

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DRONFIELD SCHOOL

Dronfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112969

Headteacher: Mr C Burke

Lead inspector: W Keast

Dates of inspection: 29th September – 3rd October 2003

Inspection number: 259279

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1989
School address:	Green Lane Dronfield
Postcode:	S18 2FZ
Telephone number:	01246 412372
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Brader
Date of previous inspection:	19 January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Dronfield school is much bigger than other secondary schools with an unusually large sixth form. It is a popular and over-subscribed school, drawing pupils from the outskirts of neighbouring towns. The attainment of pupils coming into Year 7, as shown by their end of Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science, is well above average. Their attainment in other subjects ranges from below to above average. They come from areas which, overall, are favoured in social and economic measures compared to the national average. The pupil population is stable with very few joining or leaving part-way through the year. Few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and there are very few whose home language is not English. A smaller than average proportion of pupils have identified special educational needs although the proportion with statements of need is broadly average.

The school achieved Technology College status in 2001. It has Investors in People, Artsmark Silver, Careermark and Sportsmark awards. Having occupied two sites more than a mile apart for many years, the school will move onto a single site next year when the current building work is completed.

Four-fifths of pupils continue in education post 16, the large majority at the school. Less than one in ten students leave the sixth form at the end of Year 12 and four fifths of students continue in some form of further or higher education when they leave at the end of Year 13. The majority of students join the sixth form to follow A level and AVCE courses. Their attainment is above the average attainment of students entering sixth forms.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1522	W Keast	Lead inspector	
19693	S Hall	Lay inspector	
22423	J Lovgreen	Team inspector	English; sixth form English literature
17237	A Lovett	Team inspector	Mathematics; sixth form mathematics
4922	M Driver	Team inspector	Science; sixth form chemistry
2501	R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art; sixth form art
8076	T Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology; sixth form home economics
18663	P Burchell	Team inspector	Geography; sixth form geography
30893	M Currie	Team inspector	History
32231	A Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology; sixth form business (AVCE)
32115	J Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; sixth form French
11746	R Coulthard	Team inspector	Music
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education; sixth form sociology
8096	N Files	Team inspector	Religious education
2652	R Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Sixth form psychology
31192	J Stewart	Team inspector	Sixth form physical education
32777	J McVeigh	Team inspector	Sixth form biology
11240	P Shallcross	Team inspector	Sixth form information and communication technology
14490	S Jackson	Team inspector	English as an additional language
32876	A Porter	Team inspector	
30580	A-M Storey	Team inspector	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Dronfield School is a **good** school providing good value for money. Pupils reach standards which are well above average and which are rising. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with much that is good, in the main school; they are good in the sixth form. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory as they maintain high standards through the school; it is good in the sixth form. Pupils' attitudes are very good throughout the school. Leadership and management are, overall, satisfactory and are good in the sixth form.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards which are well above average, are above average for similar schools and are rising.
- An effective sixth form.
- Teaching which is good in most subjects but which is unsatisfactory in music and art, and in German in Years 10 and 11.
- A lack of rigour in monitoring and evaluating classroom practice.
- Very good pupil attitudes.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Well above average standards have been maintained with significant increases in the last two years. Curriculum developments have taken place and a number of awards have been gained, including technology college status. Most issues raised by the last inspection have been successfully tackled. Weakness in the co-ordination of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, and the setting of useful targets at an individual level, remain.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils come to the school with well above average standards and they maintain these high standards. In Year 9, results in 2003 were well above average. Results in English were average while results in mathematics were very high. Significantly more pupils reached the higher National Curriculum levels in mathematics and science than in English. Current standards, early in Year 9, are above average and achievement is satisfactory for all pupils except the higher-attaining pupils in some subjects. In 2002, GCSE results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in several others, were significantly above average. Overall, results in 2003 were significantly better than in 2002 with improvement in English and mathematics. Current standards, early in Year 11, are above average and achievement of all pupils is satisfactory. In Year 13, results in 2003 were better than in 2002, particularly of the boys. Current standards are above average and **students are achieving well.**

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school and this has a positive effect on their achievement. Behaviour, in and around the school is very good and attendance and punctuality, a previous concern in the sixth form, are good. Pupils' personal development is good and the extent to which the school actively promotes this is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning, overall, in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory but with much that is good. In most subjects it is good, with little difference between the older and younger pupils, and pupils learn well. In the first three years, the teaching in mixed ability groupings in some subjects does not always challenge the higher-attaining pupils, and this restricts their learning and the standards they reach. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is better focused for their needs and they achieve as well as other pupils. Teaching is unsatisfactory when the tasks given and the methods used do not meet subject and pupils' needs, and so pupils underachieve because their standards are not high enough. **Teaching in the sixth form is good.** It is good or better in all the focus subjects but chemistry, where it is satisfactory and in art, where it is unsatisfactory. Overall, therefore, students are learning and achieving well.

Overall, the curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils and students well. Extra-curricular activities support subject learning well and provide many sporting activities. This helps to raise standards. The provision for the arts is weaker. The care that the school provides for its pupils is good. They receive good support and guidance from their teachers. The good partnerships between the school and parents, the community the school serves, and the other schools with which it is linked, all make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and their achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school are satisfactory and in the sixth form are good. The work of the governing body in the main school and sixth form is satisfactory in all but their ability to ensure a daily act of worship. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory in the main school, with very good leadership in mathematics and design and technology. Leadership is good in the sixth form. Management in the main school is fairly effective, where the school runs smoothly but where some issues have not been tackled with sufficient rigour. Management in the sixth form is effective and subjects are well managed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is popular and oversubscribed. Parents' views are positive. They highlight good teaching, good progress, lack of bullying, high expectations, fair treatment, approachability and induction procedures as strengths. There was some concern over how well they were informed about progress, with which the inspection team agree, and the extent to which the school sought their views. Pupils were very positive about their school. They felt it was a good school to be at, they were taught well, work was helpfully assessed and they were expected to work hard. They were more self-critical about their behaviour than the inspection team. Discussion with pupils showed that bullying did occur but that it was not an issue for them as, once identified, it was effectively resolved. Older pupils felt unfairly treated because they could see that they would not get the 'perks' they felt current Year 11 pupils had.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Be more self-critical and rigorous in monitoring throughout the school.
- Plan and carry out focused action to tackle identified weaknesses.
- Tackle weaknesses in matching work to pupils' need in Years 7 to 9, the variability of teaching in the main school and the evaluation and use of information from assessment to generate specific and individualised targets for learning.
- Tackle the underachievement in music and art, in religious education in the earlier years and in German in the examination years.
- To meet statutory requirements, ensure a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE DRONFIELD SCHOOL

A large sixth form drawing students from a wider area than the main school and providing a range of GCE and vocational courses

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective sixth form and its cost effectiveness is good. A wide curriculum choice provides well for the needs and aspirations of the students. They are well taught and this, together with their attitudes to learning, helps them achieve well. Examination results are well above average and are improving. The sixth form is well led and managed.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Well above average and rising examination results.
- Good achievement resulting from the good teaching.
- Very good student attitudes to learning which supports achievement.
- Good guidance and support.
- Limited opportunities to enrich the subject curriculum.

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	Very good in English literature where very good teaching combines vitality with intellectual challenge. Good in French .
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good in biology and satisfactory in chemistry where some teaching is too teacher centred and students' independent learning skills are not developed
Information and communication technology	Good
Humanities	Very good in psychology and sociology , and good in geography
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in home economics
Visual and performing arts and media	Unsatisfactory in art and design where teaching is not well matched to students' learning needs and there is underachievement.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Good in physical education
Business	Good in AVCE business
Health and social care	There was no focus subject in this area
General education	There was no focus subject in this area
<p><i>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'.</i></p>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Provision is good. Students know they can seek advice on any issue. Advice is well informed on careers, and on further or higher education. Close attention is given to how well students are achieving, through regular monitoring, by analysing examination performance and by setting challenging targets. The planned programme of induction and training of all of tutors is not yet complete so there is some variation in the application of the very good systems.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The **good leadership** in the sixth form is characterised by effective delegation and teamwork coupled with a passionate desire to build on success and improve further. This has led to good achievement and progress since the last inspection. The **effective management** of tutors supports students well and makes a significant contribution to their excellent attitudes to study and their personal development.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have a very positive view of the school. They enjoyed being a student, they were well taught by expert staff who were easily accessible, their work was assessed thoroughly and they were helped to study independently. Although some felt they had not been well advised on what to study, they felt their courses suited their ability and career plans. In discussion, it was clear that career and choice guidance, and on-going support, were good. The inspection team agrees with their concern over the range of activities available to enrich their curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Results in national examinations are well above average. Standards early in Year 9 are, overall, above average and pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Standards in the core subjects are well above average. Higher-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged by the work they are given in Years 7 to 9 and there is some underachievement. Standards early in Year 11 are above average and pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Work is better matched to the needs of higher-attaining pupils in these years and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils in all years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national testing at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average.
- GCSE results in 2002 were well above average and above average for similar schools. GCSE results rose significantly in 2003.
- Standards, early in Years 9 and 11, are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
- Standards in some subjects in Year 9 are not high enough for the higher-attaining pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.
- Standards in art and music, in religious education in Year 9 and in German in Years 10 and 11 are not high enough and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34 (35)	n/a (33)
Mathematics	39 (38)	n/a (35)
Science	36 (36)	n/a (33)

There were 322 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Results in the end of Year 9 national testing in 2003 were well above the national average, as they had been the previous year. Results in English fell slightly while those in mathematics rose, particularly the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Mathematics results are strongest while those in English are weakest. Comparatively fewer pupils reach the higher levels in English, than in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, that is schools whose pupils gained similar end of Year 6 test results, results in English were average, in mathematics were very high and in science were above average. The school met the targets that it had set for the proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 5 in each of these subjects. On average, over the three years to 2002, boys and girls performed equally well. The trend in results over the last six years is broadly in line with the national trend.

2. The standards seen in Year 9 were, overall, above average. In English, mathematics and science they were well above average. Standards in religious education were below the average level expected by the Agreed Syllabus because teaching and the work given did not allow pupils to reach the higher levels. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory as they make progress from their earlier standards of attainment in relation to their capability. Their achievement is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and physical education. Pupils' standards are average in art and music but, as in religious education, they are not high enough and pupils are underachieving. Without a permanent head of the creative arts faculty, which includes art and music, management of these subjects has been weak. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. Higher-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged by the work they are given and do not achieve as well as they might in every subject.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	57 (59)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (96)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38 (n/a)	n/a (n/a)

There were 287 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

National comparators are not yet available for GCSE results in 2003.

3. In 2002, an above average proportion of pupils gained 5 or more grades A* to C and an average proportion gained 5 or more grades A* to G and at least one pass. The grades A*-C measure was average for similar schools with the other two indicators being below average compared to similar schools. The school did not meet the targets it had set. On average over the last three years, girls have performed better than boys. Results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in a number of others, were significantly above average. Overall results in 2003 have improved dramatically with the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C rising to 73 per cent and the average total point score¹ rising from 45.5 to 52. There were smaller rises in the other two indicators. This significant increase is mainly due to a successful Intermediate GNVQ course in information and communication technology (ICT) taught partly out of school hours. The results in English and mathematics increased in 2003. The school exceeded the targets it had set. Until 2002, the school's results had been rising more slowly than the results nationally but with the 2003 results the trend over the last five years is likely to exceed the national trend. In all subjects in 2002, results were either in line with the national subject average or, in three-fifths of the subjects, significantly above.

4. The standards seen in Year 11 were above average overall, being highest in English, mathematics and design and technology. They were below average in German. In relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 10 and their capabilities, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Their achievement in design and technology is very good as a result of the very good teaching they have. Standards are not high enough in art, music and German because the teaching does not provide enough challenge and structure to enable pupils to make sufficient progress, and in Spanish standards are not as high as they might because teaching between the groups is inconsistent. In these subjects pupils underachieve. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. Teaching pupils in ability groupings and the clear requirements of examination syllabuses leads to higher-attaining pupils also achieving as well as other pupils. The express mathematics group and teaching three sciences results in greater achievement for higher-attaining pupils in these subjects.

Sixth form

Results in the sixth form are rising year on year. Standards, early in the year, are above average and students are achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in 2002 were well above average and results in 2003 were higher again.
- Standards are particularly high and students are achieving very well in English literature, psychology and sociology.
- Standards in art are below average and students are underachieving.

¹ Grade A* scores 8 points, grade A scores 7 points etc

Commentary

National comparators are not yet available for GCE results in 2003.

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	98 (n/a)	95 (n/a)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	41 (n/a)	39 (n/a)
Average point score per pupil	292 (236)	263 (n/a)

There were 137 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Results in 2002 were significantly higher than the previous year - 20 points difference is equivalent to an additional grade - with the boys making a particularly significant increase. Results in 2003 were higher again but the increase is more modest. Results in nearly all examined subjects, in 2002, were above, or well above average with the results for girls in English language and history being in the top five per cent of schools. Results in full design and technology and in art were well below average, as they have been for several years.

