

INSPECTION REPORT

CODSALL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124400

Headteacher: Mr E Liddy

Lead inspector: Mr Robin Coulthard

Dates of inspection: 19th – 23rd January 2004

Inspection number: 259297

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1302
School address:	Elliot's Lane Codsall Wolverhampton West Midlands
Postcode:	WV8 1PQ
Telephone number:	01902 434200
Fax number:	01902 434242
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Trefor Williams
Date of previous inspection:	13 th October 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Codsall is a high school in Staffordshire that caters for students aged 13 to 18. With 1302 students, the school is larger than most comprehensive schools and has similar numbers of boys and girls. Over 1000 of the students are White British. The other principal racial groups represented are White and Black Caribbean, Asian British Indian and Asian British Pakistani. The percentage of students whose first language is other than English is 4.1, which is below average. Of these, none is at an early stage of English. Support for 166 students is provided from the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant. The percentage of students with special educational needs is 3.7, which is well below the national average. Their needs mostly relate to dyslexia, moderate learning difficulty, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autism. Of these, 21 students (2.2 per cent) have statements of special educational need, which is below the national average. Students' attainment on entry is average. The school receives its students principally from three local feeder schools. In recent years students have come in increasing numbers from a wider catchment, which includes areas of high unemployment. Overall students' social and economic backgrounds are average. Over 700 students are bussed in daily. The school population is stable, with few students joining or leaving other than at the usual time.

The school's Investors in People status was re-awarded in 2002. Other awards are Healthy Schools, Schools Achievement Awards, Staffordshire Quality Awards for Careers Guidance, and National Opportunities Fund Award for New Build Initiatives.

The school makes substantial provision for the local community as part of its community use remit. These activities include adult education, a family learning programme, drop-in learning facilities, community outreach, a music school and two youth centres.

The school offers a good range of AS-level and A-level and a small vocational programme in the sixth form. Students generally complete the courses they undertake.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities	
			Main school	Sixth form
11746	Robin Coulthard	Lead inspector		
9053	Viv Phillips	Lay inspector		
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	Sociology
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Mathematics	Mathematics
32777	Jim McVeigh	Team inspector	Science	Biology
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30749	Heather Boyle	Team inspector	Art	Art
33018	Angela Read	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship	
33753	Philip Dean	Team inspector	History	
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	French	German
30814	Elizabeth Coley	Team inspector	Music	Music
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Physical education	Health and social care
31372	Bob Hardwick	Team inspector	Religious education	
22423	Jon Lovgreen	Team inspector		English
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector		Chemistry
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Information and communication technology
33324	Jo Fullwood	Team inspector		
23487	Patricia Kitley	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
33034	Alan Rogers	Team inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited

Langshaw
 Pastens Road
 Limpsfield Chart
 Oxted
 Surrey
 RH8 0RE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Codsall Community School provides a satisfactory education. Students' attainment on entry is average. The quality of teaching is good in the sixth form and satisfactory through most of the school and so students learn at a sound pace, achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards. In the sixth form, students achieve well and examination results are above average. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the balance between strengths and aspects for improvement results in the school giving satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Good relationships between students and teachers result in a positive school ethos
- The quality of teaching was good in the majority of lessons observed in the main school, although ineffective use of assessment information and the pace of learning over time results in teaching being satisfactory overall
- Teaching is good in the sixth form
- The special educational needs department gives well managed and effective support to students
- Good links with parents and the community support learning well
- Insufficient rigour in the monitoring of whole-school initiatives and in departmental reviews
- Weaknesses in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and the provision for citizenship, a collective act of worship and religious education in the sixth form

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, and good in the sixth form. Results have improved. A number of awards have been gained, including a Schools' Achievement Award. Accommodation has improved and other key issues from the last inspection have been broadly met, although aspects of ICT and collective worship have not improved sufficiently.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Students' standards when they enter the school are average and they are in the school for only just over two terms before they undergo the national tests in Year 9. Results in these tests in 2003 were average in English and science but above average in mathematics and above the national average overall. Results were below average, however, compared with schools whose students had gained similar results at the end of Year 6. Current standards are average overall and students' achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory. The trend in results for Year 11 is not quite as positive as the national trend. However, current standards in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good, especially in subjects where the teaching is most exciting. In Year 13, boys gained better results than girls. Currently, standards of work in the sixth form are average and students' achievement is **good**.

Students' personal qualities are satisfactory. Attendance is **good** in the main school. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory in the main school, while in the sixth form, students have good attitudes to work and their behaviour is **very good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

This is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall and so students learn soundly. In about two thirds of lessons seen, teaching was good. Much teaching is competent but unexciting and the proportion of very good and excellent teaching observed was smaller than is usually found. Teaching was sometimes excessively teacher-directed so that students had few chances to learn independently. The school has not promoted the use of rapidly-paced starter activities, main tasks that are closely geared to the abilities of the full range of students in a class and a review at the end of what has been learned that can influence subsequent planning. In subjects where the quality of teaching varies between key stages, it is generally stronger in Key Stage 4. Sixth form teaching is good. It is closely and successfully focused on examination requirements.

The curriculum meets students' needs satisfactorily in the main school and well in the sixth form. Cross-curricular themes – speaking and the use of number – are competently taught, but ICT is inadequately used across the curriculum. The poor quality of the library and limited ICT facilities limit the development of students' independent learning skills, especially in the sixth form. A small number of vocational courses are available in the sixth form. A good range of after-school activities enriches the curriculum well, particularly in music, drama and sport. However, many students are unable to benefit from these because of the need to travel home. A small number of statutory curriculum requirements are not met. The school looks after its students well, giving them good support throughout their time in the school. Links with parents are good, including the reporting of students' progress, and the school has good links with the community, for whom, as a community school it makes good provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development and key staff fulfil their roles appropriately. Systems for developing provision are suitable, but are not always effectively monitored to ensure that they are leading to improvement. Planning is generally of a good standard with valid criteria for improvement. The governing body is supportive and kept informed of all developments, but is not fulfilling all its statutory duties in relation to the school's educational provision, and so governance is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents like the school and think that, on the whole, their children are taught well, expected to work hard and make good progress. Some are concerned that students should have more homework or that students do not behave well enough, but both these aspects were satisfactory during the inspection. Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with concerns. Most students think they are taught well and expected to work hard. They think that the school is run well. Some feel that there are inconsistencies in how they are treated by different staff and in the setting of homework.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Implement the national Key Stage 3 Strategy across the curriculum to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment
- Raise the quality of teaching in Year 9
- Monitor whole-school initiatives against rigorous criteria and evaluate all improvements
- Improve the effectiveness of annual departmental reviews
- Make better use of assessment information for lesson planning
- Improve the library and ICT resources, especially for the sixth form

To meet statutory requirements, the school should develop the provision for citizenship in the main school. In the main school and the sixth form, the school should extend the use of ICT across the curriculum, and provide collective acts of worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT CODSALL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good and cost effective sixth form. The students have good attitudes to study, enjoy the sixth form and achieve well. The courses suit their needs and wishes and teaching is effective. Examination results are above average overall and the standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average. The sixth form is well led and managed.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good educational provision leads to above-average examination results
- Students enjoy the sixth form, which results in a good ethos for learning
- Good leadership of subjects and the sixth form overall
- Teaching is good overall, though sometimes uninspiring – good on facts, but not generating an enquiring spirit
- Inadequate library and ICT resources for independent research and learning
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education and acts of collective worship

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	Satisfactory in English language and literature Good in German , where students achieve well because of good teaching but do not develop independent learning skills enough
Mathematics	Good because working relationships are good and a good range of courses provides well for the students' needs
Science	Good in biology and chemistry , where achievement is good because students are enthusiastic and activities are interesting
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory , although the development of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory
Humanities	Good in geography , where students achieve well and engage in high quality fieldwork Satisfactory in sociology
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	There was no focus subject in this area
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in art because of creative and effective teaching
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	There was no focus subject in this area
Business	There was no focus subject in this area
Health and social care	Good in health and social care because of the practical relevance of the course
General education	There was no focus subject in this area

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The well-organised support that students receive makes a good contribution to their good attitudes, academic success and good achievement. The head of sixth form and the co-ordinator discharge a purposeful and helpful pastoral role. Target setting linked to effective monitoring has been successfully introduced to keep students on track. Good support is provided for those who experience difficulty. The quality of advice and assistance they receive helps them prepare for the next stage in their education and careers with confidence.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Good. The head of sixth form and the sixth form co-ordinator manage the sixth form well on a day-to-day basis. Planning is good and takes into account the academic needs of the students and their welfare. The sixth form has improved well since the last inspection.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views of the school are positive. Most students are pleased to be here, want to work and do well, and believe that the school helps them to achieve success. They feel that behaviour in the main school has deteriorated and would welcome firmer sanctions to deal with anti-social behaviour. Students feel that not all staff listen to their views and treat them with respect, but many do. In general, they think that the school's good reputation is justified.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

In relation to their attainment on entry to the school students are achieving **satisfactorily** overall, and **well** in Key Stage 4, although examination and test results do not always match the work seen during the inspection. Results are above average overall, but sometimes below average when compared with similar schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national testing at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2003
- Students at present in Year 11 are achieving well
- GCSE results in 2003 were below average compared with similar schools, although they were average when compared with all schools

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.8 (34.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	37.3 (36.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.1 (33.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 340 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Students take the national tests at the end of Year 9, a little more than two terms after they join the school. In 2003, the overall results were above average in comparison with all schools. In English and science, results were average and in mathematics they were above average. Results in English fell slightly from the previous year, while results in mathematics and science rose. Over the last five years, the school's results have risen at a similar rate to those nationally, but have been slightly above the national level. In comparison with schools whose students gained similar results at the end of Year 6, the school's results declined from below average in 2002 to well below average in 2003. Boys' and girls' results were similar, but the girls' average points score for English dipped just below the national level for girls in 2003. The school missed its targets at the end of Year 9 in English and science, but exceeded it in mathematics. Seventy-six per cent of the school's students gained Level 5 in English, when the target was 79 per cent. In mathematics, 83 per cent gained Level 5, when the target was 82 per cent. In science, 71 per cent gained Level 5, when the target was 74 per cent. The school's value added measure in comparison with similar schools was below average.

2. Standards seen in Year 9 were average overall. In mathematics, ICT and art, they were above average. Standards were below average in design and technology, except in food, where they were above average. Students achieve satisfactorily overall in relation to their capability and prior attainment. They achieve well in German, English, mathematics, ICT, geography, religious education, art and music. In science, achievement is unsatisfactory because the different teachers for the three sciences do not get to know their individual needs well enough. Students are set by ability in English, mathematics and science to so that planning can more easily meet the needs of the classes. Higher- and lower-attaining students are at a disadvantage in some subjects taught in mixed-ability groups because lesson planning is not adapted to meet the full range of needs within a class.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	59 (54)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.7 (34.7)	36.1 (34.7)

There were 359 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In 2003, an above-average proportion of students gained five or more grades at A* to C, an average proportion gained five or more A* to G passes and an above-average proportion gained one or more A* to G grades. In comparison with similar schools, the five A* to C result was above average, and the other comparator was below average. A point score is determined by awarding eight points for grade A*, seven for A, and so on. The 'capped' point score, that is the score that takes into account the students' eight best passes, including English, mathematics and science, was below average in comparison with similar schools. The school missed its target for five A* to C passes by four per cent, it's A* to G target by ten per cent, and its total points score was 45.1 when the target was 45.3. The trend in the school's average point score per student over the past five years is below the national trend.

4. Standards seen in Year 11 were well above average in German and art, and above average in English, mathematics, French, ICT, geography, religious education and physical education. They were below expectations in design and technology, except in food, where they were above average. Achievement is very good in modern foreign languages, and in music in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is exciting and the teachers enthuse the students. Because teaching is clearly focused on examination requirements, achievement is good in English, mathematics, ICT, geography, art, religious education and physical education, and satisfactory in the remainder. Higher-attaining students are challenged by the examination requirements and make good progress.

