

INSPECTION REPORT

DUSTON UPPER SCHOOL

Duston, Northamptonshire

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122074

Headteacher: Mr S. Richardson

Lead inspector: Mr D. Cox

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 September 2003

Inspection number: 259268

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

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Year 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their middle schools after Year 8. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The judgements about students' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	981
School address:	Duston Upper School Berrywood Road Duston Northampton Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN5 6XA
Telephone number:	01604 460004
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms P. Kinglerlee
Date of previous inspection:	8 – 12 October 2001

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Duston Upper School is about the same size as other secondary schools and educates students between the ages of 13 and 18. The school is a mixed comprehensive. Most students come from one of four main feeder middle schools. The school is in the process of being reorganised and from September 2004 will educate students between the ages of 11 and 18. There are 981 students on roll; last year there were 173 students in the sixth form. Students are predominantly from White-British backgrounds although there are significant numbers of students from Bangladeshi backgrounds. The percentage of students with mother tongue not/believed not to be English is higher than in most other schools at 5.5 per cent. There are three students for whom English is not their first language and who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The level of student mobility is relatively high. There is a specialist learning centre at the school for students with special educational needs.

The school was awarded the Artsmark in 2001, Investors in People in 2002 and Sportsmark in 2000.

The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is broadly average and the proportion of students with statements of special education needs is average. Most students are on the register of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; there are seven students who are autistic. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are broadly average. Standards of attainment on entry in Year 9 are below average. The school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2001.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10297	D. Cox	Lead inspector	
9086	R. Watkins	Lay inspector	
22411	A. Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English. English as an additional language (EAL).
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science. Chemistry
11933	D. Driscoll	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
30973	G. Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	History. Business education.
3793	J. Radcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Music. Drama
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education. Citizenship.
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Sociology. Health and social care.
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Geography
18453	C. Lower	Team inspector	Psychology

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a poor standard of education and provides very poor value for money. Teaching is poor, leadership is unsatisfactory and the achievement of students is poor.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The achievement of students is poor as a result of poor teaching.
- Students' attitudes are unsatisfactory.
- Leadership is unsatisfactory and management is poor.
- Students achieve well in art and design and modern foreign languages.
- The care, welfare, and health and safety of students are good.
- The school has good systems for improving attendance although attendance is still below average.
- Specialist provision for students with special educational needs is good.

The school was previously judged to have serious weaknesses. Progress has been slow and many of the key issues have not been addressed adequately. Standards are not rising quickly enough. Teaching has declined from satisfactory to poor. **Progress has been poor since the previous inspection.**

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspection Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Student achievement is poor. Standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Achievement is poor by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Students with English as an additional language make unsatisfactory progress.

Students' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are unsatisfactory. Students' attitudes are unsatisfactory and their attendance is below average in Years 9 to 11. Whilst behaviour has improved, it is still unsatisfactory. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Students in the sixth form have satisfactory attitudes and attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a poor quality of education. The quality of teaching is poor in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. It is the lack of consistently good or even satisfactory teaching that students are exposed to that is of particular concern; unsatisfactory teaching was observed in many subjects. In Year 9, teaching is good in art and design and physical education and leads to good learning. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in music and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good in modern foreign languages, art and design and history. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in religious education and poor in ICT. In the sixth

form, teaching and learning are good in chemistry, psychology, drama and business education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in ICT and health and social care. The teaching of citizenship is unsatisfactory.

The quality of the curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Students in Year 9 are not taught the measurement and control aspects of ICT in sufficient depth, while those in Years 10 and 11 are not taught religious education. Furthermore, there are not enough computers in the school to allow both the teaching of the ICT courses and teachers of other subjects to make use of computers in their lessons.

Good attention is given to the care and welfare of students, with good support for those who need help because of behavioural difficulties, child protection concerns or other personal circumstances. Satisfactory attention is paid to students' personal guidance, but advice to help them reach the targets set for their achievements is unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, good attention is given to students' welfare. Provision for educational guidance is unsatisfactory; too many students embark on courses for which they are ill-suited. Satisfactory partnership is developed with parents and with the local and wider community. Links with other schools are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is unsatisfactory and management is poor. Leadership at the top is having little effect on bringing about improvements. School policies are not always applied consistently or rigorously enough. The senior leadership team does not have the capacity to move the school forward. Governors fail to meet their statutory responsibilities because they do not provide the full statutory curriculum for all students. Although governors are supportive they do not do enough to hold the school to account.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. In Years 9 to 11, students thought that they were expected to work hard. However, over 80 per cent expressed concerns about behaviour and 50 per cent were not happy with the quality of teaching. Students in the sixth form are happy at the school and thought that the teaching is challenging. They had concerns about the lack of enrichment activities and the guidance they were given. Parents' views indicate that their children settle in well and staff expect students to work hard. They do have concerns regarding behaviour.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching; raise teachers' expectations and improve the achievement of students. (1)
- Provide the necessary leadership to drive whole-school improvement. (2)
- Ensure managers apply monitoring and support systems more consistently and rigorously. (3)
- Improve students' attitudes.

The first three points also apply to the sixth form.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure students have their full curriculum entitlement.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART A CONTINUED: SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH FORM REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is unsatisfactory and its cost-effectiveness is unsatisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students underachieve, in part, as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Students underachieve in ICT, health and social care, and aspects of citizenship.
- Students achieve well in chemistry, psychology, business education and drama.

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	Provision in English literature is satisfactory . Teachers know their subject well. Some of the teaching allows students to become passive. Some higher attaining students achieve more slowly than they should.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts. The A-level results in 2002 were well above average. Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good . In 2002 and 2003 students did well in chemistry; they gained better A-level results than might be expected from their GCSE results. The occasional lesson relies too heavily on the course notes; this is rather dull and students' concentration wavers.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is unsatisfactory . Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory teaching.
Humanities	Provision in psychology is satisfactory . Good teaching leads to effective learning for most students and they achieve well in practical investigation work. Guidance for students on their choice of subject and level of study is not rigorous enough; some students are faced with demands that are beyond their capability.
	Provision in sociology is satisfactory . Students achieve well in Year 13. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject. There is complacency in the monitoring of teaching in the subject.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in drama is good . Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and high expectations, and students achieve well as a result. Marking is not consistent.
Business	Provision in business is good . The very good teaching on the AVCE course leads to students achieving very well. The learning tasks of the GNVQ students are not sufficiently customised to their needs.

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **unsatisfactory**. Teaching on the AVCE course is good and students learn quickly as a result. Lack of monitoring of teaching in Year 12 produces lessons of an unsatisfactory standard. Progress at Intermediate GNVQ is patchy because students are insufficiently challenged.

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

Good attention is given to students' welfare. Personal care and guidance are satisfactory. Provision for educational guidance is unsatisfactory. Teachers readily give students friendly support. Guidance in subject areas is, on balance, sound. Students' are consulted but this area needs development because their capacity to take the initiative and develop ideas to benefit the school community is not encouraged enough. Students are well informed about the range of further education options and other career paths open to them. However, there are concerns about the number of students who are following courses at which they are unlikely to succeed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory. Many of the failings of the sixth form mirror those of the main school. Monitoring systems are not rigorous enough and policies are not always applied consistently.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are happy at the school and think that the teaching is challenging. They have concerns about the lack of enrichment activities and the guidance they are given. The inspection found that students are right to have concerns about the guidance they are given. Inspectors found that there is a good range of enrichment activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students join the school with standards of attainment that are below average and by the time they leave Year 11 their standards are below average. Nevertheless, there are now significant pockets of underachievement in the school that mean students are not achieving standards that are high enough in all years. Achievement is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Year 9, students achieve well in physical education and art and design.
- In Year 9, students underachieve in religious education, music, ICT and citizenship.
- In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well in art and design, modern foreign languages and history.
- Students' unsatisfactory attitudes and attendance play a part in their underachievement.
- Students do not make enough progress in the development of their literacy and mathematical skills.
- The achievement of students in ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11 is poor.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are average in art and design and physical education. They are below average in all other subjects with the exception of music where they are well below. Students achieve well in physical education and art and design because of the good quality teaching they receive. Students underachieve in religious education and music because of unsatisfactory teaching. They underachieve in ICT because they are not taught how to use computers to measure events and control devices in sufficient depth and standards are well below average in these aspects. Students underachieve in citizenship because in some lessons expectations are too low; students do not have an overview of the aims and objectives of citizenship. Overall, achievement is poor.
2. By the end of Year 11, standards are average in modern foreign languages, history, physical education and art and design. They are below average in all other subjects with the exception of ICT and music where they are well below average. Students achieve well in art and design, modern foreign languages and history as a result of good teaching. In Years 10 and 11, students' unsatisfactory attitudes play a part in their underachievement. Attendance, whilst improving, still impacts negatively on areas such as coursework and learning. Students underachieve in ICT because of poor teaching. Students do not follow a course of study in religious education that meets the locally agreed syllabus and their achievement is poor. Students underachieve in citizenship for the same reasons as noted above. Overall, achievement is poor.
3. Students do not make enough progress in the development of their literacy and mathematical skills because of an inconsistent approach across the school to improving these skills. Students who are identified as gifted and talented are provided with few opportunities to really excel. Lower attaining students generally achieve better than other students because teachers' expectations are low and these students cope with the low level work. Students from Bangladeshi backgrounds make the same progress as other students. There are only limited opportunities for students with English as an additional language to be withdrawn from lessons for additional support, though where this was seen they made satisfactory progress. Some

support is provided in lessons but again this is limited. The support provided by subject teachers for individual students ranges from good through to poor.

- The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. This is because behaviour management in the learning support centre is very good and staff work hard to raise students' self-esteem. In the mainstream classes the use of different materials to suit students' capabilities is inconsistent, behaviour management is not always secure and extra support is lacking in large classes containing significant numbers of students with learning and behavioural difficulties. A significant minority underachieve because of poor attendance.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.3 (30.3)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	32.6 (33.4)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	32.2 (31.9)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 292 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	38 (38)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (84)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	92 (90)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	28.8	34.6

There were 277 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below average in English and below average in mathematics and science.
- Students' achievement in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 6 was poor in English, good in mathematics and very good in science, given their results when they were in Year 6.
- Overall, results were below average and have been improving at a rate that is similar to the national trend.
- Results in 2003 indicate an improvement in results in English and similar results in mathematics and science.
- Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average and similar to those noted in the previous report. In 2003, the average points score of students increased. Much of this improvement can be attributed to a significant number of students gaining four GCSE grades at A*-C in ICT.
- However, this improvement masks a picture of pockets of underachievement and only marginal improvement against all other benchmarks compared to the previous report. For example, the proportions of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at A*-C and A*-G have shown only marginal improvement. The proportion of students leaving school with no GCSE passes has shown virtually no improvement and it is still of concern that nearly 10 per cent of students leave school with no GCSE passes.

- There were 16 students in Year 11, who left the school between January and June for sound reasons, who are included in these figures.
- The trend in the school's results was broadly in line with the national trend.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with below average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 13, standards are still below average. However, there are groups of students who underachieve and that means overall, students are not achieving standards that are high enough. Achievement is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the most recent examinations at AS-level, only 75 percent of students entered obtained a pass grade.
- Students achieve well in chemistry, psychology, business education and drama.
- Students underachieve in ICT and in citizenship/personal and social education (PSE).
- Students underachieve in health and social care on the Intermediate course in Year 12.

