retreats respond excellently to the stimulating range of activities undertaken. They talk freely and encouragingly about the spiritual, social and moral experiences these opportunities provide, and the friendships forged that remain throughout their time in school and beyond. Pupils have a very good awareness of a range of foreign languages and cultures due to the school's strong international programme.
15. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Teachers and pupils reflect clearly these aspects outlined in the school's mission statement. There is a strong Catholic ethos in the school and pupils' spiritual development is evident from their clear set of values, which inform their perspective and their patterns of behaviour. They demonstrate a respect for themselves and for others and, in lessons, a respect for insight as well as knowledge. This is supported by the very good use of assemblies, and some form periods, where pupils are given opportunities to play responsible roles. Pupils take on the responsibility for choosing and collecting for local and international charities. This enhances their moral, cultural and personal development.

16. The school has well defined standards of behaviour. Teachers provide powerful role models through their positive attitudes and interactions with pupils. In the wider curriculum there is a caring climate in lessons where pupils are respected and valued, where they feel confident to participate fully. They are regularly supported beyond the lessons in many subject areas.
17. There are good examples of pupils' moral and social development in lessons. In science, pupils work in role to examine aspects of global warming from a range of perspectives and in English they consider the consequences of action. In one English lesson they were observed addressing the implications of the use of mobile phones, the need for consideration and school rules regarding their use.
18. The languages department makes a significant contribution to raising pupils' awareness of other cultures through annual foreign exchanges with schools in France, Spain and Germany. Ninety Year 8 pupils spend a week in France as part of these links. All foreign language teaching incorporates and celebrates cultural differences. Other subjects make a contribution to pupils' cultural development. For example, in a Year 9 art and design project on masks there is a specific multicultural dimension and, in design and technology, multicultural displays are evident reflecting pupils' recent work. The provision for pupils' cultural development in the school is good and has improved since the last inspection. However, overall, there is insufficient focus on diverse cultures which represent multicultural Britain, beyond European influences, and there are missed opportunities to enhance pupils' understanding in this area.

THE SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sixth form students have excellent attitudes to school. They work very hard, are keen to learn, and enjoy taking responsibility for aspects of the school's enrichment programme.
- Very high completion rates in nearly all courses.

Commentary

19. All students are highly motivated and eager to learn. Their attendance is excellent as is their behaviour and punctuality to tuition sessions. They are extremely willing and keenly committed to accept roles of responsibility for example, 'responsibility groups' which are most effectively observed, supporting and working with the youngest pupils in school. Their pastoral work with Year 7, ensures these pupils have a 'friend' during their first day in school in September, continuing throughout the year. Given the heavy study workloads of these sixth form students, their commitment to working with and encouraging other pupils in school is exemplary. It is inspirational for other pupils and enhances and promotes the Christian ethos that pervades the school. The proportion of students who complete their course is very high, comprising all students in most cases, but with somewhat lower rates in biology and chemistry.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching is **very good** overall although in Years 7 to 9 good rather than very good teaching predominates. Pupils respond to the very good teaching by learning very well. The quality of teachers' assessment of pupils' work is **satisfactory** in the main school and **very good** in the sixth form. A satisfactory curriculum is provided, although it lacks a systematic approach to the teaching of citizenship and some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not follow the ICT programme to which they are entitled. There is very good provision for curriculum enrichment.

There is a very good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum. Teaching accommodation is good except for drama. Pupils are provided with very good support, advice and

guidance but, below the sixth form, their views are not sufficiently valued. The school has very good links with parents and the community served by the school and very good links where appropriate with other schools and the college.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good** overall, being strongest in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Assessment is satisfactory, although there are inconsistencies in practice which reduce its overall effectiveness.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- Teachers with good command of, and strong abiding interest in, their subject help to ensure pupils are strongly motivated.
- Well-chosen pace to lessons, varied learning activities and levels of challenge appropriate to all pupils maintain their interest and their enjoyment of learning.
- There is too little sharing of knowledge between departments as to what makes for particularly successful teaching.
- Thorough marking of pupils' work, but which does not always make clear to pupils what they need to do next to improve.
- Autonomy of departments in relation to assessment procedures leads to a lack of consistency.
- Statutory requirements are not met in respect of assessment in ICT for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not studying for GCSE; there are no plans for the assessment of Citizenship

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 178 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15 (8%)	83 (47%)	71 (40%)	9 (5%)	0 (0%)	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.

- Teaching and learning are very good overall, with teaching in over half of lessons judged to be very good or excellent. No lessons are less than satisfactory. These overall figures, when broken down into year groups, reveal an unevenness of provision. In the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11, the proportion of very good and excellent teaching is around two-thirds, while in Years 7 to 9 only four in ten lessons are of this high quality. The main differences lie in the levels of expectation and challenge, the effectiveness of methods used and in the use of homework to reinforce learning. Marking is sometimes more constructive with older pupils. The school acknowledges that, where there have been staffing difficulties, it has concentrated the efforts of its most experienced and successful teachers on the needs of pupils shortly to take GCSE examinations. However, even with Years 7 to 9, teaching is of good quality overall. Steps to improve quality at this age group further could include a more effective dissemination of the features of high quality teaching and learning which could be observed through improved monitoring.
- The impact of this very good quality teaching on pupils' learning is very good, bolstered by the very positive attitudes of pupils and the support they, and teachers, receive from parents. The lessons are very successful due to a number of often interlocking factors:
 - The impact on lesson planning and teaching strategies of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and associated teacher training.

- The excellent knowledge of and enthusiasm for their subject demonstrated by teachers across the board.
 - Teachers' high expectations of what pupils will achieve, well matched to age and capability.
 - The varied and well-chosen activities which sustain pupils' interest.
 - The very good pupil/teacher relationships.
 - Teachers successfully insisting on good behaviour.
 - The quality of the marking.
 - Thorough knowledge of examination requirements.
 - Effective use of homework.
22. While many lessons have very good or excellent features, others have features which are less than satisfactory, although none are unsatisfactory overall. Such features include:
- Lesson objectives not being shared with pupils.
 - Review sessions at the end of lessons being underdeveloped and/or not involving pupils adequately.
 - Overlong exposition by the teacher leading to insufficient challenge of pupils at appropriate levels.
23. The teaching of pupils in small specialist groups for English and mathematics is good, because the teachers and educational care officers have a very good understanding of the pupils' needs and their next learning steps through detailed record keeping.
24. SEN staff have good links with subject departments through regular meetings with a nominated person in each department. They provide very good quality information about individual pupils' needs. This is used by most subject teachers to plan effectively for use of the educational care officers in the classroom and to provide adapted strategies and resources which are focused on each pupil's needs. Educational care officers support pupils well in lessons because they understand their needs very well
25. Assessment is satisfactory. The way in which effort is assessed is well co-ordinated across the school and the twice-yearly assessments are meticulously followed up by the appropriate heads of year and subject. Marking of books and coursework is regularly undertaken and frequently includes evaluative comments indicating the next steps in pupils' learning. In the best practice, pupils follow this up with their own targets which are recorded in their books and tracked over time. However, grading criteria are sometimes vague, and targets relate to improving effort or presentation rather than specific aspects of the subject and are not always followed up. Insufficient use is made of assessment information by teachers in a number of subjects to adjust planning, pace, content and methods in future lessons.
26. School policy places the main responsibility for assessment and marking policy with individual departments. There is plenty of evidence of good practice but there are inconsistencies between one department and another. There is scope for better overall co-ordination.
27. Pupils with SEN are closely monitored, particularly those with Statements and receiving intensive literacy support and this contributes to the very good progress that they make.
28. In the previous inspection, meeting statutory requirements for assessment in science and ICT in Key Stage 3 was identified as a key issue. Good progress has been made with these identified weaknesses and statutory requirements are now met. However, statutory requirements are not met for those pupils who do not study GCSE ICT and plans are not in place to assess citizenship.

SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and of examination requirements so that students are very well prepared for examinations.
- The very high level of challenge and teachers' high expectations encourage students to achieve very well.
- Assessment, verification and moderation procedures for post-16 coursework are very good.
- There is regular marking of students' work in order to identify and make clear to students what they need to do next to improve.
- Teachers give informal assessment and help to overcome problems outside the timetabled lessons.

Commentary

29. Teaching in the sixth form is very good in the majority of subjects, with excellent teaching in French and music. Teaching is good in physics.
30. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, both in the subject matter and also in their understanding of course requirements. They therefore plan lessons very efficiently to develop students' understanding, to meet and often to surpass examination requirements. Challenge is particularly good in English, drama, history, geography, and ICT, while teachers' expectations are high overall. In mathematics and physics there is occasionally a high proportion of teacher-direction that does meet the needs of specific students. There are good opportunities for independent learning in art and design, and in ICT coursework. In drama, teachers encourage students to learn through experimentation. Teachers make skilful use of questioning in all subjects. In these various ways, the very good teaching is ensuring high quality learning and very good achievement.
31. All departments provide students with excellent opportunities for individual support outside formal lesson times. Students make very good use of this support to clarify issues and maintain their rate of progress. Music students have good opportunities to perform in school and at county level, while design and technology students have benefited from involvement in a national engineering design project. Teachers of mathematics and French make good use of ICT to develop students' learning.
32. Regular evaluative marking provides all students with accurate feedback on the standards they are achieving and what to do next to improve. There is very good evidence of self-assessment and some evidence of peer assessment, for example in English, which could usefully be extended to all curriculum areas. Students report that they are very well supported by staff and have ample opportunities to discuss their progress, both in class and informally outside the lessons. Equally, most staff are quick to respond to signs of underachievement and discuss individual targets with pupils. There are very few students in the sixth form who continue to have identified SEN. Where this need is identified, a very good quality, highly individualised approach is used and the impact of strategies put in place is monitored frequently.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** taken overall; while there are many good features, arrangements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 and citizenship do not meet statutory requirements. There is a good range of enrichment activities. Overall, staffing accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good opportunities for enrichment activities and the 'drop-in' sessions at lunchtime and after school add depth and variety to pupils' experiences.
- The school ensures there is effective vocational provision through liaison with another institution.
- There is inconsistency in the ICT curriculum for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow an examination course in the subject, and the citizenship curriculum is inadequately systematic. Requirements are not met in either case.
- Staffing, accommodation and resources are good overall although accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory.
- The Language College status allows a wide range of European languages and Japanese to be taught.
- Very good provision for pupils with SEN, for the most capable and for the very few for whom English is not the first language.

Commentary

33. The academic curriculum in Years 7 to 9 provides an appropriate breadth and balance. This meets the needs of the vast majority of pupils very well and helps ensure that pupils develop very well as rounded, responsible and knowledgeable individuals. Elements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy have been used well to improve teaching and learning and raise standards. Provision for pupils with SEN is very good. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 also provides effective breadth and balance. Not all pupils follow an examination course in ICT in Years 10 and 11. For those who do not, approximately 40 per cent of each year group, there is inconsistency in their coverage of the programme of study in this subject, which is unsatisfactory.
34. Careers education is begun in Year 9 and all pupils undertake a well-organised two-week work experience placement in Year 10. The school is conscious of the different needs of a small minority of pupils for whom a more vocationally oriented programme is more appropriate. Arrangements have been made with the local college of further education to provide this in the absence of any appropriate accommodation at the school currently.
35. In all Years 7 to 11, the personal, social and health education elements of the curriculum are delivered largely through the religious education programme and in assemblies, which are universally of at least good quality. The formal element of the citizenship curriculum, designed to provide pupils with the knowledge and understanding to become informed citizens, is not yet adequately planned for, although there are strong elements of this dimension in assemblies and in lessons in some subjects, particularly history. Nonetheless, pupils' personal and social development is of a high quality.
36. The very strong inclusive ethos of the school promotes the belief that all pupils including those with SEN, English as an additional language and those who are more able and talented will achieve and be successful. This, together with setting and banding arrangements and adapted teaching strategies, results in very good provision for all these pupils across the school. Pupils with SEN generally have the same access to the curriculum and activities as all pupils. Additionally, there is some small group teaching and individual work for pupils who need extra help with literacy and/or numeracy. They have reduced access to foreign languages as a result, but nevertheless most pupils with SEN learn one or two languages. These pupils also have access to effective additional provision designed to meet individual needs. For example,

some pupils have extra support with their homework, access to computers at lunchtime, or opportunities to develop their social skills.