Students with special educational needs

5. The achievement of students with special educational needs and disabilities is satisfactory overall. Students who receive specific help from specialist teachers and teaching assistants make good progress as a result of effective target setting and well managed teaching. A high percentage of students are awarded grades in GCSE English and mathematics and either continue with appropriate further education courses or gain employment. Students with less complex needs make better progress in their learning in the support centre than in some other lessons because not all departments provide structured and consistent support.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of abilities. They do well to gain examination results that are **above** the national average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly **average**.

Main strength

- Students achieve well in most subjects because the teaching and curriculum are good

Commentary

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.0 (88.8)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	27.3 (23.9)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	257.6 (276.4)	253.1 (254.5)

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

6. Results in 2003 were slightly above the national average, although the percentage of students gaining A and B grades was significantly below the national level but had risen since 2002. Detailed statistics for 2003 are not yet available, but in 2002, boys' results were well above average and girls' were above average. In 2002, results in geography, ICT and design and technology were well above average. Results were above average in art and design, biology and business studies, below average in economics, English language, history, mathematics and sociology and very low in religious education. Recorded results were average in other subjects. Numbers in some subjects were small and the nature of groups varies from year to year which makes firm comparisons inappropriate.

7. In the subjects focused on in the inspection, current standards are above average in geography, art and design and music, where teachers have very good practical skills and readily share their commitment and enthusiasm with students. Teaching that responds carefully to examination requirements ensures that standards are average in German, mathematics, biology, chemistry, ICT, sociology, health and social care. Standards are below average in English language and literature because, despite good teaching, students are nervous about challenging the ideas they hear and find it difficult to engage in extended debate.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **good** and punctuality **satisfactory**, which, together with satisfactory attitudes and behaviour, provides a secure basis for sound achievement. Personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are happy to work hard when teaching is interesting and fosters a sense of achievement
- Good attendance linked to how much the school community and parents value educational achievement, supports a positive work ethic
- When lessons are uninspiring or codes of conduct not applied consistently, a few students lack motivation and their behaviour becomes unsatisfactory
- Positive efforts to develop students' personal qualities are hindered by inconsistencies in the school's approach

Commentary

8. Students' attitudes to their work and behaviour are often good. Most students recognise that the school welcomes and values them all, whatever their backgrounds, and so are happy to work in lessons and at home in order to achieve good grades. They take pride in their achievements. In better lessons, teaching meets their needs well and has positive, yet firm expectations of behaviour. Students are uncomfortable with the way a few of their number shirk hard work and take advantage of any weaknesses in teaching to misbehave and spoil lessons for others. In a few instances, students behave inappropriately in spite of the teacher's best efforts to give them useful, practical work to do. Discussions with such students suggest that this is often because they have a history of not doing well in school and find it very hard to knuckle down to work which offers little instant success. Inconsistent expectations, particularly in lacklustre lessons, and erratic use of sanctions

for misbehaviour have blurred the boundaries of what is or is not acceptable, particularly for newer students. Good manners and good working relationships are too slow to develop among younger students because scrupulous attention to high standards of behaviour and personal development is missing. The inspection found that relationships among students were good and generally harmonious. Some students would welcome firmer sanctions for anti-social behaviour with a more consistent approach to maintaining high standards of conduct and a good working atmosphere. The exclusion rate is low. More boys than girls are excluded, in line with the national picture.

9. The school does much to foster students' personal qualities through good relationships between staff and students, which make a positive contribution to motivation and achievement. The headteacher leads by example in the way he makes time to talk to students quietly and informally, which sets the tone for the ethos within which students' personal and social qualities are developed. A few students feel that not all staff listen to their views and treat them with respect, but that most do. Within lessons, many opportunities to foster a spirit of enquiry and reflection are overlooked, and so students have few chances to be moved by remarkable experiences, and show a disappointing tendency to accept information without question. Although students have many chances to work together and usually enjoy these, they have fewer opportunities to explore ideas of responsibility to themselves and others in the everyday life of the school. As a result, although most have good, basic social skills, they lack awareness of others' rights and feelings, as evident in the way they treat each other at times. A few students sometimes spoil lessons for others and use put-downs when someone is praised for good work. The school has a strong commitment to racial equality and cultural understanding but not all students have a full understanding of the issues and the social skills to deal with them successfully.

10. Parents choose the school for their children because they value educational success and the school's good reputation for delivering it, and so want their children to attend regularly, work hard and do well. They have responded positively to the school's efforts to minimise the disruptive effects of term-time holidays and lateness. Attendance is consistently better than the average for schools nationally, which is a good basis for solid achievement.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1044	31	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	25	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	9	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	53	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	44	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	92	0	0

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

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	0.3
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

Sixth form

Students have **good** attitudes to learning, work very hard and their behaviour is **very good**, which makes a significant contribution to their success with their courses. Their attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**. Erratic record keeping makes it hard to check and follow up individual absences swiftly, which, in one or two cases result in lower predicted and actual grades than might be expected.

Main strength

- Students are very keen to be successful with the courses they have chosen; they enjoy the sixth form and appreciate the encouragement they are given

Commentary

11. Sixth form students are very committed to their studies and have high aspirations for their future education and employment, which helps to motivate them to keep working hard, whether they are taking vocational or more academic courses. Both year groups said that more could have been done to give them a better idea of the demands and rewards of different sixth form courses, and that the prospectus gives too little detail of what sixth form life really involves. Nevertheless, they feel that the school has supported them well and offered them strong chances of success through good teaching and positive, purposeful relationships.

12. Students value and respond well to the encouragement given by staff. The inspection confirmed, however, some students' perceptions of inconsistencies in advice, which result from the sixth form management team's philosophy that it is up to students to seek help. Tutors and teachers differ in the extent to which they check on students' welfare and act promptly to stem worries. In particular subjects, such as history and sociology, students have been very appreciative of the way in which teachers have gone out of their way to give clear guidance on how to achieve specific grades and precisely how to improve. This has motivated them to work even harder. In other subjects, they have been less clear about how they are doing and what is required for improvement. The school believes that sixth formers need to develop the independence and personal study habits that are central to learning successfully at university and in adult life. It has not ensured that this is built on an effective system that supports those who find this difficult and acts promptly to identify and help anyone when things go wrong for whatever reason. A few students are too hesitant to ask for timely help.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in the main school and the sixth form,. Learning opportunities provided through the curriculum are satisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and good in the sixth form. Students are well cared for and the school provides a safe environment for their education. The school works effectively with parents, with other schools and with the community to further the students' education.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory** overall; there are strengths in some subjects throughout the school, but teaching is unsatisfactory in Year 9. In the main school, assessment information is not used effectively to help plan for the needs of students of different abilities. The positive aspects of teaching result in students learning soundly and so achieving satisfactorily.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching was good in the majority of lessons observed
- Work is well matched to students' needs when they are grouped by attainment and where teachers plan a variety of activities to suit all level of ability
- Just over one lesson in ten observed in Year 9 was unsatisfactory
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of examination requirements
- Students with special educational needs receive good specialist support
- The use of assessment information to support learning is unsatisfactory

Commentary

13. Teaching was good or very good in about two thirds of the lessons observed. The result was that, during these lessons, students were well motivated and learned both effectively and at a good pace. Over time, the same excitement and pace is not evident and this, together with some unsatisfactory, aspects leads to the overall quality of teaching being satisfactory.

14. The match of work to students' needs was generally good where students were taught in ability groups, as in English and mathematics. The mathematics department has devised useful resource books at suitable levels for the different groups. In the most effective lessons seen, teachers had planned a variety of activities that matched the range of attainment represented in the class. In a very successful food technology lesson, for example, resources were highly organised. Time was carefully apportioned to tasks to ensure a brisk pace of work. Students worked for the most part independently, which allowed the teacher to be a consultant and ally. Praise was used judiciously to reward and encourage. At the end of the lesson, enough time was left to ascertain everyone's achievement and their needs for the next lesson, and the room was left immaculate. Learning in this lesson was very good and the students took obvious pride in their work.

15. In some subjects where teaching was of mixed-ability groups, too little work was adapted for lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs. In a few lessons seen, this resulted in students losing their concentration and teachers becoming preoccupied with maintaining order rather than sharing their enthusiasm for the subjects. Whilst remaining productive on the whole, these lessons were tense instead of enjoyable. Excessive dominance by the teacher in one lesson observed prevented the students from working independently with the teacher as a supporter. The different rate at which the students worked meant that higher-attaining students finished early and were underachieving for parts of some lessons.

16. As the school has only one year group in Key Stage 3, it has not adopted the National Key Stage 3 Strategies fully and their effect has not been felt in Years 10 and 11. In general, Year 9 lessons did not begin with a clear statement of the specific objectives for the lesson, nor were these revisited at the end to consolidate what had been learned. Students were not always clearly focused on the most important aspects of learning and so the pace was relatively slow. When lessons began with a stimulating starter activity and the focus was clear, the pace was good from the outset. In one

mathematics lesson, for example, the higher-attaining group rapidly brushed up their technique for dividing numbers because they knew what they were expected to achieve and that they had a time limit. Occasionally, planning for Year 9 lessons teachers does not take into account sufficiently the range of ability within each class. Much teaching was preoccupied with content, and the teaching methods were insufficiently varied to maintain students' interest. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, teachers had generally miscalculated the needs of the class in their planning. This led to unsatisfactory learning and sometimes unsatisfactory behaviour.

17. Overall, teaching prepares students satisfactorily for the examinations they take. Lesson planning takes careful account of syllabus requirements and teachers have good subject knowledge. The result is that students learn systematically and receive accurate, simple explanations that help them to understand new ideas. In art and design and music, the teachers' expertise enables very effective demonstrations and students aspire to reach the same high standards.

18. Teachers receive detailed information, including targets, for students with individual educational plans. Some departments, for example English, mathematics, history, geography and music, make good use of this information to adapt teaching and materials for students who do not receive teaching assistant support. In the best lessons teachers gave clear explanations and asked appropriate questions that prompted accurate answers. This strategy enabled students to devise and use an algebraic formula to solve problems in a Year 9 mathematics lesson. When work is not adapted to their needs, students with individual education plans learn at a slower pace, and poor concentration leads to disruptive behaviour in lessons. Students with statements of special educational needs are taught well through effective teamwork by teachers and teaching assistants. Assistants provide the right balance of help and challenge so that students make good gains towards their targets.

19. Although the school has a common assessment policy, it is applied inconsistently both within and between subjects. Lesson planning takes too little account of what students have attained previously in order to teach at the most effective level for students of different abilities. Students' work is marked regularly, but the information gathered from this is not used effectively. Assessment information is used well in some subjects, like music and art, in which marking is used to help students understand how they can improve. In several other subjects, assessment is not used to respond to individual students' needs or to indicate areas for improvement. Since the time of the last report the school has introduced a system of reviewing student progress. This good provision identifies and informs students and parents of underachievement. It is not yet impacting on standards in the classroom. Senior managers are aware of the deficiencies in the present system and are tackling the inconsistencies through departmental reviews.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 125 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	23 (18%)	55 (44%)	36 (29%)	10 (8%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

Sixth form

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory**. Teachers focus strongly on examination requirements and make sound use of assessment information to support learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and of examination requirements
- Small group sizes enables teachers to have an accurate awareness of students' differing needs
- The teaching of study skills and opportunities for independent learning are inadequate

Commentary

20. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. In sociology and German for example, this enables them to ask questions that demand thoughtful answers and so develop students' understanding as well as knowledge. Teachers' familiarity with examination requirements helps them to offer clear guidance to students about the most important aspects upon which they should focus.

21. Relationships are good within groups and with teachers. The small group sizes in the sixth form result in an increased awareness of the level at which the individual students are working, and teachers are more able to share this information with the students and give them individual guidance on what to do to improve. Assessment in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory generally and in some subjects, such as in English, it is good. In art, the use of assessment to inform students of what they need to do to improve is very good.