6. Within the current overall good picture, standards are particularly high in English literature, mathematics, biology, home economics, psychology and sociology. Students, as a result of the good teaching and their own efforts, are achieving particularly well in English literature, home economics, psychology and sociology. Standards in art are below average and students underachieve because their teaching does not provide them with work that is well matched to their individual needs and which challenges and drives their learning forward.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is good and has improved. Pupils' attitudes are very good and contribute to their achievement. Their behaviour, in and around the school, is very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the past year attendance rates have improved and unauthorised absence rates have decreased.
- The positive outcomes are the result of the school implementing its policies consistently and well.
- Reported incidents of bullying or harassment are generally quickly and effectively resolved.
- The school has no planned strategy to actively support pupils' personal development.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.9
National data	n/a (7.8)	National data	n/a (1.2)

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

7. Most pupils are keen to attend school and attendance levels have improved significantly in the past year. Pupils usually arrive punctually for the start of the school day and for lessons. The school has recently introduced good procedures to quickly follow up any unexplained absences.

8. The attitudes of pupils are very good across the school. They make an important contribution to the learning atmosphere which is present in the majority of lessons and which has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. In lessons, pupils work well together as opportunities arise and support each other in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs display very positive attitudes, and make satisfactory progress as a result.

9. The behaviour support units are effective in including in a mainstream setting pupils whose emotional difficulties create barriers to learning. They do this through providing an innovative alternative curriculum when the needs of individuals have been shown to require this. Pupils who attend the unit feel understood and supported by being able to spend some time in it. As a result, they become less anxious, and more confident they can manage in subject lessons.

10. The behaviour of pupils is very good in lessons. Behaviour in corridors and outside the buildings, before and after school, and during breaks, is almost always orderly. There is very little rowdiness as they move around the sites. Pupils communicate purposefully, without disturbing others. Local shopkeepers comment positively about the behaviour and honesty of the pupils, and there is little fuss when they get on the buses after school. The very good models presented by staff, and the high expectations they have, are key factors in the very good behaviour of the pupils.

11. The school's policies on inclusion are very good, and create an ethos of mutual respect supportive of a learning community. It is symptomatic of this ethos that the rights of staff and pupils alike are recognised in the social inclusion policy, and that there is real consultation with all when policies are being drawn up. Staff are consistent in their implementation of the policies. As a result, pupils are supported in developing focused attitudes to learning and have very good relationships with one another. Their confidence and self-esteem grow accordingly. The school does all it can to prevent bullying and harassment. As a result, there is very little bullying. Any instances are dealt with quickly and effectively. Exclusions are low.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1861	55	1
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	16	0	0

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

12. It is clear that, while at the school, pupils develop and mature. The school has an influence on this through the content of the subjects that are taught, through the teaching by individuals, the relationships which teachers develop with individual pupils and the good role models which they present. This results in pupils having a good understanding of right and wrong and developing a good understanding of their responsibilities of living in a community. Pupils' appreciation of their own and particularly other cultural traditions, and their development of self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is weaker. The school has no planning to actively enable this or to provide some coherence to what pupils experience during their time in the school.

Sixth form

Students have very good attitudes. They are mature and studious.

Main strength

- The skills of independent learning which they develop are a significant factor in their achievement in subjects.

Commentary

13. The attendance of students is good and they arrive punctually for lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was a concern. Their attitudes to learning are very good which leads to lessons where relationships are very good and a good learning climate is established. They work hard and respond well to the guidance that teachers give about ways to improve their work. They respond well to projects and assignments which rely upon them taking the initiative and a degree of responsibility for their own work. They readily take responsibility, for example in chairing the school council, and, as part of the courses which they are following, work with teachers and pupils in a support role.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11, but with much that is good, and are good in sixth form. The learning opportunities provided for pupils through the curriculum are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and are good in Years 10 to 13. Pupils work in a safe and caring environment where they are well supported and guided, particularly so in the sixth form. The school works well with parents, the community and other schools and colleges to support pupils' development and achievement.

Teaching and learning

With a balance of strengths and weaknesses, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11. The way in which teachers assess pupils' work and the use they make of this information is inconsistent across subjects but is satisfactory, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning which are good, in all years, in mathematics, history, geography and physical education leading to generally good achievement. In design and technology, the good teaching in Years 7 to 9 and the very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to correspondingly good and very good achievement.
- Unsatisfactory teaching in music and art in all years, and in German in Years 10 and 11, resulting in underachievement.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements.
- The use of a range of strategies to introduce and teach new concepts in many subjects but too little use of pair and group work in modern foreign languages and pupil involvement in investigative work in mathematics.
- Planning of work which meets pupils' needs and provides challenge and achievement in Years 10 and 11 but which, in some subjects, does not take account of the wide capability of groups in Years 7 to 9.
- Good class management which is helped by pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Marking of pupils' work, in some subjects, is helpful and gives clear guidance on how the work could be improved and in others is inconsistent and provides little help towards improvement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 148 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1%)	23 (16%)	54 (36%)	58 (39%)	11 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

14. Within the overall satisfactory teaching that was seen there were differences between the subjects. Within English and ICT, teaching was better with older pupils because the requirements of the examination syllabus provided a strong focus for planning. Planning for younger pupils did not provide work which was sufficiently well matched to the needs of all pupils within the mixed ability groups in which they are taught. This led to some pupils not achieving as well as they might.

15. Lessons are characterised by good management, well-behaved pupils with a willingness to learn, and good relationships which create an environment within which pupils can learn and achieve. A clear strength in the teaching is the good knowledge and understanding of the teachers. They use their subject knowledge to give clear explanations of the ideas and concepts in their subject, to respond readily to pupils' difficulties and questions and to plan lessons which gradually develop pupils' own knowledge and understanding. However, in art and music, planning is weak so that the work does not cover all aspects of the subject fully. As a result, pupils underachieve and the teaching in these subjects is unsatisfactory. Pupils are interested and involved in their lessons, generally work hard and learn. Teachers use their good understanding of the requirements of examinations, particularly for older pupils, to focus their planning towards helping pupils to recognise and meet these requirements and so achieve well.

16. Pupils' interest, and therefore their involvement in the lesson and the effort they put into their work, is encouraged through the often good variety of teaching styles and activities that teachers use. These provide challenge for pupils in physical education as tasks gradually become more difficult or, for example, challenging higher-attaining pupils in English by the texts chosen for study in Years 10 and 11. In religious education in Years 7 to 9, the planned activities do not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to reach the levels expected by the Agreed Syllabus. In most modern foreign language lessons, using the target language to teach the lesson helps develop pupils' listening skills. Too little use is made of pair and group work to develop pupils' speaking skills and independence in the language. This is part of the reason for the unsatisfactory teaching in German and for pupils' achievement not being as high as it should.

17. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are usually helped to achieve as well as other pupils through the support provided by their teacher, learning support assistants and appropriate work. This helps them achieve as well as other pupils. In mathematics, the most common teaching style is well suited to the needs of the higher-attaining pupils but is not as appropriate for the lower-attaining.

18. Pupils' work is generally accurately marked. Where marking is most effective it gives pupils a clear idea of how well they are doing in relation to the appropriate National Curriculum or GCSE levels. Annotations to pupils' work explain or give guidance on what is necessary to improve the work and to raise achievement. This is in line with the school policy. Geography and design and technology provide good examples of these processes for younger pupils whereas in English there is not enough guidance for the higher-attaining pupils. Marking, leading to clear guidance, is much better in English in Years 10 and 11. Where teachers pay too little regard to what their marking or other information tells them about what pupils can do, they provide work at too low a level and pupils therefore do not achieve as well as they should. This is part of the reason for unsatisfactory teaching in art and music, and German in Years 10 and 11. The use of marking to tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do improve, and to guide teachers in their planning of work is inconsistent across subjects.

19. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has recently been implemented in mathematics, English and science. Practice is not yet consistent amongst all teachers in a subject and the strategy has not yet made an obvious improvement in standards. The school is aware of the situation and has recently made an appointment at a senior level to drive the initiative forward.

Sixth form

Teaching and learning are good. The assessment of students' work is more helpful in identifying ways in which work can be improved and contributes to achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Knowledgeable teachers with a good understanding of examination requirements.
- A variety of teaching strategies which encourage students' independent learning skills.
- Good working relationships with students keen to learn.
- Marking which provides clear guidance for students to improve their work.
- Teaching in art which results in standards which are too low and underachievement.

Commentary

20. All teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and understand what is required for examination success. The majority plan lessons well to provide challenge and rigour for their students leading to them learning and achieving well. Lessons move at a good pace. Teaching in most subjects uses a good range of activities which reflect different teaching styles and encourage students to develop their learning in different ways. For example, the use of ICT and researching through the Internet helps students to become more independent in their learning and provides a good basis for future success in colleges and universities.

21. Teaching is clearly focused on the requirements of examinations. Work is marked effectively and thoroughly, and students are made clearly aware of how their work might be improved. This helps them understand what they need to do to reach higher standards in examinations and to achieve well. Lessons are characterised by good relationships between teachers and students and these result in good learning environments in which teachers can give of their best and students are keen to learn. Students' very good attitudes to learning are an important factor in their good achievement.

22. The teaching in art does not recognise sufficiently what students can already do and so work is not best matched to individual students' needs to help them learn effectively. There is too little first hand experience and too much reliance on the use of secondary sources in students' work and the rigour and challenge of the work is lacking leading to standards which are too low and students who are underachieving.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 59 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (5%)	14 (24%)	29 (49%)	12 (20%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

All pupils have access to a worthwhile curriculum that will prepare them for employment or further study. These learning opportunities are good in Years 10 to 11 and in the sixth form. Extra curricular opportunities support learning well and provide a satisfactory range of other experiences, particularly sporting. The school has sufficient, appropriate resources to meet its curricular needs. Statutory requirements are not fully met for a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Tutor time is more effectively used than at the time of the previous inspection.
- The school has achieved the majority of the objectives it set when gaining technology college status.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of the full range of pupils well.
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has been well structured.
- The curriculum lacks a business or vocational course option in Years 10 and 11.
- There are weaknesses in the curriculum organisation in history, art and music, and in some whole school aspects.

Commentary

23. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9 but the coverage in history is insecure. The previous report identified the shortness of time provided for the subject and this has been cut further. The time is further reduced because the department has chosen to begin aspects of the CGSE course in the summer term of Year 9. While pupils have a valuable drama experience in Year 7, the school makes no provision in Years 8 and 9. As a result, drama skills are lost and much basic work has to be taken up again at the start of GCSE courses. Several innovations and a range of subject options enhance the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, although these do not include a business or vocational option within the school day. The previous report was critical of the time wasted during the daily meeting of tutors with their forms. The school reorganised the timetable and now has a weekly tutor period. Following professional development for tutors and a structured programme of work, this time is more effectively used.

24. The objectives which the school declared when bidding for and gaining technology status have largely been achieved. These have resulted in curriculum development, for example widening opportunities in design and technology and science, and improving standards in these subjects and in mathematics and ICT, the subjects which were a focus of the bid.

25. The student support centre makes effective curriculum provision for a group of older, lower-attaining or disaffected pupils and this helps to improve their attendance and motivation. These pupils' individual needs are met through work-related courses at college (in hairdressing and painting), regular work experience and entry-level courses in mathematics, French and childcare. In Years 10 and 11, higher-attaining pupils are challenged by taking GCSE mathematics examinations a year early and by studying three separate sciences in the same time that other pupils study for the double award science. Subject planning does not always identify how teaching is to meet the needs of higher and lower-attaining pupils and this leads to some instances where work and teaching styles are not well matched to pupil needs, which adversely affect their achievement.

26. The PSHE programme meets statutory requirements and the needs of the pupils well. It is taught by a relatively small team of experienced teachers who are effectively supported by a detailed and comprehensive scheme of work. It is responsive to parents' concerns. For example, comments from several parents caused the school to hold a 'drugs awareness' evening where parents heard from health experts and teachers, and where their questions and concerns could be answered.

27. There is insufficient guidance for teachers, and a lack of detailed planning, to ensure that all aspects of art and music are covered appropriately. This adversely affects pupils' achievement.

28. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. Expert visitors enhance the PSHE curriculum and the school organises visits abroad to France, Germany and Spain. Several subject areas enrich their provision by providing 'drop-in clubs' which offer study support and extension activities. For example, ICT has after-school lessons for GCSE and GNVQ as well as an activities club. Design and technology teachers provide a Formula Schools car club while science teachers offer an aquarium club. There are daily opportunities to practise sport but the opportunities to experience music, beyond the programme of visiting instrumental teachers, is minimal. Considerable time is available for drama pupils to rehearse for their coursework assignments but, unusually for a school of this size, there is no regular dramatic production.

29. The educational resources available satisfactorily meet the needs of the curriculum. The numbers, qualifications and experience of teaching and non-teaching staff are appropriately matched to the curriculum in most areas. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and examination requirements, and this has helped to raise students' examination performance. The school is currently based on two sites. Accommodation for subject departments is generally adequate. The poor quality of the fabric on the Gosforth site is an issue and a building programme is underway to bring Years 7 and 8 onto the main site in September 2004. In the new buildings, subjects have their own rooms more closely sited and display space is good, but the decorative state of the oldest part of the school is dispiriting. The library on the Fanshawe site is too small for the school it serves but this will be resolved in the new building. This will also provide opportunity to cull the outdated stock. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. The number of computers has significantly increased, associated with the technology college bid, but limited access still inhibits their use in several subjects.

Sixth form

The curriculum in the sixth form is good. It suits the needs, interests and attainment of the school's sixth formers. Students have access to a wide range of courses, including specialist, general and vocational ones.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad range of courses which caters for students' needs and interests with good choice in English and business.
- Limited range of enhancement courses but including effective general studies courses and opportunities to gain sporting qualifications.
- Students' are helped to become more independent in their learning in preparation for courses at colleges and universities.
- Unsatisfactory provision for art.