Commentary

5. Results in the 2002 examinations were below average, with both males and females attaining similar results. Results were similar to those noted in the previous report. An analysis of the 2002 results indicates that students made at least satisfactory progress. In 2003, however, results declined. In some subjects between one-quarter and one-half of students failed to obtain a grade at AS-level. There are serious concerns about whether the quality of advice that these students were given when they were in Year 11 was sufficiently rigorous. Most of those students who continued with A-level did obtain a grade.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.3	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.3	39.4
Average point score per student	214.6	263.3

There were 63 students in the year group.

6. Students achieve well in chemistry, psychology, business education and drama because of the good teaching they receive. Students underachieve in ICT, health and social care and citizenship/PSE as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to school and their behaviour and attendance are unsatisfactory. Other aspects of their personal development are also, on balance, unsatisfactory. Good provision for moral development is helping to bring about improved behaviour. Students' social development is satisfactory in response to the opportunities provided. Their spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory because the school does not give a high enough profile to these areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Incidents of bullying and other harassment are infrequent.
- Behaviour is better than at the previous inspection because of the school's efforts, but there are still many serious incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
- Students often only work grudgingly and a significant minority arrive late to lessons.
- Students' knowledge of spiritual values and beliefs, and of others' cultures, is unsatisfactory because the school does too little to extend their understanding of these aspects.
- Attendance has improved in the last two years but remains unsatisfactory.

Commentary

7. Students generally relate well to each other. They have few worries about bullying and they know they can turn to staff for help if any concerns arise.
8. Students mostly show good attitudes on the occasions when they meet with good teaching and well-established expectations, for instance in art and design lessons. They arrive promptly, pay good attention and work with enjoyment. When such stimulation is lacking, their interest is often short-lived and a significant minority only listen and behave themselves because of the teacher's insistence. Students with special educational needs enjoy the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) courses recently introduced in Years 10 and 11, because the work matches their needs and allows them to develop skills of working on their own. Their motivation wanes in ordinary classes on those occasions when relevant adult support is lacking or materials do not suit their needs.
9. Where teaching is weak the motivation of many students goes downhill. A minority become inattentive and so impede their own work and that of others. Quite often poor behaviour means that individuals have to work elsewhere or are even excluded from school for a time. The number of fixed term exclusions is high compared with what happens in other schools although there were no permanent exclusions in the previous year. Weak teaching also provokes other unhelpful attitudes. More mature students, on occasion, become frustrated because of pointless tasks.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	840	107	
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	22	2	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	10	1	
Mixed – White and Black African	1		

Mixed – White and Asian	2		
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	1	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	10		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	34	2	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2		
Black or Black British – African	13		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	15	4	
Chinese	6		
Any other ethnic group	13		
No ethnic group recorded	2		

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

10. Students develop a clear understanding of right and wrong supported by consistent application of the school behaviour policy. Moral issues are highlighted and discussed in various subject areas, for example, science, religious education, drama and history, and most students are willing to voice their opinions. Students are developing their social skills in personal and social education; however, they do not actively seek to take responsibility or leadership roles. Award evenings provide for spiritual development and recognition of personal development in a variety of areas, which raises their self-esteem. Through work-experience placements and interaction with the wider community and the lower schools on the Year 9 'Challenge Day', students become aware of their community, although they do not demonstrate a sense of responsibility for local concerns generally. School performances enable students to develop organisational and team skills, and those who take part demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm. Many, however, do not seek to initiate extra-curricular activities or to become involved. There are good opportunities to appreciate English culture through visits to professional performances and galleries. There are insufficient opportunities to appreciate the wide variety of cultures in England or to explore students' own values and beliefs, and those of other cultures. As a result their understanding of these areas is weak.

11. Attendance in 2001-2002 was well below that usually seen in other schools. However, it was better than in the previous year and in 2002-2003 it improved again, reaching 88.9 per cent. Even so it is unsatisfactory in all year groups and is below average. A majority of students attend regularly but others, especially in older age groups, are often absent. This leaves gaps in their learning and limits their achievement. Some are absent for medical reasons or adverse personal circumstances. Others simply prefer to stay away and their parents often do little to correct this. Recorded rates of unauthorised absence (truancy) recently rose, because the school started rejecting unreasonable excuses given for absence. The increasing attendance is brought about by good efforts made by the school. A computerised registration system enables centralised recording of attendance in every lesson. The full-time education welfare officer together with two other staff form a capable team that works very effectively to follow up absences.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2001-2002) (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	10.7
National data (secondary)	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.3
National data (secondary)	1.2

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

Sixth form

Attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Students' relationships with each other and with staff are good. They usually show a sound sense of responsibility for their work, in response to teachers' expectations. Other aspects of their personal development are unsatisfactory because opportunities are too limited. Attendance has improved somewhat and is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are keen to make the most of the opportunities available to them.
- Students are offered only limited opportunities to consider cultural and religious values.
- Students show willingness to contribute to the school and wider community. However, their involvement is limited because of lack of encouragement.

Commentary

12. Students mostly respond well to the challenge of sixth form work. Where teaching is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, they show a correspondingly good level of motivation. They are more relaxed when demands on them are lower, as when they are allowed to spend time on emails before a lesson gets underway. Even when teaching is mundane they remain co-operative though concentration may start to drift. Higher attaining students wish that the pace would speed up, but usually hide their resentment of those teachers who pitch work too low. Nevertheless relationships, both between students and with staff, are good. Students work together, helping each others' progress. They especially appreciate the way teachers will help them if they find some aspect of their work hard.
13. Year 12 are still getting accustomed to the workload and find it heavy. However, like Year 13 they mostly show a good sense of responsibility for their own work and are ready to persevere. There are scattered instances where students neglect homework. Numbers dropping out from courses during Year 12 were high in the previous year but this relates more to students' realistic recognition that chosen options are too hard for them, rather than to lack of motivation.
14. Provision for personal development in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Students develop greater independence in their studies; however, they have little opportunity to develop leadership qualities through support for the main school. Valuable training as mentors has yet to be used. The 'Young Enterprise' group gains good experience of organisation and responsibility, however, the sixth form has little opportunity to demonstrate these skills other than through personal studies. As a consequence students do not develop confidence in their own abilities as individuals. The minority of students who work with younger children outside school demonstrate a growing sense of their own contribution to their community and their role

as citizens. Students have little opportunity to consider other cultures or beliefs and so their understanding is limited.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a poor quality of education. The quality of teaching is poor in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form. The quality of the curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Good attention is given to the care and welfare of students.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching in Years 9 to 11 is poor and leads to poor learning. The quality of assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Around one lesson in five fails to reach a satisfactory standard in Years 9 and 10.
- It is the lack of consistently good or even satisfactory teaching that students are exposed to that is of particular concern; unsatisfactory teaching was observed in many subjects.
- There is not enough teaching that is of a really good standard.
- Much of the unsatisfactory teaching results from teachers trying to teach material that is too easy for the students concerned.
- Marking of students' work is inconsistent and fails to inform them how well they are doing or what they need to do to get better.
- The use of assessment information to ensure planning is appropriate is not as strong as the procedures and is unsatisfactory overall.
- Teaching is good in modern foreign languages and art and design; as a result students achieve well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 165 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1(1%)	15 (9%)	55(33%)	69(42%)	18 (11%)	3(2%)	4 (2%)

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.

Commentary

15. In Year 9, teaching is good in physical education, modern foreign languages and art and design. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects except music and religious education where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in modern foreign languages, art and design and history. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects except religious education where it is unsatisfactory, and ICT where teaching is poor. Parents feel that teaching is satisfactory.
16. However, whilst on the face of it teaching looks satisfactory in most subjects, this picture masks a situation where there are pockets of unsatisfactory teaching in many subjects. Apart from those subjects where teaching is less than satisfactory overall, unsatisfactory teaching was also observed in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, physical education and even in modern foreign languages and art and design which are two of the

school's strongest subjects. It is this lack of consistency that is of particular concern. For example, in geography, there are occasions when teachers' low expectations and inconsistency in marking students' work result in students not achieving enough. In some lessons in history, the pace is rather slow, or there is not enough variety in the activities, so that students' concentration becomes patchy and their learning less efficient.

17. Much of the unsatisfactory teaching results from teachers trying to teach material that is too easy for the students concerned. This, in turn, leads students to become bored and start to misbehave. This misbehaviour usually takes the form of students simply not doing as they are told; they do not disrupt others but will not follow the teacher's instructions. In really poor lessons, teachers condone students eating, drinking and wearing personal CD players which exacerbate the problems with students' unsatisfactory attitudes; poor achievement is praised, rather than criticised.
18. With the exception of the above problems, the other weakness is inconsistency. Marking is good in some subjects but unsatisfactory in others. Some teachers use computers well while others do not use them at all. In fact, for almost all aspects of teaching there are examples of both good and unsatisfactory practice in the school. Even within subjects there are great inconsistencies. For example, in English, students are well managed by most staff; however, when teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is too slow, the work is not matched to a wide range of students' needs and discipline is not effective. This leads to students behaving inappropriately and not achieving well.
19. The strategies for teaching literacy and mathematics as basic skills in all subjects are unsatisfactory, even though some progress has been made since the previous inspection. It is the lack of consistency that is of real concern.
20. Relatively new teachers to the school are not being supported well enough in some cases. Also, some non-specialist teachers do not have an adequate command of the subject and have little idea of what is to be taught or when it should be taught. The quality of the teaching is not monitored rigorously enough and the senior leadership team need to re-evaluate what constitutes 'good' teaching.
21. When students with special educational needs are taught by specialist support staff they make good progress. Teachers have wide knowledge of how to present learning in small steps and how to manage challenging behaviour. Teachers emphasise the importance of literacy skills and work hard, with the use of appropriate materials, to raise standards of reading and writing. In a good Year 10 basic skills lesson, the teacher gave opportunity for students to practise drafting and this led to immediate improvement in their stories of *A Walk in the Woods*.
22. A substantial amount of data is collected on the students when they enter the school. The use of assessment information, to ensure planning is accurate, is not as strong as the procedures and is unsatisfactory overall. It is better developed at a whole-school level than within departments where it is variable in quality. In mathematics, English and science good use of assessment data is made. In other subject areas, assessment is inconsistent; teachers do not always inform students what to do to improve their work.
23. The quality of teaching has declined since the previous inspection, when it was satisfactory.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Whilst there are examples of good teaching, the proportion was still much lower than in most other schools and not enough very good teaching was seen. Procedures and use of assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Around one lesson in five fails to reach a satisfactory standard in Year 12.
- Teaching is good in chemistry, psychology, drama and business education; as a result, students achieve well.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in ICT and health and social care; students underachieve in these subjects.
- Teaching of citizenship is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