22. Teachers prepare lessons conscientiously, but few lessons sparkled and so the proportion judged to be very good or excellent was fewer than is often seen in similar schools. On the whole, students make solid progress but are not often highly motivated to further their own learning independently. Study skills are not developed methodically in lessons. Discussions form too limited a part of learning and students' speaking skills are below expectation for the sixth form. For example, when Year 13 students gave presentations in a design and technology lesson about the morality of advertising, the presentations were well prepared and spoken, but other students were not drawn into discussion. When questioned, they gave only very brief answers or views.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	7 (14%)	23 (47 %)	16 (33 %)	2 (4 %)	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

Overall, the curriculum is **satisfactorily** broad and balanced in Years 9 to 11, with a reasonable range and quantity of enrichment activities. The number and qualifications of the staff are adequate for the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Year 9 curriculum is well planned to help new students settle in
- Provision is unsatisfactory for cross-curricular ICT, citizenship and a daily act of collective worship
- Planning for the needs of students with special educational needs is good

Commentary

23. The curriculum is planned so that, when students enter the school in Year 9, they enjoy good continuity in their learning. This is helped by a pattern of similar timetable allocations to the feeder middle schools. Only two new subjects are added, drama and German, which provides students with the valuable opportunity of beginning a second foreign language. The needs of the lowest-attaining students are well catered for in Year 9 as they have extra lessons in basic literacy instead of German. The teaching in mathematics in Year 9 is well-adapted to students' needs as much of the material has been specially written by staff.

24. Planning for the use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. This cross-curricular aspect was judged inadequate in almost all subjects and the result is that students lack the breadth of experience required in the National Curriculum for ICT. It also has a detrimental effect upon standards in the other subjects.

25. The school is in breach of statutory requirements as it has not succeeded in establishing citizenship within the curriculum. Additionally, no attempt is made to provide an act of corporate worship during form time, which is confined to the registration of students, and provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet requirements.

26. Good planning for students with special educational needs in some subjects helps them to make appropriate progress and feel valued. The English and mathematics departments have appointed liaison teachers who work closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator. In Years 10 and 11, the English department offers AQA unit awards to motivate students and build their confidence for GCSE. The school also has a competence-based area of study to support key skills development for those older students who follow a vocational option; it combines work-place learning with the ASDAN youth award scheme. Some opportunities are provided for gifted and talented students, for example through lunchtime classes in Latin in Year 9 and the possibility of early GCSE entry in music. However, provision for these students' needs is not planned systematically by all departments.

27. Although the accommodation is adequate overall, some spaces are not suitable for their use. Some design and technology rooms, housing large machines, are cramped and not suitable for the group sizes that use them. The temporary changing rooms for physical education lack toilet and shower facilities. Several corridors are too narrow for the numbers using them at busy times. The sports centre, art studio and the geography suite provide up-to-date accommodation and support teaching and learning well. Car parking on the site is not effectively separated from where students walk, which poses a hazard, particularly at both ends of the school day.

28. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, but the library is small and its stock mostly rather old. It does not offer a stimulating resource to support learning. There is good provision for ICT in music and geography but other subject areas cannot access ICT resources easily, which limits students' learning and achievement.

Sixth form

The school provides a range of courses that meets the needs and aspirations of students **well** and enrichment activities are adequate. The number and qualifications of teachers make a **good** contribution to students' achievements. The accommodation and resources for learning are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of AS and A-level subjects is taught by well-qualified staff
- The school avoids duplicating vocational courses offered by other local institutions
- Good retention rates on courses
- Key skills and opportunities for independent research are too limited
- Provision for religious education is inadequate

Commentary

29. The school provides a good range of AS and A-level courses, including classical civilization and Latin. Vocational courses in business, leisure and recreation and health and social care are offered. This limited range reflects a sensible rationale in not duplicating vocational courses that are readily available at other institutions in the area. In addition to their academic subjects, all students have a weekly general studies lesson. Religious education is subsumed within general studies and does not meet statutory requirements. The appropriateness of the curriculum in the sixth form is evidenced by the high retention rates. Few students fail to finish their courses.

30. Although accommodation and resources are sound overall, the inadequate library for the sixth form and insufficient opportunities to use computers at school limit students' scope for independent research.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures for the welfare, safety and protection of its students are **good**. The support and guidance given to students is good overall. Arrangements for seeking students' views through the student council are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths

- Good monitoring of health and safety issues
- Good access to support and advice through the careers education programme
- Good levels of supervision are maintained throughout the school day
- The school has effective induction arrangements for its students

Commentary

31. Staff ensure that students work in a safe environment. Health and safety issues are monitored well. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately and recorded. There are regular checks by outside contractors who make sure equipment is well maintained. Form tutors and staff with pastoral responsibilities ensure that the level of supervision of students at all times is good. Efficient systems operate well when students encounter personal problems or give rise for concern. Liaison between pastoral staff is very good and well managed by heads of year. Teachers know their students well and take action to minimise any risk to their safety or well-being. Procedures for the protection of students when using the Internet are very good. Supervision of the bussing arrangements is rigorous to ensure the safety of students when they arrive at and leave the school site. This is essential while the car parking facilities and pedestrian access remain integrated.

32. Relationships in the school are good and contribute to the positive atmosphere both in and around the school. The 'Connexions' adviser operates an open-door policy and students know they can go there for guidance about further education or employment. A useful 'problem post' system enables students' concerns to be brought to the attention of the school anonymously. The school council provides a useful forum for communicating students' concerns to the senior management.

33. Reward systems and sanctions are tracked by year managers, and this leads to a good analysis of the links between attendance, behaviour and achievement. The special needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants meet regularly to review the progress of students with special educational needs. The files of students are well organised. Annual reviews of statements involve subject teachers, parents and students, and targets are revised in the light of their responses.

34. There are very good links with the main feeder schools both through subjects and the pastoral system. This, together with effective induction arrangements, ensures a smooth transition from one school to another. Parents and students say the transfer arrangements from the feeder schools are very thorough and effective. A new student support service is in place to reintegrate students who are timid, disaffected or returning from illness.

Sixth form

Students are well supported throughout their time in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of sixth form and the sixth form co-ordinator are constantly available to provide advice and guidance
- The school prepares students well for the next stage of their education
- Students are not always sure how well they are doing or when to ask for help

Commentary

35. Students appreciate the availability of the key sixth form staff, who are always willing to discuss important issues with them. This contributes significantly to the good relationships and

atmosphere in the sixth form and ensures that students receive effective pastoral support.

36. The sixth form has good links with further and higher education institutions and students are well prepared for the next stage in their education through effective careers and educational guidance programmes. The effectiveness of the school's care and guidance is clear from the sixth form questionnaire responses, in which students agree that their courses suite them and they enjoy being members of the sixth form. However, both year groups said that more could have been done in advance to give them a better idea of the demands and rewards of different sixth form courses.

37. Target setting has been introduced in Years 12 and 13 as part of the pastoral and academic tracking system. Students write evaluative comments on their own work and extended statements are made by subject teachers and pastoral tutors. Although this practice is effective it is not consistent across all departments. Students are sometimes unsure how well they are doing, despite the willingness of teachers to tell them. The sixth form management team's philosophy is that it is up to students to seek help, which is a good approach for many, but some need more adult leadership in this aspect of their personal development.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has built **good** links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges, which are used effectively to underpin students' achievements.

Main strengths

- The school values its partnership with parents and works hard to keep them well informed about its life and their children's progress
- Reports on students' progress are good, clear and helpful in suggesting ways forward to improve on current achievement
- The school's commitment to community education helps to foster aspirations and reinforces the value of lifelong learning and achievement for all
- Good links with other schools and colleges support smooth transfer to and from the school

Commentary

38. The school is popular and oversubscribed, and parents are pleased that their children have places and are happy to do what they can to support their education. Parents attend open evenings and school productions in large numbers because they are interested in what happens in school. They want to be assured that their children are doing well, which was evident in their responses to inspection questions. Parents with children in Year 9 who attended the parents' meeting felt that it was too long before they had information about how students had settled and were progressing. Opportunities to meet staff formally and socially were limited once the students had started, although before then, preparation for transfer had been good. The school has introduced an improved system of students' progress reviews, with more frequent information about progress, which may resolve the concerns of those parents who did not feel that they were well informed about how their child was getting on. Annual reports about students' progress usually give a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses and set out the steps they need to take to improve the standards they achieve. They are good at outlining the reasons for what has been achieved, including absence rates and whether or not homework is done well, leaving the student in no doubt about the importance of practising particular skills and meeting coursework deadlines. Usually they give a clear indication of the student's target grade for the course and the level or grade at which (s)he is working.

39. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are kept informed at all stages of their child's education. Parents of students who benefit from supported study also receive additional reports. These include appropriate information about things that can be done at home to help. Careful preparation for admission in Year 9 is effective and involves staff from middle schools. Transition for students with behavioural and social needs is managed by the co-ordinator for special educational needs but subsequent target setting and monitoring are undertaken by pastoral staff. Students from the sixth form volunteer to work with teachers in classrooms to support younger students.

40. The school has a thriving community education centre, which provides over a hundred courses for adult learners, some of which, such as sugar-craft, attract students. The emphasis on the value of learning for everyone in the community reinforces the idea that education is worthwhile and helps to sustain high aspirations among families. Students benefit from good role models and access to computer facilities in the centre for independent study during the day.

41. The school works hard to maintain good links with its local feeder schools and to build effective links with schools further afield, from which more students have joined recently. Good efforts are made to work with middle school staff in all areas of the curriculum to ensure that gains made in Years 7 and 8 are not lost and that the welfare of all students is central to the support given as they move to Year 9. Good links with local colleges ensure that students who might benefit from work related experiences have access to relevant programmes. The school has good, productive links with several universities that support both access into higher education and specific extra-curricular activities, such as events and workshops for gifted and talented students.

Sixth form

As in the main school, links with the community and other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths

- The strengths found in the main school are sustained well in the sixth form
- Good links with nearby colleges and universities support very strong interest in education and training for students after they leave the sixth form

Commentary

42. Sixth formers benefit from the same strong community links as students in the main school. They make good use of the computers in the community centre and sometimes work alongside adult learners, as well as helping students in the main school who are having difficulties with subjects such as music and mathematics. The school provides students with a wealth of information about courses for the future, particularly in higher education, taking care to give them a taste for campus life through relevant visits to universities such as Staffordshire, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Warwick. As a result, it is the norm for most sixth form students to consider applying to university and to feel confident of success.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall and **good** for the sixth form. Sound leadership by the headteacher and key staff has ensured that the school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. The governing body carries out most of its functions appropriately, but does not ensure that the school fulfils all its statutory duties, which is unsatisfactory. The school is managed satisfactorily.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a good vision for the school's development
- Governors support the school well but do not fulfil all their statutory obligations
- The provision for students with special educational needs is well managed
- The implementation of policies and procedures is inconsistent across the school
- New staff undergo an effective induction process

Commentary

43. The headteacher has consistently shown vision, enthusiasm and commitment in carrying out his duties and has been supportive professionally and personally of both staff and students. He is assisted by the leadership team, the heads of subjects, and the year heads. The headteacher is knowledgeable about the details of national initiatives for school improvement, and is ambitious in seeking to move the school forward, for example in the pursuit of specialist school status. However, initiatives have not always been implemented with sufficient vigour. Improvements in the quality of teaching, for example, have been insufficiently influenced by the Key Stage 3 Strategies. New management systems and initiatives focused on raising achievement have been developed by a collegiate approach, involving staff working groups. The school development planning is of good quality with appropriate criteria for judging its successful implementation. The quality of subject leadership varies. It is very good in music and art, and good in English, modern foreign languages ICT and geography.

44. Good leadership and management of the special educational needs department have maintained the high standards found at the time of the last inspection. The study support base is well equipped with computers and a printer, and there are plans to improve provision through greater use of ICT to disseminate information. Teaching assistants are well managed, but their time is generally allocated to students with statements. However, to raise standards in science in Year 9, a support agreement has been put in place to provide additional classroom support for specifically targeted students. Staff have received training in learning styles and behaviour management. However practice is inconsistent because each department, while following a consistent overall framework, organises its own provision for this group of students.