Commentary

30. The school offers a large number of courses which provides a wide range from which students can choose those best suited to their aspirations. Opportunities in English and business studies provide a wider range than is often the case. The majority of students study four subjects in Year 12 before reducing to three in Year 13. Opportunity exists, in this large sixth form, to study A level courses together with a vocational course. In this way the sixth form curriculum meets the needs of its students well.

31. The general studies course, followed by all students, is effective and enhances their more academic curriculum. Sixth form students have good opportunities to pursue sporting activities and physical education provides the chance to coach, umpire and perform at school, local and county level. It also offers a good preparation for leisure pursuits outside school. All Year 12 students follow a key skills course, choosing whether it is to be information and communication technology, application of number or communication. The ICT course is most closely integrated with the other work that students are following. The communication course is satisfactorily organised but is somewhat isolated while the application of number course is not well planned. This leads to these courses being undervalued and not making the most effective contribution to students' learning. There are few other regular opportunities to broaden the curriculum.

32. The provision for computers and software is good within information and communication courses. Students are linked to real clients in local firms through their project work. This provides them all with a motivating experience and challenges the higher-attaining students. ICT plays a greater part in courses in the sixth form than in the main school. Nevertheless, its use remains too variable between the subjects. Fieldwork in geography is well organised and develops students' subject understanding very well. The teaching styles used, together with the planned projects and assignments, help to promote the students' ability to study and learn independently. This is good personal development and preparation for studying at college or university.

33. The curriculum planning for art shows the same weaknesses as in the main school. This leads to standards which are below average and students make less progress in art than in their other subjects.

34. Accommodation and resources in the sixth form are satisfactory. Since the sixth form use the same facilities as pupils in Years 9 to 11, the judgements are the same as those relating to the main school. The main difference being that the sixth form have no teaching on the Gosforth site. Their study and social areas will improve on completion of the building work.

Care, guidance and support

Good. The school ensures the care, welfare and health and safety of its pupils well. It monitors and supports them well as they move through the school. Various councils have been set up and are effective in the matters they consider.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral system is strong and pupils value the good support and guidance they receive.
- There are good procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- The induction for new pupils is good and pupils receive good careers guidance.
- Tutors do not always have enough information about pupils' academic progress to guide and support them in achieving their best.
- The school council is not regularly used as a forum to allow pupils to contribute to improving school life.

Commentary

35. Staff ensure that pupils work in a healthy and secure environment. The school has dealt with issues raised in the last inspection and risk assessments are in place. Child protection procedures are well known by staff and arrangements for first aid are very good. Pupils are well supervised outside lessons.

36. The pastoral system is well managed and structured. Staff know the pupils very well and the ethos of mutual respect permeates many aspects of school life. The questionnaire returns and interviews with pupils clearly show that pupils can turn to a variety of people such as tutors, heads of year, welfare assistants, support staff and the counsellor for pastoral support and advice. Parents are impressed by the induction process and new pupils say that they quickly found new friends and settled into school routines. Pupils receive good careers advice as they move through the school. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a weekly tutor period. Overall, tutors are making satisfactory use of this time, but not all of them are confident in leading discussions or allowing pupils to think for themselves and resort to mundane worksheets.

37. Although tutors prepare pupils for examinations by advising them on revision techniques and study skills, they are not well equipped to advise pupils on how to improve their academic work. In Years 7 and 10, pupils and parents meet with tutors to discuss progress but the targets which are set are often of a very general nature.

38. Pupils feel that teachers value their ideas. The year councils and school council organise fundraising events for charity and discuss issues such as uniform, but offer few opportunities for pupils to become regularly involved in shaping the school's future.

Sixth form

The support and guidance offered to students as they join, move through and leave the sixth form is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality information is made available in a well-planned sequence at appropriate times, the process is well evaluated and the experience is used well.
- Students and their parents work together with staff to agree helpful targets and to monitor progress.
- Most students feel very well supported and cared for.
- Students have too few opportunities to contribute to improving school life.

Commentary

39. Provision of support, advice and guidance is good because most students feel very well supported by teachers, tutors and others who genuinely care about their welfare and progress. They know they can seek advice on any issue, be it personal, or about present and future progress. Advice is well informed on careers, and on further or higher education. Links to other institutions are good. Students are encouraged to aim high, and most tutors systematically use tracking information. However, inconsistencies in their application lessen the impact of these very good systems, and a minority of students feel that their concerns have not been addressed properly. This may result, in some cases, because communication to students or between teachers has been ineffective, or in others because issues are not fully followed up to students' satisfaction. The planned programme of induction and training of all of tutors is not yet complete. Students are involved in setting personal targets and there are good opportunities in lessons for them to express their views. The Post-16 council members are keen to organise social events but they are not sufficiently encouraged to think about how they can improve school life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed good links with the parents of its pupils, with the community that it serves and with the schools from which pupils come. These links have been strengthened through the school gaining technology college status.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some very good links with local employers.
- The school works closely with the town council to promote citizenship.
- Links with local schools have been enhanced by technology college status.
- Parents support the work of the school and feel they can approach staff if they have concerns.
- Pupils' reports do not always give parents enough information about how their children can improve their work.

Commentary

40. The school has forged valuable links with local employers and these partnerships have enhanced the pupils' understanding of the world of work. A careers assistant has worked hard to build beneficial partnerships with local employers and all Year 10 pupils are offered a valuable work experience placement. Some sixth form students have very good opportunities to extend their learning, for example ICT students design computer programmes for local firms. However the sixth form business studies course has only limited links with local businesses. A national food production company supports a food technology competition and involves students in product development. Good links with a local first division football club lead to the organisation of courses and competitions for pupils. A successful careers convention is held every two years and attracts over a hundred employers.

41. The well-established links with Dronfield town council enable pupils and students to take an active part in civic life. For example, many of the pupils and students participate in regular surveys conducted by the council and several projects such as basketball courts and an internet café have been undertaken as a direct result of the findings of the questionnaires. Pupils have visited Dronfield's twin town in Germany and taken part in civic events. During the current building work, the council has made sporting facilities available to the school.

42. The school has strengthened its links with local schools through its technology college status. The school has appointed a community co-ordinator and staff from a number of local schools now share expertise and resources. Pupils from a local special school visit The Dronfield School each year to work on computer projects and primary schools make good use of the science resources loaned to them. Primary pupils are well prepared for their secondary education. For example, there are beneficial science master classes and specialists teachers visit primary schools to teach physical education and French.

43. The school is held in high regard by parents and most take a keen interest in their children's education. Parents appreciate the way in which staff are willing to talk with them about any concerns. The school provides parents with satisfactory information about their children's progress. The interim progress reports, although not the easiest document to understand, give parents an additional snapshot of how their children are doing. Parents value the parent-pupil interviews held with tutors in Years 7 and 10. Parents are given appropriate opportunities to discuss their children's progress with subject teachers each year but the progress reports and pupils' annual reports do not always contain clear information about how pupils can improve their work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the main school are satisfactory and good in the sixth form. Governance of the main school and sixth form are satisfactory in all but their ability to ensure a daily act of worship. In the main school, leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory and management is fairly effective. There is good leadership and effective management in the sixth form. Leadership is very good within mathematics and design and technology, and is good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Determination of the headteacher and governors, and the commitment of key staff, to raising standards.
- The school has successfully achieved specialist technology college status.
- Strong leadership and management in some subjects but leadership and management in creative and expressive arts is poor.
- Analysis of strengths and weaknesses and the action that results from it is not well co-ordinated or rigorous enough.
- The development of teaching and learning has not had a sufficiently high profile.

Commentary

44. The governors are very supportive of the school and have strong links with parents and the local community. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, particularly on the Fanshawe site where there are major constraints of space, but in all other respects governors meet their legal obligations. They take their responsibilities very seriously, notably by helping to shape the school's priorities for improvement, monitoring the school's spending and working in partnership with key staff. They have a basic understanding about how well the school is performing but have not been sufficiently robust in holding the school to account. Governors know they need to improve their understanding of performance data and so they are taking part in a training programme designed to help them.

45. The headteacher leads a school that is very popular with parents and achieves very good standards. Specialist technology college status has been achieved and performance targets have been met. In the school as a whole, the staff is strongly committed to raising achievement and, standards have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. Two notable successes are in design technology and in mathematics in the main school, and in English language and literature in the sixth form. These improvements are being achieved through the shared vision and determination of key staff to tackle weaknesses head-on.

46. Where leadership is weaker, there is a lack of co-ordination and sharply focused, firm and decisive action. In creative and expressive arts faculty leadership is poor and teaching and learning unsatisfactory. There has been significant underachievement for several years and senior leaders have not acted decisively to put this right.

47. The leadership team has drawn up a satisfactory plan for improvement. However, the action that flows from this is not thoroughly analysed, rigorously monitored and well co-ordinated at all stages. This leads to variable practice, some successful and some unsuccessful. Some subject leaders manage developments well. They share responsibilities across the team and keep up-to-date and well-informed about how well their intentions are being realised by observing teachers at work, monitoring work and analysing results. This information enables them to take prompt action and to adjust their plans so that what is working well can be shared, and what is not successful can be put right. In other subjects and faculties this does not happen and longstanding weaknesses go unchallenged. In the school as a whole the plans for improvement are not always well led and co-ordinated and so improvements are patchy.

48. National initiatives, like the Key Stage 3 Strategies, have been slow to embed themselves in the day-to-day work of the school. This has been recognised and there are plans to improve this situation. Nevertheless, to date there has not been a sharp enough focus on improving teaching and learning as a crucial step to whole-school improvement. A significant proportion of the staff is not familiar with current thinking and best practice and so have a limited base from which to evaluate how well they are adapting their teaching to match the learning needs of the pupils. Teaching and learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9, reflect this weakness in lesson planning where it was found that higher-attaining pupils were marking time and not fulfilling their potential. The school has recently appointed several key staff to help develop teaching and learning. However their skills and time have not yet been co-ordinated and managed effectively to have the maximum impact and to ensure teachers who are most in need of their expertise can be helped to improve.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,604,272	Balance from previous year	- 28,506
Total expenditure	5,673,483	Balance carried forward to the next	- 97,717
Expenditure per pupil	2,927		

49. The school finances are managed well against a background of budgetary constraints. Spending is prioritised in line with the school improvement plan. Standards have improved and performance targets have been met. The impact of management decisions are not thoroughly evaluated to pin point any inefficiencies and shape future decisions.

Sixth form

Governance is satisfactory. Leadership of key staff is good and management effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good and has made a significant contribution to raised standards.
- The tutorial programme is well managed.
- Good monitoring of performance has helped students achieve personal goals.
- The management structure gives only limited powers to key staff to act on behalf of students and intervene where teaching and learning are weak.
- Governors have not challenged underperformance.

Commentary

50. Governors have been fairly effective in helping to shape the school as whole and, as part of this remit, the sixth form. They are very committed and supportive. However they do not have a sufficiently realistic picture of performance in some subjects and have not held senior leaders to account over underperformance.

51. The good leadership in the sixth form is characterised by effective delegation and teamwork coupled with a passionate desire to build on success and improve further. This has led to good achievement and progress since the last inspection. Close attention is given to how well students are achieving, through regular monitoring, by analysing examination performance and by setting challenging targets. Alongside the good quality guidance given by subject teachers these strategies have successfully contributed to improvements in standards and in helped students fulfil their personal goals and aspirations. Key staff share a vision that has helped broaden the curriculum and make it more attractive to a wider group of students. The sixth form is a strength of the school.

52. The tutorial programme underpins the work of key staff and this has improved considerably since the last inspection. The effective management of tutors supports students well and makes a significant contribution to their excellent attitudes to study and their personal development.

A barrier to raising achievement

53. A weakness within this otherwise positive picture is that the key member of staff has a very big part to play in shaping students' personal development but has limited powers of influence over students' academic development. The management structure does not allow intervention, for example where monitoring has revealed weaknesses in teaching and learning in a particular area. Some underachievement has not been rigorously pursued at the highest level because whole-school monitoring is weak.

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	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2003 GCSE results were an improvement on above average results in 2002.
- Teachers use a good range of methods and manage classes well.
- Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour are very good.
- End of Year 9 test results are too low, especially for higher-attaining pupils.
- Too many lessons in Years 7 to 9 are pedestrian and don't demand enough from pupils.
- Assessment and marking in Years 7 to 9 are inconsistent in quality, frequency and usefulness.

Commentary

Examination results

54. English results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been less consistent than those in mathematics and science. In 2002 they were above national average but below maths and science because of the smaller proportion of pupils gaining higher levels. They equalled results achieved in schools with a similar pupil intake. Boys and girls performed equally well. In 2003 English results fell whilst those in mathematics and science improved. Teacher assessments were accurate. The most notable decrease was at the higher levels, indicating underachievement by higher-attaining pupils.

55. At GCSE in 2002, English language and literature results were above average, especially in terms of the highest A*/A grades. Pupils performed less well in English compared with their other subjects. However, in each subject a pupil gained one of the five best marks nationally. In 2003, pupils' English results improved, particularly in literature.