24. Teachers have a good command of their subject although they do not always use this effectively to engage students or to challenge them to do well. In drama, students are keen to get involved in work because of the lively and stimulating way in which teachers enthusiastically pass on their own very good specialist knowledge.
25. There was no very good or excellent teaching seen in Year 13. Teachers' expectations of how much work can be covered in a lesson and how much effort students should make varies between a significant amount and very little. There is very little teaching that is inspirational or that really challenges students to do well. Much of the teaching is mediocre. Teachers do not always plan their lessons well enough. For example, students who embark on courses in Year 12 do not always have the appropriate GCSE grades. Teachers do not adapt or match their teaching and materials to suit these students, and as a result many students fail to gain a grade at AS-level. Teachers spend too long practising the application of a method at the expense of learning new work. A few students in each year group are not as well organised as they might be in, for example, keeping their files in good order.
26. The quality of teachers' feedback on written work is variable. At best it is thorough and provides good guidance on what students need to do to improve. It is least effective when comments are superficial and errors are overlooked. This weakness in marking is seen in subjects where files are not checked to ensure that notes are accurate. There is a wealth of assessment data available to departments although its use is not always consistent.
27. Teaching in the sixth form was some of the best in the school at the time of the previous inspection. It is still of a better quality than that seen in the main school, but it has declined to unsatisfactory.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. There are not enough extra activities on offer throughout the school day. The curriculum is worse than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has sufficient staff and accommodation, but not enough computers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Year 9 are taught several subjects that are over and above the National Curriculum.
- Students who have been disapplied from the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11 follow particularly well-planned courses.
- Students in Year 9 to 11 are not taught all the subjects to which they are entitled.
- There are not enough clubs and other activities available outside the school day.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

28. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because students in Year 9 are not taught in sufficient depth the measurement and control aspects of ICT, while those in Years 10 and 11 are not taught religious education. Furthermore, there are not enough computers in the school to allow both the teaching of the ICT courses, and teachers of other subjects to make use of computers in their lessons. As a result, students are not getting enough opportunities to practise the skills they have learnt in their ICT lessons.
29. There are, however, several strengths in the curriculum. In Year 9, for example, students study dance and drama as part of their core curriculum and three foreign languages are on offer. In Years 10 and 11 the school has identified students who would benefit from an alternative curriculum. Some of these have dropped their foreign language to concentrate on improving their skills in English and mathematics; all have been successful in public examinations in English and mathematics as a result. Another group of students spend two or three days each week on a work-related placement, and through skilful planning the school has still ensured that students receive both the curriculum to which they are entitled, other than religious education, and can still follow courses that develop their own interests and aptitudes.
30. The provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In the learning support centre and the open learning centre provision is good. The teachers and learning support assistants attached to the centres are expert at helping students with learning and behavioural difficulties to raise standards. There is appropriate access to computers, which has a positive impact on achievement. Learning support assistants give good in-class support, but there are too few, and progress in certain classes with large numbers of special needs students is only satisfactory at best. The ASDAN course, very recently introduced in Years 10 and 11, is popular with students because teaching is good, the work matches their needs and it allows them to develop independent learning skills. In mainstream classes a lack of suitable materials in subjects such as design and technology and ICT is a barrier to learning for students with special needs. Not all subject areas make full use of education plan targets to help students improve.
31. The short lunch break makes arranging clubs impossible, but even so, the number of clubs and activities that are provided at the end of the day is much smaller than is usually seen. Musical activities, in particular, are very limited and few students take part in instrumental lessons. The participation in sporting activities is, on the other hand, similar to that usually seen in schools. The school also provides many opportunities for students to gain extra help with their subjects outside the school day.

Sixth form

32. The school provides a range of courses, at different levels, that are suitable for the students staying on to the sixth form and provide a sound basis for continuing their education. Students

are able to mix and match their courses at different levels, or continue with four subjects to full A-level if they are particularly high attainers. The provision of extra activities is particularly good. All students in Year 12 follow a compulsory enrichment course that includes physical education, religious education, general studies and key skills. This course is then optional in Year 13, but its popularity is apparent in the continued high rates of attendance.

Care, guidance and support

Good attention is given to the care and welfare of students, with good support for those who need help because of behavioural difficulties, child protection concerns or other personal circumstances. Satisfactory attention is paid to students' personal guidance, but advice to help them reach the targets set for their achievements is unsatisfactory. The school takes satisfactory steps to consider students' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attention is given to students' personal welfare.
- The specialist centres for students with learning or behavioural difficulties give good support and guidance to students.
- Students feel their teachers are interested in helping them.
- Support for students as learners is not good enough because, although they are given target levels or grades, the advice on how to improve towards these is often rather vague.
- Although students were consulted about the new shape of the school day, they are still unhappy about the changes.

Commentary

33. Arrangements for students' well-being are good and the school is alert to make further improvements. For instance, new requirements for all students to stay on site during the lunch break are a positive step contributing to their safety. The additional tutor period that was recently introduced is another step in this direction, though at present it often allows too much time for chatter. Arrangements are good for students with particular needs for personal support. Those in the two learning support centres are helped particularly well because staff give generously of their time and help with social as well as academic skills. Liaison between the units, the school's attendance team and external agencies adds effectively to the support students receive.
34. Good use is made of part-time attendance coupled with an appropriate work experience placement, to support the personal and learning needs of a number of students who lack the motivation or aptitude to follow a full range of GCSE subjects. Good routines are in place to support students who show serious misbehaviour in lessons. Students' understanding of expectations is reinforced because they are removed to work elsewhere under close supervision. Satisfactory use is made of short-term exclusion as a further sanction. Permanent exclusion is rare because staff persevere well with efforts to help students improve. Arrangements for reintegrating students who return to school after truancy or a period of exclusion are good.
35. Year 9 students receive good guidance when they select their optional subjects for Year 10, and are happy at the way they mostly get their choices. Older students are well-informed about the wide variety of routes open to them after Year 11, but some lower attaining ones are left with unrealistic ambitions of following unsuitable sixth form courses.

36. Staff in the specialist centres for students with learning and behavioural difficulties offer very good support and guidance to students. They give generously of their time at breaks and lunchtimes to help students with social as well as academic skills. As a result, students grow in confidence and try hard to improve. Links with outside agencies are good and their contributions give added support to students.
37. The school takes suitable steps to consider students' views about important matters, such as features to be included in plans for the new school buildings. Students were all consulted before recent changes to the daily timetable. However, there is at this stage, a feeling of discontent among them, that the changes were not what they wanted. As yet, many are not fully convinced of the benefits that staff perceive and they find the short lunch break rather rushed.

Sixth form

Good attention is given to students' welfare. Personal care and guidance are satisfactory. Satisfactory consideration is given to students' views. Provision for educational guidance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students appreciate the way that teachers are approachable and ready to give extra support with their work.
- A significant minority of students are allowed to join and continue with courses on which they have little chance of success.
- There is not enough encouragement for students to contribute to the school community by initiating ideas.

Commentary

38. Teachers readily give students friendly support and at the same time encourage their sense of personal responsibility for their work. Guidance in subject areas is on balance sound so that students feel satisfactorily informed about their own achievements. However, it is unsatisfactory for students of ICT. Occasional talks in the assembly rota, such as one on 'motivation', make an important contribution to the guidance students receive. Students also appreciate the support they receive from their tutors.
39. Students' views are consulted but this area needs development because their capacity to take the initiative and develop ideas to benefit the school community is not encouraged enough.
40. Students are well informed about the range of further education options and other career paths open to them. Similarly those following vocational courses are appropriately advised. However, there are concerns about the number of students who are following courses at which they are unlikely to succeed. As some students suggest, there is a need for teachers 'to be cruel to be kind' and to give more realistic consideration to each student's chance of success before allocating places on courses.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

A satisfactory partnership is developed with parents and with the local and wider community. Links with other schools are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents generally get good information about their child's progress but are not sent a report about the social and moral education course for older students.
- The partnership with parents of students with special educational needs is good.
- The annual Year 9 community action day makes a good contribution to students' personal development.
- Good links with local sports clubs contribute to the breadth of students' experience.
- A large minority of parents take little interest in the work of the school.

Commentary

41. The school finds it hard to boost parents' interest but makes satisfactory efforts to involve them as partners in its work. For instance, the home school agreement highlights expectations about attendance and nearly all parents sign it because of the way it is promoted. Parents are informed about changes such as the new daily timetable. The school regularly uses questionnaires to find parents' views. Often only a small minority of parents reply and the proportion which is discontented causes concern.
42. Students' annual reports, together with interim reviews, give parents a generally good amount of information. However, comments in ICT are of little value as they do not always reflect the grades recorded alongside them. A sizeable minority of parents, more than one in four, do not come to the consultation meetings organised for them to talk with teachers about their child's progress. A few obstruct the school's efforts by their failure to ensure their child's regular attendance. Parents take more interest when their children are involved in events such as a performing arts celebration evening.
43. Particularly good efforts are made to regularly involve parents of students with special educational needs. Staff work hard to keep parents informed of students' achievements and make prompt phone calls home if any concern arises about attendance. Parents appreciate this contact. However, attendance at annual review meetings for students with statements is no more than satisfactory although attendance at the evenings arranged to explain the new ASDAN course was good.
44. Links with middle schools result in satisfactory liaison about the curriculum, with good practice in science where teachers visit Year 8 classes to take lessons during the final weeks of the summer term. Links are generally good with regard to students with special educational needs though there is room to speed up the transfer of information.
45. The Year 9 Community Action day enables all students to make a positive contribution to community life. Successful links that underpin worthwhile work experience for Year 10 students and links with employers also allow a group of Year 11 students to benefit from extended work experience placements calculated to meet their individual needs. Business links are very well developed to support business education. However, liaison with local churches and other religious organisations, to enhance students' understanding of Christianity and other religions, is neglected. Participation in community sports is encouraged through links with a wide range of local clubs that regularly use school facilities.

Sixth form

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Suitable links with the community and with universities are in place. Links with other local sixth forms, to add to the breadth of courses offered to students, are underdeveloped.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-developed links with local businesses make a good contribution to the learning of business education students.
- Links with other local providers of post-16 courses are underdeveloped.

Commentary

46. An appropriate cycle of reports and consultations keeps parents suitably informed of students' progress. However, more realistic guidance is needed for parents, as well as for students, in the case of the significant minority of students who join courses at which they have only a low chance of success.
47. The necessary links are in place to add to the breadth of students' experience on vocational courses and these are well developed in the case of business education. A few opportunities are developed for individuals to expand their experience by voluntary contributions to the life of the local community, but relatively small numbers of students are involved in these initiatives.
48. Satisfactory links are established with universities. Efforts to strengthen links with other local providers of post-16 courses, to add to the choice of courses the sixth form offers, are being made. However, several students voice regrets about courses they wished to follow, for instance in music, and that their own sixth form was unable to run.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is unsatisfactory and the management of the school is poor. There has been only marginal improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Many of the weaknesses identified in the previous report are still apparent in the school's work now. The work of the governing body is unsatisfactory.

The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is unsatisfactory. The effectiveness of management is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are serious weaknesses in leadership and management at senior level.
- Systems and policies are not applied rigorously enough.
- Governors fail to meet their statutory responsibilities.
- The school now has a balanced budget between the main school and the sixth form.
- Leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

49. Leadership at the top is having little effect on bringing about improvements. The leadership of the headteacher is unsatisfactory. Whilst attention is given to teaching, learning and standards, the application of monitoring systems lacks rigour and decisiveness. This lack of rigour is evident in many aspects of the school's work. Improvement since the previous inspection has not been fast enough. There are still staff who are complacent about the school being identified as having 'serious weaknesses' at the time of the previous report. There is no real sense of urgency in the drive to provide an acceptable standard of education for students. The senior leadership team does not have the capacity to move the school forward. Within the team there is no corporate view on what constitutes good teaching and good practice.