37. Provision for pupils who are more able and talented is very good across the curriculum. It is excellent in mathematics and languages where there is the very high expectation that pupils in higher sets will achieve very well and the teaching provides a commensurate level of challenge.
38. The school is pro-active in providing a broader dimension to pupils' learning particularly through a good range of extra-curricular activities and links with the community and local and international charities. This encourages a sense of empathy with others, concern and compassion and contributes to pupils' moral and social development.
39. The school's high expectations and very good knowledge of the pupils enables all pupils to achieve their best in a climate of support and challenge. Good opportunities exist for participation in debating festivals and theatre visits and sports events, including a thriving hockey club. The school promotes teaching styles that value pupils' questions and gives them space for their own ideas and reflections. These opportunities for reflection are also supported by planned and well-attended retreats for students in the sixth form and pupils in the main school.
40. Many departments extend the school day by holding twilight and drop-in sessions to develop pupils' learning even further although not all pupils can benefit as a result of their travel arrangements. There is a large programme of extra-curricular activities and visits. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to learn languages and take part in foreign visits. The international dimension to the curriculum provides an excellent range of learning opportunities for all pupils. Almost all pupils end Year 11 with qualifications in two modern languages.
41. The staffing of the school is very good. Teachers and support staff are experienced and well qualified and meet the needs of the curriculum very well. In curriculum areas such as modern languages and design and technology, staffing is excellent. It is very good in mathematics, English, ICT, science, art and design and geography, but it is weak in citizenship. The school is set in an attractive campus, providing good accommodation, although the school is over subscribed and this puts a strain on the number of rooms and space available. In many cases the size of the teaching groups in comparison to the size of the rooms provides difficult learning environments, although this is often well managed by teachers. The accommodation for history, ICT and science is very good. It is unsatisfactory in drama, where access to an appropriate space is prohibitive to pupils' learning. The library provides a valuable resource but is under-used during the school day and its impact is, therefore, somewhat limited. Overall, the resources for the school are good. There are generally enough books and equipment to allow the curriculum to be taught effectively. The resources are excellent in modern languages and very good in art and design, but they are poor in citizenship.

SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Language College status allows a wide range of European languages and Japanese to be taught.
- The good opportunities for enrichment activities and the 'drop-in' sessions at lunchtime and after school add depth and variety to students' experiences.
- Staffing, accommodation and resources are good overall.

Commentary

42. The curriculum is good overall and there is a wide range of academic AS and A2 courses on offer. There are excellent opportunities to study a foreign language and to take part in a number of exchange visits with schools abroad. Design and technology courses are highly valued and English, mathematics, history, art and design and music provide a very good education that extends students' academic and cultural development. However, apart from the Royal Society of Arts business language course there are no vocational courses available. Satisfactory arrangements are made for students who require such courses to take them elsewhere in the locality.
43. The quality of provision for gifted and talented students in the sixth form is very good overall. It is excellent in music, art and design, languages and ICT, where students' abilities are extended to their limit. Instrumental work is of a very high standard. All students are expected to perform and recitals are frequently held. The international dimension of the school contributes very effectively to students' very good achievement in language learning and most Year 12 students study at least one foreign language. There is a wide range of language learning opportunities with access to native speakers.
44. Enrichment of the sixth form curriculum is good. There is a very good range of activities offered and good opportunities to study outside of lesson times. A particular strength is the very good access to teachers' help throughout and beyond the school day. Students organise and run a series of 'responsibility groups', which support a wide range of whole-school activities. Provision is not planned nor is its effectiveness monitored and so the impact and potential further development of this opportunity is not explored.
45. The school has well-qualified teachers and there is a good range of resources to support the curriculum. The accommodation is good for all subjects except drama.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety for pupils and students is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements for Year 7 pupils are excellent.
- Form time is not used consistently well by all tutors to contribute to pupils' guidance and support.
- Pupils with SEN are very well supported.
- Involvement of pupils below the sixth form in the work of the school is too limited, although in the sixth form it is excellent.

Commentary

46. The excellent and close relationships between all staff in school provide an ethos in which pupils are valued and supported very well. The school is a safe, secure environment in which pupils can learn free from risk or harm. However, the lack of sufficient storage facilities for pupils' school bags and work folders results in them being left outside in areas of high pupil and staff mobility, and subject to the elements. This presents a risk to all, and particularly those with limited mobility. The lack of available storage is a concern to pupils.
47. The breadth of support, guidance and advice to pupils is very good. It extends throughout the school and is a major factor in the excellent ethos that is very evident. This enables pupils to achieve their best. Pupils perceive staff to be caring and easily accessible should they require help or guidance. The high profile of staff around school maximises these opportunities. For pupils in Year 7, the induction arrangements are excellent. The arrangement for their 'first day'

as the only pupils in school, supported by sixth form students, ensures they can settle quickly and easily into the school's routines. This excellent arrangement is valued by these pupils, their parents and guardians. Pupils enthusiastically take on roles of responsibility. However, these opportunities are insufficiently developed in areas such as the school council, which is a provision for upper sixth form students only. For those pupils not wishing to continue their studies into the sixth form, membership is, therefore, unachievable. This is an area of real concern and dissatisfaction for pupils who feel very strongly that they do not have a sufficient voice in the development and running of their school. This is unsatisfactory in that it limits pupils' personal and social development.

48. As pupils progress through school, their personal and academic progress is very well monitored and recorded. Appropriate intervention is applied for those experiencing difficulties or those who require additional support with their learning. This ensures these pupils are able to make very good progress. However, form time is not always consistently well used by some teachers and an invaluable opportunity is missed to share events, items of news and pupils' achievements that occur in or outside of school. It is also a lost opportunity to re-enforce moral, social and personal values during class prayers and in quiet moments for reflection.
49. Pupils with SEN are supported very well through the strong inclusive ethos of the school which promotes the belief that all pupils will achieve. Each member of staff knows the pupils very well through the very good quality information provided by the SEN staff and works hard to ensure that the pupils' needs are met. Advice and information are sought from professionals outside of the school and this is acted upon. Very close links with primary schools ensure that pupils' needs are known and can be planned for effectively. All pupils with Statements attend their annual review meeting and are involved in planning their own next steps.
50. The school benefits from a supportive team of school administrators, caterers, lunchtime supervisors, maintenance and cleaning staff who undertake a range of duties essential to the smooth running of the school. They have an excellent and positive impact upon the lives of all pupils, students and staff and make the school a welcoming and pleasant centre for learning. Their cheerful and friendly manner enhances the overall positive ethos that pervades St Mary's.

SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leaders and tutors of the sixth form give excellent guidance and support for students.
- The short form periods do not allow all necessary business to be covered within them.

Commentary

51. Students in the sixth form receive excellent guidance and support from their tutors. As a result, they are able to make informed decisions about the type of courses they wish to undertake, the progress they are making, and later, the universities they intend applying to. However, this excellent advice is perceived as being insufficient during their earlier periods in Years 10 and 11, when advice to pupils was more focused on those wishing to seek vocational training or employment. Students indicate that form periods to be too short which result in them having to seek out their subject tutors when requiring advice and guidance. This places significant additional demands on these very committed staff who willingly make sacrifices of their own free time in order to be available for them. Students are unanimous in praise of their tutors, and value their advice and guidance immensely. Their involvement in the life of the school is excellent.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' end of year reports do not report on all subjects of the curriculum.
- Parents are very pleased with the information they receive about the progress their children are making..
- Parents very strongly support the view their children achieve very high standards.
- Links with industry, other schools and the community extend learning and promote work of high quality.
- Excellent homework diaries provide beneficial advice and guidance to parents and pupils.

Commentary

52. Annual reports provide parents with very useful information about how their children are progressing. Parents deem the reports to be very informative. However, they do not contain information relating to pupils' progress in ICT in Years 10 and 11 for those who do not follow the GCSE course. This omission was identified in the previous inspection report. An interim report each year gives parents additional information about the progress their children are making, which they appreciate. Homework diaries are of excellent quality. Consistent and informative comments by teachers ensure pupils and their parents have a very good understanding of what they do well and how they can improve. In addition, it provides very useful reminders, school rules and policies so further promotes the school's excellent Catholic Christian ethos. Parents are very pleased with the arrangements for the transfer from primary schools and confirm their children settle very quickly into their new school.
53. The school's specialist language college status provides many additional, very good learning opportunities for pupils in the feeder primary schools and adults in the immediate community. Lessons in French and Spanish are typical examples. They enrich the curriculum for these pupils enhancing their linguistic skills and abilities within the context of the wider European Community. Later, pupils in school are able to take part in cultural exchanges with pupils in France, Germany and Spain which builds upon this early exposure and knowledge of other languages, enhancing their cultural, social and personal development.
54. Businesses within the community value the partnerships forged between them and the school which provide for work experience placements for Year 10 pupils over a two week period. They comment very favourably upon the excellent behaviour and attitudes of these pupils and indicate they contribute very positively to their businesses. Additionally, visits outside school in support of learning, and visitors to school are greatly impressed with the interest pupils demonstrate during their talks and presentations. This positive feedback from visitors highlights the well-developed maturity of pupils in preparation for the world of work. The school benefits greatly from its partnership with Connexions and a local further education college who provide very informative careers advice and guidance to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Additional 'taster' sessions provide pupils with a very good insight into vocational training courses available as part of careers guidance. Weekly 'drop-in' sessions in the library give pupils access to careers advice and use of computer programmes designed to assist with careers choices.
55. The SEN staff maintain very good contact with parents. All parents of pupils with Statements attend their child's annual review meeting.
56. The very supportive Parents' Association provides substantial additional funding to extend and enhance pupils' learning opportunities.

SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with colleges and businesses provide sixth form students with wide opportunities to develop their learning.

Commentary

57. The Young Enterprise and Young Engineering Education schemes in particular provide high quality involvement with professional organisations and prepare students very well for higher academic research and development projects when they transfer to university.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **good**. Leadership is **very good** and management is **good**. Governance has strengths and weaknesses and is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's very strong, highly principled leadership focusing on the inclusion of all pupils and their high achievement.
- The high quality of leadership provided by other key staff, helping to ensure clarity of purpose and high aspirations across the school.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness; job descriptions do not adequately describe these functions of managers.
- Strong use of pupil performance data in some areas but this is underdeveloped across the school so that improvement targets are not yet well enough founded.
- Some departments' development plans do not benefit from effective criteria for measuring success nor are some actions clearly costed.
- Unsatisfactory arrangements for performance management and professional development of support staff.
- Governors not securing all their statutory responsibilities.