45. The governing body supports the headteacher and staff strongly and has established a range of committees which meet regularly and involve members of the leadership team. Their sincere appreciation of the headteacher and their deference to senior professionals has limited the scope of their critical questioning. They do not fulfil statutory requirements concerning a daily act of collective worship, citizenship, ICT across the curriculum and religious education in the sixth form. The very recent appointment of a governor interested in special educational needs and the newly instituted questionnaire to parents have strengthened their position. They have good systems for financial management and ensure that the principles of best value are pursued and that spending is linked to development priorities. Overall, however, despite their strengths, the governance of the school is unsatisfactory overall.

46. The full effectiveness of planned developments on standards and achievement has not yet been realised because they have not been implemented methodically, nor have they been monitored and evaluated rigorously enough for them to be effective. Nevertheless, overall, the management of subjects is satisfactory. In departmental reviews, quality and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation carried out by the leadership team is inconsistent. Where an effective review has been undertaken, staff have responded positively to the targets set and seen improvements in the

standards achieved by students, for example in physical education. Another way through which the school has sought to raise achievement has been a system of peer reviews, where staff share good practice by observing good quality teaching. Although there is no formal focus on the outcomes of these observations, some staff have said that they find the experience useful.

47. The systems for the induction of staff new to the profession and school are good. A regular programme of meetings informing colleagues of areas of importance concerning the school calendar and the day to day management of school life is in place, and all new staff are given mentors or 'buddies' to whom they can direct any concerns. Newly qualified teachers are receiving their entitlements and speak well of the high levels of support they receive. The headteacher ensures that those staff who take on new areas of responsibility receive training for their new role. The school is committed to the professional development of all teaching and support staff, but, whilst a large range of both external and in school courses is undertaken, they are not always closely linked to the priorities in the school development plan.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4275807	Balance from previous year	28780
Total expenditure	4123137	Balance carried forward to the next	181450
Expenditure per student	3082		

Sixth form

The sixth form is **well** led and managed.

Main strengths

- The head of sixth form and the sixth form co-ordinator work as an efficient team
- Sixth form reviews are effective and lead to rigorous follow-up

Commentary

48. The governors maintain effective contact with the affairs of the sixth form through an active link governor, regular contributions to their meetings from the head of sixth form and scrutiny of the development plan. Good evidence of the inclusive nature of the sixth form is the practice of admitting of a small number of students who do not meet the five A* to C criteria, but whose needs can be effectively met in the sixth form. They have not ensured, however, that the sixth form fulfils the statutory requirements in relation to collective worship and religious education.

49. The headteacher has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day management of the sixth form to an assistant head, who manages the work of the assistant head of sixth form and the sixth form co-ordinator. They work effectively as a team. The sixth form co-ordinator, a trained counsellor, makes a valuable contribution in both administrative and pastoral terms. Imaginative thinking in leadership and development planning has been applied to practical challenges such as the development of students as responsible adults and the very cramped accommodation. The reviews of student progress in Year 12 are effective and issues arising are rigorously followed up. The innovations introduced have been reviewed independently and the leadership team is aware that the recording and checking of attendance in Year 13 require improvement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching was good in the lessons observed, with interesting tasks and resources
- Good results in English Literature
- Higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs often achieve well produce original creative writing of good quality
- Planning does not take sufficient account of the full range of abilities within classes
- Students do not receive enough detailed advice on how they may improve their work
- Insufficient attention is paid to improving the standard of spelling

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

50. In national tests at the end of Year 9, which students take after little more than two terms in the school, results are average overall. The proportion of students exceeding the expected level is above average. Following national trends, girls do better than boys. Results are well below average when compared with those gained in schools whose students had similar standards at the end of Year 6. Results are similar to science but below mathematics, and have declined slightly since the previous year. GCSE results are above average for the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades and for the average points score gained by students in both English language and literature. As nationally, girls do better than boys. GCSE results in English Literature have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now above average.

Standards and achievement

51. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average and indicate that students achieve satisfactorily. Speaking and listening skills are average. Students answer questions succinctly in class and conduct sensible, if brief, discussions. Standards of reading are above average. Lower-attaining students understand well what they read. For example, they demonstrated a secure understanding of 'Twelfth Night' by producing attractive posters to convey the features of principal characters. Students enjoy writing in a wide range of styles because teachers set tasks that are well matched to students' abilities. Higher-attaining students write detailed analyses of poetry which reflect the way in which authoritative teaching has helped their appreciation and understanding. The written work of middle and lower-attaining students tends to be marred by inaccurate spelling, which is not currently a sufficient priority for improvement. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Higher- and middle-attaining students understand and explain well the characters and narrative events of

plays and short stories, and are adept at distinguishing the way in which poets from different historical periods treat similar themes. Higher-attaining students produce vivid and assured creative writing in response to stimulating encouragement from teachers. Lower-attaining students produce good narrative accounts of books they have read, but rarely consider questions of theme and character beyond the obvious. Girls' standards are above boys' and the gap is greater in work seen than in the most recent examinations. This is because teachers do not always emphasise the need for boys to produce their best work in class. Students with special educational needs achieve well in response to good teaching, well aimed to encourage them and sustain their concentration. These students use computers well to order and communicate their ideas.

Teaching and learning

52. In the lessons seen, teaching was generally effective over the whole range of ability. Teachers engage students' interest well by carefully choosing books, poems and plays that will motivate them. This ensures that students learn effectively. Teachers question them helpfully and explain ideas clearly, which also stimulates their learning. Teachers' planning is not sufficiently developed to take full account of the range of ability that is present even within settled groups, although students tend to do better in sets than mixed ability classes. Higher and lower-attaining students achieve better than middle-attaining student, on whom teaching is less effectively focused. Gifted and talented students are encouraged well by teachers to extend their creative writing of stories and poems. Students with special educational needs benefit from additional staff, who keep them working hard with additional prompts and explanations. Students' learning is enhanced by their co-operative attitudes and behaviour. Written work is marked helpfully, but teacher comments do not give students enough information to help them to understand in detail how they should improve.

Leadership and management

53. Priorities for developing and improving teaching have been identified astutely. The department is effectively organised on a day-to-day basis. Priorities for development are carefully considered before implementation, but the use of information from assessment and the continued development of the use of ICT remain areas for further development.

Literacy across the curriculum

54. Students use their literacy skills competently across the curriculum. Speaking and listening skills are better developed than writing. In science, students benefit from good opportunities to think through and discuss ideas, but lack opportunities to develop ideas at length in writing. In mathematics, key subject words are emphasised well by teachers, and purposeful discussions reinforce students' understanding well. Discussion is used to good effect in geography religious education and history. Writing is not sufficiently emphasised in geography and science, and low level writing skills hold back students in physical education examination work. In modern foreign languages, students are effectively taught to understand the structure and grammar of language, but miss opportunities to promote confidence in speaking and listening. English lessons are effective in helping students to structure their writing coherently and to take part in discussion. A school policy for literacy across the curriculum contains good advice on teaching methods, but its implementation is inconsistent.

English as an additional language

55. A small number of students use English as an additional language, but all are at an advanced stage, and achieve in line with their peers. The school takes particular care to ensure that their needs and progress are checked and recorded.

Modern Foreign Languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good GCSE examination results in 2003
- Teachers' professionalism and commitment help students to achieve well by the end of Year 11
- Students work hard to succeed and do so
- Students have too few opportunities for oral work and for using ICT

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	French - above average German – well above average
Achievement	French – satisfactory German - good	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

56. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were generally in line with national averages. GCSE results at grade C and above were well above average in French and German in 2003, although few students achieved the highest grades. Results in German have risen significantly in recent years.

Standards and achievement

57. Students make faster progress in German than French. They respond well to the opportunity of learning a new language and the necessity of working at a fast pace. Lessons focus clearly on the teaching of comprehension and grammar skills, and this enables students to understand what they are learning and to retain this knowledge over time. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 as the curriculum is closely geared to examination requirements. Although students work well together in their written work, they have fewer opportunities to do so in oral work and standards and achievement in speaking are not at the same level as their written work. Students achieve very well in German because the fast pace is maintained and teaching methods are more varied.

Teaching and learning

58. Students benefit from teaching which establishes a clear sense of structure to their learning. The good opportunities to be taught by native speakers help students to develop their cultural awareness, comprehension and grammar skills systematically. They are well aware how individual lessons fit into the well-structured scheme of work, and this enables them to work with confidence. They listen carefully when teachers explain new structures, follow the patterns and can provide their own accurate examples. Materials, however, are not sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of the higher-attaining students fully and opportunities to develop students' oral skills are under-used. As a result, although students can read fluently, they have difficulty in using language spontaneously, and pronunciation is imprecise. The resources available are selected with care to ensure progression. Students respond well to the clear expectations of behaviour and work-rate set. Their work is closely monitored and their efforts encouraged through praise and the merit system. Relationships are good and students readily request help when needed. When teachers use a good variety of methods,

students respond and participate enthusiastically. This variety of approach boosts the standards achieved by lower-attaining students. When the foreign language is not so well used by the teacher, learning is less effective. Marking is insufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria to help and motivate students to seek further improvement.

Leadership and management

59. The head of department provides a strong intellectual direction for a hardworking faculty. The department is successfully focused on gaining good results. Lines of responsibility are clear but some inconsistencies in practice remain. Good standards of work have been maintained and, in the case of German, improved significantly since the last inspection. Issues relating to the under-use of ICT and students’ diffidence in oral work remain to be tackled.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and so students achieve well
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and encourage effective learning
- Students are not sufficiently aware of the level at which they are working or what they need to do improve
- Teachers do not share good practice enough

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

60. Students take the national tests at the end of Year 9 just over two terms after joining the school. Results were above average in 2003, and better than those gained by students in English and science. Results were, however, below average compared with those gained by students whose attainment had been similar at the end of Year 6. GCSE results in 2003 were average, which was lower than in previous years when they had been above average.

Standards and achievement

61. Current standards in Year 9 are above average and students are achieving well. Students in Year 9 are good at mental arithmetic. Higher-attaining students accurately use the formula for calculating the area of a circle, while lower-attaining students find difficulty in substituting values within an equation. In Year 11, where standards are higher than those indicated by last year’s GCSE results, students achieve well, for example when confidently solving quadratic equations both graphically and by using the formula. Achievement in lessons is good overall although it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. This wide variation in achievement is closely linked to the quality of teaching.

Teaching and learning

62. The quality of teaching is good overall, and prepares students well for examinations. However, the quality varies from very good to unsatisfactory. The good relationships which generally exist between the students and the teachers ensure a positive working environment which encourages students to learn willingly. Where the teaching is very good the pace of the lesson is brisk and is maintained through use of challenging questioning and a frequent change of activity and approach. However, some teaching is excessively teacher-directed with insufficient use of visual aids or practical activities and too few opportunities for students to exercise responsibility for their own learning. Teachers generally state the learning objectives at the start of the lesson, but not all spend time at the end of the lesson going through these objectives with the students, evaluating what has been learned and what needs to be done next. Few students are aware of their target grade for mathematics and most are unaware of the level at which they are working or what they need to do to improve. Most of the exercise books are marked regularly, but marking fails to inform the student as to their progress towards their target grade. Students make good use of graphical calculators and one of the mathematics classrooms is equipped with an inter-active whiteboard. Students do not have the opportunity to use computers regularly in mathematics. This is a requirement and students are disadvantaged by the present lack of compliance and miss the opportunities for independent study that using ICT provides.

Leadership and management

63. Day-to-day organisation is efficient but the leadership of the subject has not developed teaching methods with enough initiative. The National Strategy for mathematics has been adopted in Year 9. While this is already having an impact on students' attainment in Year 9, its beneficial influence has not spread to other years. The department has a satisfactory assessment policy which sets out the practices to be followed by the teachers, but these are inconsistently applied and the use of assessment is unsatisfactory. Monitoring of lessons within the department is limited to that required for performance management. Good practice is inadequately shared throughout the subject.