50. School policies are not always applied consistently. Teachers have different expectations regarding what are acceptable standards of behaviour and student attitudes. This can be seen in the way that students abuse the privilege of being able to drink and wear personal CD players in lessons. Performance management systems are in place and meet requirements. However, outside of this system there is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching given the range of significant shortcomings. Records show that the amount of monitoring of teaching varies considerable between subjects. At middle management level there are significant differences in how monitoring is carried out. Even in those subjects where senior staff play a key role there is a lack of rigour and expectations. Senior leaders acknowledge that they may have been side-tracked by the emphasis in the previous report on improving behaviour and have not focused enough on improving teaching and learning. Teachers fail to see that attitudes and behaviour reflect the quality of teaching and cannot be managed in a vacuum.
51. A strength of the school is the way in which it has managed to modify its expenditure patterns which were criticised in the previous report. There is now a good balance between expenditure in the main school and that in the sixth form.
52. The governing body has clear aims and policies. Communication between committees is good and governors are provided with sufficient documentation by the school. Governors keep a watchful eye on expenditure and have worked with the school to ensure there is a balance between expenditure in the main school and the sixth form. However, governors fail to meet their statutory responsibilities because they do not provide the full statutory curriculum for all students. Although they are supportive they do not do enough to hold the school to account. There is a lack of rigour in their monitoring of the work of the school. Governors do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Sixth form

The leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many of the failings of the sixth form mirror those of the main school.
- Monitoring systems are not rigorous enough.
- Policies are not always applied consistently.

Commentary

53. Whilst many aspects of the work of the sixth form do not have the shortcomings of the main school, there are still significant weaknesses. Overall, there is not enough rigour in monitoring the work of the sixth form. There are weaknesses in the guidance systems for students. There is little teaching of a really good nature and very little sharing of good practice. There is no real vision for how the sixth form might develop.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3444191
Total expenditure	3416547
Expenditure per student	3482

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-177280
Balance carried forward to the next	-149636

The school receives well above average funding per student although some of this is because the school is an upper school and therefore, like most secondary schools, a higher rate of funding is provided for older students. The deficit budget is a result of significant repairs being required to the school's swimming pool. The school has agreed plans to reduce this deficit over the next two years. Given the funding the school receives and the poor education provided, it is providing poor value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' reading comprehension is a relative strength.
- The quality of leadership and management is good and has helped to improve standards.
- Students' skills in speaking and learning are relatively weak.
- Some of the teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

54. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well below average. However, results obtained in 2003 were higher than those obtained in 2002 although they have still not risen to the level noted in the previous report.
55. In 2002, GCSE results obtained in both English language and literature were well below the national average. However, here again results obtained in 2003 were considerably higher than those obtained in 2002.

Standards and achievement

56. When students enter the school their skills in speaking and listening are well below the national expectation. Many of them express themselves briefly, have only a limited vocabulary and find difficulty in explaining themselves more fully when asked to do so. Few understand how to contribute effectively to group discussion. However, when they are given the chance to take part in well-structured oral work, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson when students had to judge their "compatibility" with others, they displayed greater maturity, tried to find the right tone and achieved well. The limitations inherent in oral work are also evident in writing. The small number of higher attainers can adapt what they write for different audiences but the majority of students do not have this range and flexibility. Additionally, the work of many students contains many errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar which limit their achievement. Reading and understanding are a relative strength.

57. In Years 10 and 11 students improve their skills but at a rate that means they are still below average. Whilst few become articulate or persuasive speakers, they are more confident and can employ a more formal style when it is required. A significant development in writing skills is that a considerably larger proportion of students improves the quality of their work by redrafting it and producing lengthier work. As a result, examples of good quality well-planned and carefully word-processed assignments were seen on a variety of topics, for example, on comparing videos made by the popular musicians Will Smith and Eminem. However, it remains the case that the work of many students contains many errors and little originality. Students' understanding of what they read remains satisfactory but most are dependent upon their teachers to explain any deeper meaning there may be or to evaluate the author's techniques. From Years 9 to 11 students have less interest in reading for pleasure than might be expected.

Teaching and learning

58. Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, examples of very good, good and unsatisfactory practice were also seen. When teaching is most effective and students achieve well, relevant, interesting materials are selected, the lesson includes plenty of variety and students are given ample opportunity to be active in their learning, there are very high expectations regarding work rate and behaviour, and written work is set regularly and is marked with a level of detail which acknowledges the student's efforts. One such lesson was seen in Year 11, in which the all-boys group were studying Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein". Students concentrated well, were keen to contribute and felt all the more committed to the lesson because the teacher had sought their views on the choice of text to be studied. Good planning, particularly when it is shared with students, leads students to think ahead and to plan themselves for the lesson. In most of the lessons seen, teachers maintained good or satisfactory discipline, with the result that a secure environment for learning was created. When teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is too slow, the work is not differentiated to match a wide range of student needs and discipline is not effective. This leads to students behaving inappropriately and not achieving well enough.

Leadership and management

59. The head of faculty is an energetic and committed individual who has introduced initiatives that have helped to improve standards within the department in 2003. In particular, assessment has been used to place students in groups so that there could be a particular focus upon their learning needs. Since the last inspection, the subject has become fully taught by a permanent staff instead of temporary teachers. Standards of behaviour have improved.

Literacy across the curriculum

60. The strategy for teaching literacy as a basic skill in all subjects is unsatisfactory, even though some progress has been made since the previous inspection. For example, additional classes in literacy are provided in Year 9 for students who do not take a second modern foreign language and a deputy head works alongside the literacy co-ordinator to monitor the work of the faculties. Even so, practice is inconsistent. At best, literacy is an active concern in modern foreign languages, where students are shown how to construct longer sentences and are given a thorough grounding in grammar. In other subjects, such as English and history, students in Years 10 and 11 are encouraged to redraft their written work and to produce extended writing. More generally, however, students' skills in writing are not extended and errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar do not receive an appropriate level of attention. There are insufficient reading tasks set to require students to read more widely and to develop research skills.

English as an additional language

61. The provision for students in the early stages of learning English is unsatisfactory, despite the improvements made following initiatives taken by the co-ordinator. For example, in-service training has made teachers more aware of the needs of students for whom English is an additional language. When students enter the school, an assessment is made of their capabilities, the information is passed to other teachers and then students attend National Curriculum lessons for their year. There are only limited opportunities for students to be withdrawn from lessons for additional support, though where this was seen teaching and learning were satisfactory. Some support is provided in lessons but again this is limited. The support provided by subject teachers for individual students is variable. In some lessons students were provided with individual support and were set specific tasks but in others they were largely left to their own devices. There is less provision for students to be supported by other students who speak their own language than is usually seen in other similar schools. Though the school is currently trying to obtain the services of a bi-lingual helper, so far this has not been achieved.

Modern foreign languages

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and creates a good climate for learning.
- Teaching and learning are good overall but not as effective as they could be because some teaching groups are too large. The special needs of some students cannot be met.
- Most students achieve well in response to the good teaching as they progress through the school.
- The school has been unable to recruit a linguist to fill a vacant post. This is having an adverse effect on standards.

Commentary

Examination results

62. In 2002, approximately half the students were entered for the full course GCSE. Their results in French were above average and in Spanish they are well above average. In 2003, results in French were lower. Modern foreign languages is an area where students do much better than in most of their other subjects and an area where boys achieve well.

Standards and achievement

63. Some students have done no French at all prior to entering the school in Year 9. Opportunities to speak the foreign language are limited for some students because of the very large number of students in their class, and students do not achieve well when their teacher is a non-specialist. In writing, standards attained are below average in French; students struggle to write at length and in detail to describe events. Higher attaining students have a sound

understanding of grammar and apply rules accurately to express their ideas. Students' learning includes an understanding of grammar, which contributes to the development of their literacy skills.

64. Both long and short GCSE courses are running in French, and in Years 10 and 11 some students - 82 in Year 10 - do not take a foreign language at all. Students speak and write at length in French, for example, to tell stories and describe events in the past, present and future in detail. They link their ideas together using a wide range of vocabulary and structures to communicate their ideas; most students achieve well. Lower attaining students have a more limited range of vocabulary and structures and are less confident overall in speaking and writing. Spanish and German are taught to selected groups who progress very well over their three years.

Teaching and learning

65. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the languages they teach and usually use their knowledge to good effect to conduct activities, often exclusively in the language being learned. They challenge higher attaining students to achieve well and interpret more complex instructions for others and, where this is the case, listening skills are well developed as a result. Objectives are clear and routinely shared with students and then reviewed at the end of lessons; this effectively reinforces learning by focusing on the key points of the lesson. Activities are usually appropriate and well sequenced, enabling students to build effectively on previous learning and teachers use questioning and visual prompts well to enable students to respond successfully. Students achieve well when they are given the opportunity to use the language themselves to practise informally in pairs or gather information for themselves. Several native speakers of French and Spanish make a good contribution to learning, as do annual exchange visits with a link school in Poitiers, as well as annual trips to Paris. These measures help overcome negative attitudes to Europe. However, the lack of an additional specialist teacher is having an adverse effect. When teaching is unsatisfactory, expectations are too low and a lack of specialist knowledge limits students' learning and achievement. A strong feature is students' use of emails to link with a school in Lyons, but overall, insufficient progress has been made in the use of ICT, and opportunities to develop students' numeracy are missed.

Leadership and management

66. Very good leadership has created a purposeful staff team. However, whole-school issues, for example unsatisfactory attendance, limit the effectiveness of this team. Nevertheless satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below Average	Below Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management of mathematics is good and is leading to improving standards and teaching.
- There are good methods of monitoring and tracking students' progress so students can see how they are progressing and where they need to improve.
- Teachers plan lessons well with clear objectives so students know what they are to do.
- The attitudes of a minority of students are unsatisfactory; students lack concentration when set individual work and this limits their achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

67. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average. The results for 2003 were similar to those in 2002 although the proportion of students attaining level 6 or above increased. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average and those in 2003 were similar.

Standards and achievement

68. By the end of Year 9, students' numerical skills are below average. Understanding of place value is below average. When investigating powers of 10, middle-attaining students understand and can apply the positive powers, but have greater difficulty in understanding negative powers. Comprehension and application of data handling are better and are satisfactory overall. Students produce accurate cumulative frequency graphs and can analyse them well. They calculate conditional probabilities. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining students are developing good skills in graph sketching that prepare them well for the future. When completing coursework, they apply the skills that they have learnt in their mathematics' lessons well and develop ideas further at a higher level. Numeracy skills are below average. Middle attaining students can add and subtract proper fractions but are confused when adding and subtracting mixed numbers.

Teaching and learning

69. Teachers plan their lessons well and have a good knowledge and understanding in mathematics. They share clear objectives with the students so that students understand what is to be achieved. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan the lessons so that there is a balance between different types of activities to maintain the interest of students. However, in a minority of lessons, the activities and tasks do not capture the interest of the students and then they are easily distracted, lack the motivation to work and waste time; in these lessons achievement is unsatisfactory. Homework is set regularly and generally supports the work that students carry out in class well. It consolidates the new learning that takes place in the lessons. Marking and assessment are good.