Commentary

58. Governance is satisfactory overall, with both strengths and weaknesses. Governors have helped to shape the vision and direction of the school. Individual governors joined a working party with staff, parents and sixth formers to review the school's statement of aims. Through their regular meetings, both as a full governing body and in appropriate committees, they receive reports from the headteacher on how the school is progressing. Individual governors visit the school to discuss provision – for instance a governor has regular meetings with the SEN co-ordinator. Governors are content that the school's very successful outcomes are the result of high quality provision, and they have very strong respect for and trust in the school's management and staff to secure this quality and to keep them informed about any areas of concern.
59. That governors take their support role very seriously is evidenced by the quality and comprehensiveness of their annual report to parents. However, they acknowledge that they have not secured that the full statutory curriculum requirements are met in ICT (in Years 10 and 11) or citizenship. The school is fortunate in having governors who bring substantial professional and practical experience to their role and who can, therefore, support the school's management strongly with respect, for instance, to financial, legal and personnel issues. However, they make little use of training opportunities to develop their role more broadly as critical friends of the school.
60. The quality of leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher provides well-established and much respected leadership, which is strongly principled around Catholic values, the valuing of individuals, the maximising of all pupils' achievement and their development as responsible,

ambitious young people. His very good leadership is highly visible and he has built a strong leadership group around him. All key staff share this commitment; leadership of subject departments and of teams of tutors is of very good quality overall and excellent in mathematics. Team leaders provide very good vision, demonstrate high aspirations and are experts in their field. Strategic planning has improved since the last inspection, with actions well related to the agreed, and appropriate, development priorities which, in turn, stem from a powerful mission statement. However, there are rather too many actions planned in some areas to ensure that the school is able to focus sharply on its agreed priorities; criteria for judging success are not always clear enough to ensure that the impact of actions can be ascertained.

61. The SEN co-ordinator provides strong leadership of the area and manages the processes well overall. She is very knowledgeable and provides very good quality information and advice to all staff about any pupils with needs.
62. The effectiveness of management is good overall. The distribution of responsibilities among the leadership group ensures that line-management of teams is now shared more appropriately. However, because it is not adequately described in job descriptions, there is sometimes confusion between their role and that of the headteacher in holding team leaders to account. While there are good examples, there remain inconsistencies in the way that senior staff carry out their monitoring of heads of department, and there is a tendency to monitor quality of provision solely via output measures, thus missing opportunities to identify and disseminate particularly good teaching and other aspects of provision. Subject management is mainly very good although there are inconsistencies in the quality of monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness, for instance of teaching and learning strategies. This role is not adequately specified in their job descriptions.
63. The effectiveness of heads of year is secured through very good line-management and teamwork, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The lack of senior members of staff with specified responsibility for assessment and overall curriculum development leads to insufficient co-ordination and pace in securing necessary improvements. There is scope to remove basic operational tasks from senior managers, for instance in relation to organising cover for absent staff.
64. The school is developing its approach to the use of pupils' performance data to set appropriately challenging targets for each pupil. It acknowledges that practice across the school needs further development so that all teachers can make consistent use of analyses, at school and national level, to identify where and how further improvement can be targeted.
65. The management of the performance of teaching staff is satisfactory. An effective programme of professional development for teaching staff, which contributes effectively to school improvement, is derived from performance management objectives and priorities outlined in development plans. Newly appointed staff are well supported. The school is fully staffed with subject specialist teachers. Morale is good and turnover low.
66. The school's support staff are not included in the annual performance management cycle and this detracts from their sense of worth and team spirit. Training for support staff is inadequate and not well organised as a result of complex line management arrangements.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,209,319
Total expenditure	3,171,066
Expenditure per student	2,527

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	36,478
Balance carried forward to the next	38,253

SIXTH FORM

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The senior management have a clear vision for the development of the sixth form.
- Very good leadership and management by the head of sixth form and his heads of year.
- The sixth form is cost-effective, with very good standards in large classes.

Commentary

67. The leadership of post-16 education in the school is very good. The school has a clear rationale for the design of the sixth form curriculum, working very well within the constraints imposed by shortage of accommodation to maximise academic opportunities for Catholic students in the area. In doing so, the governors and senior management have taken into consideration the sufficient alternative provision in the town for vocational education. The effectiveness of this arrangement is apparent in the numbers of students who join the sixth form from other schools because of its reputation for high standards in academic courses. Statutory requirements are met in the provision of a course to develop students' ICT capability, while those few students without a higher level GCSE in mathematics or English are offered an opportunity to re-take the course. The leadership team promotes a very strong ethos by devolving responsibility to voluntary groups run by student committees under the direction of the Year 13 students elected to the school council.
68. The management of the sixth form is also very good, with clear definition of responsibilities for all members of the team under the leadership of the head of sixth form. Standard procedures are well established and supported by all, so that issues such as attendance and student welfare are very efficiently managed. Although there is a relatively low allocation of time for form periods, staff manage daily routines and essential business well, allowing for a period of reflection appropriate to the ethos of the school. The head of sixth form and his team have developed excellent relationships with students that promote excellent standard of student involvement in the running of sixth form and other school activities.
69. The cost-effectiveness of the sixth form is excellent, as most subjects achieve very good results in large classes, which allows for a wide choice of A level courses with some very small groups within the allocated budget. Although the school does not analyse in full the cost of the sixth form, their calculations show that the sixth form's cost is approximately equal to its funding.
70. Leadership and management of post-16 subject areas are very good, with a clear focus on high achievement assisted by a consistently high standard of planning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average results in national tests and examinations.
- Teaching methods using a well-planned mixture of activities and methods which challenge pupils well and sustain their interest and enthusiasm.
- Well above average technical competence in writing because teachers have emphasised basic skills well.
- Very good achievement of pupils with SEN because teaching is adapted well to their capabilities.
- Advice given to pupils on how to improve is not specific enough.

Commentary

71. By the end of Year 9, girls do better than boys, but boys are further above the national profile for their gender than girls. Performance has remained stable against a rising national trend. Achievement mirrors similar schools where pupils start with comparable levels of attainment. GCSE English results were well above the national picture overall and for the proportion reaching higher grades (A*-C). Girls did better than boys, matching national trends. Here again, boys were further above the national picture for their gender than girls. English literature results repeated the pattern with well above average results.
72. In Years 7 to 9, standards of speaking and listening are well above average, Pupils explain sensibly and clearly what they have read in response to well-focussed teacher questioning, deploying very good subject knowledge. They read aloud with understanding and expression. Here, boys' standards match those of girls. Pupils enjoy writing, whether its function is to persuade and instruct, or to write original poems or descriptive pieces. Pupils express themselves confidently in speech and at well above average levels in writing. This is a product of very good teacher emphasis on a mixture of basic technical skills, and on the range of opportunities they provide to ensure that pupils put them to practical use.
73. By the end of Year 11, pupils discuss ideas fluently. They sum up controversial issues judiciously and know how to argue from different points of view. Pupils extend their thinking well in response to lively and demanding teacher questioning. They develop the skills of independent critical analysis by analysing single poems in depth and know how to draw out the way they deal with common themes such as culture and identity. They write about the plays and novels they study, with subtlety and insight. Very thorough teaching establishes detailed knowledge of the works as well as the ability to think independently. Pupils achieve very well, because teachers plan to make sure that lessons are sequenced to keep up a rising challenge on their interest and application to work. Teachers' demands extend very well the capabilities of all pupils. Pupils with SEN achieve very well as a result.
74. Teachers plan lessons very well, making very good use of national initiatives for younger pupils by applying their principles across the age range. Pupils' interest and enthusiasm are well sustained by varied classroom activities, and the high expectations placed on them. Teaching establishes a good balance of instruction and opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. Teachers make high demands through very clear explanations, well-paced question and answer sessions, and a stimulating variety of sharply focused written tasks. Pupils are often required to complete these within strict time limits, which sustain their energy and concentration. At the same time, lessons feature planned interludes of discussion or writing

where pupils reflect upon and feed back to others what they have learned. Here, they benefit from opportunities to develop, explain and substantiate their own ideas independently. This method builds habits of independent learning and reflection well. It also helps pupils to consolidate and deepen their understanding, as well as preparing them for advanced levels of study in the sixth form and beyond.

75. Written work is marked sensitively so that pupils know how well they are doing, although advice given on how to improve is not specific enough. Standards of teaching of grammar have improved greatly since the last inspection. Pupils with SEN make very good progress because teachers and additional staff adapt their demands and questioning well to their capabilities.
76. The subject is led and managed very well. Staff work well together as a team to check pupils' progress, and to share teaching methods. In consequence, standards of teaching and learning are improving steadily, following a period of staffing instability. The department makes a valuable contribution through its extensive programme of theatre visits and participation in outside activities.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are well above average. Teachers ensure that pupils discuss in order to understand technical terms well in physical education, and they extend their understanding, ability to hypothesise and to think independently in science, English, design and technology, history, and music. In modern foreign languages, they are well focused and confident in speaking aloud. In mathematics on the other hand, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' understanding through independent discussion and questioning, although listening skills are good. Reading for pleasure and information is well developed through a programme of library sessions, in which younger pupils are helped by sixth formers. The sixth form helpers are well focused on their task because they benefit from training to develop their skills in this activity. Written work is very good across the subjects In English, modern foreign languages, science, history, art and design and physical education. Very high standards and achievement in writing arise from the consistently high demands, and careful structuring of teaching. It makes sure that literacy skills are emphasised in lessons both as an end in themselves, and as a means to extend and consolidate learning and understanding.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well above average standards in GCSE in French, German, and Spanish.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge sets consistently high standards for pupils.
- The department makes an excellent contribution to pupils' literacy.
- Boys respond well in lessons and are well motivated; their achievement in Year 11 Japanese is excellent.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 require increased awareness of their routine progress.
- The range of modern languages offered is excellent.
- The lack of monitoring reduces opportunities to share good practice.

Commentary

78. In 2003, GCSE results in French, German and Spanish were well above average, with above average A*/A grades; the trend over the past three years is of consistently high standards, with boys achieving as well as girls.
79. In Years 7 to 9, in French, German and Spanish, pupils understand the spoken language quickly, as a result of the teachers' consistent and fluent use of the foreign language in lessons. In writing, pupils make excellent progress; the teachers' strong emphasis on accuracy in spelling, grammar and sentence structure, and the cross-references pupils themselves can make between the languages they study, contribute effectively to the whole-school standards in literacy. All write confidently at length, for example, describing recent holidays in at least two languages. All pupils understand challenging texts according to their ability. In speaking, they successfully recall and then re-use key language with very good accents in structured role plays; however, opportunities for speaking personally and creatively are generally limited. Marking of written work, and all informal assessment, is frequent and detailed; however, pupils do not have any clear measure of progress to which they can relate their routine learning.
80. In Years 10 and 11, in French, German, Spanish and Japanese, all pupils make rapid overall progress due to the teachers' increasingly high expectations, the clear focus on examination outcomes and the supportive framework provided in this specialist languages college. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is excellent; almost all leave Year 11 with qualifications in two languages, and average and middle attaining pupils make significant progress. The ablest pupils and gifted and talented pupils reach excellent standards. Achievement is particularly impressive in the current Year 11 Japanese in which the five boys have reached above average GCSE standards in two years, and have successfully mastered the fundamentals of the complex grammar system, written characters and authentic pronunciation. At this stage, all pupils have much better awareness of their progress because of teachers' constructive marking and frequent reminders of examination requirements.
81. Pupils with SEN achieve very well because of supportive resources and teaching methods. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; boys learn rapidly, responding enthusiastically to the clear lesson structure and lively pace of learning.