Numeracy across the curriculum

64. The use of numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. When interviewed, students spoke confidently and positively about their mathematical experiences. Students use graphical representations in science. In design technology, the importance of accurate measurement is constantly stressed, for example in the weighing out of ingredients. Graphs and pie-charts occur in geography. A good example of the use of numeracy occurred in a Year 10 drama lesson in which students calculated the likely profit margins from putting on a performance. A good initiative is underway to emphasise and extend the use of numeracy across the curriculum. A staff training day highlighted the possibilities, and members of the mathematics department have been attached to other subjects to assist in identifying opportunities to use numeracy. The numeracy co-ordinator has compiled a bank of appropriate examples so that mathematics processes that are used across the curriculum can be taught and reinforced in mathematics lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad curriculum offers a good choice of courses to students
- Science technicians support teaching very well
- Lack of a shared vision within the faculty has led to an inconsistent approach
- Short contact time between teachers and students in Year 9 limits students' achievement

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

65. Students take the Year 9 national tests after just over two terms in the school. Results in 2003 were average for students gaining level 5 or above, but well below average for schools whose students had gained similar results at the end of Year 6. Results were below the school's results in English and mathematics. Boys and girls' results were similar. GCSE results were average in 2003.

Standards and achievement

66. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve satisfactorily. Year 9 students have three separate science teachers, each of whom they see once a week. This short contact time is insufficient for the teachers to get to know the students well, which adversely affects achievement.

Teaching and learning

67. Teaching is inconsistent. Most is satisfactory or good, but in some lessons it is unsatisfactory. The more effective lessons have clear learning objectives and a lively style of teaching. They make good use of starter activities to engage students quickly and have a closing discussion that purposefully involves all students. The main activity in the lesson offers appropriate challenge to the full range of ability represented in the class. Other lessons lack a clear structure and incorporate uninspiring activities, such as copying, that go on for too long so that students become bored. Work in these lessons is not always matched to students' different needs. Generally students behave well and relationships with teachers are positive. Teachers set homework and mark work regularly, although not all put enough comments on students' work to help them recognise what they need to do to improve. Throughout their course, students have opportunities to experience a good range of practical work so that their experimental skills develop well. However, they have fewer opportunities to use ICT in lessons. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support lower-attaining students.

68. Technicians provide very good support in biology and chemistry, but have insufficient time to match that level in physics. Accommodation is adequate, but some of the older laboratories are drab and have inconvenient arrangements of benching that limit the ways students can be grouped. The faculty provides a good range of courses. No science clubs or regular trips to places of scientific interest are organised to enhance the curriculum. Good improvement in the provision of science textbooks has been achieved since the last inspection.

Leadership and management

69. Biology, chemistry and physics maintain strong individual subject identities. This has contributed to a divergence in approaches to teaching. For example, the Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive influence in some lessons, but is not universally used. Good practice is not fully shared; in part due to the lack of a central departmental area where teachers can meet regularly. However, the individual subjects are managed well. The setting of Year 9 students has produced several groups with a wide ability range so that adapting lessons to cater for individual needs is more difficult, and this difficulty is not always satisfactorily met. The faculty collects a range of

performance data. Some has been used successfully to target support for underachieving students, but the rest is not used systematically to help teachers plan work or to set challenging targets for teachers or students. A recent internal review of the department lacked sufficient rigour to generate improvement quickly. The school has appointed a new faculty head. However, there has been too little time for the re-structuring of the department since then to have a beneficial impact on historical weaknesses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results were well above the national average in 2003
- The department is effectively led and a good range of innovations is planned to raise standards, but management is unsatisfactory
- The distribution of resources limits access too often

Commentary

For curricular ICT	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

70. The 2003 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average. The GCSE results for Year 11 were above the national average in 2003. Girls did slightly better than boys in both key stages.

Standards and achievement

71. Current standards are average overall. Students in Year 9 use the Internet effectively to provide information for a database. In Years 10 and 11, students showed skill and ingenuity when devising appropriate ways of presenting information from a database to a range of audiences. The limited examples of work in Year 11 students' folders indicated average attainment and good achievement. The pace in parts of some lessons observed was too slow, especially for higher-attaining students, who achieved less than they should. Achievement is limited in some lessons when computers are shared.

Teaching and learning

72. Teachers ensured lessons were generally well structured and planned to enable students to be clear about what they needed to do. Students welcomed tasks that were broken down into small steps which they could follow and this enabled a good pace of learning to be maintained. Where lessons were less well organised, behaviour became an issue and had a detrimental effect on achievement. A lack of computers for whole-class work sometimes limited learning. There were good examples of paired working where students took responsibility for their own learning. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson, where students explained how they chose to divide the work to accomplish the task. Teachers were sometimes limited by the lack of resources. The clearest explanations took place in rooms equipped with a data projector where the teacher could demonstrate how the programmes would work to the whole class. There are good relationships

between teachers and students which creates a positive learning environment. Teachers make too little use of assessment information when planning for the needs of students of different abilities.

Leadership and management

73. Leadership is good but the new ideas have not yet had time to be developed. The development plan identifies key issues requiring attention and there is a clear vision for the department. There is an enthusiasm within the department with teachers working together to produce learning materials. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge although most do not have a specialist background in the subject. A useful programme of monitoring of colleagues' teaching has already begun, enabling strengths in teaching to be shared across the department. Some groups have more students than computers in the rooms and so students have to share resources. Access is limited for other subject departments because of the demands on facilities for Year 9 ICT lessons, and the increasing requirements of GNVQ ICT in Year 10.

Information technology across the curriculum

74. Students' competence in ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are, however, pockets of very good practice. Students make very good use of computers for composing and performing in music and for research and design in art. Students with special educational needs were observed making good use of ICT, and students used the library computers competently for research. However, the development of ICT across the curriculum is inadequate to meet statutory requirements. The ICT policy is inadequate and does not recognise that ICT is statutory across the curriculum. Accommodation, resources and the development of ICT across the curriculum were a key issue in the last inspection and there has been insufficient progress since then. Management of the accommodation and resources is at present not making the best use of what is available.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use very good subject knowledge to produce well-planned lessons
- Students' learning is stimulated by a variety of lesson activities and high quality resources
- Work does not always meet the needs of students of differing abilities
- Fewer students are choosing to study geography to examination level

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

75. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been average for the last three years. In 2003, the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE was above the national average. The percentage of students gaining A* or A grades was well below the national average.

Standards and achievement

76. Most students achieve well in lessons because they use a good range of investigative skills. For example, Year 9 students identified features of poverty from photographs, applied development indicators to different countries, and plotted comparative data on a graph. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students. The higher-attaining students in the mixed ability classes are not achieving as well as they should. They are given some extension work, but generally, whole-class tasks are not challenging enough.

Teaching and learning

77. The quality of teaching was good or very good in just over half the lessons observed. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and use it well to plan and teach lessons. Objectives are clearly explained so that students know exactly what they will be doing and why, which helps them to focus clearly. Students are motivated by the variety of lesson activities and the high quality resources. In a Year 10 lesson, the use of an interactive whiteboard, a video clip, and key word cards stimulated interest. Consequently, students made rapid gains in their learning in work about the rain forest. Students spend too little time carrying out independent research and making use of the department's computers. Work is thoroughly marked, but teachers are not using assessment information to plan effectively for differing levels of attainment. In some mixed-ability lessons, for example, tasks do not cater effectively for the range of students within a group. For example, in one lesson observed, this made the mood tense because lower-attaining students could not cope easily with the work and the behaviour of a few deteriorated. Year 9 students do not have appropriate opportunities to develop geographical skills through fieldwork.

Leadership and management

78. Departmental team spirit is strong and planning responds to problems. For example, the recent changes to the work planned for Year 9 have been designed to boost interest in GCSE geography. This is in response to the considerable fall in GCSE entries over the last three years. Standards of work and the quality of teaching have been maintained since the last inspection. The department has recently moved to a purpose-built suite of rooms that are well equipped, alive with displays of students' work and have a stimulating subject identity.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject
- The department is developing a good system for monitoring students' progress and using information from assessment to set targets for individual students
- The range of teaching methods is narrow
- Teachers foster good relationships with students
- Provision for the use of ICT in history remains poor

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good

Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory
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Examination results

79. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with national averages in 2003. Results at GCSE in 2003 were below average.

Standards and achievement

80. Students make steady progress in Year 9 and most do well in Years 10 and 11. Year 9 students interpreted historical sources, such as maps and employment registers, for the local village and could suggest reasons for the differences from the modern day. Students in Years 10 and 11 can judge the quality of historical sources of evidence and put together reasoned arguments for and against historical decisions. In Years 10 and 11, lower-attaining students were supported well in class, leading to better GCSE achievement. By contrast, some higher-attaining students do not achieve high enough results.

Teaching and learning

81. Lessons are planned well and teachers introduce lessons clearly, drawing upon good subject knowledge. Staff are enthusiastic about their subject and students respond to this well, showing great interest in the topics being studied. Relationships with students are also good. They work well co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Good group work in Year 11 enabled students to discuss and compare two key battles in the American Indian Wars and form good conclusions about their causes and consequences. In Year 9, the planning for a lesson explaining local history ensured that lower-attaining students were supported. However, the modification of the tasks for some higher-attaining students was inadequate as it prevented them from extending their learning further. Overall, the range of teaching methods used in lessons is too narrow and does not focus enough on improving the performance of boys and stretching the potentially higher-attaining students. The use of ICT is not incorporated into the work of the department and access to computers for class use is inadequate.

82. The department has recently introduced a good profiling system which uses information from assessment to set targets for students and monitor their progress. Students and teachers review their work regularly and a range of measures is being planned to support students when necessary. Teachers mark work regularly and use an assessment system clearly explained to the students in their books. However, the information from assessment is not yet used well enough to help students see how they can improve.

Leadership and management

83. The head of department, who has only recently been appointed, manages the department well on a day-to-day basis. Resources are organised effectively, records are kept of key decisions and a close team ethos has been fostered. There is now a focus on raising standards, especially in Years 10 and 11. The staff meet regularly and share a real enthusiasm for their subject, but the best aspects of teaching are not yet sufficiently shared across the department. As a result, the quality of provision is inconsistent. The department runs a good programme of visits to history lectures. Recent professional development has been specifically focused on the needs of the subject. The need to develop the use of computers was highlighted in the last inspection, and this has still to be implemented.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strengths in teaching result in students achieving well
- Current written work is above the expectations of the agreed syllabus
- Examination results in 2003 showed a good improvement
- Marking offers students insufficient information on the levels at which they are working and how they may improve their work
- Computers are used too little

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

84. Results in 2003 in the GCSE full and short courses were below average, although they showed marked improvement on the previous year and follow an upward trend.

Standards and achievement

85. Previous staffing problems have had a negative impact on students' experience of the subject, their attitudes and consequently their achievement. The situation has now improved and they are now making good progress. In Year 9, students' oral work on crime and punishment showed good knowledge, understanding and thinking skills. Students in Years 10 and 11 completed good reflective work on belief in God and Creation, some good extended writing and showed evidence of good research skills.

Teaching and learning

86. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons carefully and use questions which challenge students' thinking. The best lessons seen moved at a good pace and contained varied activities. Relationships and teachers' management of behaviour are good. Students work well with each other and generally display a positive attitude to the work. These strengths are contributing well to the raising of standards. In one lesson, a learning support assistant had prepared her contribution to the lesson well so that a small group of students made good progress. Marking is completed regularly and work is graded according to subject-specific levels. However, students receive too little detailed help about how they can improve their work. Planning for lessons in some mixed ability classes does not take enough account of the range of ability. The absence of access to ICT is a limiting factor on both teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

87. Leadership and management of the department have presented considerable challenges in the last two years because of significant staffing problems. The rising trend in results and overall standards reflects effective management of the situation. The development plan is appropriate and includes a necessary revision of planned work. The constructive use of information from

assessment is rightly being developed. Specific levels of work are beginning to be highlighted in lessons and discussed with students as a means of raising standards in the end-of-module assessments. Since the last inspection the time allocated to the subject in Years 9 to 11 has improved. The introduction of the GCSE short course for all in Years 10 and 11 is proving an effective means of raising standards and improving students' perception of the subject.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in food is very good, resulting in good standards and achievement
- Planning in Year 9 does not always build effectively on students' previous learning
- In lessons, teachers give good support to individuals, and particularly those with special educational needs
- There is insufficient access to ICT

Commentary

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

88. Results of teacher assessments in Year 9 in 2003 were average. GCSE results were below average in 2003. Results vary across different aspects of the subject; they are above average in food and well below in resistant materials.