Leadership and management

70. The leadership and management of mathematics are good. The faculty has developed strategies for raising attainment and there is a clear vision for improvement. Results of national examinations are analysed thoroughly so that strategies can be developed to improve achievement. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved. There has been an improvement in results for students aged 14.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. The strategy for teaching mathematics as a basic skill in all subjects is unsatisfactory, even though some progress has been made since the previous inspection. It is the lack of consistency that is of real concern. In geography, students have sufficient mathematical skills in data handling to draw a population graph and analyse it. However, ICT contributes very little to students' competence; it is limited to addition in a spreadsheet. In design and technology, there is no standardised approach to teaching aspects of mathematics, but students use their measuring skills for packaging design and produce statistics from questionnaires. Students' measuring skills are practised again in art and design when studying proportion, balance and scale. In physical education, GCSE students regularly use their knowledge of data handling and in the athletics unit measurement is practised.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attainers achieve well in both key stages.
- Teachers manage students well so that behaviour is good.
- The recently appointed head of department provides good leadership and staff are working well together as a team to raise standards.
- In Years 10 and 11, there is a wide range of courses, including the separate science subjects and an 'entry level' course, so that all students can follow a science course that is right for them.
- In some lessons, the pace is rather slow, or there is not enough variety in the activities, so that students' concentration becomes patchy and their learning less efficient, though they remain quiet and well behaved.

Commentary

Examination results

72. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were below the national average but continued a rising trend. The 2003 results were similar to those for 2002. Results in the 2002 GCSE science examinations were below the national average and those in 2003 were similar. In 2003 girls gained more of the higher grades, A*-C, than boys.

Standards and achievement

73. Most students in all year groups have at least a basic understanding of the topics they are studying. Higher attainers achieve well, both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. For example, higher attainers in Year 9 produce equations for chemical reactions and some in Year 11 show good understanding of the formation of images by lenses. However, lower attainers often find it difficult to recall work from earlier in the course and their written answers are not as detailed

and precise as they should be. Students' work in investigations is better than their standards in other aspects of science and is broadly average for their age.

Teaching and learning

74. Teachers know their subject well, plan carefully and provide regular homework of good quality so that students can consolidate and extend their learning. In good lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and share their interest and enjoyment of the subject and students achieve well. In a very good lesson for Year 10, students moved quickly from a useful 'starter' activity on energy changes to considering how much energy was used by various appliances displayed round the room. Despite the frequent changes in activity, there was no rush and everybody had the chance to think about what they were doing and why. Hence, students' concentration was intense and their learning quick and secure.
75. There are, however, some weaknesses in lessons that are otherwise satisfactory. For example, few teachers are using the end of the lesson effectively to ensure that students have actually grasped, and will remember, the main points from the lesson. Some higher and middle attaining students in Year 11, many of them boys, have attitudes to their work that are too relaxed. They do not concentrate as well as they might when the teacher is talking or work as quickly as they could do in practical sessions.

Leadership and management

76. The new head of department leads by example, both in terms of the quality of his teaching and in the enthusiasm, team spirit and commitment to improvement that is obvious in the department. The department now has good monitoring systems, sensible plans for the future and new, detailed schemes of work. The previous report judged the provision in science to be good and it is now satisfactory. Hence, the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The department is now moving forward rapidly but the improvements and new initiatives have not yet been in place for long enough to have had a significant impact on students' standards and examination results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Poor

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching by subject specialists in Year 9 is good.
- The achievement of students is poor in Years 10 and 11 because of the poor teaching.
- Standards are falling as a result of poor leadership.
- Students' attitudes to work are poor in Years 10 and 11 because teachers' expectations are too low.
- Students are underachieving in Year 9 because they are not taught the measurement and control aspects of the National Curriculum.

Commentary

Examination results

77. Examination results were well below average in 2002 and only improved marginally in 2003. A high proportion of students gained no grade whatsoever in 2002 and 2003 and few gained the highest grades. Results in the GNVQ ICT were particularly poor with many students not attaining a grade.

Standards and achievement

78. By the end of Year 9, students' practical skills are broadly average, although their ability to use computers to measure events and control devices is well below average because these aspects are not taught in sufficient depth; students are underachieving. Students' understanding of the theory associated with the subject is below average. By the end of Year 11, students' practical skills are below average. They produce good quality presentations and use email with ease, but their ability to use spreadsheets and databases is weak. Students do not have the depth of knowledge and understanding to enable them to succeed in examinations. Students with special educational needs achieve worse than others because their specific needs are not dealt with.

Teaching and learning

79. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but their expectations in Years 10 and 11 are low, both in terms of what students are capable of doing and attitudes that are acceptable; as a result, students underachieve. In Year 9, specialist teachers plan lessons that are interesting to students and maintain their concentration by moving rapidly from one task to the next. The work in students' files shows that this is not always the case and that sometimes too long is spent on individual topics.
80. In Years 10 and 11, however, the situation is completely different. Students are allowed to wander into lessons without challenge for their late arrival. Lessons usually start by allowing students to send and receive emails, which wastes the first ten minutes and also encourages the students to carry on when the teacher is telling them what to do. Most pay attention when the teacher is speaking, but as soon as they move to computers some in every class will surf the Internet, return to emailing or just sit and chat. Teachers go around getting students back on task, but as soon as they turn their back, the students stop working again. Condoning students eating, drinking and wearing personal CD players in lessons exacerbates this problem with attitudes. Poor standards are praised, rather than criticised. The planning of lessons is poor, particularly for students with special educational needs where many teachers pay no attention to the requirements of individual education plans. Teachers do not understand the rigorous requirements of the GNVQ course which results in many students failing the course.
81. Assessment is unsatisfactory in all years. Marking is cursory with few comments that would help a student improve and the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are wildly inflated.

Leadership and management

82. The department now provides a much poorer quality of education than that at the time of the previous inspection. The poor leadership has not addressed sufficiently the issues raised in the previous report, so standards have fallen, achievement is poor and teaching has declined. There is no departmental development plan or scheme of work for GCSE. This latter document is most important as new teachers and non-specialists have no idea of what is to be taught or when it should be taught. Non-specialists in particular receive totally inadequate support. The quality of the teaching is not monitored and examination results are not analysed

in sufficient detail. Some key members of the department are providing poor role models for others in the quality of teaching they provide.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

83. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The number of lessons taken up with examination courses in Years 10 and 11 means that there are too few computers available on a regular basis for other teachers to use. As a result, students are not getting enough opportunities to practise the skills they learn in their ICT lessons.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New schemes of work are leading to improvement in examination results in 2003.
- Teachers demonstrate good specialist knowledge, which is supporting gradual improvement.
- The range of activities and tasks is often not sufficient to meet the wide range of abilities.
- Standards are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11, which is a consequence of staff deployment and insufficient rigour in completing homework and coursework.
- Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low.

Commentary

Examination results

84. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were very low. The results in 2003 show some improvement in the A*-C grades; however, students in both 2002 and 2003 did not do as well as they did in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

85. Students join the school with varying geographical experiences despite the syllabus agreements between the middle school and upper school. In Year 9, students begin to improve their knowledge and geographical skills; their achievement is satisfactory. This was well exemplified when plotting and memorising the location of the tectonic plates and their relationship one to another. They begin to learn the use of correct technical words associated with mapping; many students had not previously encountered such vocabulary. By the end of Year 11, most students show an interest in geography and want to do well. In Year 10, students are successfully building on work they did in their humanities course in Year 9. Some of their basic skills of labelling, using titles, key and scales still have to be refined. Evidence of

improving standards in map work was seen in a Year 11 class on relief rainfall, and in a Year 10 lesson on population students improved their analytical skills.

Teaching and learning

86. In Year 9, students study geography through a humanities course. Recent teacher deployment means that knowledgeable geographers now undertake the majority of teaching in Year 9 and students are now achieving satisfactorily. Teachers structure lessons well with appropriate objectives. These are shared with students and checked at the end of the lesson. However, there is often an insufficient range of activities and tasks to meet the needs of all students, as lessons are focused on the average and below average and so students do not achieve as well as they should. In Years 10 and 11, students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting activities but there are instances where there is insufficient challenge to stretch students, especially the higher attainers, and these students underachieve. This was well exemplified in a Year 10 lesson where students had problems understanding the concept of the Demographic Transition Model. Relationships between the teachers and students are good. This enhances learning and students show satisfactory attitudes to the subject. Students work co-operatively especially with a partner. Lack of access to ICT constrains some of the investigative work. Marking is not sufficiently consistent and evaluative to help students to improve. Homework is used to reinforce learning; however, incompleteness of homework causes a minority of students to fall behind in their learning. Students' work needs to be more rigorously monitored to ensure sufficient demands are made to improve their examination results.

Leadership and management

87. Satisfactory leadership gives a clear vision for the development of geography. The head of department has identified what needs to be done to improve standards. However, the management of implementation has been unsatisfactory. The features identified need to be undertaken with much more rigour.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE exam results are improving because students are attaining higher standards in coursework.
- Students have a good understanding of moral values in topics because teachers emphasise them in lessons.
- Some boys do not achieve highly enough because they have poor attitudes to learning.
- Teachers do not plan learning tasks well enough for students of different attainment so progress is inconsistent.

Commentary

Examination results

88. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below average, but substantially improved in 2003. Girls performed much better than boys did overall.

Standards and achievement

89. In Year 9, students develop skills in using sources of evidence to interpret events but do not develop their answers enough. They make gains in knowledge of topics such as the social change brought about by the Industrial Revolution but lower attainers do not achieve enough because their specific needs are not always addressed in the lesson. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well and produce well-developed coursework assignments. Higher attaining students write particularly well and most students have clear understanding of the moral issues brought about by change in South African society. At times, achievement of the minority, particularly boys, is unsatisfactory because of poor attitudes to learning.

Teaching and learning

90. In Year 9, students benefit by being taught by specialist teachers and their achievement is satisfactory. The aims of the lesson are explained so that they know what is expected, but the outcomes are rarely reinforced by challenging students to explain what they have understood from the lesson. Homework is well used to extend learning beyond the lesson.

91. By the end of Year 11 students have achieved well in developing skills in organising and presenting assignments because teachers have emphasised this in lessons. The marking of work, however, is not good enough because work is not always corrected or students given guidance on how the work could be improved. Learning is enhanced by teachers organising visits to such as Kenilworth Castle and this enables them to link theoretical study to places.

Leadership and management

92. The subject is managed satisfactorily and sound arrangements have been made to cover for the absence of the subject leader. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

Year 9 are following a religious studies course. Years 10 and 11 are following a social and moral course that does not comply with the statutory requirement for students to have access to a religious education.

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Structured lesson plans support the work of non-specialist teachers.
- Teachers treat the responses of students with respect while insisting on good discipline in the lesson, thereby encouraging their participation.
- Teachers encourage students to use examples from their own experience when introducing new religious concepts.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 are deprived of their statutory right to a religious education.
- There is no system by which the progress of students can be monitored in Year 10 and 11.
- There is insufficient record of students' work in order to enable them to review and build on previous learning.
- Students have no opportunities to develop their appreciation of other beliefs and cultures by visiting places of worship, or through discussion with people of different convictions.

Commentary

Examination results

93. Students in Years 10 and 11 do not follow an examination course. There is no accreditation to identify attainment and achievement.