82. Pupils' use of ICT for communication and independent learning is very good; the department's multi-media system enables all pupils to practise listening, speaking, reading and writing in all the languages, including Japanese. In a Year 7 German lesson, three pupils confidently planned and delivered their own Powerpoint presentation.
83. The clear vision and high aspirations of the leader are shared and made possible by the expert committed team. Assessment data is well used; documentation across the department is well focused on very high standards. However, monitoring of teaching does not ensure that exemplary practice is shared. There have been very good improvements in curriculum breadth, standards, achievement of middle and lower attaining pupils, teaching and management.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is overall good; teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they understand the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent; pupils work hard and complete a great deal of work of high quality.
- Leadership of the department is excellent.
- Marking and assessment are very good.
- End of lesson reviews are underdeveloped.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision needs to be more formalised to be fully effective.

Commentary

84. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 are well above average compared to all schools and similar schools. Pupils' achievement is overall good compared to prior attainment on entry to the school. There has been a steady improving trend since the last inspection with girls performing as well as boys. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 are very high with a significant proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades. Pupils' achievement compared to prior attainment for the same cohort of pupils in Year 9 is very good with both boys and girls performing equally as well. Current standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 are overall well above average and pupils are achieving well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Standards achieved by the higher attaining pupils are excellent.
85. In most Years 7 to 9 lessons teaching and learning are overall good. Teachers are caring and concerned to do their best for the pupils. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is evident in their planning, exposition and explanation. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils who respond well maintaining the brisk pace of lessons. There is, overall, a good balance between theory and practice and careful management and control enables all pupils to be included. The department is incorporating ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy, such as the three-part lesson, but learning objectives are not consistently shared with the pupils at the start of

lessons. The end of lesson review, to give some understanding of how well pupils have understood the work and progressed, is underdeveloped. Homework is issued regularly and marking is up-to-date with supportive annotations that aid learning and is a strength of the department. The partnership of teachers and educational care officers provides valuable support for pupils with SEN, enabling their achievement to match that of their peers.

86. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are overall very good. Work is intellectually demanding, deepening understanding and consistently challenging. The pupils work hard and make considerably better progress than expected, standards are well above average and achievement is overall very good. There is clear evidence of continuity and progression with pupils building upon previously taught skills. Work recorded in exercise books is of a very high quality and is a valuable aid to review, revision and discussion. Pupils are aware of their GCSE target grades and what to do to improve.
87. Leadership is excellent. The strong work ethic promoted by the department reflects the ethos of the school. The staff work hard and well together and are prepared to give up their free time to help pupils which is greatly appreciated. There is a strong sense of purpose, clear vision and high aspirations for the school with a relentless focus on achievement. The effective management of the department is very good. Documentation is of a high standard and used to considerable effect. Monitoring performance data, reviewing patterns and taking action are very robust. However, the systematic use of pupils' self-assessment needs to be promoted further to have an impact on teaching and learning. Issues raised in the previous report have been addressed satisfactorily although the monitoring and evaluation of the department is not sufficiently formalised to ensure informed improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

88. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons and other subjects have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. The school has developed a numeracy policy following an audit of practice, and monitoring of practice takes place. Staff training has occurred although further training is now necessary to take account of teacher turnover. In design and technology, science, ICT and art and design, schemes of work identify what pupils are should be able to do in mathematical terms. There are particular strengths in handling data and the use of graphs. The majority of pupils are sufficiently proficient in number skills that the use of a calculator is unnecessary. Overall, the contribution of other subjects to the development of mathematical skills and knowledge is good. Arrangements now in place ensure that the needs of the lowest attaining pupils are met.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The combination of very good teaching, excellent attitudes to learning and very good behaviour results in all pupils achieving very well.
- Teachers work very hard and well as a team that has a shared desire to raise standards and a capacity to succeed.
- Not enough use is made of the results of assessment in lesson planning to meet the needs of individual pupils and to involve pupils much more in self-evaluation related to national standards.
- Insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to share good practice and to secure consistent practice across the department occurs.

Commentary

89. The Year 9 results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were well above the national average for both the expected level 5 and the higher level 6 when compared with those in all schools and with those schools where pupils have similar prior attainment. In recent times boys have done better than girls. Results for the GCSE dual award examination were well above the national average when compared with results in all schools with girls doing better than boys but significantly less well than they did in the other subjects they took. The above results represent very good achievement for all pupils.
90. In most lessons, pupils achieve very well. They enjoy science, are very well motivated and respond very well to being challenged. Little difference between the achievements of girls and boys is apparent. Most pupils listen very well, take advice and complete a good variety of practical activities skilfully and safely. They make very good observations and accurately report their findings. However, some in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently practised at designing experiments, making predictions and forming hypotheses. Their levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT support them very well in their learning. Most complete homework and assignments and use their homework diaries very well. By the end of Year 11, they are competent, independent learners in all three sciences, well placed to move confidently into the sixth form. Higher attaining pupils bring very good prior learning to new situations and ask searching questions. They research very well and are able mathematicians. Lower attaining pupils and those with SEN achieve very well in response to the support they get from their teachers and support assistants, despite there being insufficient joint pre-planning by these parties. Some do not complete written work and a number find related mathematics difficult.
91. Teachers set high standards. They are very well qualified specialists who plan well for very effective learning. They make very good use of models and application to everyday life, very good reference to examination board requirements and they use a good range of activities for pupils' personal development and practice of cross-curricular skills. In an excellent lesson in Year 10, a high level of questioning and the provision of relevant research resources resulted in groups of pupils making excellent presentations on the use of hormones in food production, including the global issues. All teachers set and mark homework regularly and pupils find the diagnostic and supportive comments useful. There are elements of excellent teaching in all lessons but inconsistencies occur in agreed practice because monitoring and evaluation of teaching does not happen systematically.

Example of outstanding practice - Excellent teaching and learning of science through research and drama, and excellent use of homework.

In Year 11, pupils were studying global warming; researching evidence, including use of ICT, and forming hypotheses. Using drama, each was given a specific role to play in a televised audience participation production. On the panel were experts from industry, commerce and the world of politics. One pupil was the presenter. In the audience were people from all walks of life. Study packs were used to prepare all for their roles. During the presentation points of views were presented and debated very well: Pupils were focused and extended their knowledge and understanding at a very good pace. Out of role they were challenged to demonstrate their scientific achievements. For homework further role-play was required; being a journalist in the audience now having to write an article based on the programme.

92. Leadership is clearly focused on raising the achievements of all pupils. There is knowledgeable and innovative leadership of teaching and the curriculum in each subject and the combined team is very effectively bringing about change in the writing of units of study and in the way they are taught. Teachers are well deployed and very well supported.
93. Since the last inspection, very good departmental planning gives a better structure to the development of the department. Teaching and learning are improved well and statutory requirements of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 are now met. The use of ICT is much improved but there is still a need to further increase resources. Assessment data held on pupils is not being used enough to support pupils' learning and achievements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11	
		Exam course	Non-exam
Standards seen	Above average	Very high	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good	Good

Leadership of department	Very good
Management of department	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results at GCSE with very good achievement resulting from teachers' high expectations and clearly expressed objectives.
- Very good specialist teaching characterised by very good planning, excellent pace and very good range of activities. This results in high level of interest and involvement.
- Use of ICT across the curriculum is very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Use of ICT across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not give the statutory ICT curriculum to those pupils not following a GCSE course in ICT.
- Most teaching of ICT in Years 7 to 9, and that for half the pupils in Years 10 and 11, is non-specialist resulting in good achievement overall rather than the very good achievement when the subject is taught by specialists.

Commentary

94. Results from teacher assessments in Year 9 are above average overall, with boys' performance considerably higher than that of girls. Work seen during the inspection confirms above average standards, with strengths in Year 8 pupils' judgement of the benefits of different methods in the application of ICT. When learning ICT in other subjects, standards are above average in that pupils cope well with the subject-specific requirements. Their achievement is very good in Year 8 where they develop skills and knowledge very quickly in a specialist course, but over the three-year period to Year 9 achievement is overall good.
95. Standards of work seen in the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 are very high confirming the GCSE results in 2003 that were very high in comparison with the national average. Pupils who take the examination course achieve very well. Coursework meets the requirements in full as it is very well designed, with well reasoned planning based on accurate evaluation of need. The highest attainers use imaginative solutions beyond the requirements of the syllabus. Pupils' discussion shows that they clearly understand the impact of user interface design. They have excellent knowledge of the effective application of a range of software. Year 11 pupils who do not follow a GCSE ICT course have above average standards in their ICT work in other subjects, and their achievement is good. Pupils SEN and the highest attainers achieve very well with extra support and challenge.
96. This achievement is the result of very good teaching in specialist ICT where it occurs throughout Years 7 to 11, with several examples during the week of excellent teaching. Teachers plan very efficiently to extend pupils' learning in several directions at once, with very high expectations of their involvement and pace of learning. Their planning over time is very well managed to develop pupils' knowledge while revisiting prior learning and inviting them to consider at all times the implications of their studies. This results in a thinking approach to ICT. In all years taught by specialists, and especially in Year 8, there is very thorough coverage of the syllabus. There is a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy in the expression of ideas and in the production of spreadsheets. Their discussion deals well with aspects of social and moral education when they deal with appropriate use of ICT and especially Internet. Assessment of pupils' standards is very good. Teachers use assessment well to plan for individual pupils and groups including those who have special educational needs or are especially talented in ICT. They give very thorough feedback. Teachers are attempting to redress the low proportion of girls in GCSE classes, but are hampered by the lack of ICT-specific lessons in Year 9.
97. Leadership of the ICT department is very good. The curriculum is very well co-ordinated in Years 7 to 9 with excellent systems in place to provide for the needs of classes and to moderate assessment. Management of the department is excellent, but overall school management of the subject is unsatisfactory for Years 10 and 11 since many pupils do not have access to planned development of their ICT skills and capability. There is no report on ICT to parents of Year 11 pupils. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in the coverage of ICT between Years 7 to 9, in the use of ICT in other subjects and in standards at GCSE.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. ICT is widely used in other subjects to promote learning, with such experience responsible for teaching the national curriculum for ICT in Years 7 and 9. Teachers from other subjects have higher than average knowledge of ICT, especially in relation to their own subjects, and so develop its use well. Specialist ICT teachers have recognised, however, from assessment at the start of Year 8 and Year 10, that they need to work hard to develop pupils' ICT-specific areas of knowledge and understanding. Class use of ICT in other subjects is not as widespread in Years 10 and 11, so that pupils who do not follow a GCSE ICT course do not have equal access to the statutory curriculum. Where it is used, pupils are competent. Pupils

in all years use ICT well independently. Their presentations using Powerpoint in assemblies are particularly well designed and effectively used.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave very well in lessons.
- Enquiry methods are well developed, particularly in Years 10 and /11, but some lessons in Years 7 to 9 give too little opportunity for pupil involvement.
- Very good systems are in place to track pupils' performance and to encourage them to set individual targets for future performance.