Standards and achievement

56. In Year 9 pupils' standards are well above average. Reading standards are very good and pupils show good progress in using class and group discussion to share and pursue ideas and points of view. As pupils get older, most choose pleasure reading which is undemanding, and this is not discouraged by library lessons. Most pupils produce copious amounts of writing, but achievement is variable. Some early drafts show too little care and accuracy and there is, generally, too much indiscriminate writing. This particularly affects the achievement of higher-attaining pupils. The evidence of pupils' work and lessons observed showed that standards in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils respond very well to demanding texts and topics. They learn to analyse and justify opinions, and to work on improving how these are expressed in discussion or print. Essays are well organised. Higher-attaining pupils engage and impress the reader; lower-attaining pupils always attempt style and are aware of the purpose behind their writing. Pupils achieve well on GCSE courses because of a shared teacher/pupil understanding of the standards required.

Teaching and learning

57. Teaching is better to pupils on GCSE courses than in the earlier years. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage and organise classes well. They deliver lessons with interest and get pupils involved from the beginning. Methods, including group discussion, brisk note-taking, and analysing precise video extracts are well used. At its best, class discussion is brisk and stimulating but on many occasions, particularly with younger pupils, the range, pace and depth of questioning are too predictable. Pupils learn very good listening skills, but do not use them sufficiently to respond with their own ideas. Their attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good. These are used in the best teaching, more often seen in Years 10 and 11, to generate an atmosphere of enquiry and systematic study. Despite many positive features, teaching in Years 7 to 9 rarely pays heed to the full range of ability in classes. Pupils do not get systematic advice, through comment or marking, about their level of achievement. They do not fully understand what skills they have shown, and how they can progress by improving or widening these.

Leadership and management

58. The department is well organised and shares a good sense of direction. The curriculum time given to classes in Years 9 and 11 is now appropriate. GCSE results have improved and lessons are less teacher-dominated. The effect of good schemes of work and agreed approaches is not maximised. There is not enough robust questioning of how pupils best learn, and the qualities in teaching which lead to this. As was the case previously, there is no planning for pupils to use and develop ICT skills within the English curriculum.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Pupils have very good literacy skills, and school strategies for improving these are satisfactory. There is a current focus on writing 'frames' and key vocabulary. Teachers are aware of the techniques behind the literacy strategy. Too many see these as tips and tricks to be added on to their teaching, rather than ideas to stimulate a fundamental review of what works best for pupils' learning. Thus most rooms have 'key word' displays, but even in strong departments like design technology these are rarely referred to. Spelling guidance is given, but mistakes like 'equashuns' go uncorrected in mathematics books. Reading skills are well promoted but many teachers make assumptions about how well pupils can access written information given to them. Teachers make good use of pupils' speaking and listening skills, and are good models of how to develop ideas through speech. Pupils use Standard English and technical vocabulary very well, because teachers model it and expect it in return.

Modern foreign languages

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

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with primary schools help to ensure continuity of the curriculum.
- Effective teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning ensure good progress in Years 7 and 8.
- A range of study trips abroad boosts motivation and the development of language skills.
- A lack of challenge to higher-attaining pupils, especially in mixed ability groups, leads to underachievement.
- Inconsistency in teaching leads to unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11, especially in German.
- The lack of monitoring of classroom teaching makes it difficult to share good practice.
- Assessment data are not used effectively to help raise standards.

Commentary

Examination results

60. Overall GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In 2002 the percentage of candidates attaining grades A* to C in French was well above the national average. Spanish results were just above average. Results in German were below average and pupils made significantly less progress than in their other subjects. In 2003 French results were not so high, and Spanish results were similar to 2002. German results deteriorated further.

Standards and achievement

61. Pupils make good progress in French in Year 7 and 8 and enjoy their lessons, gaining confidence in speaking and understanding the language. They have very good attitudes to learning and all groups of pupils achieve well at the outset. However, in the mixed ability groups in Year 7 to 9, pupils with special educational needs sometimes find the work too difficult, when they are expected to do the same tasks as the rest of the class with no learning support. Higher-attaining pupils are often not challenged appropriately and underachieve. In Year 9, standards are above national expectations. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Currently, all pupils also study either German or Spanish in Year 9. Their achievement in the second language is satisfactory.

62. In Year 11, standards are above average in French, average in Spanish and below average in German. In relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 10, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in French but unsatisfactory in German and Spanish. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall, but a minority of pupils, mostly boys, has negative attitudes.

Teaching and learning

63. In Years 10 and 11, teaching in French is satisfactory but it is unsatisfactory in German and inconsistent in Spanish. Where successful learning takes place, a variety of activities maintain the pace of learning, and an element of fun motivates and enthuses pupils. Teaching is at its best when the foreign language is used as the main medium of communication and all pupils are included in oral work. However, pupils rarely work in pairs or groups, and therefore opportunities for developing speaking skills and independent learning skills are lost. Teachers' planning is sometimes unsatisfactory; time is not well used, tasks are dull or go on too long. Too often teachers do not provide work appropriate to the needs of all pupils. Marking is regular, but gives too few hints on how to improve. Little use is made of ICT to enhance learning.

64. Visits to Spain, France and Germany boost pupils' motivation and language skills in addition to supporting their personal development. The generous provision of two languages for all will be restricted from next year to committed Year 9 pupils, who are willing to take up the second language outside normal lesson times.

Leadership and management

65. The head of faculty has good vision for future developments in modern foreign languages, is an experienced practitioner and provides a good role model as a teacher. Very good links with all local primary schools have been developed, where the faculty provides five-week taster courses in French for all. This helps ensure a smooth transition to the secondary school. However, there is no formal monitoring of classroom teaching, which makes it difficult to share good practice. Information from assessment and testing is thoroughly analysed, but is not used effectively to set work at the right level and raise standards. Curriculum changes are planned to arrest the decline in standards in German. Weaknesses in teaching remain, but teachers have the subject expertise and commitment necessary to improve standards in teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in both Years 9 and 11.
- Higher-attaining pupils achieve very well because they receive good quality teaching.
- Very good planning documentation which supports teachers and ensures high expectations.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to use and apply the skills they have been taught.
- Marking does not give pupils enough advice on how to improve their work.

Commentary

Examination results

66. Test results for Year 9, in 2002, were well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. There has been a further substantial improvement in 2003. GCSE results were well above the national average in 2002 and broadly in line with those of schools with similar pupils. In 2003 there has been a very substantial rise in performance.

Standards and achievement

67. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are making good progress and reaching high standards in most areas of the curriculum. Higher-attaining pupils are achieving especially well. They reach particularly high standards in algebra where, for example, Year 9 pupils can confidently solve simultaneous equations. However, pupils are less proficient in applying their skills to solve problems. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are highly skilled in algebra and formal geometry where, for example, average-attaining pupils know abstract theorems relating to angles formed in circles. One class of Year 11 pupils has taken GCSE early and is now working on an AS level course. Pupils are settling in to the new course well and their work is of a very high standard.

Teaching and learning

68. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. This enables them to explain concepts clearly and simply and as a result, pupils learn new skills quickly. From Year 7 onwards, pupils are placed in classes that suit their mathematical ability and teachers then pitch the level of challenge to pupils accurately. They are supported by very good planning guidance which ensures that the teaching is coherent and progress is rapid. Across all years, teaching is at its best in the groups of higher-attaining pupils. Nonetheless, all pupils expect to work hard and be challenged. Lessons throughout Years 7 to 11 tend to have a similar style; the teacher explains a technique and then pupils practise, using a textbook or worksheet. This generally works very well for improving the skills of higher-attaining pupils but is relatively less successful with average and lower-attaining pupils who make less progress. This teaching style is less useful in developing pupils' understanding, which would benefit from time for discussion and reflection. Teachers mark books regularly but rarely comment on work. Consequently, pupils are unclear as to how their work could be improved. There is some innovative use of ICT to demonstrate, for example, complex graphs, but computers are not yet fully exploited as a tool for learning mathematics. Plans to increase its use are advanced and the mathematics team will be well placed to take advantage of the new facilities that are currently under construction.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership is focused on raising standards throughout Years 7 to 11. This has led to very good work on curriculum planning and using assessment data. As a result, the quality of teaching across the faculty has improved since the last inspection and pupils are achieving more. However, the narrow range of teaching styles employed by the team was commented on in the last inspection and this has yet to be rectified.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. As a result of the implementation of a recent national initiative to increase standards in numeracy, number skills are currently relatively higher in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9 and are above average overall. Standards of numeracy in Years 10 and 11 are in line with pupils' general mathematical abilities. Pupils use numeracy well in a range of subjects across the curriculum. In geography, for example, they skilfully analyse data and interpret graphs and in design technology Year 11 pupils use ratio and scale well to design and build models. Training has been given in using numeracy in different subject areas but, currently, the school has no widely accepted policy and practice and faculties rarely plan their contribution.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2002 were significantly above average and have risen further in 2003.
- Results in the end of Year 9 tests were well above average in 2002 and were above those in similar schools.
- Standards in Year 9 are well above average and are above average in Year 11.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils learn and achieve well because they are taught well.
- In Years 10 and 11, the range of teaching and learning styles is too narrow and some average ability pupils in Year 11 underachieve.
- A new applied science course has been introduced, to better meet the needs of average and lower-attaining pupils.

Commentary

Examination results

71. Results in the end of Year 9 tests in 2003 were similar to those in 2002 and remain well above average. Although GCSE results in 2002 were significantly above average, pupils performed less well in science in comparison with the other subjects they studied. An issue relating to the motivation of average and lower-attaining pupils was identified and measures have been taken to try and tackle this.

Standards and achievement

72. In Year 9, pupils are well above average in their ability to write word equations and to use formulae to calculate moments of forces, speed and pressure. Pupils' achievement is good. In Year 11, pupils have an above average understanding of topics such as atomic structure, rate of reaction and displacement reactions. Achievement is satisfactory overall but there is some underachievement by average-attaining pupils.

Teaching and learning

73. In Years 7 to 9, effective use is made of commercial worksheets matched to pupils' needs. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They have high expectations and lessons are conducted at a good pace. Pupils' learning of concepts is effectively developed through a combination of teacher explanation, written activities that require them to use their knowledge and understanding, and practical activities. Pupils' investigative skills are developed through a combination of practical work and paper-based activities but many practicals lack challenge and there is not enough open investigative work. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 includes a significant amount of good teaching but is less effective than in Years 7 to 9. The range of teaching and learning styles is too narrow and fails to engage all pupils. There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning and too little independent and group work. Some teaching in middle sets was unsatisfactory because the teachers' expectations were too low, too long was spent on repetition of earlier work and pupils made too little progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly but with inconsistency in the system used and in the extent to which the teacher's comments help pupils to understand what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

74. The department identified that lower-attaining pupils were not motivated by the courses they were being taught and so has introduced a new applied science course in Year 10. Early indications are that pupils are responding well to aspects of the course, including the company structure. Since the last inspection, triple award science has been introduced to challenge the more able pupils. It is taught in less than the recommended amount of time and the proportion of pupils, overall, gaining the higher A* and A grades fell in 2003. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in results resulting from well-planned courses.
- A wide range of courses caters for pupils' needs.
- Good leadership and management which is driving forward change.
- A limited range of teaching and learning styles is used.
- The lack of challenge for younger students with a lot of prior knowledge restricts their achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

75. GCSE results in 2002 were above average. GCSE results were lower, in 2003, but overall results were enhanced by the successful GNVQ Intermediate course.

Standards and achievement

76. In Year 9, where pupils start GCSE coursework and teaching is focused on examination requirements, standards are average and pupils achieve well in this year. In the earlier years, a proportion of pupils do not make as much progress as they should because of unsatisfactory aspects of teaching. Examples of completed GCSE coursework confirm standards in Year 11 are above average and pupils are achieving well.

Teaching and learning

77. Most pupils make progress due to their eagerness to engage with the tasks. In Years 7 and 8, teaching was sometimes unsatisfactory because the teacher did not manage behaviour effectively and pupils did not make enough progress. Satisfactory lessons avoided behaviour problems because pupils were anxious to use the computers but tasks often lacked challenge. Pupils were required to practise skills with which they were already very familiar, leading to underachievement by higher-attaining pupils and those with greater ICT experience and higher levels of skills. The teaching styles used do not engage pupils as fully as they might and this has a negative impact on pupils' learning. The learning situation improves markedly in Year 9 where the introduction of GCSE work provides interesting contexts for the tasks and teaching is more demanding.

78. In Years 10 and 11 the wide range of courses meets pupils' needs and their differing ICT expertise. The work they are given is well matched to their understanding and challenges the higher-attaining pupil and supports the lower attaining. Good relationships lead to a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils learn well. In the best teaching, a fast pace was established and pupils were clearly focused on their work. Good integration of whole class instruction and individual computer based work resulted in good learning. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and communicate it confidently. The range of teaching style used does not engage all pupils as fully as it could.

Leadership and management

79. Good leadership, with a clear view of the way forward, has resulted in well thought out and carefully constructed courses. Effective learning resources have been developed to support teaching. Devolved responsibility within the department is clear with good support and mentoring for teachers. The very good resources and the availability of high quality computers represent a significant investment and are a marked improvement in provision. The use of modern equipment aids effective learning because information can be presented in more efficient and effective ways. All pupils now follow a taught course in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. Very good investment has been made with more departments and staff making use of equipment. Technical backup is very good and with a good hardware infrastructure to support developments. However, with the notable exception of design and technology, few departments make good use of ICT within their own teaching. In major subject areas, such as English and mathematics, the use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory. Teachers lack confidence in the use of ICT and government mandated training from the new opportunities fund has been ineffective in bringing about change. Pupils indicated that opportunities to use computers, in lessons other than ICT, were occasional. The management of ICT across the curriculum is unclear. Pupils' competence with ICT is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently well planned and conscientious, so pupils learn and progress at a good pace, allowing time for consideration of more complex issues.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9, as the teaching moves them from their varied earlier experiences in geography to above average standards, and in Years 10 and 11 as these standards are maintained.
- Relationships are very good and support good learning.
- Not all pupils do not clearly understand the strengths and weaknesses in their work and how to best improve it.