Standards and achievement

94. By the end of Year 9, students can identify the key features of Islam and higher attaining students recognise the reasoning behind such practices as pilgrimage and fasting. They identify different theories for the creation. Lower attaining students complete work; however, there is limited evidence of their understanding. There is little evidence of the development of their knowledge of Christianity and students underachieve. By the end of Year 11, students have considered moral issues and recognise there may be a variety of different valid opinions. Higher attaining students support their opinions with reasons, but the majority do not evaluate their opinions unless encouraged by the teacher. No religious content was observed in Years 10 and 11, and students did not recall receiving any; the achievement of students is poor.

Teaching and learning

95. Teachers seek to involve students actively in their lessons. The lack of assessment and monitoring of achievement, however, results in teachers having an insecure idea of an individual's achievement and attainment. This reduces the determination of students to learn and unless their interest has been captured they make little effort, and teachers have to work hard to maintain progress. There is insufficient incentive for students to apply themselves rigorously. In Years 10 and 11, they are willing to discuss issues; however, opportunities to develop their ideas further are curtailed by the two-week time gap between lessons and absence of homework. Teachers' own expectations of students' achievement are also reduced.

Leadership and management

96. The provision for religious education across the school is not unified. As a result there is no continuity in content, staffing or monitoring of teaching or achievement. The co-ordinator for Year 9 is developing some interesting modules; however, there is no overall development of knowledge and understanding by students as they progress through the school. Standards have fallen since the last inspection as Year 10 and 11 no longer receive a religious education. Improvement since the previous inspection has, therefore, been poor in religious education.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of management is good and ensures a supportive environment for teaching and learning.
- Students achieve very well in graphics because of the very good teaching.
- The individual needs of students are not being met in lessons; this leads to a lack of challenge for some students.
- Standards in food technology are well below average; the achievement of students is poor because of poor teaching.
- The Year 9 curriculum does not provide enough challenge for students and concentrates too heavily on the acquisition of craft skills to the detriment of designing.

Commentary

Examination results

97. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average. Girls performed much better than boys overall. Results in the 2003 examinations improved significantly.

Standards and achievement

98. By the end of Year 9, students' making skills are average. They use a variety of tools and equipment accurately and with confidence in all material areas. The introduction into Year 9 of a Computer Aided Design (CAD) course is a positive development; however, there is currently no opportunity for students to use Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM). Students' designing skills are weak because over-concentration upon the acquisition of skills limits their opportunities for creativity and decision-making. By the end of Year 11, standards of designing and making are average; however, standards vary considerably across the department. Students' work is often outstanding in graphics, where it is characteristically creative, thorough and superbly presented; students achieve very well. In contrast, standards in food technology are well below average, students underachieve because of the poor teaching. The department provides after-school booster classes for students in Year 11; these classes are well attended and are having a positive impact upon achievement.

Teaching and learning

99. In Year 9 students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Lessons are usually well paced and have clear learning objectives; however, in general, lessons are dominated too much by the teachers, with few opportunities given to students to contribute to their own learning or show initiative. A structured programme throughout the year provides students with the opportunity to experience a wide range of materials and processes that capture the interest

of students of all abilities; students with special educational needs learn at a rate that is similar to all other students.

100. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is consistently very good in graphics, where students of all abilities are challenged, teachers have high expectations and assessments are used to help students' learning improve. However, in food technology teaching is poor because explanations are over-complicated and the lessons are dull and uninspiring. As a result students learn very little. Students' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory overall but vary according to the quality of teaching they receive. When challenged and engaged as in graphics, students' attitudes are very positive, they work hard, are interested and take pride in their work. In contrast, attitudes to food technology are unsatisfactory and worsening. In some areas, notably resistant materials, the teaching of theory is too removed from the practical activity. This does not allow students to make links between the theory and practice and whilst students are gaining some new knowledge their understanding is less secure.

Leadership and management

101. The department is managed well, new teachers are supported and there is a positive working relationship between the teachers. The head of department has established effective policies reflecting the aims of the school; however, these are not being applied consistently across the department and there is no shared vision for improvement. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained despite a high turnover of staff, and new developments such as the inclusion of CAD teaching in Year 9 reflect a commitment to improve the provision.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good; students are inspired by their teachers' expertise.
- Students achieve well in all years because of the good teaching.
- The quality of leadership is good, with dynamic management.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in the development of students' work.

Commentary

Examination results

102. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were average overall and results in 2003 are similar. Girls' results were above average.

Standards and achievement

103. By the end of Year 9, students' drawing and painting skills are above average. They use a good range of shading techniques very well to achieve tone, texture and three-dimensional effects. They have an adequate understanding of what constitutes good composition. This represents good achievement given their below average skills when they join the school.
104. By the end of Year 11, students' research and development skills are well developed. Their practical skills are good, helped by the high quality paints, brushes and other equipment provided. Students' skills in experimental work are average. This work is not built up systematically. The low funding does not make provision for students to be given sketchbooks for this purpose.

Teaching and learning

105. In Year 9, students benefit from knowledgeable specialist teachers and as a result, students achieve well. These teachers inspire students by the quality of their creative ideas and demonstrations. The teachers structure lessons well with a good range of activities to capture students' interest.
106. In Years 10 and 11, students research and develop their topics in good depth. The teachers give very good demonstrations of the level of work required for the top grades. The students are well informed about the requirements of the course. They have very good attitudes to the subject and work at a good pace. Marking and assessment are good and students are clear about what they have to do to improve. A significant number of students are absent from all lessons. This hinders their learning and achievement.

Leadership and management

107. The department is managed well; planning and documentation are very good. The head of department gives good support to newly qualified and non-specialist teachers. This is a vibrant department and displays of students' work enhance the whole school. There is good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards and assessment in GCSE have improved. The incidents of non-specialist teaching are almost eliminated. There is insufficient provision for the use of information and communications technology.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and students underachieve in Year 9 because of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Unsatisfactory management has resulted in poor assessment procedures and progress since the last inspection.
- Marking of students' work is poor and fails to inform them how well they are doing or what they need to do to get better.
- Teaching incorporates good demonstrations but suffers from too much input from teachers and not enough creativity from students during lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

108. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below average and have been so for the last three years. Girls performed much better than boys did overall. Results in 2003 were similar.

Standards and achievement

109. Students' performing and composing skills are stronger than their theoretical work. By the end of Year 9, they use a variety of voices and effects on the keyboards when creating simple pieces. They understand musical elements such as tempo and texture but do not always incorporate them successfully in their compositions. Students with above average musical skills such as those learning instruments from the visiting teachers are not always stretched enough in lessons and consequently do not achieve well enough. Students do not use computers with music software enough in lessons because there is only one machine and its use is not planned. By the end of Year 11, students' practical skills are average but their understanding of musical history and theory is weak. Students enter the course in Year 10 with a wide range of musical ability and generally make satisfactory progress. Students use their instruments to create pieces in a variety of styles. Higher attaining students use computer software to notate their pieces in traditional notation or guitar tablature. Lower attainers struggle to locate the correct notes on the keyboard and have very low performance skills.

Teaching and learning

110. Teaching is knowledgeable with regular use of good quality practical demonstrations. The pace of lessons is often too slow with much of the time spent listening to the teacher and copying information from worksheets and the board. There is too much input by teachers and not enough opportunities for students to create music. Scrutiny of students' work shows that they

do not achieve as much as they should throughout the year. The marking of students' work is poor; teachers' comments are vague and unhelpful. For example, a Year 11 student had the comment "getting there" written on several pieces of work. Assessments by teachers have been over-generous because the students' full range of musical skills is not taken into account when assessing work at the end of Year 9. Students' musical ability is not assessed on entry to the school so the teacher has no knowledge of what they need to do to improve. The schemes of work are based on a dated commercial scheme with much use of worksheets and do not tackle all the requirements of the National Curriculum.

111. In Years 10 and 11, students are given more opportunities to make music. Planning of these lessons is satisfactory and as a result students achievement satisfactorily. A good feature of these lessons is the way in which students are keen to learn and use the musical instruments to create their own work. They work well together, concentrate well and demonstrate good independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

112. The head of department is committed to providing extra-curricular opportunities such as the annual production. However, a very low number of students receive instrumental tuition and there are no weekly musical ensembles or groups. The unsatisfactory schemes of work and planning result in a mundane curriculum that lacks creativity. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are lower and the quality of teaching has fallen. Most of the issues of the previous inspection have not been dealt with effectively.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Dance

Two practical lessons in Years 10 and 11 were observed and students' GCSE work was scrutinised. Standards in practical dance are close to average, but students' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects are low, reflected in the poor quality of their written work.

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership provides a clear vision for the subject.
- GCSE results are improving as a result of good teaching in this course.
- Very good relationships between staff and students have created a strong departmental ethos, which is having a positive impact on students' attitudes.
- Poor attendance, and the unsatisfactory attitudes of a significant number of students, continues to adversely affect standards and achievement in Year 11.

Commentary

Examination results

113. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average, and improved still further in 2003.

Standards and achievement

114. By the end of Year 9, students' practical skills are average, and they achieve well in games. Students are competent in a range of skills with particular strengths in netball and football. By Year 11, standards are average overall. Students achieve well in the GCSE course. Good learning was seen in swimming, where students of all levels of attainment made good progress in understanding the principles of fitness training. Written work reflects a broadly average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. In the non-examination course, standards in hockey and rugby are below average. Although satisfactory in most lessons, students' achievement is hindered by the lack of time given to mastering the basic skills, the negative attitudes of a significant minority and unsatisfactory attendance, particularly in Year 11.

Teaching and learning

115. In Year 9, students benefit from enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers. High standards are expected and achieved, reflected in good participation, standards of dress and behaviour. A range of interesting activities motivates students who put good physical effort into their work, and learn well at a demanding pace.
116. These good characteristics are maintained in Years 10 and 11, well illustrated in a GCSE swimming lesson, where very good planning ensured the involvement of all students, including a group of reluctant non-participants. Very good support and well-timed interventions by the teacher ensured the latter's success, and all the boys left with a sense of achievement. Most students respond well when given a share of responsibility for their learning, such as a Year 11 boy who took pride in demonstrating the correct stretches, as he led the warm-up. However, not all students show such maturity, and teachers find it increasingly challenging to motivate them and to ensure the rate of progress that is required. Despite well-managed lessons, more time than should be necessary has to be spent in encouraging participation and keeping students on task, because of the immature attitudes of a significant minority.

Leadership and management

117. New, effective leadership of the department has created a committed team approach to improving standards. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are higher, and the quality of teaching is improving.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

For vocational ICT, see previous section headed 'Information and communication technology'.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Citizenship is delivered predominantly through personal and social education and moral and social education. Some subjects also contribute individual lessons, for example drama and history.

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Structured lesson plans support the work of non-specialist teachers.
- Teachers treat the responses of students with respect and this encourages their participation.
- New schemes of work provide a clear overview of the delivery of citizenship.
- The Community Challenge Day for Year 9 provides them with a good opportunity for active citizenship.
- Monitoring of progress is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Teachers' expectations are too low and they fail to ensure increasing depth of discussion.
- There is no system to note and assess the development of skills in citizenship.
- Provision for citizenship across the curriculum has been identified, but it is not monitored or collated.
- Students have no means of reviewing what they have learnt as individual students' files contain very little work or evaluation of progress.