Commentary

99. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were in line with those achieved by pupils nationally. This is a decline from previous years when standards have been above national averages. In 2003, boys' geography GCSE performance was significantly below their performance in their other GCSE subjects while girls performed equally well in geography as in their other subjects.
100. When pupils join the school, their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding are average. In Years 7 to 9, pupils make good progress in gaining geographical skills, especially atlas and map skills. By the end of Year 9, they have good levels of subject knowledge and understanding, produce detailed, accurate maps and diagrams and their written work shows increasing understanding of how physical geography influences human activity. In Years 10 and 11, pupils develop sophisticated enquiry skills particularly through case study and first hand fieldwork activities. They gain a good breadth of knowledge and understanding of different parts of the world and different environments.
101. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. In the very good lessons observed, teachers establish very good relationships with pupils who, in turn, sustain concentration throughout the lessons. Teachers use a range of teaching styles, so that pupils of all abilities are enthusiastic, work hard and achieve high standards. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on natural hazards the teacher used whole-class discussion, paired work and finally created a class poem to encourage pupils to explore the impact of earthquakes on people. Where lessons are satisfactory, there is an overemphasis on teacher explanation without enough pupil involvement and a concentration on pupils completing simple recording exercises, missing the opportunity to engage pupils in more challenging independent and group tasks. In these lessons, understanding by the least able is weaker and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Very good systems are in place to encourage individual pupil target setting and to track pupils who are not achieving the standards of which they are capable. This

is particularly effective in Years 10 and 11, where pupils who are achieving below their predicted grade are identified and regular targets for improvement are agreed with them.

102. The head of department provides very clear leadership and has developed a strong team ethos for the department. There is a good development plan, which identifies the key priorities for improvement, and new initiatives, such as the national Key Stage 3 Strategy, have been readily adopted. The department is very well managed with resources efficiently deployed and an appropriate range of staff development secured. Schemes of work are up to date and continue to be improved, recently incorporating citizenship and literacy across the curriculum. Assessment is very good at both key stages and geography makes a significant contribution to the assessment of ICT.
103. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection when teaching was found to be uniformly good and standards were found to be well above national expectations in Years 7 to 9 and above national expectations in other years. Very good progress has been made with the two areas identified in the previous inspection report, to develop fieldwork and pupils' target setting and self-assessment.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because they work hard in interesting and challenging lessons.
- The proportion of pupils choosing to continue with history to the age of 16 is around twice the national average.
- Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because teachers build very thorough preparation for GCSE into the challenging and enjoyable lessons.
- Monitoring of the progress of pupils of all attainment levels in Years 10 and 11 is very good. All do very well in GCSE examinations and the proportion of the highest grades they gain is far higher than nationally.

Commentary

104. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were very high, with a significantly higher proportion of the highest grades gained than the national average. This continued the pattern of recent years.
105. By the end of Year 9, pupils develop very good skills in using sources of evidence to interpret events, and a well above average number of them write fluent answers. They use historical vocabulary accurately to support their views with relevant and convincing evidence. Pupils, in much larger numbers than nationally, opt for history in Years 10 and 11. They go on to develop speaking and writing skills to a very high standard as when, for example, talking in class about the extent to which Roosevelt's New Deal was a success, or writing about the reasons for Arab defeats in their wars with Israel. Such attributes are reflected in very high GCSE results.

106. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well because they are taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers employ a good range of learning strategies. Lessons move at a lively pace and students relish the challenge that is presented.
107. In Years 10 and 11 teachers, in addition to planning lessons that retain the same effective pace and challenge, assess standards of work accurately and provide very good written feedback to pupils. Pupils are interested, highly motivated to succeed, and concentrate totally in class. Consequently, all pupils achieve very well.
108. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The head of history's clear vision, and high ambitions for pupils are shared by the other teachers. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in maintaining high standards.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards gained by pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- The quality of leadership is very good with good arrangements in place to sustain improvements.
- Pupils' very good skills and depth of knowledge are due to the effective teaching. The sharing with pupils of what they are to learn is inconsistent across the department.
- Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well because good planning is effectively linked to assessment.
- Some of the department's review procedures are too informal to ensure sustained improvement.

Commentary

109. Results in 2003 were well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils' standards of work and experiences in design and technology when they enter the school are variable so achievement through Years 7 and 8 is good and by the end of Year 9 very good. Pupils are given very good opportunities to develop confidence and competence in selecting and using a variety of tools and equipment. They also gain thorough knowledge of the design and make processes to produce quality products. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to apply very good skills, knowledge and understanding to produce high standards of work. In Years 10 and 11 pupils build very effectively on the learning gained in previous years enabling them to further develop and research ideas using a very good range of techniques. They analyse their findings very well and modify products in the light of their findings. This is underpinned by very good knowledge and understanding of materials and components and proficient use ICT to develop and enhance their coursework

110. Teaching is very good with particular strengths in Years 10 and 11. Relationships are very good promoting confidence and mutual respect. This coupled with the very positive attitudes pupils have towards their learning and their enthusiasm for the subject creates a productive and safe learning environment. Teachers organise lessons very well to minimise the problems of access due to large groups who are doing practical work in small rooms. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is shared effectively with pupils and probing questioning checks previous knowledge and promotes investigative and analytical thinking. Planning is good and is linked effectively to assessment helping pupils to improve their work. Pupils are aware of their targets and know what they need to do to improve. Teachers support the development and use of technical language very well and give very good support to individual students, particularly those with SEN, helping them to achieve very well.
111. Leadership and management are very good. Hardworking and committed teachers work effectively as a team with a shared view of the direction for the department and of its strengths and weaknesses. The department is constantly reviewing its performance, but the informality of some procedures means that decisions and actions are not recorded and used to inform the self-review process for the school effectively. However, improvement since the previous inspection is good with data analysed well and effective assessment procedures in place.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are very high.
- Pupils achieve very well because the quality of teaching is very good.
- Very high quality leadership and management have driven up standards.
- Pupils' use of ICT is less developed than their other skills.
- They do not make sufficient use of sketchbooks.
- Monitoring arrangements are not secure.

Commentary

112. GCSE examination results in 2003 were very high and amongst the best in the school. Almost half of the very large entry gained a grade A* or A.
113. By Year 9, pupils begin to work with a GCSE approach. Their technical skills in a range of media are very well developed. They achieve very well and reach standards well above those expected nationally. Pupils use ICT in their work but this is not as well developed as other skills. They do not use sketchbooks.
114. By Year 11, pupils are able to explore ideas and themes in a good range of media. Their work is well linked to their studies of the art of other cultures and Western artists; written critical

responses are particularly good in many pupils' work. Some pupils use ICT well to support their work but this is not generally as well developed as other skills. Pupils' use of sketchbooks is not developed.

115. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils acquire and practise new skills through carefully planned and structured work. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the National Curriculum requirements. Pupils assume more responsibility for their work as teachers have very high expectations of them and set challenging tasks. Assessment is very well used so that pupils understand how to improve. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are interested and motivated because they are encouraged to bring their own interests to their work. They benefit from teachers' thorough understanding of examination requirements and well-planned work. They understand how to improve through regular assessments and particularly thorough assessments at the completion of units of work.
116. The subject is very well led and very well managed. The subject leader has built a strong team with a shared vision and common approaches. Senior managers are not well enough involved in the monitoring of the subject. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection with strongly rising standards and results.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of the high standard of teaching pupils are keen to learn.
- There are very good examination results at GCSE and in instrumental lessons.
- Many pupils take part in concerts and music festivals.
- The quality of practical work is hampered by the half-hour lessons.

Commentary

117. All pupils passed the GCSE examination with higher grades in 2003. This was an improvement on the good results of the previous year. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
118. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Considering that the majority of pupils enter Year 7 with broadly average musical ability this represents good achievement. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and because many pupils are talented performers this is very good achievement. The high quality of teaching is a key factor in promoting very good learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. One hundred and twenty pupils learn instruments in school and take part in the many choral and instrumental activities run by the department and the county music service. This builds up confidence and self-esteem and complements the work done in lessons.

119. Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 inspires pupils to do well. The high standard of planning, pace and challenge ensures that pupils are motivated and work hard. From Year 7 pupils develop skills and knowledge in vocal activities, elementary composing and keyboard work. By Year 9 they have a good background in score reading, melody writing, chord progression and developments in world music. Group work is strong and pupils collaborate well as seen in video extracts of performances played and directed by the pupils themselves. Half-hour lessons are found to restrict the quality of practical work. Good assessment helps pupils to know how well they are doing: the National Curriculum levels are matched up to the school system.
120. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to a positive commitment from the pupils. They compose well using Sibelius software and direct and perform each other's work. Excellent features of the teaching bring twentieth century music to life and improve pupils' understanding of devices such as flutter tonguing and whinnying. The pupils' work is assessed regularly and predicted grades are known. The good accommodation and resources also support pupils' learning.
121. The department is managed very well with a focus on raising standards. The documentation is in place and the development plan is being revised in line with new developments. The very good leadership of the head of department ensures that music has a high profile within the school and the local area. There has been a good improvement in music since the previous inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The quality and provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Assessment and target setting procedures including the provision of opportunities for pupils to be involved in self- and peer-assessment are not sufficiently well developed.
- The lack of assessment strategies restricts teachers' knowledge of individual pupils' progress.

Commentary

122. An examination course for physical education was introduced during 2003 for the first time.
123. The standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with national levels of expectation. By the end of Year 11, standards have risen above national levels of expectation, which represents very good achievement. In the most effective lessons pupils are able to demonstrate a very good understanding of, for example, the type of activities to include in a training programme, in order to improve skill and fitness levels. In basketball, they observe, evaluate and provide feedback to others in order to improve their dribbling skills. The indoor facilities are currently inadequate, preventing higher standards from being achieved, although a new sports hall is nearing completion.
124. The pace and progression in lessons is very good. The lessons are well planned and cater for the needs of all pupils. In the best lessons teachers are able to use their very good subject knowledge to improve pupils' learning. In these lessons the pupils enjoy the activities and make very good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding as the result of well-focused activities and questioning. Pupils apply themselves in basketball, in particular, very well and sustain their efforts throughout, acquiring skills very effectively. They repeat, refine and practise their skills in order to attain high levels of performance, as seen in rugby and netball lessons. In some lessons however, pupils are not included in the observation and evaluation of their own performance and that of others or involved in discussions, which relate to what they were intended to learn. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Pupils with SEN learn and progress as well as other pupils.
125. Very good leadership is promoting good teamwork and a unified approach to the teaching of physical education. The management of the department is also very good and is raising standards, although further staff development and self-evaluation strategies need to be implemented. There are significant opportunities for pupils to become involved in extra-curricular activities. These activities enable pupils of all abilities to practise in well-organised lunchtime and after-school sessions and allow pupils to compete in House and inter-school matches. The House matches are very effectively organised by sixth form students.
126. There is no assessment data available at the end of Year 11. The time allocated for Years 10 and 11 is below the recommended level although the balance of activities is very good. Strategies to increase pupils' awareness of their own level of attainment, involvement in their own self- and peer- assessment and the identification of their own individual targets need to be further developed. Risk management procedures are very good.
127. Since the last inspection an examination course has been introduced and the department now has a unified approach to curriculum planning and assessment strategies. A new all-weather pitch has been built greatly improving outdoor facilities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship and Personal and Social Education

The overall provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**. The school is failing to meet the statutory requirements for National Curriculum citizenship in all years 7 to 11.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and Learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils appear to meet many of the national expectations for citizenship by the end of Years 9 and 11 respectively, though no systems are in place to monitor or assess their standards and achievement.
- Insufficient time and weight are given to citizenship in the overall curriculum and the school does not meet the statutory requirements for the teaching and assessment of National Curriculum citizenship.
- The opportunities for pupils below the sixth form to develop skills of participation and responsible action are limited.
- The leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