Commentary

Examination results

81. The results of teacher assessment, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were above those reported nationally. They were higher again in 2003. GCSE results are broadly average with little change in 2003. Boys performed slightly better than girls. GCSE results are lower than when last inspected, but pupils achieved broadly at their predicted levels.

Standards and achievement

82. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment when they come to the school. In Year 11, pupils' standards are above average and most achieve well from their earlier attainment. Younger pupils understand geographic terms such as less economically developed country, magma and plates, well. They can explain why sources are useful or not and describe basic processes and patterns well, for example volcanic eruptions. Year 11 students have good understanding of complex skills, for example interpreting weather symbols, and have good research skills. They use a range of ways to present and explain their findings, for example in word-processed text, graphs, maps and sketches. More able students organise their work independently.

Teaching and learning

83. Teachers provide a wide range of interesting activities and pupils enjoy their work and have good relationships with teachers. They cooperate well with each other. This results in good pace in lessons where much work is covered and understood. It enables teachers to challenge pupils with more complex ideas and so they learn well. Work is well structured, particularly in GCSE coursework and fieldwork, so that pupils can achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by learning support staff, when available, but generally not enough work is provided specifically for individual lower or higher-attaining pupils.

Leadership and management

84. Good leadership has led to well-planned schemes of work including different tasks appropriate to the differing needs of pupils. The use of ICT is improving. New teachers are supported well. The National Key 3 Strategy has been introduced but not yet consistently used. Better use is being made of school systems of evaluation and data analysis, than when last inspected, but does not yet lead to all pupils having a clear understanding about their own strengths and weaknesses and how they could improve their work.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-structured lessons enable pupils to acquire good historical knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers provide effective help to GCSE pupils which enables them to complete coursework assignments to a high standard.
- The positive attitude of pupils towards learning enables them to achieve above average standards by Year 11.
- Inconsistent and infrequent use of marking and assessment results in pupils receiving insufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- Studying insufficient European and World history pre-1914 and post-1945 before Year 10 limits pupils' ability to make links between British history and the wider world.

Commentary

Examination Results

85. In 2002, the results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were similar to those reported nationally, but in 2003 they were above. In 2002, GCSE results were broadly average with little change in 2003. In both cases girls performed better than boys.

Standards and Achievement

86. In Year 9, pupils confidently use a wide range of sources and produce well-structured extended writing. They have a detailed knowledge of aspects of British history, but standards are not well above average because pupils are unable to make links with events in Europe and the wider world. In Year 11, pupils are able to compare and contrast sources effectively and reach balanced conclusions. They have a very good understanding of causation and motivation and can explain how and why the past is interpreted in different ways. They achieve well at this level.

Teaching and learning

87. Well-planned lessons enable pupils to make good gains in historical knowledge. Incisive questioning challenges pupils to develop their thinking. This improves understanding and analytical skills. Pupils have a positive attitude towards learning and support each other by working co-operatively in groups. Pupils enjoy their history lessons and the number of pupils who choose to study GCSE history is above the national average. Teaching helps to develop good study skills that are of use in other subjects. Weaknesses in classroom management sometimes allow a minority to dominate discussion, which means other pupils do not get involved in the lesson and switch off. Easy tasks enable pupils to acquire adequate historical knowledge but do not enable pupils to achieve well above average standards.

Leadership and management

88. The use of common assessment tasks in Years 7 to 9 ensures that the progress of pupils is tracked, but not enough use is made national data to set targets and to compare the performance of different groups of pupils, e.g. boys and girls. There is no marking policy and the quality and frequency of teachers' feedback to pupils is not monitored. As a result, pupils' class work goes unchecked. The coverage of the National Curriculum requirements in Year 7 to 9 is insecure because of a shortage of time. Since the last inspection the trend in attainment at the end of Year 9 has remained above average whilst GCSE attainment has been variable with no overall pattern. In 2002 GCSE attainment was just below the national average in comparison to above the national average in 1998. The quality of teaching and learning continues to be good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards meet or exceed the national average in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching covers the content required by the new Agreed Syllabus.
- When teaching is stimulating, students are eager and co-operative learners.
- Standards in Year 9 are below those expected by the Agreed Syllabus.
- Teaching methods do not cater for the range of pupils' learning needs.
- Teaching time in the early years is below that expected by the Agreed Syllabus.

Commentary

Examination results

89. GCSE short course results, in 2002, were broadly average. Results in 2003 were at a similar level.

Standards and achievement

90. Standards in Year 9 are below the level expected by the new Agreed Syllabus because the time these pupils have had for the subject has been less than it now is and because what teachers plan to do does not address the higher attainment levels in knowledge, understanding and response. For example, pupils compiled detailed information on aspects of Hinduism but the higher-attaining pupils were not required to focus on individuals or communities, or identify differences within Hinduism. Pupils are able to describe aspects of religion and make some responses. Achievement is satisfactory in Year 10 where pupils produced extended writing on abortion and euthanasia, and related Christian teaching to racial harmony.

Teaching and learning

91. In Years 7 to 9, pupils responded well where the teaching was interesting. Year 7 pupils responded enthusiastically to the story of Rama and Sita. In Year 9, pupils were challenged to suggest words beginning with the letter 'd' that could describe Dr. Martin Luther King. They listened carefully to an audio extract of the 'I Have a Dream' speech. However, interest and motivation waned in lessons that used worksheets with short answer responses. A wider range of teaching approaches, utilising more visual sources, would make learning more vivid and meet the range of pupils' learning needs. There are insufficient learning resources which provide a focus on the lives of individuals and communities, including local or regional examples. The examination course is well planned and the work enables pupils to produce extended writing about complex religious and ethical issues. For example in Year 10 work on evil and suffering, recent newspaper reports of 'moral' and 'natural' evil were displayed to stimulate interest, and to provide memorable examples.

Leadership and management

92. Teachers are led to cooperate in curriculum planning although there are few formal arrangements for departmental planning, monitoring or evaluation. Teaching time is below what is expected by the Agreed Syllabus. Since the last inspection examination results have improved through an increase of teaching time. Subject leadership has not sought to identify good practice from religious education web sites or from other schools.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' above and well above average standards result from the quality of the teaching they have.
- Quality teaching by a well-qualified team who plan and teach lessons with a wide range of challenge and activities.
- Pupils learn and achieve well because their interest is captured by the work they are given to do.
- The high quality of teamwork, leadership, management, accommodation and resources helps to raise achievement.
- One hour lessons are too short for examination food technology courses to develop pupil self-evaluation most effectively.

Commentary

Examination results

93. GCSE results in 2002 were significantly above average and pupils' performance in design and technology was significantly better than in the other subjects they studied. Results in 2003 continue the rising pattern.

Standards and achievement

94. Pupils' attainment in design and technology on entry to the school is low because of a lack of previous experience. In Year 7, pupils rapidly develop confidence in handling a range of tools and materials in all contributing areas of the subject. By Year 9 their progress has been such that their standards are above average. The quality of design folders and practical work produced in all specialist areas in Year 11 is almost always very good. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress and achieve very well, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

95. Teachers are very well qualified and work very effectively as a team to plan lessons which are of good quality and proceed at a brisk pace. A wide range of often quite demanding work, such as the systems and control work in Years 7 and 8, engages the interest of pupils who work hard and show very positive attitudes towards the subject. Pupils apply computer aided designing and making, and systems and control, well throughout Years 7 to 11. Although all pupils respond well to the teaching, insufficient thought has been given to ways in which teaching can extend higher-attaining pupils. Homework is used well throughout and good use is made of assessment to inform subsequent lesson planning. A Young Engineers club and the Formula Schools scheme provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their design and technology capability outside of formal lessons.

Leadership and management

96. The very good leadership has developed excellent teamwork from all staff, including very good contributions from more junior members of staff. The faculty has made very good progress towards meeting the targets of the technology college bid. Effective links have been established with local industry, especially in food technology. The very good accommodation and resources make a positive contribution to raising achievement although there remains a shortage of storage space for practical work. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The single one-hour lessons in Years 10 and 11 inhibit the type and range of work which can be done in food technology and do not allow pupils to learn from the work of their peers, or to develop effective self-evaluation skills.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **unsatisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved standards in Year 11 in 2003 GCSE results.
- Teachers' command of the subject and their determination to raise standards.
- Significant numbers of pupils underachieve because too little is asked of them.
- There is no scheme of work to guide teachers to develop pupils' skills progressively.
- Leadership has lacked direction, neglecting to focus on improving teaching and learning and not facing up to falling standards.

Commentary

Examination results

97. In 2003, teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 suggested standards were average. Results in GCSE examinations dipped significantly after the last inspection from well above average to well below. In 2002 results were average but both boys and girls performed less well in art than their other subjects. The latest results showed some improvement.

Standards and achievement

98. In the work seen, standards in Years 9 and 11 are in-line with expectations but below the standards expected of these pupils, given their starting points. There is no scheme of work around which teachers can systematically and progressively build pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Year on year there is insufficient progress. Some teachers expect too little of pupils, getting them to copy out information, not challenging them when information is downloaded from the Internet or using secondary rather than primary source materials. A lack of pace and urgency is missing in some lessons. Pupils chatter and waste time and some miss homework deadlines.

Teaching and Learning

99. Some good teaching was seen but overall the quality of teaching and learning is too variable. In Years 7 to 9 expectations are set too low and skills, knowledge and understanding are not progressively planned and developed term on term, year on year. Information about pupils' attainment across the curriculum as a whole is not used enough, either to plan work or as a basis for discussing with them how well they are achieving. Good teaching and learning led to good achievement in a lesson where pupils shared their ideas for a piece of sculpture based on the Iron Man. Written work challenged both higher and lower-attaining pupils, extending their understanding and use of specialist terminology and the development of drawing and practical skills were supported well through the teacher's demonstrations. Pupils learn well when teachers use actual work to explain particular techniques and exemplify standards.

Leadership and Management

100. Weaknesses have not been squarely faced up to in the past and with a lack of direction and determination to tackle underperformance. Despite this, individual staff have worked very hard to raise standards, widen the curriculum and give the arts a stronger focus. The Silver Artsmark is a good achievement that has enabled the school to benefit from an enriched curriculum and to build productive relationships with practicing artists, designers and craftspeople. Amongst the staff there is an understanding of what needs to be done and a desire and determination to move forward. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Drama

101. During the inspection week practical examinations severely restricted times when lessons could be seen. In lessons seen, teachers laid down clear routines and guidelines for practical work, which was above average in quality. Younger pupils showed the ability to create character or machine by movement, mime and gesture. In a GCSE class pupils' very good achievement was seen in the quality of three tableaux performances. Pupils also showed very good ability to compare and discuss the merits of the various ideas presented.

102. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average and notable for the unusually high proportion of pupils gaining grades A*/A. All pupils passed, none with less than grade E. There was some decline in 2003 results, but the overall pass rate and the performance of higher-attaining pupils remained strengths. The drama curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Pupils have a valuable drama experience in Year 7, but the school makes no provision in Years 8 and 9. As a result, drama skills are lost and much basic work has to be taken up again at the start of GCSE courses. Considerable opportunities for younger pupils to learn how to discuss, plan, take initiative, and develop teamwork and trust are lost. This is not compensated for within the English curriculum. To compound matters, drama has no head of department so planning and direction rely on the goodwill of the three part-time teachers. Whilst pupils show enthusiasm and respect for the subject it has low status in the school's planning and priorities. There are no school productions other than those required by examination syllabuses. Given these issues, there has been good improvement in GCSE standards since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **poor**.

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

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good technical knowledge and performance skills.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory over time because work is not well matched to their varied capabilities.
- Assessment of what pupils achieve is poor and not related to National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9.
- The development of music has been poorly supported by senior management and the teachers work in professional isolation.

Commentary

Examination results

103. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. Results vary from year to year, reflecting the nature of the groups.

Standards and achievement

104. Pupils' factual knowledge is above average. Pupils who learn instruments perform and compose competently, but standards are below expectation for these pupils because too long is spent on individual assignments in Years 7 and 8, and work is not well matched to pupils' capabilities in Years 7 to 9. By Year 11, performance standards are well above average for the majority of GCSE pupils because they have instrumental lessons and have achieved high grades in national performance examinations. Pupils' knowledge of musical styles is limited, and the course is not geared to pupils' individual needs over the whole range of examination requirements.

Teaching and learning

105. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' learning is restricted by the teachers' over-use of worksheets that are preoccupied with basic theory and musical terminology. This is rarely linked to a meaningful musical experience. Time is poorly used and teachers' expectations are too low and not informed by meaningful assessment of what the pupils are achieving. Pupils worked mechanically to a set of rules when observed composing and were not given the chance to use instruments to stimulate the creative process. Pupils' very good attitudes and exemplary behaviour were significant factors in the progress they made.