Standards and achievement

89. Year 9 students' practical skills are satisfactory overall and good in food. They use a range of tools and equipment competently and select the appropriate tools for the material with which they are working. Current standards of work seen Year 11 reflect the variation seen in GCSE results. Standards are higher in food and graphics than other aspects. Students' understanding and application of the design and make processes are satisfactory. ICT skills are satisfactory, but the lack of appropriate equipment makes it difficult to meet the needs of the curriculum, particularly computer-aided manufacture.

Teaching and learning

90. Most lessons are well organised and have good strategies to ensure safe working practices. Lessons on food were especially well planned and linked effectively to marking that helped students to improve their work. The quality and usefulness of marking vary between courses, and the effectiveness with which learning objectives are shared with classes is inconsistent. Some lessons, especially in Year 9, lack pace and the nature of the activities does not stimulate students enough to maintain their interest. This results in higher-attaining students in particular not always achieving as well as they should. Individual support for students is good, particularly for students with special education needs, enabling them to achieve well.

Leadership and management

91. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department, but the latter are not always addressed with enough vigour, especially in monitoring the work of the department. The result is that inconsistencies in teaching and the implementation of policies hinder the intended improvements. The department has made satisfactory changes to planning as a start to raising standards and achievement in resistant materials. Accommodation remains a problem. Some improvements have been made to food rooms but the size and cramped conditions of other rooms has a negative effect on standards. However, the situation is set to improve as a result of a forthcoming building initiative.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching of skills contributes to good achievement
- Students respond very well to teachers' high expectations
- Assessment information is used well and so students know how to improve their performance
- Behaviour management is applied inconsistently across teaching groups

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

92. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003. In the same year, GCSE results were average. They have continued to rise since the previous inspection. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

93. Standards are average when students enter the school. Students make good gains during Year 9. This is a result of appropriate emphasis on technical skills and sound drawing techniques. Students show a good understanding of the basic principles of design and use colour creatively to enhance their work. A good example was the creation of 'mood paintings' based on the work of Kandinsky, when students were given the opportunity to paint to the sound of music. Students achieve well due to the high expectations of their teachers, and a strong emphasis on planning and preparing their work.

94. By the end of Year 11, students' skills are well above average. Most show confidence in using a range of media, materials and processes. They use effective research techniques to support their coursework planning and preparation. This can be clearly seen in the highly detailed and creative use of sketchbooks and in their critical evaluation of Fine Art. The majority of students achieve well. They have settled into their GCSE course and their learning is helped by the consistent focus on examination requirements throughout every teaching group. Lower-attaining students, including

those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Achievement is sometimes hindered by poor behaviour and lack of concentration which can result in reduced productivity.

Teaching and learning

95. Some very good teaching was observed during the inspection. However, examination results indicate that, over time, teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. They explain techniques and concepts clearly and simply. As a result, students learn quickly. A good range of activities captures the interests and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and teachers' expectations are high. Students consolidate their learning well in the GCSE teaching groups. Students have very good opportunities for wider reading and research, and the quality of support material benefits their studies immensely. An important contributory factor to GCSE success is the strong link with the work of contemporary artists. Students are inspired by their trips to galleries and by the many opportunities to work with visiting artists.

Leadership and management

96. The department is well led and managed and this results in good teaching. The department is strongly committed to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards further. A progressive and exciting scheme of work reflects subject requirements and sets the stage for good teaching. Target-setting, based on careful analysis of student performance in tests, is becoming well established and has much improved since the previous inspection.

Drama

97. The provision for drama is good. It provides students with very good opportunities for social and cultural development. Standards are above average and students achieve well as a result of good teaching. The introduction of a management position with responsibility for the subject has had a positive effect, with a well-organised course being established. Drama is taught as a separate subject, and the hall and a demountable classroom are available except during examinations periods. Intermediate GNVQ drama is offered in Year 10.

98. The lessons observed were carefully planned and structured. Good progress was ensured through varied teaching strategies and constant reinforcement of good dramatic techniques, as well as insistence upon appropriate behaviour and audience response. Planning and teaching ensure the inclusion of all students. They co-operate enthusiastically in groups and, as a consequence, contribute as individuals with increasing confidence, which furthers their personal development. Year 10 students are encouraged to use constructive criticism during lessons to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. They are involved in assessment using criteria that are suitably linked to lesson objectives. Students responded maturely to the demands of independent study, despite being only one term into the course. Teachers organise mixed-ability groups within classes, which fosters teamwork, loyalty and commitment.

Music

Provision in music is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are inspired by the expertise of their teachers and enjoy the subject
- The assessment of students at the end of each topic is very good
- A wide variety of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and students' personal development
- The department is very well led and managed
- The accommodation lacks suitable sound proofing

Commentary

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

99. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. The 2003 GCSE results were below average.

Standards and achievement

100. Students of all levels of attainment achieve well in years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11 because of the positive encouragement and support of staff. The department operates an open-door policy at GCSE level. Some pupils opt for music with very limited formal skills. Gifted and talented students achieve very well because of the wide range of opportunities they encounter and the high level of encouragement they receive. Some higher-attaining students reach exceptional standards, as was heard in a rock band improvising.

Teaching and learning

101. Every lesson includes opportunities for developing compositional and performance skills. Students are inspired by the skills and practical demonstrations of their teachers and benefit from the teachers' wide knowledge. Behaviour is good because students are focused on their tasks. Very good planning ensures that all students develop their skills and understanding at their own best level, which leads to effective learning. In a Year 9 lesson on the twelve-bar blues, students participated and achieved well because very helpful topic booklets described very clearly how to find the chords required on the keyboard or on the guitar. These booklets are also used as assessment documents by students and teachers and are carefully linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment. The new electronic recording of assessments in Year 9 is successful but is not yet happening in other years. Sometimes, teachers do not give students enough time to think for themselves but intervene prematurely. An emphasis on correct musical language gives the opportunity for very good learning and the extension of students' literacy. Music provides very good opportunities for students' social and cultural development. Extra-curricular activities are an important feature of provision. Groups meet at lunchtime and after school. Instrumental lessons are available on all orchestral instruments.

Leadership and management

102. Effective leadership offers a clear vision for the future development of music, which is shared by an enthusiastic team, and the department maintains a strong focus on raising standards. In some GCSE lessons, staff teach as a team in order to give additional support to the students, and regular monitoring of teaching is helping to raise standards. Accommodation is sufficiently spacious and includes a music laboratory for recording, but its use is restricted by a lack of sound-proofing. During the week, students' concentration is affected because two practical music rooms are separated only by a wooden partition. The department is very well resourced. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly in the development of planning and assessment procedures. Close and beneficial links exist with the middle schools because of the department's outreach programme.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the use of progressive practices to teach skills
- 2003 GCSE results are below average at the higher grades and the number of non-participants in lessons is too high
- The department has a shared sense of commitment to improving standards
- Temporary problems with accommodation have adversely affected students' achievement at the higher levels

Commentary

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

103. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicated that standards were above the national average. Standards in the current Year 10, which are average, suggest that this was an overestimate. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average. The average points score achieved by pupils was close to the national average, but 45 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades when the average nationally was 55 per cent. The marks were significantly depressed by poor performance in the theory section of the examination and that boys notably did worse than girls. The department has already begun to take steps to help students achieve more highly in this aspect.

Standards and achievement

104. Students enter the school with sound skills and make satisfactory progress during their first year. Girls in the present Year 9 were seen to be working at the nationally expected level in dance although this was a new activity for them since entering the school. They successfully extended a dance which they had previously created, by introducing new moves that raised the level of working. In Years 10 and 11, standards in practical performance for many students are generally above average, particularly in football, netball and swimming. Boys in Year 11 who had not played rugby since Year 9, showed a good level of skill in receiving and passing the ball during an introductory lesson, as well as a sound knowledge of the basic rules. Those who choose to take part in lessons generally achieve well. Better achievement is hindered by the attitudes of indifference of too many students who do not participate.

Teaching and learning

105. Teachers are up-to-date in the use of progressive practices to teach skills, and this is a key factor in the department's ability to raise standards. It results in students learning skills effectively and increasing their understanding of the subject. Lessons are well planned and a good variety of activities motivates the majority of students. However, the attention of the teachers was too often diverted from the task of teaching by the need to supervise non-participants. A weakness in the teaching was that teachers did not relate the work to health and fitness issues. Students are not invited to take responsibility for their work often enough.

Leadership and management

106. Good leadership and sound management are beginning to have a positive effect upon provision and standards. A recent internal review has raised awareness of issues which need to be tackled, such as the marking of GCSE work, and improvements are already evident. The temporary changing rooms have no toilet or showering facilities. The absence of a suitable space to teach dance and gymnastics is a barrier to achievement for students. The department has the capacity for significant further development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of some work is above expectation
- The school has completed a detailed audit to identify elements of citizenship across the curriculum
- Students are not assessed and there is no means of evaluating their progress
- Teachers do not as a matter of course identify where topics across the curriculum are contributing to students' understanding of citizenship

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence
Teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Standards and achievement

107. Good examples of written work were seen in which the standard of citizenship was better than expected. Students over the whole range of ability were enabled in individual assignments to achieve well. For example, Year 9 students carried out research on a famous black person and his/her role in society and then produced extended writing of good quality. Students used ICT well to research and present findings. However, lack of coherence in planning the course results in such positive features being relatively uncommon.

Teaching and learning

108. Only one citizenship lesson was observed. In this, a member of the local police force talked about drug abuse to Year 9 students as part of the PHSE programme. In general, students' learning and achievement in citizenship are held back because planning and teaching do not systematically identify the aspects of citizenship within topics being studied across the curriculum. In addition, teaching does not always make students aware that they are studying an aspect of citizenship. However, good practice was noted in history and biology.

Leadership and management

109. Recent long-term staff absence has contributed to the unsatisfactory provision. Whilst opportunities for providing citizenship have been identified by a very thorough audit involving all heads of department, the contribution to citizenship from other subjects is unsatisfactory. Attention has not been given to the statutory assessment, recording and reporting of students' achievement.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

During the inspection, 11 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 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
A level							
Art and Design	20	100.0	96.1	60.0	48.7	89.0	85.1
Biology	17	100.0	91.6	47.1	36.3	83.5	74.1
Business Studies	23	100.0	96.4	34.8	32.8	82.6	76.5
Chemistry	13	100.0	94.0	46.2	45.9	80.0	81.1
Economics	7	100.0	96.2	28.6	45.8	74.3	83.1
English/English language	34	100.0	98.3	26.5	36.5	76.5	80.1
Design and Technology	8	100.0	95.3	50.0	35.3	87.5	76.5
General Studies	76	100.0	90.1	15.8	29.1	69.5	69.3
Geography	31	100.0	97.1	54.8	40.5	94.8	80.9
History	14	100.0	97.1	28.6	41.0	72.9	81.2
Information Technology	51	100.0	89.1	37.3	33.4	82.7	64.1
Mathematics	16	100.0	93.3	43.8	52.2	78.8	84.7
Psychology	19	100.0	94.3	52.6	38.9	87.4	77.7
Physics	5	100.0	92.8	40.0	42.8	80.0	78.6
Religious Studies	9	77.8	96.3	0.0	44.0	44.4	82.2
Sociology	21	100.0	95.4	28.6	39.6	70.6	79.1
VCE							
Business	12	100.0	87.1	16.7	16.5	66.7	60.1
Health and Social care	6	100.0	90.1	0.0	16.3	46.7	62.5
Leisure and Recreation	11	100.0	86.9	0.0	12.7	56.4	62.1

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on the joint English language and literature course. The English literature course was sampled.