Commentary

Examination results

118. Students do not follow an examination course in citizenship.

Standards and achievement

119. By the end of Year 9, students have a clear understanding of the debating process and have experienced the work of the student council. Levels of discussion and involvement are limited; however, they are developing their listening skills and most are willing to voice their opinions. Higher attaining students recognise the need to support their views with reasons. They understand the importance of the community, although council notes indicate that many do not appear to recognise their responsibility to contribute to it. By the end of Year 11, students have investigated such issues as racism and demonstrate understanding of the problem, although recognition of its causes and ways to overcome it are not secure. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory, but reduced by the lack of determination and motivation of some students. Teachers have to work hard to maintain student involvement. Limited previous knowledge and failure to build on prior learning mean students are only slowly developing skills and understanding.

Teaching and learning

120. During personal and social education lessons teachers benefit from well thought out lesson plans that support consistency across the year group. In the best lessons teachers have thought about the delivery of these plans and identified how they can develop students' understanding of the issues. In some lessons, however, expectations are too low and the level of discussion remains low and the issues generalised. Students do not have an overview of the aims and objectives of citizenship and have not connected the opportunities for citizenship that they meet. This limits the development of their understanding of the concept. The lack of assessment and rigorous evaluation of students' progress means that the emphasis is on the

delivery of material rather than the students' learning. Teachers encourage students to share opinions with others and develop their own ideas through group activities.

Leadership and management

121. There has been an extended period without leadership. The newly appointed co-ordinator has correctly identified areas for development and has re-written schemes of work and developed lesson plans. New methods of evaluation are being designed. At present there is insufficient information to enable her to monitor progress or to judge achievement over time. Students have no individual record of their progress in order to identify the development of their knowledge and skills, or to verify their application of citizenship. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the last report.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Design and technology	7	100	89.2	14.3	32	34.3	35.7
Information technology	5	100	78.2	20	20.6	32	28.5
History	5	80	91.8	20	37.2	26	37.8
Sociology	7	100	83.7	0	33.6	31.4	33.8
Other social sciences	10	100	83.2	40	32.5	36	33.6
English literature	10	100	94.4	20	37.9	32	38.9
General studies	11	54.5	78.6	0	25.7	16.4	30

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
Mathematics	5	100	93.3	80	52.2	104	84.7
Design and technology	8	100	95.3	25	35.5	67.5	76.5
Information technology	15	73.3	89.1	33.3	22.4	61.3	64.1
Art and design	6	100	96.1	33.3	48.7	80	85.1
Drama	8	100	98.1	50	41.5	90	82.9
History	11	100	97.1	9.1	41	70.9	81.2
Sociology	14	100	95.4	57.1	39.6	94.3	79.1
Other social sciences	8	87.5	94.3	25	38.9	75	77.7
English literature	22	100	98.5	31.8	43.7	77.3	84.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for the inspection was English literature.

English

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers possess good knowledge of the subject.
- Students understand, and have an enthusiasm for, the way novels present social issues.
- Some of the teaching causes students to become passive.
- Some higher attaining students do not achieve as well as they should because they are not sufficiently challenged.

Commentary

Examination results

122. In 2002, results at A-level were below average. Results have fluctuated over the past four years from being average to being well below it. Results at AS-level were above average in 2002. Results in 2003 were broadly similar to those obtained in 2002. The subject is a popular choice for A-level; however, the proportion of students that has studied the subject to AS-level, failed the assessment, then dropped the subject, has been high over the last two years.

Standards and achievement

123. By Year 13, most students show a willingness to take part in group or whole-class discussions and understand the value of sharing their ideas with others in order to increase their understanding. In this aspect of the work, higher attainers are articulate and possess a sound technical vocabulary. However, the majority of students are middle and lower attainers, and they usually express themselves briefly, sometimes in too colloquial a way, and often find difficulty in elaborating their ideas in response to questioning. These features are also found in students' written work. High attainers produce well-structured, well-illustrated essays. The written work of lower attainers is often too short, the vocabulary lacks sophistication and there are too many errors in spelling and punctuation. Most students take an interest in social issues and are willing to explore how these are presented in literature. Thus some of the most thorough and thoughtful written work seen was on how racism is presented in contrasting novels by John Steinbeck and Alice Walker. The extent to which students pursue their own studies is variable. Higher attainers work independently and could give examples of useful material they had discovered on the Internet, particularly when examining the context of literature they were studying. In general, however, students had less interest in finding things out for themselves than might be expected.

Teaching and learning

124. Teachers know their subject well, as was seen by the way in which the social context of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of being Earnest" was explained to Year 13 students and led them to speculate about how the play might be produced. When the purpose of the lesson is clearly defined, relevant and interesting resources are used and there is variety in the lesson, students become more active and learn quickly. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson on satire in which students became ingenious in their interpretation of some lines from Alexander Pope. Teaching is less effective when the teacher leads students through the work, providing them with ideas and interpretations, and the students assume an essentially passive role. In some lessons seen there was a wide range of prior attainment amongst the students. However, the nature of the tasks covered did not reflect this range, with the consequence that potentially higher attaining students were not sufficiently challenged and so did not improve their skills at the rate that might have been expected. The quality of teachers' feedback on written work is variable. At best it is thorough and provides good guidance on what students need to do to improve. It is least effective when comments are superficial and errors are overlooked.

Leadership and management

125. The head of faculty is a good role model for other teachers. She helps create good relationships amongst her colleagues and between teachers and students. Assessment data is used effectively to monitor progress.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

126. Satisfactory use is made of language and literacy across the curriculum. Many middle and lower attainers usually express themselves briefly. These features are also found in students' written work.

MATHEMATICS

The focus for the inspection was mathematics.

The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. The school offers AS-level and A-level in three areas: pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good level of knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of concepts.
- There are good relationships between students and teachers that promote confidence in students.

- The A-level results in 2002 were well above average.
- In 2003, the achievement of males was not as high as that of the females.
- Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently to give teachers guidelines on teaching methods and resources so that the quality of teaching can be improved further.

Commentary

Examination results

127. In 2002, the results at A-level were well above average. Students did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. Results were significantly lower in the 2003 examinations when the achievement of the females was better than that of the males. Students did better in statistics in Year 13 than they did in pure mathematics or mechanics.

Standards and achievement

128. The quality of students' written and oral work is in line with expectations at this stage in the course. They have a sound understanding of mathematics and make use of past work when introduced to a new topic, for example, when they are learning how to factorise polynomials using standard identities. They are able to use their understanding of factorisation and extend it. However, students rely too heavily on calculators to carry out simple operations. In Year 12, students are introduced to mechanics and they develop and apply their understanding of Newton's Laws of Motion when solving problems involving velocity and acceleration. In statistics, students build on their understanding of probability by setting up models to study data and learn to use the laws of probability using correct notation.

Teaching and learning

129. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics. They give good support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. In the better lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons so that the interest of all is engaged. The better lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are planned well to allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. For example, when studying composite functions, the teacher allows students to apply their new learning at each stage before going on to more complex examples. This consolidates new learning well. Homework is set regularly. It is used effectively to consolidate and extend new work that is introduced in the lesson. The better example is where it is used to develop students' study skills, encouraging them to read about inverse functions in preparation for lessons.

Leadership and management

130. Mathematics in the sixth form is efficiently led and managed. Although there is a comprehensive programme of study that follows the published syllabuses, the schemes of work lack guidance on appropriate teaching methods and use of resources that would enhance the teaching further. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. The department has recognised that students' mathematical skills would benefit from extra tuition and have developed a booklet that prepares students well for the more complex mathematics that they meet on their AS-level course. The provision for mathematics was good at the previous inspection; it is now satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They were good at the previous inspection. Overall the improvement is unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

131. Satisfactory use is made of mathematics across the curriculum. There is extensive use of graphs in the Business AVCE course to show sales channels for the consumption of confectionery. Students are developing and practising numeracy skills when working on a trial balance sheet in their finance module.

SCIENCE

The focus for the inspection was chemistry.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2002 and 2003 students did well in chemistry; they gained better A-level results than might be expected from their GCSE results when they started the course.
- Students enjoy the subject. They appreciate the enthusiastic and carefully planned teaching they receive and the extra help that is always available if needed.
- The occasional lesson relies too heavily on the course notes; this is rather dull and students' concentration wavers.

Commentary

Examination results

132. There were only two candidates for A-level chemistry in 2002 and both gained pass grades. In 2003 there were six candidates; all gained pass grades and all except one gained the higher grades A or B.

Standards and achievement

133. Many of the 11 students in Year 12 are doing better than expected at this early stage. However, a few are not reaching the expected standard because they do not have sufficient background understanding and skills, for example in balancing chemical equations, to benefit from the teaching they receive.

134. Several students in Year 13 gained AS-level results that were not as good as they should have been and underachieved. However, these students now realise how hard they need to work, their standards are improving and they are now achieving well. In particular, their practical and investigative skills are good. For example, they work quickly and carefully to distinguish between aldehydes and ketones and draw appropriate conclusions.

Teaching and learning

135. The best lessons are lively and interesting and students have to think hard from the very beginning. There is skilled, intensive questioning, using supplementary questions when students get stuck. Students are actively involved throughout and there is plenty of reinforcement of the main points that they need to remember.
136. Students do make occasional use of ICT, for example in researching topics and preparing presentations. However, teachers do not use simulations or data-logging experiments as often as they might.
137. Some students in Year 12 pose particularly valuable, searching questions to the teacher. This is beneficial to the whole class in terms of confirming and extending students' understanding. A few students in each year group are not as well organised as they might be in, for example, presenting calculations and keeping their files in good order.

Leadership and management

138. The teacher in charge of the subject is a skilled and experienced chemistry teacher. He has used his expertise to produce very detailed planning for the A-level and AS-level courses. This is of great benefit to the two less experienced members of the team and provides a high level of security for students. The A-level investigative coursework tasks provided for students were not as demanding as they should have been in 2003; the department has made appropriate modifications.
139. It is not possible to judge the progress in chemistry since the time of the previous inspection. Chemistry was not a focus subject in that inspection and only four students took A-level chemistry in 2000, too few for any overall judgements on their results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus for the inspection was information and communication technology.

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Students' achievement is unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory teaching.
- The quality of teaching has got worse as a result of unsatisfactory leadership.
- Students' attitudes to work are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

140. Examination results at A-level were below average in 2002 and students underachieved compared to their performance in other subjects. Results improved marginally in 2003. Results at AS-level were well above average in 2002 and students' achievement was satisfactory. Results fell in 2003.

Standards and achievement

141. Standards on both the AS-level course and the A-level course are below average. Students are underachieving because they are not made to work hard enough. In general, standards of coursework are better than the students' knowledge and understanding.

Teaching and learning

142. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but their expectations of how much work can be covered in a lesson and how much effort students should make are unsatisfactory. Lessons are slow to start and the pace is pedestrian. Activities, such as discussing a date for the completion of coursework for 30 minutes, simply waste time that could be spent teaching. Very few students had completed homework during the inspection, but this was just accepted by the teacher on all occasions. In one class, no student had done a relatively simple homework that was to form the basis of the lesson, so the lesson that had been planned had to be abandoned while the students carried out the task instead. Too often the lesson is dominated by the teacher talking to the students when other activities, such as discussion, would make the lesson more interesting and improve students' skills at the same time.