106. In Years 10 and 11, pupils do not see their lessons as satisfactory. Pupils with existing knowledge and musical skills do well, but the course and teaching are not calculated to spur on individual pupils and develop their needs from their varied starting points. Questioning is not used to recall topics, find out what pupils know or consolidate what they have learned. The teaching improved during the inspection, and one lesson was very good. Teachers do not use their own good technical knowledge and performance skills to best effect.

Leadership and management

107. The teachers have received inadequate support in the development of their work, and the leadership and management of the subject are poor. The scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 does not adequately reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teaching methods are not geared towards helping pupils to achieve the required standards. Resources, apart from keyboards, are unsatisfactory. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising, so that by Year 11 they are above average on the 2003 new GCSE course.
- Pupils learn and achieve well from the good teaching they receive.
- Pupils outside the examination course are not sufficiently aware of their own progress.
- Leadership is good and management is improving.
- Extra-curricular activities give very good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning.
- Some inefficiency in the use of staffing and facilities.

Commentary

Examination results

108. GCSE results in 2002 were broadly average with girls performing better than boys. Pupils performed less well in physical education when compared with the other subjects they took. Results in 2003 were higher.

Standards and achievement

109. Standards in Year 9 are average in all aspects of the subject and, from their attainment at the start of Year 7, pupils are achieving well in Years 7 to 9. Standards, in Year 11, in the examination course are above average and pupils are learning and achieving well. Standards in the core curriculum are average and here, the achievement of pupils of all abilities is satisfactory. Boys achieved better than girls in lessons seen in Years 10 and 11, unless the activity was new to boys, for example in netball.

Teaching and learning

110. Teachers demonstrate skills well and give clear explanations that help all pupils understand. Questioning is effective. Teachers usually review learning well to check understanding and consolidate knowledge before moving on to new work. They know their pupils' strengths and, in good lessons, challenge pupils to achieve. Pupils have good attitudes and learn well. On occasion, however, achievement is restricted when pupils are not given enough responsibility for their own work or where large group sizes mean pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to practise an activity. Talented pupils are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular work and occasionally demonstrate or lead groups in lessons. Assessment, closely related to examination criteria, is used well to help pupils to check their progress but pupils outside the examination course are not sufficiently aware of their own progress.

111. Safety expectations, outlined in practical areas and in department policies, are sometimes contravened. Non-participants, although few, are not effectively engaged in lessons and achieve little and can distract others.

112. The very extensive range of extra-curricular activities and team games enhances opportunities for learning. An external organised and sponsored coaching programme includes pupils from nearby schools. Talented pupils are able to attend coaching and umpiring sessions leading to awards. The school has achieved the Sportsmark Award in recognition of the range of sports activities available to pupils.

Leadership and management

113. Good, new leadership has focused attention strongly on lesson planning, and marking and feedback to examination pupils. This is already showing through in the improved results in 2003. Greater guidance for teachers is provided by more detailed schemes of work. Best use is not being made of outdoor space, reduced by the building work, because at times too many pupils are timetabled to use while, at other times, it is unoccupied. Resources are good although access to ICT is limited. Analysis and improvement of practical performance is enhanced by use of a video camera.

Dance

114. The first examination in dance was in 2003. School data suggests that pupils are close to the national average in performance and that achievement is satisfactory. In Year 11, standards are above average. Pupils focus and concentrate on fluidity and sustained movements. They understand the importance of timing, good interpretation of music and use of gesture. They respond well and teamwork is emphasised effectively with pupils working well together. Talented pupils have the opportunity of leading the group.

115. Teaching in Year 11 is very good. In one lesson, on an Eastern theme, the use of a video camera for analysis and evaluation assisted learning, improvement and progress. Specially organised extra-curricular provision supports pupils' practise and enhances their work. Teachers review previous learning, to check understanding before moving on, well. Good demonstration, effective questioning and thorough evaluation at the end of lessons contribute strongly to the progress pupils are making. The facilities for dance are good. The course is led and managed well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Citizenship is taught as modules within the PSHE programme. Only one unit was being taught during the inspection. One lesson was seen in Year 8. There is evidence from year council meetings and from scrutiny of the planning of work.

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Schemes of work to support teaching and learning are in place and readily available.
- Teaching seen in Year 8 was good, enabling pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils show good attitudes and behaviour when working in groups.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning are not well developed.
- Opportunities for citizenship across the curriculum have not been identified.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

116. Standards in the Year 8 lesson observed were average. Pupils made good progress in their knowledge of how decisions are made in relation to financial constraints in a local council. They achieved well and the majority satisfied the lesson objectives. No direct evidence is available to judge standards in Years 10 and 11 but the assessments made by the co-ordinator show that standards are average.

Teaching and learning

117. Observed teaching in Year 8 was good. The teacher had good knowledge and planned challenging and purposeful activities involving pupils in the decision making process that enabled them to learn effectively. Objectives were very clear and shared with pupils so that they knew what they had to learn. Relationships were good and pupils worked well together, acting as local councillors to plan a leisure centre for the community. They gained understanding of financial constraints when dealing with public money. The teacher gave very clear instructions so that pupils knew what to do. Pupils learned to consider the opinions of others when working in groups. In Year 8 form time pupils gain better understanding of election procedures through electing two year council representatives. In a Year10 council meeting to elect posts on the school council, the year head displays good leadership and guidance to enable pupils to take on civic responsibility roles.

Leadership and management

118. Leadership and management are satisfactory and developing well. Staff changes during the past two years mean that the new co-ordinator has been in role for a short time. During that period the co-ordinator has worked very hard to write schemes of work and lesson plans to give good support to teachers. Very good links between PSHE, through which citizenship is taught, and ICT have led to all plans being available through the school's internal computer network. Procedures to monitor pupils' progress by the ends of Year 9 and 11 are not in place but have been identified for future development. The contribution that other subjects do or might make to citizenship have not been identified.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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
Art and design	5	80	90	0	43	24	39
Biology	11	73	82	0	33	18	33
Business studies	13	100	98	23	32	31	35
Chemistry	5	80	85	0	37	22	35
English	13	92	92	8	30	35	36
General studies	23	96	79	4	26	25	30
Geography	11	100	88	0	36	29	36
History	5	80	92	80	37	46	38
Mathematics	8	75	74	13	34	19	31
Other social studies	12	58	83	8	33	18	34
Sociology	5	60	84	20	34	22	34
Spanish	6	83	88	0	36	25	36

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	14	86	96	21	49	63	85
Biology	36	100	92	42	36	84	74
Business studies	28	100	96	29	33	78	77
Business studies VCE	12	68	87	0	17	31	60
Chemistry	30	100	94	43	46	85	81
English language	20	100	98	55	37	93	80
English literature	19	100	99	42	44	90	84
French	8	100	96	38	46	80	83
Design and technology	5	100	95	20	36	60	77
General studies	96	100	90	43	29	83	69
Geography	12	100	97	50	41	90	80.9
History	25	100	97	72	41	102	81
Home economics	10	100	97	30	31	80	76
Mathematics	37	100	93	60	52	91	85
Other social studies	23	100	94	39	39	82	78
Physics	19	100	93	53	43	90	79

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Sociology	7	100	95	71	40	103	79
Spanish	5	100	96	20	47	68	84
Sports studies	6	100	95	17	30	63	73
Health and social care	13	100	90	8	16	55	63
Leisure and recreation	7	100	87	0	13	51	58
Travel and tourism	15	87	88	7	16	59	61

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ Business	9	78	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
GNVQ Health and social care	2	100	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
GNVQ Leisure and tourism	3	100	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

119. The focus for the inspection in this curriculum area was English literature and French. Lessons were observed in English language and Spanish. Results in English language, in 2002, were above average. In a Year 13 lesson, students made satisfactory progress in how to explore a theory (genetic predisposition) to develop and balance arguments. The teacher showed skill in drawing out and probing their ideas and understanding. In the Year 13 Spanish lesson, standards were average and students' achievement satisfactory. The teacher's fluent Spanish set a challenging pace. Students struggled at times but effective question and answer left them able to carry out the set tasks. Teaching was effective and there was good learning. Results in recent years have been below average and students have underachieved compared with performance in their other subjects.

English

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in 2002 were above average, those in 2003 were higher.
- Teaching is very good, combining academic challenge with vitality.
- The course is very well managed.
- Students' excellent attitudes are evident in their enthusiasm and diligence.
- Some class discussion involves too few students, and supplementary questioning could be widened.

Commentary

Examination results

120. Results in A level English literature in 2002 were above average, because boys did so well. 2003 results showed substantial improvement. A feature of recent years has been the increasing number of students who opt for the subject, and the excellent retention rates.

Standards and achievement

121. Lesson observation during the inspection and a scrutiny of written work indicate that present standards are well above national average. Students write lengthy, accurate yet incisive essays, the best of which show a shrewd awareness of how to use a succinct style. Many write with insight and authority, though average-attaining students use the introduction to an essay to 'warm up' and can drift from analysis to personal response. Nonetheless, they show good awareness of how to demonstrate the skills necessary to meet examination criteria, and essays are never dull. Lower-attaining students have good understanding and the ability to interpret and develop responses to texts. In lessons, the quality of debate is high, with many students showing skill in cross-referencing texts, and extending or countering others' views.

122. Students' achievement is very good because they continue to work at a high level. They use language, especially technical language, with precision and ease because teachers model it and expect its use in discussion. Teachers' astute and demanding questioning results in students realising the value of probing ideas and weighing their validity. Year 12 students were challenged by the teacher to consider to what extent a character in 'A Clockwork Orange' was actually 'trapped', to examine language effects, and to extract key concepts from the text. Such approaches enable a very good understanding to develop of the value of detailed cross-reference, and the significance of parallels and symbolism. In large classes too few students are expected to give extended answers.

Teaching and learning

123. This achievement stems from very good teaching. Teachers have very good knowledge of literature and students learn to consider texts in the light of social, literary and political influences as a result. In a particularly effective lesson, the teacher illuminated the study of 'A Tale of Two Cities' by urging comparison with a parallel set text. This was followed by a discussion of the contrasting treatments of the French Revolution by Dickens and Carlyle. In some lengthy teacher-led sessions students are not sufficiently expected to support key general ideas with close reference or quotation. Lessons and essays take into account what students are capable of, and both essay titles and the level of debate are challenging. Students' attitudes are excellent. They enthuse about the subject, write diligent essays and show an impressive ability to debate in groups. They benefit from the very detailed guidance they are given in marking which accurately indicates success, but supportively shows where and how improvements can be made.

Leadership and management

124. A sense of purpose and vigour pervades the course, and the majority of lessons. Both students and teachers are very aware of examination requirements, but study is informed rather than straitjacketed by this. The popularity of the subject is posing practical problems. Inspection evidence supports students' views that in the largest groups (30 in Year 12, over 20 in Year 13) returning draft essays takes longer, and class discussion cannot involve all students. The Year 12 situation is compounded by lessons which take place in a science laboratory, where benches have to be moved and acoustics are unsatisfactory. The good improvement since the last inspection is demonstrated in improved examination results, even better teaching, and the growth in the number of students opting for the course.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

125. Students join the sixth form with above average standards of language skills. They are able to choose a course for communication as part of a key skills programme. Work sampled on this course was satisfactory. It would have been of greater benefit if students had had more occasions when they explored ideas and their linguistic presentation, rather just being given ideas and principles to study. Subject specialist language is well taught across almost all subjects, and teachers expect students to define and then examine aspects. Studying illegal marriage in Sociology, students were expected to reach an agreed definition, and were taught how to understand the meaning and power of such phrases as 'entrenched opinions'. Similarly challenging concepts were unpicked in ICT. In subjects such as PE key ideas such as 'focus', 'extension' and 'balance' are discussed and modelled, but the language is not always revised sufficiently nor its understanding thoroughly checked.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are expert linguists and use French constantly to improve students' listening and speaking skills.
- Students develop good independent and co-operative learning skills, which help their personal development.
- Teachers know their students well and give them good advice on how to improve.
- Students have few opportunities for contacts with French nationals, in order to make their studies more authentic.
- Students do not read widely for pleasure or to increase their knowledge and skills.

Commentary

Examination results

126. Results in 2002 were in line with the national average, as they have been since the last inspection. There were no candidates for A level in 2003. The six AS students all gained pass grades.

Standards and achievement

127. Standards in Year 12 are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. They are not yet fluent orally, but have begun to develop a good grasp of basic grammar. Their written work contains few serious errors. In Year 13, students' attainment is above average and their achievement is good. Higher-attaining students compile extensive files of written work, accurately composed, on complex themes. The writing of lower-attaining students still contains many basic inaccuracies, but they can express their ideas clearly.

128. Students discuss competently subjects such as environmental issues, and acquire a wide range of specialist vocabulary. Their reading skills are good. They have good independent learning skills, use dictionaries and reference books efficiently, and work well co-operatively. Students use email for handing in assignments, and occasionally redraft corrected work on the computer. They use the Internet for research, but they do little other reading for pleasure or enrichment. Other than the weekly meeting with a French assistant, students have no contacts with French nationals, although several have been on study trips to France in the past.

Teaching and learning

129. Teaching and learning are consistently good, sometimes very good. Teachers are expert linguists and have very good subject knowledge. In Year 13 they use French for all communication and insist on French in return. This improves students' oral fluency. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a fast pace, with a range of activities, including discussions, quizzes, tests, grammar study, presentations by students and pair and group work. Very good relationships ensure a favourable learning atmosphere. Students enjoy their lessons. They have a good attitude to their studies and are very keen to succeed. All plan to go on to higher education, half of them to study French. Almost all students complete the course they start in the sixth form. Teachers know the students well and give them good advice on how to improve.