128. Insufficient evidence is available to judge standards and achievement as the programmes of study are not systematically taught and pupils' learning is not monitored or assessed.
129. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils appear to meet many of the expectations for citizenship though they have not been taught the relevant programme of study. By Year 9, pupils have a broad knowledge and understanding of the legal and human rights underpinning society, of basic aspects of the criminal justice system, the key characteristics of parliamentary government and of the electoral system, mainly delivered through the humanities curriculum. They think about topical, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues in many curriculum subjects and are able to justify a personal opinion. Most pupils take part in school and community-based activities, and almost all demonstrate personal and group responsibility in their attitudes towards themselves and others
130. By the end of Year 11, most pupils demonstrate the expected citizenship skills of enquiry and communication, being able to contribute to discussions about topical, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues; they take part responsibly in both school and community-based activities. .
131. Pupils achieve high standards in personal and social education. They demonstrate high levels of personal and social responsibility.
132. Insufficient evidence is available to judge the quality of teaching and learning in citizenship as the curriculum is not systematically planned and delivered.
133. Provision for citizenship is patchy owing to heavy reliance on incidental contributions from subjects across the curriculum and on the voluntary engagement of pupils in extra-curricular activities. Other subjects have identified opportunities for citizenship to be taught through the subject, but this is not systematically mapped or monitored. Some lessons deal with citizenship issues, such as work in history in Year 8 on democracy and women campaigning for the vote, and geography work on the operation of a magistrates' court. However these lessons have not been planned to deliver the citizenship objectives and the citizenship element is insubstantial. Many rich activities that contribute to citizenship education take place outside the formal curriculum, but the equal access of all pupils to these learning experiences cannot be ensured. Limiting the School Council to Year 13 students misses a powerful opportunity for developing skills of participation and responsible action for all pupils in the school.

134. Suitable assessment arrangements are not in place to meet the statutory requirement for teachers to make a judgement about pupils' progress in citizenship at the end of Year 9. There is no teacher monitoring or assessment of pupils' work related to citizenship. Pupils are asked to self-assess their involvement in a range of school-based and community activities.
135. The school provides good support and guidance to pupils through effective systems, which are applied consistently and coherently across the school. Personal, social and health education is effectively delivered mainly through science and religious studies.
136. The leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory, as the school does not meet the statutory requirements. Insufficient time and weight are given to the subject in the overall curriculum in all Years 7 to 11. The citizenship curriculum is inadequately planned and lacks coherence across the school. There is no monitoring of its delivery or impact. The school development plan indicates citizenship development as a priority for Autumn Term 2003, and adopted a policy on citizenship in October 2003. This is a year after the statutory requirement to deliver the citizenship curriculum was introduced.
137. The leadership and management of personal and social education are satisfactory. The school has appropriate policies on sex and relationships education and drug misuse.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, thirteen subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	11	81.8	65.2	0.0	11.1	28.2	20.6
Business studies	3	100	76.4	0.0	16.3	30.0	26.2
Chemistry	5	80.0	72.9	0.0	13.9	20.0	24.1
Drama	3	100	86.5	0.0	19.6	30.0	30.6
Economics	7	100	73.6	14.3	20.1	32.9	26.4
English language	4	100	82.9	25.0	17.5	37.5	28.7
English literature	1	100	85.9	0.0	19.1	30.0	32.0
French	3	100	78.2	33.3	18.9	43.3	27.6
Design and technology	2	100	74.9	50.0	15.1	50.0	25.3
General studies	8	87.5	73.9	37.5	17.8	35.0	25.7
Geography	3	100	74.3	66.7	19.8	53.3	26.5
German	3	100	81.5	0.0	19.3	23.3	28.9
History	8	100	80.7	37.5	19.5	41.3	28.6
Information technology	10	80.0	67.0	0.0	10.9	21.0	21.4
Mathematics	56	100	61.9	73.2	17.1	51.4	22.1
Music	3	100	86.5	0.0	21.4	26.7	30.7
Other social studies	1	100	69.7	0.0	16.7	20.0	24.1
Physics	5	60.0	68.6	0.0	14.4	16.0	22.7
Religious studies	11	100	80.2	72.7	22.6	48.2	29.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	13	100	98.6	53.8	50.2	95.4	87.5
Biology	27	100	96.4	70.4	39.2	98.0	75.2
Business Studies	24	100	98.7	12.5	36.8	68.3	80.1
Chemistry	26	100	97.6	69.2	49.0	95.4	89.4
Drama	12	100	99.5	41.7	40.1	81.7	83.6
Economics	11	100	98.9	18.2	52.0	74.5	88.3
English Language	23	100	99.5	52.2	36.3	95.7	80.9
English Literature	24	100	99.5	70.8	46.5	99.2	86.5
French	9	100	98.8	66.7	51.5	102.2	87.6
Design and technology	14	100	97.8	100	35.0	115.7	77.9
General Studies	22	100	94.7	45.5	31.0	90.9	73.1
Geography	11	100	98.7	63.6	44.5	96.4	84.0
German	13	92.3	98.4	23.1	47.9	73.8	84.8
History	43	100	99.0	65.1	44.6	97.2	84.6
Information technology	13	100	95.6	38.5	24.6	83.1	69.5
Mathematics	51	100	96.7	70.6	55.6	99.2	88.8
Music	2	100	98.8	100	38.9	120	81.1
Other languages	1	100	96.9	0	64.5	80.0	93.8
Physics	24	100	96.7	37.5	44.6	82.5	81.7
Religious studies	32	100	98.8	87.5	46.7	106.6	85.6
Spanish	5	100	98.3	100	50.2	112.0	86.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and ensures that students are consistently challenged.
- Students achieve very well in Years 12 and 13 and attain very good standards because of teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Students' participation in a range of extra-curricular activities enhances their debating skills in class.
- Students work collaboratively to enhance each other's learning.
- Methods to check how well groups of students are doing are underdeveloped
- The variety of resources in classrooms is limited resulting in restricted opportunities for students to learn from a range of methods.

Commentary

138. Results in the A level examinations were well above average in 2003 and this was also reflected in 2002. In literature, results show an increase in students achieving higher grades.
139. Standards in work seen were well above national standards. Students are able to analyse texts confidently and bring their own personal interpretation to group discussions. In Year 12 they apply their clear understanding of the examination assessment criteria to their work and to that of their peers, demonstrating a sophisticated level of critical analysis and an authoritative command of subject specific vocabulary. In a Year 12 lesson on Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, very good examples were observed of students competently adopting a 'teacher' role, delivering mini lectures to their peers who questioned and challenged them. All students were able to meet the challenge of articulating their response to texts from a range of perspectives. In Year 13, in particular, students engage in a mature level of debate, well informed by a thorough and in-depth understanding of text and textual features. On advanced language courses, students successfully employ linguistic concepts to analyse written language.
140. Teaching and learning are very good. Students negotiate their own understanding of how texts are interpreted because teachers provide regular opportunities to reflect, annotate and share. Teachers' very good subject knowledge also challenges and extends students' thinking leading to new insights. Careful organisation of groups and skilful teacher questioning and intervention ensures that all students engage in active discussion and debate. In one Year 13 lesson on Shakespeare's *Othello* the teacher's penetrating questioning resulted in students discussing whether Desdemona's passive nature was a strength or a weakness and its role in her own downfall. Their debate was well informed by detailed scrutiny of the text as well as by a recent theatre performance of the play. Students are self-motivated and confident because teachers take their contributions seriously and help them articulate and refine their ideas well. Teachers' high expectations of the standards of work result in students' well honed analytical skills. In a Year 12 lesson on Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, students applied critical vocabulary to assess the work of their peers and provide them with feedback and targets for improvement. The range of resources in the classroom is limited which restricts possibilities

for students to learn from a variety of methods. There is a tendency for students to rely on very supportive materials provided by teachers thus limiting the degree of independent research undertaken.

141. Leadership is very good so that teachers plan collaboratively to ensure that students are consistently challenged. Leadership ensures that teaching is very well structured to cover all the examination requirements authoritatively. Management is good with a strong focus on raising standards. However, methods to check how well groups of students are doing are underdeveloped which makes sharing of effective practice less focused.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

142. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is very good. There are several opportunities for students to use language for a range of purposes including speaking, listening, reading and writing in English and in other subject areas. In English, students show skill and perception in interrogating language for layers of meaning and implications. Drama students are able to explore a range of language registers in context and explore their purpose from an audience perspective.
143. Students are confident in sharing with their peers and teachers, personal responses and perspectives. In art, for example, students are encouraged to share orally aspects of their own life including family relationships and ideas of self as inspiration for their work. In languages students discuss issues on environment, terrorism and racial issues through the appropriate language. In English literature, students show a high degree of skill in articulating personal responses to interpretations of text and feel confident about challenging their teachers and peers about alternative views.
144. Careful listening is also promoted in language lessons where students focus on the courteous phrasing of language. In mathematics, students demonstrate good oral skills. They confidently articulate reasoning and explain methods clearly. Students are also confident in using language more publicly as in presentations in assembly. Teachers provide structure and support for the development of students' written expression. This was evident in a general studies lesson where teachers focused students on writing a discursive essay. In ICT lessons, students are able to articulate very well producing explanatory and analytical written work of an exceptionally high standard.

Modern foreign languages

The focus was on French. German, Spanish and Japanese were sampled. In 2003 in German, A Level results were average and AS results were well above average; in Spanish both A and AS results were excellent; and in Japanese, grades were average at A Level and below average at AS Level. One lesson in each of the three languages was seen, in which teaching and learning were very good; the teachers' excellent use of the foreign language contributed substantially to students' very good listening and speaking skills. Scrutiny of students' files showed that teachers' marking and guidance sheets support students very well. Current standards are at least above average and students' achievement is very good overall.

French

Provision in French is **excellent**

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement in writing and in speaking is excellent.
- In 2003, A and AS Level results were well above average.
- Teachers consistently share best practice, which leads to excellent teaching and learning.
- Teachers' fluent use of French enables students to gain high standards in listening.
- Students' very positive attitudes to learning contribute to an effective learning partnership with their enthusiastic teachers.

Commentary

145. In 2003, A and AS level results were well above average, with an above average proportion of students gaining A/B grades. This continues a trend of above average results over the past few years. All students normally complete the courses.
146. Students' well above average standards are the result of excellent teaching. In Years 12 and 13, students have very good listening skills due to the teachers' fluent use of French in lessons, effectively supported by the authentic radio broadcasts which students study independently at home; for example, Year 12 students understood a rapidly delivered French broadcast about asylum seekers. Standards in speaking are excellent. The teachers' meticulous lesson planning and skilful building of specialist, high register language from early in Year 12 results in students' rapid development in contributing confidently to whole class or paired discussions, for example, in Year 13, about moral issues such as terrorism. Additionally, students' individual speaking practice with the French assistant and opportunities within the school's impressive visits and exchange programme contribute to consistently high standards in students' natural, unsupported self-expression with good French accents. In writing, standards are also excellent. Students' files showed that throughout Years 12 and 13, students systematically absorb, and then re-use in essays, increasingly complex and authentic language. Teachers provide full grammar and examination guidance, and correct essays in detail, clearly linking comments and grading to examination criteria. All this leads students to achieve their personal best in writing. Students confidently read challenging texts for gist and detail, and use ICT very well, for example, in researching French Internet sites for coursework information. Discussions with students showed their high motivation and excellent relationships with their teachers.
147. The department's contribution to students' general literacy is excellent because of the teachers' systematic training of their students in all the language skills. Gifted and talented students are fully challenged by independent learning resources.
148. Two excellent double lessons were seen in which the teachers successfully used their enthusiasm, language expertise, and well-structured resources, in developing students' communication skills to high standards. Team aspirations are high and documentation is clearly focused on students' achievement. Innovative and well-proven teaching methods are routinely and enthusiastically shared, as are high quality resources. The high standards of the previous report are maintained; current teaching and learning are now excellent, as are standards in speaking and writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average overall, and very high in further mathematics by Year 13.
- Excellent leadership provides a clear vision for the department focussed on raising achievement.
- Teachers are very committed and hardworking, and have excellent knowledge of their subject.
- Students are highly motivated and enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers.
- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Formal monitoring of teaching does not take place.