English literature

110. The English literature course is taken by fewer students than the joint course. Examination results have been above the national average. In the lessons sampled, students achieved well to reach standards that were average. Good teaching saw them coming to terms successfully with the language and meaning of complex texts. Teachers achieved an effective balance between allowing

students to discuss and justify their ideas, and using details picked up from textual notes and background research.

English language and literature

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very clear understanding both of their subject, and of its examination requirements
- Marking is thorough, helpful and accurate so that students are clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do next
- Teachers do not always link and summarise ideas and check students' understanding of them
- Students listen closely but lack skills in proposing ideas both in discussion and essays

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

111. A-level results in 2002 were below average and lower than in previous years. Results in 2003 were similar, but a smaller proportion of students gained A and B grades. Whilst boys tended to get lower grades than girls, they did better in English language and literature than in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

112. The course has a relatively 'open door' policy, accepting some students who would be discouraged from entry in many other schools. Once settled, almost all students complete the course. Students' level of written English is good in terms of accuracy, clarity and structure. All are able and willing to write at length, planning and redrafting work effectively. A weakness in many essays is a tendency to drift from the focus of the work into generalised, vague or unsubstantiated writing. Students are good listeners, and take notes diligently, but many understand details but are less secure about the key ideas behind them. In Year 12, many students are reticent, or very colloquial in discussion. This limits their ability to see and understand deeper or more complex meaning, and to make informed comparisons. Many improve their spoken skills during the course but their vocabulary, especially in terms of precision and the use of specialist vocabulary, remains a barrier to their learning.

Teaching and learning

113. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject. Relationships and students' willingness to work are good. Lessons are well planned, although in some cases teachers lack clarity about exactly what skills and understanding students are intended to learn and develop. Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to refer within and across texts. They have a good understanding of examination requirements and explain these, and how tasks fit into them, regularly and well. Students appreciate the range of methods used, including frequent pair and group discussion. However, teachers have no agreed approach for taking students' ideas and modelling them in more precise English. Ideas generated are too rarely highlighted, summarised, or challenged. Marking and

assessment are good, and students appreciate their detail and helpfulness. As a result students have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

114. The course is well organised and there is a satisfactory rationale for future developments. There is a growing understanding of the value of closely examining data about students' performance to learn from past results, and to set targets and predict future standards. Students appreciate the course, and having a choice of two English courses in the sixth form.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

115. Students join the sixth form with average standards of language skills. There is no study skills lesson or course to provide for literacy development. Subject specific terms are well taught and their use encouraged by most teachers. Students' written work is neat, well organised and technically accurate. Oral skills are more varied and are an area for development. Almost all students use close listening skills well. However, a number give more attention to what teachers say than to each other during class discussion: when fellow students outline ideas they are listened to with courtesy rather than critical interest. Partly because of this, discussion describes or repeats ideas rather than examining them, and countering and extending them. Reading skills are good: in subjects such as religious education, history and psychology, students show a quick and thorough understanding of even very demanding material they are presented with.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good examination results in 2002 and 2003 reflect good teaching
- Effective teaching enables students to gain a sound mastery of comprehension and writing skills
- Very good relationships spur on students to succeed
- Independent learning and oral skills are underdeveloped

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Insufficient evidence

Examination results

116. A total of five students took A-level German both in 2002 and 2003 and they achieved well.

Standards and achievement

117. Comprehension and writing skills are more highly developed than oral skills and this bias is largely maintained throughout the year as it continues to be the main focus of the teaching and learning. Students are conscientious and committed and this helps them to move through the syllabus topics quickly and gain a solid understanding of vocabulary and structures. They come to lessons well prepared and the redrafting of essays helps them improve their written work. Later in

their courses, students receive more targeted practice which enables them to meet the demands of the oral examinations.

Teaching and learning

118. Teaching entirely in the target language develops students' comprehension skills well. Teachers have very good knowledge of the topics, prepare their materials thoroughly and draw on students' own experiences to further their understanding. Students acquire new language well because both texts and tasks, while remaining challenging, are reduced appropriately in length to provide them with a sense of achievement on completion. Questioning is generally well judged to allow students of all attainments to make a proper contribution. The quality of relationships is very good, with many of them having participated in the school exchange to Mellberg or the class trip to Berlin. This acts as a particular encouragement to lower-attaining students. Speaking activities are generally linked to the study of short texts and little use is made of techniques to promote discussion skills and to make students think more creatively. Lower-attaining students lack the support of highlighted key words as they work through exercises, and this slows their progress. Work is carefully marked and accompanied by useful informal feedback to provide students with information of how they are progressing. Students use ICT for research purposes, but do not benefit from a wider range of opportunities to develop independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

119. The expertise of staff is deployed well to further student achievement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All candidates gained a pass at A-level in 2002 and 2003
- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Good working relationships between students and teachers contribute to a productive atmosphere within the classrooms
- There is a lack of mathematical discussion and debate within the lessons

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

120. Just over half the students who took A-level mathematics in 2002 gained grades A to C. In 2003, almost all gained these higher grades. Since numbers of candidates are relatively small, national comparisons are inappropriate.

Standards and achievement

121. Standards seen in lessons were in line with national expectations, and the students' achievement is good in relation to their starting points. For example, a Year 13 group, revising their knowledge of differential calculus, achieved well when solving complex calculations using advanced algebra.

Teaching and learning

122. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan work carefully and foster good working relationships with students. Teachers plan the work to take account of students' prior attainment and to build systematically on this. However, even in good mathematics lessons, students are rarely presented with opportunities to discuss their mathematical thinking and philosophy. On the few occasions when such situations do occur, students are unwilling to engage in open dialogue, or to ask questions which extend the topic beyond the examination syllabus. There is a pleasant atmosphere in lessons, with well-qualified and confident teachers, and students who are generally eager to learn. Students readily talk about their mathematical interests and aspirations when asked, but are sometimes reluctant to take the initiative in venturing views or challenging what they hear.

Leadership and management

123. Revisions to the planned work show that the department has kept abreast of recent developments and has maintained a focus on raising achievement. The curriculum is well organised. Students have the opportunity to study A-level mathematics and further mathematics, including modules in pure mathematics, applied mathematics and statistics. The school possesses sufficient data to set realistic and informative targets for the students which can be monitored regularly. Students' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning are higher than at the time of the last inspection.

Numeracy across the curriculum

124. The use of numeracy skills across the post-16 curriculum is satisfactory. Students in Year 12 and 13 speak positively about their mathematical experiences within the school and how these have prepared them for their present courses and for entry into higher education. The school library has a range of material to support independent study of the subject. Although evidence of students using their mathematical knowledge outside mathematics lessons was limited, good examples were found in art, where students were engaged in work on judging proportion, and in ICT where they were called upon to use their algebraic skills in creating spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Biology and chemistry were focus subjects and physics was sampled.

Physics

125. One physics lesson was observed, in which the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Students needed prompting to contribute orally to the lesson. Examination results were average in 2002.

Biology

Provision for biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, interesting and challenging
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work
- Students do not use ICT enough
- The department is well organised

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

126. The A-level results for 2002 were above the national average. The results for 2003 were at a similar level.

Standards and achievement

127. The standards of work seen during the inspection were average. As students' overall level of attainment when they start the course is lower than usually found, this represents good achievement. Students achieved well when investigating 'streak plates'. They organised their research methodically and carefully explained the techniques they were using.

Teaching and learning

128. Teachers have a good command of their subject and respond quickly and accurately to students' queries. Lessons are well planned with stimulating resources and activities that engage and motivate students. The pace of lessons is often brisk and students are productive throughout. Teaching offers an appropriate challenge to students who consequently respond positively. Students have very good attitudes to their studies and work well in groups or by themselves. Homework is used well to extend or consolidate work done in class. Teachers mark students' work regularly and use comments effectively to help students improve. Although students experience some ICT, such as data logging, the use of computers is not incorporated sufficiently into lessons. When Year 12 students first join the course, they have a suitably challenging research task that provides a realistic introduction into the standard or work expected at A-level. Students receive workbooks and carefully chosen textbooks that both support learning well and are specific to the syllabus being followed.

Leadership and management

129. The head of department acts as a good role model for teachers and students. Management is carried out in a calm and well-organised fashion. New teachers are inducted successfully into the department. They receive a helpful handbook that supports their lesson planning well and their work, including lessons, is monitored. Technicians provide very good support to teaching through the provision of well-organised lesson resources. Schemes of work, which help teachers plan their lessons, are being further developed to help teachers share good practice. The curriculum is enhanced by trips to university for revision and careers advice and by biology lecturers who are invited into the school. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Chemistry

Provision for chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding to teach well-planned and interesting lessons
- Students have a very positive attitude towards learning and respond well to teachers' enthusiasm for the subject
- Good relationships enable students to ask and answer questions confidently
- Teachers do not analyse assessment data rigorously enough to help identify the needs of students
- Curriculum enrichment, including the library provision, are inadequate

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

130. Results have fluctuated in recent years but have usually been above average. In 2002, results were average. Value added data shows that this group of students did as well as could be expected. In 2003, results were well above this level, but national comparisons are not yet available.

Standards and achievement

131. The overall standard of students starting A-level chemistry is about average. They make good progress throughout the course. Standards in the lessons seen were average. In a Year 12 lesson on extracting copper, students demonstrated a good level of practical skills but found the theory behind the work more difficult to follow. In a Year 13 lesson on soil chemistry, students demonstrated good practical skills. The majority of the group needed carefully structured questions to enable them to apply their prior learning to the practical task.

Teaching and learning

132. Teachers structure lessons well and this helps students understand and apply chemical principles. Lessons are taught with infectious enthusiasm so that students enjoy them. Although students find the chemistry intellectually challenging, they appreciate the opportunity to think. Study skills are encouraged through note taking, practical investigations and research using the Internet so that Year 13 students feel well prepared for university. They are well supported by their teachers, who readily make themselves available to sort out problems. Students find the course relevant and interesting. Teachers expect students to work hard and most of them do. The course that the department has chosen to teach contains ICT work and good opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy skills. However, limited opportunities for enrichment activities and poor library provision make the course too dependent on the published text.

Leadership and management

133. The department has a strong team spirit, with teachers sharing good practice and common aims. Teachers receive excellent support from the well-organised team of technicians. The head of department monitors the work of the team closely as a means of ensuring consistently good provision. Data from assessment is not analysed carefully enough to indicate the learning needs of the range of students. Little was said about chemistry in the last inspection. However, standards have been maintained and, overall, students continue to do well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good A-level results
- Good innovations by the new head of department are resulting in more effective teamwork by staff
- Students do not gain wider insight into the subject by making visits and creating links with local commerce as part of their studies
- Some theory lessons were not sufficiently integrated into the coursework, due to students being timetabled into rooms without computers

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Not Applicable

Examination results

134. A-level results in 2002 were well above average. Results declined slightly in 2003. Students gained considerably more A to C grades than students nationally. Girls did better than boys.

Standards and achievement

135. Current standards in Year 13 are average overall. Students have good practical skills. They create hyperlinks, write macro procedures and have a good understanding of visual basic programming. This enables them to implement the design of a new ICT system confidently. Achievement in the theory lessons was good when the teacher used a laptop computer to show a Power Point presentation and had given students opportunities to apply the new knowledge gained. Achievements were lower when the teacher had few resources and no access to computers to enable them to combine the theory work with practical coursework.

Teaching and learning

136. Teaching was most effective when teachers used their good subject knowledge to help students solve ICT problems. This led to effective learning of visual basic programming. Good use is being made of electronic communications to set assignments and gather the students' responses to tasks. Teachers have established good relationships and behavioural expectations and students respond positively to this and are keen to work hard. The department is not giving that extra touch of reality to students' learning by linking the teaching sufficiently with commercial experiences involving the local community. Less successful lessons were those taught in non-specialist rooms, when the

students did not have opportunity to practise the knowledge and skills being described. The lack of access to computers in these lessons creates a slow and dull learning experience in which students have to rely too much on textbooks. The pace in some practical lessons is reduced by the need to use older computers that will not operate visual basic programs reliably.