Leadership and management

130. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers are committed to the success of their students and work well as a team. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Very good
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because teachers plan the courses thoroughly.
- Student attitudes are very good.
- There is good teaching by skilled subject specialists.
- Achievements in further mathematics are held back because the curriculum is not always coherent.

Commentary

Examination results

131. Examination results in 2002 were above national figures for A level and in line with them for AS level. Previous years have seen a fluctuation in results in both courses but results since the last inspection have always been at least in line with national figures and often above. In 2003 results were broadly similar to 2002 for both courses although there was a small drop in the performance of the highest-attaining students in Year 13.

Standards and achievement

132. Students are currently working well above the national average level. All but a few students start the course with very good GCSE results and they continue to achieve well. In Year 12 for example, students who have only been studying the course for 3 weeks have a good understanding of the concept of irrational numbers and apply the concept confidently to manipulate surds. Girls make up a smaller proportion of the classes than is the case nationally although their achievements are broadly the same as those of the boys.

Teaching and learning

133. All teachers have a very good command of the subject. They set out the main themes of their lessons in a clear and organised manner and consequently students pick up concepts quickly. When students are struggling to understand an abstract idea teachers are adept at re-phrasing and addressing the problem in a different way. The mathematics team has set up a tutorial system to support students with their work, students are appreciative and feel this facility is a significant factor in their progress. The teacher-student learning partnership is greatly enhanced by the very positive attitude of students who work hard, expect to be challenged and take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst students enjoy the clarity of delivery in mathematics they are rarely inspired by the teaching, which usually consists of teacher explanations followed by individual practice exercises with little opportunity to work in groups, discuss topics, or use computers. Students receive good, clear verbal feedback from their teachers but they receive little helpful feedback from the marking of work, which is limited to correcting errors.

Leadership and management

134. The leadership within the faculty has had a central role in ensuring the progress of students is good. Courses are very well planned and clearly focused on examination specifications. However, students taking further mathematics are taught topics in an unhelpful order because of difficulties with the school's timetable. Although the teachers work hard to mitigate the problem, students struggle to achieve their full potential.

Mathematics across the curriculum

135. Standards of numeracy in the sixth form are high. Students apply their skills well across the curriculum. For example in ICT, students studying systems analysis work confidently with numbers to solve problems. The Key Skills course, application of number, is currently under-performing. There is little ownership of the course by any faculty, consequently curriculum planning is weak and the course fails to put number skills into the context of students' AS courses. Progress is correspondingly slow.

SCIENCE

Biology and chemistry were the focus of the inspection but a lesson in physics was sampled. Results in physics in 2002 were above average but fell in 2003. Students' achievement, teaching and learning were satisfactory in the lesson observed. The lesson was a revision session focusing on thermal capacity. The small group were reluctant to contribute to question and answer but were given help to understand some very challenging material.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Teachers have a good command of their subject.
- Lessons are well structured with a range of activities to keep students engaged.
- Marking does not tell students what they must do to improve.
- Students have limited access to ICT resources in the department.

Commentary

Examination results

136. Results at A level were well above the national average in 2002 and continue a rising trend. Boys performed better than girls.

Standards and achievement

137. Standards are well above average and students achieve well. They express their ideas coherently, both orally and in writing. They show a good understanding of complex processes such as the transmission of the nervous impulse and they can bring knowledge and understanding from several areas of biology and apply them to novel situations. For example, when predicting the appearance of a chromatogram of photosynthetic pigments from seaweed, students were able to link ideas from photosynthesis, absorption spectra, penetrating power of different wavelengths of light in water and habitats of different seaweeds to propose a reasonable pattern of pigment distribution. Although they use ICT, such as word processing and computer-generated graphs, to present investigation reports, they have not used data-logging devices for remote collection of results.

Teaching and learning

138. Teaching is characterised by an imaginative use of resources and a range of activities to enhance learning and challenge students. For example, lessons about electrophoresis involved computer-generated models and simulations, and teacher modelling of DNA fingerprinting using string. These appealed to different learning styles. Students have an excellent attitude to their learning and teachers have a very good rapport with their students. This means students are willing to contribute to discussions and try out their own ideas in front of their peers. Also, they are able to approach their teachers outside lessons for extra help. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to respond quickly to students' questions and ideas. They have high expectations of their students.

Although marking is carried out regularly, it does not focus on how students can improve their performance or tell them clearly what the standard of their work is. Although teachers enhance their teaching through the use of ICT, students do not use it for data-logging purposes so that too much time is spent on the manual collection of results in investigations and experiments.

Leadership and management

139. A close-knit team of teachers has been created, well supported by a capable technician. They are all committed to their students doing well and they share ideas during their regular, informal meetings. This has led to the development of a stimulating environment for students. The presence of several, well-maintained aquaria are particularly impressive. A rigorous system for regularly monitoring and evaluating teaching is not yet in place. The assessment of students work does not generate targets for them to work towards. The current scheme of work, although indicating a good range of resources for each topic, does not set clear learning objectives for teachers to check their lessons have been successful. In short, the good work of the department relies too heavily on informal arrangements that may degenerate with changes in personnel.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average examination results in 2002.
- Students enjoy chemistry and the majority respond well to the context led approach.
- The extended practical project makes a significant contribution to developing students' skills in working independently.
- The homework set is too short, with insufficient extended response questions and too little emphasis on students researching information.
- There is insufficient attention given to students' skills in working independently throughout the course as a whole.
- There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

Commentary

Examination results

140. A level results have improved since the last inspection and were above average in 2002, but the proportion of students gaining higher A/B grades fell in 2003. Analysis provided by the school shows that students achieved in line with expectations and there are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

141. Standards in Year 12, soon after the start of the course are above average in the understanding of recent work on the mole, volumetric calculations and calculating empirical formulae. In Year 13, students have a average understanding of topics such as rate of reaction, and chemical and ionic equilibria. Students' progress and achievement in both Years 12 and 13 are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

142. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a number of good features. Students' understanding of concepts is developed through a combination of clear teacher explanation, written questions and practical activities. As a result, students' learning is satisfactory. Year 13 students undertake a substantial and extended piece of independent practical work. This makes a significant contribution to their skills in working independently, researching information, planning and carrying out practical work and analysing and evaluating data. At other times in the course, however, insufficient attention is paid to developing students' skills in working independently. Some teaching is too teacher-centred when students of different abilities would benefit from a more individualised approach. Students are not given sufficient homework in which they need to make extended responses or for which they need to do some research. Most students enjoy the context led approach of the course based around chemical storylines. At certain points in the course students make presentations on particular topics. This makes a contribution to the development of some key skills. Students do not get enough guidance on what makes a good presentation to gain the maximum benefit from these opportunities. Work is marked regularly and feedback given. Students value the extra support they receive both in and out of lessons. They also appreciate the school-produced, ICT-based, revision materials.

Leadership and management

143. Leadership and management of the subject are both satisfactory. Results have improved since the last inspection and a new course has been introduced based around chemical storylines. However, there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good but uses a narrow range of styles.
- Students' achievement is very good.
- Very good assessment analysis of and support for tasks.
- Very good projects based on real firms and problems.
- Students' preparation for revision in some modules is weak.

Commentary

Examination Results

144. There were no examination results in 2002. Results for 2003 are in line with the previous year's national average. Teacher analysis of the developing course modules is good and improvements are being made effectively to raise standards further.

Standards and achievement

145. The standards of work seen in AS and A2 lessons were above average. Achievement is very good because many students gain higher than predicted grades. Students' achievement is exemplified by their project work on real problems, such as the design of a web site for a local band or a spreadsheet with input forms for calculating and managing workers' expenses. Students confidently use a range of computer programmes to solve problems, and draft and re-draft essays. Students do not use computers to present to the group, which is a weakness. The quality of note taking is weak; this leaves students with insufficient record of course content for revision. The quality of work and standards reached by higher-attaining students has improved since the previous inspection. Lower-attaining students' achievement is good. Gifted and talented students are stretched and achieve the highest standards.

Teaching and learning

146. Teachers are well prepared for lessons which are delivered at a very fast pace. However, the limited range of teaching strategies do not best suit students' different learning styles so concentration levels sometimes wane. Learning in lessons results from a balance between teacher direction and individual exploration, with little group work. Effective teaching practice splits lessons into motivating sections with clear targets, matched to a variety of learning styles. Teacher assessment is very rigorous, giving expert feedback on progress because it informs students' next steps in their learning. Teaching helps students understand abstract ideas in effective practical ways. New knowledge and skills are taught well, building on new intranet-based resources.

Leadership and management

147. The courses and resources are effectively managed and thorough review and planned development is leading to improvements in teaching and resources. Good software and hardware, including modern equipment for teaching, aids effective learning because of more efficient and effective ways of presenting information. There have been positive improvements in provision, planning and attainment since the previous inspection, catering for the more able through new A level provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

148. Students throughout the sixth form apply and use computers confidently to support their learning outside of lessons. Key skills opportunities are satisfactory and standards are in line with national standards. Cross-curricular assessment in key skills is satisfactory and improving. Students use computers in private study periods effectively, especially for research in other subjects. Students' home use of computers is very good and is a significant factor in improving coursework standards. There are very good examples of ICT work through many subjects. In English, for example, students researched accounts of the French Bastille as a background for work on the book "A Tale of Two Cities". In English, physical education, design and technology and vocational courses, students confidently research and integrate text, pictures and data in a variety of ways to very good effect.

149. Technical backup is very good with a very good hardware infrastructure to support innovative developments. Plans are in place to increase provision and meet increased demand for open access computer use. Provision has improved greatly since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

In addition to the focus subjects, a lesson in history was sampled. Results over recent years have been well above average. In the Year 13 lesson seen, standards of work were well above average. Students' achievement in the lesson was satisfactory and teaching and learning were good. Students' responses demonstrated very good understanding of background issues of their chosen area of research. They effectively consolidated key information based on the British Empire.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average standards.
- Teaching is challenging and interesting and results in very good learning.
- Fieldwork is very good and supports learning very well.
- Students are well supported in coursework and examination preparation.
- Not all students build successfully on progress made in Year 12 when moving into Year 13.

Commentary

Examination results

150. Results in 2002 were well above average. Results in 2003 are lower but still above average. Girls achieve more of the higher grades than boys, School analysis of examination results show that just over half the students improve on their AS grade while the rest drop by a grade.

Standards and achievement

151. Standards in Year 12 are above average, with most students achieving well very early in this course. About a quarter are achieving very well. Standards in Year 13 are average but the ability range in this small group is wide. At this early stage, in this more demanding course, students are achieving satisfactory outcomes.

Teaching and learning

152. Students are enthusiastic and well informed, and have very productive relationships with teachers and each other. Year 12 students are achieving particularly well, given the early stage of their course. They have already achieved much work of a high standard because teaching has been challenging and very well prepared. A feature of this is the very good use of fieldwork, which makes the study both relevant and readily understood. For example, students can explain a wide range of features of coastal erosion with very good understanding, and interpret census data to understand inner city decline. Teachers' subject knowledge, enthusiasm and choice of methods are a strong feature of all sixth form work, and Year 12 students are confident that they will achieve well with the individual support available. Both teachers and students use information technology well to support learning and a wide variety of methods for teaching and presentation are in use.

Leadership and management

153. The department is well led and managed and good progress has been made since the last inspection in achieving some improved results, in using information technology and in successfully introducing the 'new' AS level exam to students. The management of coursework is a particular strength, as teachers' clarity of expectation and the structure of the work set support students very well. Teachers use data well to track student performance but are not yet using it fully to help all students to achieve consistent improvement. Higher-attaining students, in particular, understand their own strengths and weaknesses while lower-attaining students are less secure.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Standards	Very high
Achievement	Very high
Teaching and learning	Highly effective

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	This is a new course

Main strengths

- Students' attitudes to learning and the standards reached.
- The excellent learning which leads to very high achievement.
- The quality of teaching to which students respond very well.
- The quality of the teaching base.

Commentary

Examination results

154. Since 1998 there has been a rising trend in the results. In 2003, all students passed with more than half gaining the higher A/B grades. With an entry of 44, the largest specialist subject entry, this demonstrates the very high standards which the school promotes in psychology. There are no national comparators for the subject. The main factors in the standards achieved are excellent teaching, and the excellent attitudes of the students to their learning.

Standards and achievement

155. Students' current standards are very high, as is their achievement. For example, In a lesson on models of abnormality, a Year 12 student argued that the biological model was deficient, as it failed to take account of the fact that abnormality is defined, culturally, by age. It is acceptable, he said, for young children to have imaginary friends, but similar behaviour in adults is likely to lead to a diagnosis of schizophrenia. This was a particularly thoughtful extension of learning for this student. It was an example of the conceptual links which the teaching and the attitude of the students engender.

Teaching and learning

156. The characteristics of the teaching which promotes this learning include teachers' subject knowledge, and energetic and lively direct teaching, including short, focused tasks, which makes lessons proceed at a very rapid pace. The range of teaching strategies, including students acting as a learning resource to each other, is effective in promoting learning. Helpful feedback to the students on their written and oral work, ensures that they know exactly what they must do to improve. There is a good focus on psychological models of understanding human and animal behaviour. Key skills, such as analysis and evaluation of data, and examination and coursework technique are developed very well through the teaching. The use of questioning, which makes students develop habits of reflective and critical thinking in order to defend their point of view, is particularly strong. Students say they very much enjoy psychology. Their excellent attitudes to learning are very evident. They consistently work to capacity, and achieve and maintain comprehensive gains in learning. They offer evidence from their own reading, and introduce ideas from their own experience to exemplify and support, or to challenge points being made in the teaching, or being made by their peers.