Commentary

149. Results in GCE A and AS examinations in 2003 were well above average in both mathematics and further mathematics, and have been consistently high over the past six years. There is no significant difference in the results of male and female students over time. Two thirds of students achieve the highest grades (A or B) at the end of year 12 and even more achieve these grades in the full A Level at the end of Year 13.
150. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are also well above average; students enjoy mathematics and achieve very well. A very high proportion of students who took AS in 2003 have continued with the full A Level. By the end of Year 12, students find maximum and minimum values of curves by differentiation and the area under curves by integration. In Year 13 they appropriately apply a variety of methods of integration to expressions involving partial fractions, trigonometric and logarithmic functions. Students' application of algebra is very good. Students have very good oral skills and discuss their methods confidently. Work is set out very logically and clearly. By Year 13, standards in further mathematics are very high and students tackle very challenging work with confidence.
151. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject and the examination requirements. Lessons are very well planned to build confidence and understanding. In most lessons, teachers use questioning very effectively to promote good learning and to check understanding. Occasionally, lessons are too directed and there are insufficient opportunities for students to question and discuss. Teachers have very high expectations, are very hardworking and enjoy excellent relationships with their students. Teachers give their time freely outside lessons to help students individually. This excellent support is valued extremely highly by the students and contributes significantly to their learning and to their enjoyment of mathematics. Students are encouraged to explore and discuss different solutions; in further mathematics students are encouraged to extend their learning beyond the examination syllabus. ICT is used effectively to promote understanding: for example, the concept of differentiation is introduced by students exploring gradients using Omnigraph software; a similar package is used to introduce integration. Homework is used very effectively to extend learning and the quality of marking is high, providing detailed, constructive comments.
152. The clear vision and very high expectations of the head of department provide excellent leadership of a strong team of dedicated teachers. Prior attainment data is used to set students' targets and the progress of each student is tracked effectively throughout the two years. Underachievement is identified and effective action taken. Examination results are analysed and trends over time identified; however, value-added analysis is not currently undertaken. Monitoring of teaching and learning is informal. The head of department works closely with her team and has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the

department. Formal, scheduled monitoring through lesson observations, and checking sets of students' exercise books and teachers' planners, is not yet established. Since the last inspection high standards have been maintained and the strong team of specialist teachers continues to provide a very good mathematical education. Students' level of satisfaction with the quality of provision they receive is exceptionally high.

Mathematics across the curriculum

153. Competency in mathematics in the sixth form is good overall. It is at least very good in geography, ICT and design and technology. Students apply their mathematical skills to statistical analysis in geography, including hypothesis testing and calculation of Spearman Rank coefficient; they create business systems on spreadsheets and databases in ICT and apply geometry very effectively in design technology. In physics competency in mathematics is satisfactory overall; some students are unable to perform the necessary calculations without additional teaching, which is provided in Physics lessons.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on the two-year course in physics leading to a full A-level qualification. The A-level courses in biology and chemistry were also sampled. In 2003, results in biology put the school in the top five per cent nationally, and in chemistry, results were well above average. The chemistry lesson observed was excellent. Students were preparing A-level examination questions with mark schemes and asking their peers to respond to them. This gave them a superb insight into the construction of the questions and the pitfalls that might be encountered in answering them. Of the two biology lessons observed, one was very good and the other excellent. In one of the lessons, students had researched topics connected with disease and were presenting their findings to the rest of the class with a confidence normally only found at undergraduate level. In the other, a laboratory session on microscopy, the students were absolutely engrossed in their work and standards were particularly high.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results in physics were above average in 2003.
- Current standards are above average and students are achieving well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There is room for improvement in the assessment system.

Commentary

154. In 2002 and 2003, A-level results in physics were above average. All candidates in these two years were male. Approximately 40 per cent gained the top grades A and B and all candidates passed in the range A to E. Hence, results have improved since the time of the previous inspection when they were average.
155. Current standards in Year 13 are above average, represent good achievement for both males and females, and reflect the previous two years' examination results. Students generally present their work in an organised fashion. The best work, consistent with the highest grades, is extremely thorough and detailed. It shows that the students have a very strong understanding of the concepts they have studied. They select the correct equations for solving problems and they integrate numerical, algebraic and literacy skills very well in producing written answers of high quality. Although there are many high attaining students starting the physics course annually in Year 12, overall initial standards are only average. This is because several candidates have really very modest mathematical skills for study at this level. It is to the teachers' credit that they support these students carefully by teaching them the mathematics they require as they proceed and eventually ensure that they are successful. Students have plenty of opportunity to test out theories through practical work. Standards in this aspect of the subject are also above average.
156. Teaching is good and students learn quickly. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are well organised, ensuring that the course is covered in sufficient depth to enable students to learn new concepts and explore them adequately. They provide students with good quality explanations and worked examples so that they can extend their confidence and understanding in private study. Teachers are adept at ensuring that both weak and strong students understand the work and experience success. Questioning of students in class is good. It checks understanding well, enabling teachers to know when to proceed to new areas of learning. Help for individuals with problems is of good quality. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly so that they know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. When students make numerical or algebraic errors, the correct solution often appears underneath their work. This is extremely helpful. Students are justifiably very positive about the course and the help that they receive. However, the frequent testing and marking would be of even greater value if it were to show clearly the quality of the students' work in terms of the A-level grade scale.
157. Leadership and management of physics are good. The course is organised well between the teachers responsible for it. There is a relentless drive to ensure that all students achieve well. Improvements since the previous inspection are evident because standards have risen considerably. However, assessment and the setting of targets in relation to national rates of progress from GCSE need to be strengthened.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The main focus was on A level information technology (IT), and one lesson was observed of the CLAIT course offered to all sixth form students. Nine students present were well taught and learned well, showing average attainment.

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

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement by the A level classes.
- Very clear guidance given to students so that they can improve.
- Excellent subject knowledge of the teachers allowing them to plan for all students to meet the requirements of the curriculum and often to surpass them.
- Very good classroom teaching so that students are totally involved in learning.
- The very low proportion of girls opting for the subject.

Commentary

158. Over the past few years results at A level have been consistently well above average. This is high achievement over attainment on entry to the course where some students have no prior qualification in ICT. These very good standards are confirmed in the work seen during the inspection that is well above average. Students' subject knowledge is good and their coursework is very good, with some excellent examples. All meet the criteria in full, with very good independent thinking and very thorough support for their analysis, planning and evaluation. In addition students make very high quality systematic notes to support their learning.
159. This achievement is the result of very good teaching. Teachers have excellent knowledge of IT and of the course requirements. They have very high expectations of students at all levels, so that the highest attainers work well beyond the requirements of the course and the lower attainers are supported without having to ask. Students with SEN are given entirely appropriate treatment by teachers who know exactly how to help them. Teachers have established very efficient working methods so that students concentrate at all times. They make deadlines clear and expect them to be met. In some lessons the teachers' input is rather lengthy without directly involving the students but, when this happens, learning is reinforced well through practical experience in the next session. Teachers use interesting contexts with a good range of exemplar materials. While they give students scope and inspiration to develop their own coursework applications, teachers make high demands on the standard of coursework. They report back to students regularly on the extent to which they meet them and the action that they need to take. As a result, students trust their teachers' judgement and make every effort to follow their guidance. Teachers are very good role models for the course in their use of ICT to advance learning. The department is working to increase the popularity of the subject with girls, as at present almost all students are boys.
160. The school curriculum meets the needs of the students in the sixth form. The department makes the CLAIT course available on demand to all students who wish to develop their information technology capability in the sixth form. This is well taught with good support to individual students. There is good availability of ICT facilities for all sixth form students to help their learning in other subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

161. Students have good access to computers for use in other subjects and are encouraged to use them independently. Where they use them, for example in researching, planning and presenting coursework, their skills and knowledge are sufficient for the purpose. There is particularly effective planned use in French and mathematics. The majority of use is for presentation by word processing or graphing data, and for Internet research. ICT is very well used in school assembly by sixth form students to present ideas.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between staff and pupils so that pupils feel valued and are motivated to achieve very high standards.
- Enquiry methods are very well developed.
- All pupils benefit from the availability of teachers outside of normal lesson time to provide advice with more challenging concepts and coursework.
- Very good systems are in place to track pupils' performance and to encourage them to set individual targets for future performance.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching in order to share and develop good practice is underdeveloped.

Commentary

162. Standards attained in the sixth form are well above national averages. All pupils achieve very well in the sixth form, including those who are gifted and those with special educational needs. Results in the AS and A level examinations in 2003 were significantly higher than those achieved by students nationally. This is a continuing trend of very high standards achieved over recent years.
163. Students make very good progress and achieve very high standards. A wide range of case studies is explored in detail and high expectations are set. Very good relationships are established between staff and students so that all students are encouraged to participate fully in lessons and to seek advice and support outside the lessons. This makes a significant contribution to the very high standards achieved.
164. Six lessons of geography were observed in the sixth form. All lessons observed were good or better. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' achievement. They establish very good relationships with pupils and readily make themselves available outside lessons to support individuals. This is appreciated by the students who regularly take the opportunity to benefit from one-to-one tuition. The high percentage of very good lessons were characterised by very good planning, high quality teacher made resources and very high expectations that all students would be involved in answering questions and developing their understanding. For example, in a Year 12 lesson exploring the relationship between urbanisation and the level of economic development, careful preparation, the use of appropriate statistical techniques and a very well managed discussion resulted in students challenging their own ideas and engaging in a high level debate.
165. The head of department provides very clear leadership and has developed a strong team ethos for the department. He provides a very good role model, for example leading in providing frequent student support outside the normal lessons. Schemes of work are up to date and continue to be improved. Excellent fieldwork opportunities are provided and these make a significant contribution to the very high standards achieved.

166. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection when standards were judged to be above national expectations in A Level results and well above national expectations in lessons.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reached by students at A level are well above the national average.
- Students achieve very well and readily develop those skills and attributes that are required for success at A level.
- Teaching and learning are very good, although there is scope for students' discussion and debating skills to be further extended.
- The marking and assessment of students' work and progress are very good.
- Both leadership and management are very good and make a significant contribution to the high standards that are achieved.
- There is only a limited use of ICT by students in their regular work.