Leadership and management

137. The new head of department has thoughtfully analysed the needs of the subject and is showing good initiative. Teachers are working well together to produce new schemes and e-learning materials. Although management of the course is satisfactory, the quality of teaching and planning is varied and insufficiently monitored to ensure consistency. The department has to split the course into practical and theory lessons, due to a lack of access to rooms with computers. Dual teaching alongside adult education in the same room, when other rooms are vacant, is unsatisfactory. Students' achievements are not recorded and shared so that other teachers can use the information to guide their lesson planning. Senior management is not providing appropriate support for non-specialist teachers to ensure their professional development.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

138. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Computers are used well in art for design and research. In music, various forms of ICT are used very creatively for composing and performing. Many subjects do not have sufficient access to computers and experiences are not planned in schemes of work. Overall, too few opportunities are provided for students to develop their capabilities, other than through using standard office tools. The sixth form does not have any separate ICT resources for study, and have to share the library computers with the main school. This limits their opportunities for research.

HUMANITIES

Focus subjects in humanities were geography and sociology. Lessons were sampled in classical civilization, economics, history, psychology and religious education.

Classical Civilisation

139. In an excellent lesson, the teacher familiarised the students with a section from Virgil's Aeneid where two young warriors were slain in battle. The students were very skilfully led to an appreciation of the richness and poignancy of the text by very expert questioning. The poet's use of simile was penetratingly analysed. The students were given time for reflection and ventured the Soham murders as a modern tragedy with similar resonances. The students' gains in understanding and their achievement in textual analysis and appreciating the subtlety of the language were excellent.

Economics

140. Standards and results are average. In the lesson seen, students in Year 13 were achieving standards appropriate to their capabilities. Satisfactory teaching with thorough coverage of key features of market structure enabled them to consolidate their knowledge and skills, and develop their understanding of examination techniques. Opportunities to foster students' independent thinking skills and active participation were overlooked at times.

History

141. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the lesson observed. Knowledgeable teaching was supported by good lesson preparation. A positive working relationship existed between the teacher and students and achievement was satisfactory. The curriculum is enriched by a programme of external lectures.

Psychology

142. Results are consistently high, with a significant proportion of top grades. Lessons were seen in Years 12 and 13, which had a sharp focus on what groups and individuals need to master to be successful in the subject. Teachers have very good knowledge of course requirements and complementary expertise in different aspects of the subject. In the lesson seen in Year 13, students were achieving very well as a result of very well planned, sparkling teaching that enabled them to enjoy revising and feel confident about success in imminent examinations.

Religious education

143. Provision for statutory religious education in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. However, results and standards in the small groups following examination courses are in line with course expectations. Students' achievement is good. Students displayed good attitudes in the few lessons seen and contributed well in oral work.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good A-level results
- Students produce high quality individual fieldwork
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge in both human and physical geography
- Students do not make enough use of ICT to enhance their learning

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

144. A-level results are well above the national average and for the last two years the pass rate has been 100 per cent. The percentage of A and B grades gained was also well above the national average, with the girls significantly outperforming the boys at these higher grades. Geography performs better than many other subjects do. The number of entries has fallen over the last three years.

Standards and achievement

145. Standards seen in lessons and in the students' work were above the national average in both Years 12 and 13. The standard of fieldwork in both year groups well exceeds expected standards, and in 2003 three students attained full marks for this coursework module. In lessons, students have good recall of previous knowledge. Teachers use their command of physical and human geography to challenge the students' analytical skills in working with maps, text, photographs and numerical data. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson where the teaching used the theme of 'sustainability' to enable students to practise synthesis, connectivity and holism in preparation for the forthcoming examination. The students work hard and achieve very well throughout the course. Students apply themselves diligently and follow the advice given by staff on technique. This helps them to achieve well in the final examinations.

Teaching and learning

146. The students much prefer passive learning and do not readily show intellectual inquisitiveness. Teaching is closely and successfully focused on examination requirements but does not develop students' capacities for independent and creative work enough. Students are excellent note-takers. Teachers work hard to get discussions going, skilfully using open questions to encourage students' contributions. The students use ICT effectively for research and for present their coursework.

Leadership and management

147. The subject is well organised and the teachers work well together to develop and refine the curriculum. Effective leadership has enabled the department to sustain the high standards reported following the last inspection and improvement has been good. The accommodation for sixth-form teaching is much better and comprises a new specialist suite, which is spacious and well equipped.

SOCIOLOGY

Provision for sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to challenge students well, especially the higher-attaining students in Year 13
- The proportion gaining higher examination grades rose in 2003
- Opportunities are missed to draw out and extend students' understanding through detailed questioning
- Advice given on how to improve written work in Year 12 is not sufficiently specific

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

148. Results in 2002 were average. The proportion reaching grades A and B was similar in 2003.

Standards and achievement

149. Year 12 students grasp competently the theoretical foundations of the subject. Average and higher-attaining students explain basic concepts reliably, such as the nature of inequality, or key issues in significant areas, such as health policy. At the same time, they rarely extend what they understand and say beyond the obvious. Lower-attaining students have a reasonable understanding of concepts such as Marxism, which they demonstrate in brief but coherent written assignments. By Year 13, students acquire further secure knowledge of key sociological concepts, such as power and politics, which they relate well to their own opinions. For example, they explain confidently such methodological issues as sampling and bias in opinion polls. Higher-attaining students show mature insight by linking established theory to wider issues of a changing society, such as globalisation. Achievement is good in Year 13 because students respond to the steadily rising challenge posed by teaching.

Teaching and learning

150. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain their ideas well. In Year 13, students are encouraged to summarise their understanding of everyday issues and express strong individual opinions about questions of voting behaviour. In a Year 12 lesson, opportunities were missed to extend students' understanding through detailed questioning. Students benefit from conscientious marking of their written work and well-focused comments from teachers, which consolidate their understanding well.

Leadership and management

151. Thorough records of students' progress are used well to identify those needing additional help. Girls' attainment has caught up with boys' since the most recent results, and the quality of teaching has been maintained over several years.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

152. One lesson was sampled in design and technology. The teacher engaged the students in a meaningful discussion about the morality of advertising and packaging of modern-day technological products. Several students gave carefully prepared presentations and, while their discussion skills were below average, they achieved well because of their careful preparation and the teacher's persuasive and encouraging questioning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design, music and health and social care. Hospitality, sports and leisure and business studies were sampled.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students benefit from their teachers' good subject expertise and respond well to creative teaching approaches
- Lessons are well-structured and the work is challenging
- The department focuses successfully on raising standards
- Evaluative and analytical skills are not as well developed as other aspects of their work

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

153. A-level results in 2002 were above average overall, although the proportion of A and B grades was below average.

Standards and achievement

154. The performance of the current Year 13 is above average and is of a higher standard than in previous years. In Years 12 and 13, students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Students achieve well in individual lessons and over time. They are doing well as a result of effective teaching which demands much of them, in terms of meticulous planning and preparation of coursework. Students have a very good understanding of tone and colour and their drawing and sketching skills are advanced. Students understand well the work of prominent artists and use this information to support and extend thematic pieces such as work on 'Mythical Beasts'. In this, they used the textures and shapes of red peppers as an inspiration for creating imaginative creatures.

Teaching and learning

155. Teaching is consistently good overall and some is very good. Working relationships between students and teachers are based on mutual trust and respect and an atmosphere of co-operation. Lessons are clearly focused on examination criteria. A very good feature of the teaching is the progressive and creative approach to learning through a detailed study of modern artists, their techniques and works. Teachers clearly and succinctly explain terminology and artistic processes. Students are encouraged and motivated by their teachers' practical skills and enthusiasm, and readily ask for guidance and support. Overall, their learning is good.

Leadership and management

156. All departmental members are conscientious and hard working. They remain focused on raising standards and improving curriculum planning to include target setting and student profiling. The areas of student self-evaluation and critical analysis are not as well developed as they might be. Since the last inspection, results have improved and projected grades for the coming year are very high.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths

- Teachers set high expectations
- Students are committed musicians and enthusiastically take part in the wide variety of practical activities
- Assessment information is shared with students so that they know how to make further progress
- The curriculum and resources contribute significantly to successful learning

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Examination results

157. In 2002, all students gained a pass in music technology at A-level, but, as the group was very small, it is not possible to make a meaningful comparison with national statistics. In 2003, the results were higher, and again all students passed.

Standards and achievement

158. Standards in work observed were above average. Students achieve well in both music and music technology, with some achieving very high standards. They are committed musicians, who strongly support and benefit from the extra-curricular activities of the department. Some regularly help with younger classes. During the inspection, one student gave additional support in a Year 9 music lesson, helping students to learn the chords on the guitar, his specialist instrument. This gave a boost to the younger students' achievement. Students perform each month in a concert and so improve their performance skills well.

Teaching and learning

159. Good relationships enable teachers to give constructive criticism regularly and this extends students' awareness of the standards they are attaining and what they must do to improve. A Year 13 lesson began with a review of an analysis paper which had been taken previously, and clear reasons were given for the marking structure along with helpful hints about how the mark could be improved. Teachers have high expectations and monitor students' progress closely. Teachers have a wide range of practical skills that enable them to give authoritative advice on a range of topics such as a sequencing and notation package in music technology and assistance with the complexities of the figured bass. Occasionally, explanations of quite difficult concepts can be rushed, without checking that all students have grasped the subject matter. Students appreciate the advanced subject knowledge and skills of the staff, the support that they give, and the way in which they work closely together for their benefit. They are very enthusiastic about their music. Students are encouraged to use the equipment during their lunch breaks and after school in order to develop their skills, and staff are on hand to advise and support.

Leadership and management

160. Courses are planned very well and resources have improved considerably since the last inspection. . Students have access to A-level courses in music technology even if they have not taken GCSE music. Improvements since the last inspection include far better resourcing of the department, particularly with ICT equipment. The community link with an extra-curricular community music school has contributed significantly to the development of music in the school.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Leisure and recreation and physical education were sampled.

Leisure and recreation

161. Standards and results are slightly below average, but students achieve well on the course, given the varied starting points. In the lesson seen in Year 13, students were doing well. Teaching focused carefully on students' individual knowledge and understanding of a business organisation's internal and external environment and the use of SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). This and a good mix of activities motivated students well.

Physical Education

162. One sixth form lesson was observed. Students' achievement was very good as a result of lively teaching supported by very good subject knowledge.

BUSINESS

Business studies was sampled.

Business studies

163. All students achieved well. They were well-motivated and willing to draw on their own experiences to take an active part in the lesson in response to lively teaching. Their knowledge of a good range of facts about personal selling was better than their skills in analysing the marketing mix.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on the course in health and social care.

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to draw on personal experiences to help students in their learning
- Teachers are committed to helping students to succeed
- The large number of part-time staff makes it difficult to maintain the effective management of the department

Commentary

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Examination results

164. The A-level results in 2003 were average. All students passed.

Standards and achievement

165. Written work is well-presented and the students clearly take great pride in this. In one lesson, students in Year 12 spoke fluently and with enthusiasm from prepared scripts about their placements in schools and day-care centres.

Teaching and learning

166. Students gain good knowledge and understanding of a range of issues related to health and social care. Teachers draw on personal experiences to highlight issues, and this helps students to appreciate the relevance of the work. Students in Year 12 were clearly absorbing and understanding the work presented to them but were often reticent and unwilling to answer questions or initiate discussion in class. However, in informal discussion they spoke enthusiastically of their enjoyment of the course and their appreciation of the help and support they received from their teachers. Thorough and constructive marking and assessment of coursework make a strong contribution to the quality of learning.

Leadership and management

167. There is a shared commitment to helping the students to succeed. While the high number of part-time staff is not allowed to detract from the ethos of helping the students to succeed, it does place an additional burden on an already highly committed department. Students regularly go on to further education or employment connected with health and social care.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

General studies was sampled.

General studies

168. Results are generally above average. In the lesson seen, however, outcomes were unsatisfactory because very little time was allowed for students to participate actively and express their views as a result of the 'lecture and video' method used.

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	4
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		4
Attendance	4	3
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well pupils learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	4
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	3	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	5	5
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).