157. Psychology lessons take place in a lecture theatre. Reminiscent of a university environment, this has a very positive effect as it encourages an adult approach to learning. The walls of the room are used to great effect to display very stimulating and creative montages made by the students. Such visual presentation has the effect of consolidating and celebrating their learning.

Leadership and management

158. There have been some very good developments in psychology. Leadership of the subject, in terms of designing and teaching a psychology scheme of work, and creating the learning environment, is excellent.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	This is a new course

Main strengths

- Students achieve very well in examinations.
- Teaching is very good and students learn very well.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- The subject is very well led.

Commentary

Examination results

159. A level results were well above average in 2002 and students performed significantly better in comparison with their other subjects. Results were lower in 2003 but in both years the number of students was small so that results were very dependent on the individuals in the group.

Standards and achievement

160. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average and students achieve very well. Early in Year 12, students can identify definitions and technical terms. Specialist vocabulary is strongly emphasised in all lessons. For example, students understand the meaning of, and influences within, the nuclear family and the conflict of power and gender at home and in the work place. Students discuss well the change in family groupings in modern society and explore the history of this change. Students' achievement results from the challenging teaching and the careful planning in the course. Year 13 students apply their good understanding of theorists and different perspectives to a variety of topics. This leads to well-informed discussions. They are competent at organising essays and understand the value of planning and research. Students answer questions very well and choose appropriate examples to support their answers. They understand how to interpret statistics, analyse graphs, collect data and confirm hypotheses. Good feedback from marking keeps all students aware of possible grades and helps them to raise their achievement.

Teaching and learning

161. In lessons, a rapid pace ensures that much is achieved in the time. An excellent personal understanding of the subject enables the teacher to use a variety of teaching methods that rigorously challenge students. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students' understanding of the pressures of globalisation was developed well when the teacher brought alive the social, moral and cultural implications of the pressures brought to bear on other developing societies. Pressures resulting from the impact of industrialisation, science and technology on wealth, trade and political and economic influence. Teaching extends students' thinking well through good challenging questioning and discussion. This results in good inter-change of ideas and clear, confident dialogue. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They appreciate the learning environment of a cooperative joint enterprise. They support their very good learning through supplementing the teaching with their own Internet and document-based research. Students feel that they have a good understanding of how society functions; they enjoy learning to understand the impact of different interest groups on society, and see this as a useful contribution to future careers.

Leadership and management

162. Regular attendance on courses helps to keep the department and students up-to-date and fully acquainted with examination requirements. Good monitoring systems enable the teachers to track students' progress, and identify their strengths and weaknesses. This guides teaching and enables teachers to advise students very well. The popularity and success of the sociology course, and consequently increasing numbers, puts strain on the good accommodation and resources available.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The home economics course was the inspection focus. A lesson in product design was seen. Standards were very high and students achieved very well. Teaching and learning were very good, and students produce high quality coursework.

Home economics

Provision in home economics is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good achievement because of very good teaching.
- The quality of lesson planning, teamwork, leadership and management helps to raise achievement.
- One hour lessons restrict the type and range of practical work and students' opportunity to learn from each other.

Commentary

Examination results

163. Results in the A level examination in 2002 were above average and results in 2003 were similar.

Standards and achievement

164. Students joining the course usually achieve high grades at GCSE, and these students continue to make good progress. Lower-attaining students also make very good progress. Many students produce coursework folders of high quality and which show considerable depth of understanding of the topic. In a Year 12 lesson, students were able to combine recent learning about healthy eating with that learnt in Year 11 and were then able to deepen their understanding of the nutritional content of products made in the previous lesson. In this lesson, the use of ICT was a positive aid to understanding the nutritional content of food products and aided students' understanding of the need for careful planning of meals. Following a well-structured lesson, Year 13 students showed a clear understanding of the need for hazard analysis and critical path control when designing and making food products on a commercial scale, and the need for very detailed planning of this aspect of food production. Students are able to apply previous learning well to new situations and respond well to clearly focussed questions from their teachers. The marking of essays gives students helpful feedback and guidance on how to improve their work.

Teaching and learning

165. Staff involved in teaching the course work very effectively as a team to plan both the scheme of work and individual lessons. The work set is demanding and requires considerable thought and effort from students who respond well to the quality of teaching. Teachers make a particular point of using topical information from press cuttings in their teaching. Good use is made of information and communications technology for teaching and learning, with students also making effective use of ICT in their coursework folders. Staff have developed valuable links with local industry for both students and teachers and these help to develop the understanding which students have of the

subject. Very effective use is made of practical work to reinforce students' understanding of key concepts in the scheme of work. Marking is used well to inform students of their progress and to advise them of where further work is needed. Students enjoy the course, and speak highly of the quality of teaching which they receive.

Leadership and management

166. The subject leader and other staff work very well together to plan work which is interesting, challenging and relevant. Available resources are of high quality and these help to raise standards. The single one-hour lessons inhibit the type and range of practical work which can be done, and prevent students from learning from the work of others on the course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

In addition to the focus subject of art, lessons were sampled in music and in theatre studies. In music the small group of mixed Year 12 and 13 students were taught well. In this lesson on harmony, their standards were average and they achieved well. In theatre studies, good teaching helped students to understand the importance of staging, movement and representation in non-naturalistic theatre. The teacher's use of video recordings of their rehearsal, alongside a professional interpretation, was very effective in enabling students to relate theory with practice.

Art

Provision in art is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved results in 2003.
- Students' capacity for independent study.
- Enrichment activities, including a study visit to Barcelona.
- Leadership and management are poor and have not confronted weaknesses.
- Significant underachievement in examinations and in lessons.
- Teaching is not planned in ways that meet the needs of individual students.

Commentary

Examination results

167. Results, since the last inspection, have fallen from well above, to well below average standards in the past three years. In 2003 there was some improvement and, overall, a higher proportion of A and B grades than in previous years. Numbers starting the courses have fallen considerably and the drop-out rate is too high.

Standards and achievement

168. In 2002 there was significant underachievement by students when their performance in art and design is compared with their other subjects. This underachievement was evident in much of the work seen during the inspection. Standards were below average. Although some start the course with strong GCSE results, few manage to maintain the high standards in the sixth form.

Teaching and Learning

169. Students have well-developed personal learning skills and the capacity to achieve well. They learn independently – read widely and some go to exhibitions. Too many students rely on books and secondary images rather than working from first-hand experience. The pace of lessons was often too slow and work lacked the level of intellectual challenge expected at this level. Provision for students with special learning needs is very mixed. Some are supported well, by teaching assistants, but others do not get the help they need. A major barrier to learning is the lack of agreement and planning between the teachers who share classes. As a result, teachers' interventions and guidance sometimes confuse students rather than clarify what needs to be done. One-to-one tutorials were effective in some cases but overall, teaching and learning was not appropriately matched to students' individual learning needs and prior attainment.

Leadership and Management

170. Students have gained from the additional opportunities created through the Silver Artsmark Award and for those who are able, the visit to Barcelona presents an excellent starting point for a major piece of work. The team of teachers offer a wide range of skills and experience. However their strengths have not been well managed and outstanding weaknesses have not been analysed, evaluated and confronted. The development of teaching and learning has not been given a high enough profile. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In addition to the focus on physical education, A level leisure and tourism was sampled. The lesson was well planned and students demonstrated good standards of literacy and use of ICT. Project work was well planned and organised. Notable examples included work on the use made of a local leisure centre where a student had visited and carried out risk assessments. Standards were in line with individual targets and achievement good.

Physical education

Provision for physical education in the sixth form is **good**.

	Sixth form
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving as a result of good teaching and the effective deployment of teachers.
- Teaching is good, ensuring that students make good progress.
- Leadership and management provide clear vision for the subject.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they display good intellectual effort.
- Systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are not well developed.
- Accommodation for theory lesson is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

171. Results in A level have been below or well below national averages for the past 5 years. However, results are improving and in 2002 AS results were above average.

Standards and achievement

172. Students have above average knowledge and can apply it effectively to exemplify and justify their opinions. Students achieve well throughout the course. In Year 13, students know the historical influences on the development of sport in different countries. They have good research skills and use the Internet effectively to gain further knowledge. Their knowledge of the psychology of sport is above average and they can justify their opinions with good examples. In Year 12 students have good knowledge and understanding of definitions of leisure and play and apply this knowledge well. Standards of work in folders shows that their knowledge of anatomy and physiology, skill acquisition and social and cultural aspects is very well developed.

Teaching and learning

173. Teachers have good knowledge which ensures that all students learn well and make good progress. Teachers use a good range of teaching styles and very good relationships keep students interested and motivated. Students know what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Challenging questions provide good opportunity for students to justify their opinions and thus enhance their understanding. Good use is made of ICT to provide opportunity for independent research so that students can gain further knowledge. Students have very good attitudes to the subject and work with good intellectual effort. They work well together and there is mutual respect shown by teachers and students.

Leadership and management

174. The recently appointed head of department manages the department well and has clear vision for future development. Teachers are more strategically deployed so that they teach to their strengths and this is having a positive impact on standards. However, systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are not well developed. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in that there is no dedicated room, making storage of resources and display for the theoretical aspects difficult.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on AVCE business, but A level business studies, A level economics and business, and GNVQ (intermediate) business were also sampled. In A level business studies, results in 2002 were around the national average. In the lesson seen during the inspection good teaching brought about good learning. This was interesting and captured the students' imagination, making theory clear by linking it to real world situations to which the students could relate. In economics and business, results in 2002 were well above average and in 2003 all students achieved the top three grades. In the lesson sampled, very good teaching started from the students' current experience and understanding and built up understanding through clear and systematic teaching related to relevant examples. In 2002 the number of students achieving the GNVQ intermediate qualification in business was slightly above the national average. Standards seen confirm that students continue to benefit from this introductory course in business. Some use it to progress from a small number of GCSE passes to gain the entry requirements for AVCE business and university entrance. In the lesson observed good teaching gave students the opportunity to clarify and widen their understanding of forms of communication in business, drawing on their collective experience from their range of part time jobs. This made the lesson interesting and relevant to the students helping them to achieve well.

Business

Provision in AVCE business is **good**.

Standards	Satisfactory
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	This is a new course

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement, by Year 13, results from good teaching.
- The course now recruits from the whole ability range leading to improving standards.
- Teaching involves frequent and clear links to the examination requirements and assessment and real world examples build on the students' experience and knowledge.
- Students feel well supported through constructive oral feedback.
- The teaching programme lacks sufficient illustration, through visits to businesses, for the applied nature of the course.
- Students start the course with no background of business education from the main school.

Examination results

175. Results in 2002 were well below average. Results in 2003 were similar, however school data indicates that students begin the AVCE course in business with a record of GCSE performance that suggests these results to be the likely outcome.

Standards and achievement

176. The school has recognised that the demands of AVCE are very different to those of its predecessor, GNVQ (advanced) and the subject now recruits from a wider ability range and unit tests, already taken, reflect this greater range of ability. Current standards are average. Students are able to contribute their ideas from the real world of business and work successfully through guided assignments. They are achieving well.

Teaching and learning

177. The good achievement results from teaching and learning which is good. Teaching seen during the inspection was at least good and sometimes very good, although learning in some Year 13 lessons was less effective because students lacked the experience and skills to fully understand the concepts. Relationships were very good in all lessons observed and this led to a positive working atmosphere. All teaching observed was fully rooted in the real business world and students were able to apply their knowledge to business contexts with which they were familiar such as the motor industry. A particular strength of the teaching is the frequent and clear links to examination requirements which assists the achievement of students. Students receive ongoing and useful oral feedback and feel very secure in their learning as a result.

Leadership and Management

178. There exists a rationale for the wide curriculum provision and there is coherence to the delivery and resourcing of the courses. Staff skills and expertise are carefully matched to the curriculum. Within school, accommodation and resources for the course are very good with teaching taking place in a modern office-like environment with lots of access to ICT. However, links with local businesses are limited and insufficiently developed for the applied nature of the course. Students have not had the opportunity to go on visits although some were able to join the AS course for a visit to the Toyota factory. Students start the course with no background of business education from the

main school, which is a disadvantage. Planning for this course has taken place in isolation and teachers have not benefited from insights into how the course is delivered in other schools.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

179. This was not a focus for the inspection. Two AVCE (advanced vocational certificate of education) health and social care groups were sampled. Results have been very good in recent years and students' achievement has been excellent. The course is very well planned. There is an excellent mix of in-class study where, for example, students learn about theories of child development, alongside action research in a work environment. Standards were very high and coursework was excellent quality.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

180. This was not a focus for the inspection but a lessons of general studies were sampled. Results in general studies were average up to 2001. In 2002, results were well above average. All students achieved very well but male students achieved better than the female students. These results demonstrate considerable improvement. In a Year 12 lesson students' achieved very well. They made thoughtful contributions to the discussion - about the moral and ethical issues raised in cloning and IVF treatment - as part of a wider debate on medical research. The teaching was very good and students were able to consider different viewpoints throughout the very productive discussion. There were considerable gains in their knowledge and understanding.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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