Commentary

167. In the A level results of 2003, the proportion of A – B grades awarded was well above the national average as it had also been in both 2002 and 2001. Girls performed markedly better than boys although this had not been the pattern in previous years. The boys' results were well above the national average for boys. The average points score in history was notably higher than the average across other subjects taken at the school.
168. Achievement is very good. Students readily develop essential A level skills including in-depth interpretation and evaluation of sources and the writing of analytical essays that balance conflicting hypotheses and arguments. Following investigation, they discuss and debate key issues with their teachers and with each other although this is an ability that could profitably be further developed. They demonstrate an impressive breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding: this was particularly evident in a Year 13 lesson on the 'Enlightenment'. Their attitudes and response are excellent: students respond equally well to the various demands that are made upon them in respect of making oral contributions, individual and group work in class, homework and researching for their course work assignments. However, there is only limited use of ICT by students for compiling their notes and writing essays.
169. Teaching is very good and promotes a very good standard of learning. Together with the attitudes and response of students, it accounts in large measure for the high standards that are achieved. Teachers have a secure command of the subject for A level teaching. Their detailed planning of lessons allows for a very thorough coverage of the areas of study. They have high expectations of students and constantly challenge them through skilful questioning to gain insight and perceptions that go beyond basic knowledge and understanding. They take care to stress, and to make students aware of, the broader themes running through topics and periods as well as their more particular aspects. Students speak highly of the marking and assessment of their work and value especially the opportunities to discuss with teachers on an individual basis the comments that have been made on their essays.

170. Leadership of the subject is very good, providing both vision and clear direction. Management is also very good. The development plan has a separate section on the sixth form with a prominent focus on strategies for maintaining the high standards of achievement. To ensure the deployment of particular strengths, different areas of the curriculum are covered by teachers according to individual expertise and preference. There is a very good ethos for learning. Improvement has been good since the last inspection: the standard of teaching has been raised and students' achievements have been consistently high.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and Design

Provision in art and design is **very good**. The AS and A-level courses in art and design were inspected in depth.

Standards seen	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because they enjoy consistently very good teaching and have very good attitudes to work.
- Knowledgeable and experienced teachers prepare students for examination very well.
- The curriculum is of a high quality and its enrichment is very good.
- ICT does not make a significant enough contribution to most students' work.
- Informal, ongoing assessment is not recorded by or for students, thus reducing its value.

Commentary

171. Results in both AS and A-level 2003 examinations were very high. They vary from year to year a little, reflecting the previous attainment of those who choose to study the subject.

172. Standards of work are very high in both Years 12 and 13. Students develop very personal and individual responses in their work. They are very well able to use a good range of media and materials. Sketchbooks are well used to collect information and images and to develop ideas. Work is very imaginative and students explore important themes, including significant moral issues facing society. Individual students use ICT very well but this is not generally the case. The most competent students in Year 13 produce work that is beyond the usual expectations of the A-level examination. Achievement in both years is very good.

173. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use questioning particularly well so that students clarify their thinking and their plans for work. Students benefit from teachers' excellent command of the subject so that they can find local sources, relevant artists and productive avenues of study. Teachers have an excellent understanding of requirements and students are very well prepared for examination. Assessments are very thorough and students are clear about how they can improve their work. Informal and ongoing assessments are also very good but students make no record of these valuable exchanges.

174. The subject is very well led and management is very good. The curriculum is reviewed following analysis of results and appropriate changes made. It is enriched with life drawing classes at a local college, gallery visits and visiting artists. The leadership provides a very good

role model for students and teachers as a conscientious and skilled practitioner. Knowledgeable and experienced teachers, very good dedicated accommodation and very good resources all make an important contribution to the high standards students achieve. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High levels of motivation by students as a result of teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to the work.
- Students show skill and initiative in analysing each others' work as a result of teachers' high expectations.
- Frequent theatre visits broaden students' perspective of performance styles and genres.
- Good teacher knowledge informs and develops students' understanding of the work of practitioners in directing and acting.
- Students' analytical work is better than their practical realisation of dramatic intentions.
- The lack of resources, storage and specialist area restricts students' development and range of dramatic forms.

Commentary

175. Results in the 2003 A level examination were broadly in line with the national average, showing an improvement since 2002 when they were well below this level. The course is relatively new to the school, having been introduced in 2002. Results indicate that students do less well in drama than they do in other subjects in the school.
176. In standards seen, work in drama was above national standards. Students are able to apply their knowledge of the work of practitioners to the rehearsal process with a clear sense of purpose. They apply the skills of analysis to their planning and reflection of theatre practice. Students' achievement is very good; over the two-year course they build performance skills confidently and rapidly despite a lack of prior experience on entry. By Year 13, students are able to experiment in practice with a range of interpretations of text, well informed by an understanding of theatre elements.
177. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and they use it well to challenge students' own performing and directing. They help students to grasp how practitioners can inform their work and consequently students are motivated to experiment with ideas and interpretations. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students applied Stanislavski's approach to sub text to their devised pieces to very good effect. Students draw on the numerous theatre visits made to make intelligent comparisons with their own work, showing skill and initiative in analysing each other's work. In a Year 13 lesson on an unseen play text, students drew on their knowledge of a range of non-naturalistic forms including Brecht's 'Alienation' and use of gestic which they effectively applied to their own interpretations. Students' contributions are valued by their peers and teachers so they confidently engage in discussion, usefully assessing each other's work. However, there is less specific guidance for individuals on how they can improve. Students' analytical work is better than their practical

realisation of dramatic intentions and this is because there is a tendency for analysis to take place separately from the practical drama context. The lack of resources, storage and specialist area restricts students' development and range of dramatic forms.

178. Leadership and management are good. Teachers share a sense of common purpose and support each other in the organisation and delivery of the curriculum. The drama provision is well supported by teacher's commitment to extra curricular theatre visits to support the requirements of the examination

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Standards seen	Very high
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of the quality of teaching, students are highly motivated, show excellent attitudes and learn very well.
- Extra-curricular activities make a strong contribution to students' learning.

Commentary

179. Results in 2003 were excellent for the two male students taking the A2 examination: they were above average for the one male and two female students taking the AS examination.
180. The standards in lessons and the performances in the recital programme are very high. This represents very good achievement over time. Year 12 students have a very good understanding of developments in the baroque, classical and romantic periods. To improve their understanding of Wagner's operas they use the internet for their research. Year 13 students learn about keyboard styles of the romantic era and extend their knowledge by discussion and analysis of Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood*. The excellent grade 8 performances of German and French music by the flautist and the singer compliments the work done in the lessons. About half the students in both years are interested in a career in music and one already has a place at Sheffield University to specialise in vocal studies.
181. The teaching is excellent and the lessons are lively, interesting, challenging and well planned so that students enjoy learning and make a conscious effort to succeed. Both teachers know their subject extremely well and because of their complementary skills they effectively prepare students for the examinations. Because students take part in the school and the county music ensembles they build up an even wider understanding of the subject. Students' work is regularly assessed to give them a good indication of their present performance and likely grades. They are attentive and highly motivated and there is a relaxed and businesslike atmosphere in the lessons.
182. The head of department has been in post for the past two years and the leadership and management of the subject are very good. Clear policies and schemes of work make a good contribution to the high standards of the department. The development plan is being brought more in line with the school model. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Physical education was not inspected in depth, but lessons were visited. A very good recreational activities programme is provided for students, which is well supported and very appropriate to their needs, allowing them to participate at varying levels of competition. Students' attitudes, behaviour and sense of responsibility are excellent. A very good inter-house competition is organised for younger pupils, with sixth form students acting as house captains. The lack of examination and Community Sports Leaders Award courses prevents some students from pursuing their sporting interests at a higher level.

BUSINESS

Business studies was inspected in depth, and economics was also inspected.

Business studies and economics

Provision in business studies and economics is **good**.

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive student attitudes and behaviours, and the maturity of their approach, positively support learning.
- Knowledgeable teaching and assessment of students' work.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning.
- Opportunities to enhance the curriculum through contacts with the world of work and simulations are underdeveloped.

Commentary

183. A level results in business studies and economics have risen from 2001 to 2003 in relation to A-E grades, though the percentage of students achieving higher grades has fallen year on year over the same period. Examination performance in both subjects is weak in comparison to other subjects within the school, and is lower than that of other sixth forms nationally. There are no significant differences in the performance of male or female students. The numbers of students examined in AS Business Education are too small for meaningful analysis. Examination performance in AS level Economics is similar to that of other subjects in the school and is above that of other sixth forms nationally. Students begin both business studies and economics courses with no previous experience of these subjects, so comparison with other subjects in the school and with other sixth forms nationally should be treated with caution.
184. Standards in both business studies and economics are average and students achieve well in relation to their prior performance. They are able to use appropriate business and economic terminology confidently and accurately, and demonstrate clear understanding of relevant concepts, such as ethical behaviour in business and fiscal policy in economics. Students are able to apply their learning to case studies and to the real economy and world of work. They are able to analyse information, draw conclusions and make predictions, for example in relation to a

case study of recruitment to the post of account manager within an advertising agency. The standard of presentation of written work is high.

185. In both business studies and economics, students benefit from knowledgeable teaching and well-structured lessons, which use relevant and engaging stimulus materials, and have a range of appropriate activities that capture the interest and involvement of all students. Assessment using grade levels supports learning and students know the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Homework is well used to reinforce learning. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and apply consistent effort to their work. A strong feature of lessons is the way in which students show an interest in the activities, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Their group discussions are mature and thoughtful. Positive relationships within the class support learning.
186. Opportunities for collaborative learning and students to talk are limited and insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning. Use of real or simulated work contexts are limited to a successful Young Enterprise programme run by the department.
187. The department is well managed and has adequate resources. Leadership is satisfactory with limited progress demonstrated since the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

General Studies

Several lessons were visited during the inspection, although the subject was not inspected in depth. General Studies is a well organised course, with a good structure, taught by experienced and well qualified teachers. It sets appropriate challenges and builds on the previous experiences of the students who are well motivated and sustain their efforts well. In general, students are performing at a standard above average, and their needs are well catered for by this course.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business languages

Provision in the business languages courses is **very good**

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good choice and can choose between French, German, Italian, Spanish and Japanese.
- All students reach above the required standard.
- Achievement in Italian and Japanese is very good.
- Male students are motivated and respond well in lessons.

Commentary

188. All students in Year 12 study at least one modern language if they study fewer than four subjects. Those not already studying a language at AS level take a one-year Royal Society of Arts (RSA) business language course at Level 1 in either French, German or Spanish and entry level in Italian or Japanese. Content is based on practical business situations and the examination is on a pass/fail basis in speaking, listening, reading and writing at Level 1 and speaking at entry level.
189. All students reach above the required pass standard in each of the five languages, and their achievement is very good overall. In French, Spanish and German, achievement is very good; and in Italian and Japanese, achievement is very good given that in these two languages students reach entry level and above with no prior knowledge of the language. In all five languages, students understand and respond to basic business language; for example, they order goods by telephone, converse socially with colleagues, translate basic business language, and understand short written extracts. In Japanese, students make excellent progress in recognising and copying basic Japanese characters. ICT is used regularly in independent reading tasks within lessons. Teachers assess students' work regularly and have very good awareness of each student's progress. Conversations with students showed excellent attitudes to learning, and those studying Italian and Japanese were pleased at their achievement in a new language. Gifted and talented students are well challenged by independent learning opportunities.
190. Teaching and learning are very good overall. All four lessons seen were very good. The teachers use the foreign language consistently in lessons, which familiarises the students with pronunciation and phrasing; this is especially impressive in Italian and Japanese, in which students have learned in a short time to speak confidently with good accents. Male students responded very well in all the lessons seen, motivated by the relevance of the lessons to the world of work.
191. Each course is very well organised by the participating teachers. Overall leadership and management are very good.

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

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