Leadership and management

143. The quality of teaching is now unsatisfactory because nobody is taking the lead and determining how standards can be improved. There has been no proper analysis of examination results for the last two years. There is no departmental development plan or checking of the quality of teaching. Some key members of the department are providing poor role models for others in the quality of teaching they provide.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

144. Students have good access to computers to support their study because teachers are always willing to allow them to use computers that are free. Across the sixth form, students are encouraged to use computers in their coursework; their skills are broadly average.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was psychology and sociology.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to effective learning for most students and they achieve well in practical investigation work.
- Good leadership and management lead to the effective teaching of well-structured lessons.
- Guidance for students on their choice of subject and level of study is not rigorous enough; some students are faced with demands that are beyond their capability.
- Analysing students' previous examination performance data and the setting of realistic targets for students' achievements are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

145. Results in the 2002 examinations were average for A-level psychology and well above average for AS-level. Female students did better than male students at both levels. Results at A-level for the three years between 2000 and 2002 have alternated between average and below average and this year's results were not as good as last year's for both A-level and AS-levels.

Standards and achievement

146. Students in Year 12 describe theories of memory and attachment fairly well but they are not able to evaluate these theories as effectively. Students are able to analyse critically and see further implications in investigations, for instance ethical considerations such as confidentiality or the problems of replication. At the end of Year 13, most students demonstrate above average investigative skills. The work of the best students is clearly written, uses an appropriate vocabulary and demonstrates knowledge, understanding and research and the ability to explore and develop ideas. A minority, however, experience considerable difficulty in obtaining a grade at all. Several students in Year 13 who did not attain any module grades in the AS-level examinations are now facing the increased demands of the A-level course.

Teaching and learning

147. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Teachers plan their lessons well, including in them a range of activities that challenge and stimulate their students. Teachers plan learning activities that enable students to gain first hand experience of the ideas they need to acquire. As a result, students learn well and achieve well. For example, in a very good Year 12 class on memory, the teacher involved the students in memory tasks using similar sounding letters and similar meaning words to highlight the differences in encoding data for short-term and long-term memory. As a result, students learned well, taking ownership of the knowledge and understanding. Teachers create many opportunities for students to work alone through the setting of regular homework tasks. The students however have not yet fully developed their independent learning skills. Teachers assess learning well during lessons and the assessment of practical investigation work is thorough. The assessment of written assignments is satisfactory. The rigorous monitoring of student achievement progress through frequent assessment and student target setting is not yet fully developed. Students' attitudes towards the subject are positive and they enjoy the lessons. Attendance in some lessons however is low.

Leadership and management

148. The subject is managed well and clear vision and direction are provided. A well-structured handbook that contains thorough schemes of work and guidance for staff is in place. An annual evaluation of students' performance in examinations is carried out but the analysis of data to ascertain student achievement is not fully developed. It is not possible to judge the progress in psychology since the time of the previous inspection. Psychology was not a focus subject in that inspection.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Year 13.
- Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject.
- There is complacency in the monitoring of teaching in the subject.
- Lack of a head of department impacts on standards.

Commentary

Examination results

149. Results at A-level in 2002 were well above average and were above average at AS-level. In 2003, AS-level results were disappointing. A large number of students did not achieve their target grades and a significant number were ungraded. Coursework usually has a positive

effect on final grades. However, recently, some students have found coursework requirements difficult to follow and this has resulted in the lower AS-level results. In comparison, A-level results were similar to those attained in 2002.

Standards and achievement

150. In Year 12, students new to this course are struggling to demonstrate an understanding of key sociological terms and concepts. In Year 13, students are able to draw concepts and theories from different sociological traditions. They use a range of evidence to produce and support generalisations about social life. However, these students have yet to adopt a critical attitude towards sources of evidence.

Teaching and learning

151. In Years 12 and 13, students benefit from teachers who have a good command of their subject. However, there is a tendency for the teaching to be too teacher-directed and teachers do not take sufficient time to reinforce basic sociological terms, concepts and theories. Students need to be more fully involved in their own learning and teachers need to be questioning effectively to check that understanding has taken place. There are often missed opportunities to extend students' learning. Insufficient attention is given to the development of analytical and evaluative skills.

Leadership and management

152. Day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory, as the two teachers work well together and the department runs smoothly. However, leadership is unsatisfactory as the lack of a head of department is having an effect on standards, both teachers having other significant responsibilities within the school. Students benefit from the long-term teaching partnership in many ways, but not in terms of critical evaluation of teaching, standards and achievement. Insufficient attention is given to the monitoring of teaching within the department. It is not possible to judge the progress in sociology since the time of the previous inspection. Sociology was not a focus subject in that inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus for the inspection was drama.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and high expectations of their students, and students achieve well as a result.

- Students have good positive attitudes to the subject and teacher/student relationships are good; both enhance learning.
- Students gain in confidence and learn to work and perform together well in groups.
- The consistency of marking is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

153. Examination results at A-level in 2002 were above average. This continues a trend of results being above average.

Standards and achievement

154. During Year 12 students make good progress, rapidly improving their knowledge, skills and understanding of all aspects of drama because teachers plan lessons well and ensure all aspects of the course are covered. In a Year 12 class, students did not yet feel comfortable with each other because it was only the third time they had worked creatively. They initially lacked confidence in their ability to perform and were not fully used to the need to co-operate in group preparation before presenting a performance.

155. Year 13 students use their very good relationships to bring the best from each other in group work, in taking initiative and responsibility, and in generating original ideas from outlines proposed by the teacher. They have been taught to be good independent learners. Their understanding of different styles of dramatic concepts is enhanced by regular opportunities to see live performances. For example, they could describe the main theatrical devices used in a recent production of "Bouncers" they had seen. This experience helps them to incorporate imagery into their pieces and have a good understanding of devised theatre. Students show less skill, however, in how to use appropriate drama theory and vocabulary in their work.

Teaching and learning

156. Teachers plan lessons well and ensure students become more confident in sharing ideas, rehearsing how to present them and then showing them to an audience. Students are keen to get involved in work because of the lively and stimulating way in which teachers enthusiastically pass on their own very good specialist knowledge. Teachers have high expectations and good relationships with students. The way in which teachers give students tasks to explore results in good learning of how to propose ideas, negotiate them, and then develop them using group strengths. Students in Year 13 are given and value responsibilities for assisting with lower school lessons. Occasionally the pace of learning slows as teachers allow students too much control of the lesson.

Leadership and management

157. Documentation and schemes of work are good and ensure lessons are well planned. The quality of teaching is monitored well and enables effective sharing of good practice. The department has strong links with local teacher-training courses and increasingly involves student-teachers in its work. This ensures the staff team have up-to-date ideas. There is an annual production involving many students but links within the community are not strong and the subject has a relatively low profile within the school. Marking is not consistent and lacks diagnostic comments that inform the students of exactly how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. The subject was not reported on in the last inspection so progress cannot be judged.

BUSINESS

The focus for the inspection was business education.

Business education

The provision in business education is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching on the AVCE course leads to students achieving well.
- The good links with the business community enable students to relate their studies to the real world.
- The learning tasks of the GNVQ students are not sufficiently customised to their needs.

Commentary

Examination results

158. Results in the 2002 AVCE examination were well above average, whilst in 2003 nearly one-third achieved six units or more accreditation. It is unusual for students not to complete the course. Results in the GNVQ Intermediate course were well above average with two-thirds of students attaining merit or distinction level. In 2003 most students attained at least a pass grade.

Standards and achievement

159. By the end of Year 13, students have skills in organising and managing assignments and use case study examples very well to research information. Students in Year 13, for example, used nationally available data to compile graphs to identify marketing strategies for the sale of confectionery. Work is detailed and well reasoned and ICT is well used to develop and present assignments. In the GNVQ course, students in Year 12 produce written projects that are well structured and with business terms used in appropriate context. They have knowledge of the business environment, with higher attaining students applying theoretical information through business examples. Other students, however, do not use their knowledge of the business world enough. The standards of the group who have just commenced the GNVQ course are below average.

Teaching and learning

160. Teachers on the AVCE course are appropriately qualified and experienced and this makes a significant contribution to the achievement of well above average standards. Lessons are developed at a brisk pace, learning is rigorous and teachers have high expectations of

students' efforts. Students respond well by concentrating on what is taught and engaging orally and in writing. Most teachers are appropriately qualified to teach the GNVQ course and there is planning to link the course with students' work-experience schedule. The aims of lessons are clear and assignments are well assessed so that students know how well they are doing and how they can improve further. Lessons are structured to engage students actively in the learning but, on occasions, tasks are not well matched to the different abilities of the students so that progress is slower than expected.

Leadership and management

161. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator and there are established lines of communication to plan and review progress in business studies. Good support is given to newly qualified teachers so that integration into the course is rapid and effective. Clear systems are in place to track and review the progress that students make so they are kept well informed about their achievement. There was no report at the previous inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus for the inspection was health and social care.

Health and social care

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

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	N/A

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching on the AVCE course is good and students learn quickly as a result.
- Students attain high standards in AVCE because of the good teaching.
- Lack of monitoring of teaching in Year 12 produces lessons of an unsatisfactory standard.
- Achievement at Intermediate GNVQ is patchy because students are insufficiently challenged.
- Not all teachers are sufficiently well trained in the demands of the course.

Commentary

Examination results

162. Results in GNVQ Intermediate examinations up to 2002 followed an improving trend. However, the school has requested that the poor 2003 results are investigated and re-moderated and the results of this are pending. In comparison, the new AVCE course has produced good results. Students are exceeding their target grades and the department is producing results that are higher than the national average.

Standards and achievement

163. Intermediate and Foundation students in Year 12 are not being sufficiently challenged by their teachers and achievement is currently unsatisfactory. Many of these students are not working

to capacity and are not doing as well as they should. Students in Year 12, who are new to the course, are still finding difficulty in employing technical terminology correctly. They have yet to demonstrate even a basic knowledge of health and social care services or state how people can gain access to them. However, on the AVCE course, students make good progress. They achieve well compared to their prior attainment. They apply their knowledge of the major theories of human development and they demonstrate a secure understanding of the organisation of health and social care services. They are also beginning to demonstrate an appreciation of the ethical issues which arise when balancing the rights of clients with the rights of others.

Teaching and learning

164. Year 12 Intermediate and Foundation students make limited progress because some teachers do not have a secure understanding of course requirements. They do not use a range of teaching methods, which best allows the students to develop different ways of working, and the pace of lessons is often inappropriate. As a result of this, many Year 12 students are unclear what they are meant to be doing in lessons. Students are not being provided with sufficient guidance at this stage of their course. In contrast, teaching on the AVCE course is good and students learn quickly as a result. Often the teachers' enthusiasm inspires the students who work hard as a result and they respond to the challenges that these staff set for them.

Leadership and management

165. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. However, management of the department is unsatisfactory. Not all staff are aware of their responsibilities and there is a lack of uniformity of systems and good practice within the department. Changes in staffing and the use of unqualified teachers do not enable this department to work in an effective manner at present. It is not possible to judge the progress in health and social care since the time of the previous inspection. Health and social care was not a focus subject in that inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	5	6
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5	6
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	5	7
Overall standards achieved		6
Students' achievement	5	6
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		5
Attendance	4	5
Attitudes	4	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	5
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		5
The quality of education provided by the school		6
The quality of teaching	5	6
How well students learn	5	6
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		5
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	5	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		6
The governance of the school	4	5
The leadership of the headteacher		5
The leadership of other key staff	5	5
The effectiveness of management	6	6

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

