

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **LEISTON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

Seaward Avenue, Leiston

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124819

Headteacher: Mr Sean O'Neill

Lead inspector: R Peter J McGregor

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 259298

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	690
School address:	Seaward Avenue Leiston Suffolk
Postcode:	IP16 4BG
Telephone number:	01728 830570
Fax number:	01728 832227
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Lesley Hill
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Leiston is a relatively small, 13-18, co-educational, community comprehensive school with specialist technology college status. The school achieved a school achievement award in 2000 and Sportsmark in 2003. Community provision on site includes many adult education courses, family learning and family support, provided through community education services based at the school. There are 527 pupils aged 13 to 16 in the main school and 163 students in the sixth form. The number of boys and girls is similar except in the upper sixth, with 40 girls and 18 boys. Over 96 percent of the pupils are white. A small number of pupils are from Asian, Caribbean and African backgrounds. A very small number of pupils do not speak English as their mother tongue and are at an early stage of learning English. An even smaller number of pupils are Traveller pupils and refugees. About ten percent of pupils have special educational needs, a below average proportion compared with England as a whole. These pupils' needs are mainly moderate learning, or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A very small number of pupils needs concern basic skills. An above average proportion of pupils, 3.5 per cent, have a Statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals, about 13 percent, is a little below the national average figure of 16 per cent. The numbers of pupils arriving at the school other than at the time of first admission or leaving at other than the usual time of transfer, is much lower than the national average. The area around the school is socially and economically mixed, but disadvantaged overall. Pupils of a full range of prior attainment enter the school in Year 9. The entry standard, overall, is average but it does fluctuate quite significantly from year to year.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3525	Peter McGregor	Lead inspector	Mathematics; Chemistry in 6 <sup>th</sup> form
9569	Jan Leaning	Lay inspector	
32403	Keith Nicholson	Team inspector	English including 6 <sup>th</sup> form
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Mathematics in 6 <sup>th</sup> form
3242	Mike Newman	Team inspector	Science
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); Design and technology
32367	Joanna Pike	Team inspector	Art; Citizenship. Vocational course in Years 10 and 11
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	Geography, including 6 <sup>th</sup> form
32340	Peter McKay	Team inspector	History
31682	Anne-Marie Storey	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; French in 6 <sup>th</sup> form; English as an additional language
30297	Gary Spruce	Team inspector	Music; Music technology in 6 <sup>th</sup> form
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Physical education; Health and social care in 6 <sup>th</sup> form
32315	Peter Wibroe	Team inspector	Religious education
32269	Richard Butler	Team inspector	Special educational needs
2652	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Psychology in 6 <sup>th</sup> form

The inspection contractor was e-Qualitas Ltd, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 ORE.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Leiston is a good school.** Standards are improving and teaching is good overall, resulting in effective learning and good achievement. Very good quality care and support is provided. The staff team work very well together for the benefit of pupils. The school is at the centre of the community and works hard at developing effective links. The headteacher is respected greatly by parents, pupils and staff, and provides outstanding leadership. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Most effective use is made of excellent data to raise pupils' standards
- Some teaching is very effective resulting in very good achievements, particularly in the open-access sixth form
- The curriculum is generally planned well to meet all pupils' needs; timetabling problems and insufficient planning for PSHE and citizenship detract from this success
- The school has insufficient computers and so ICT is not used enough in some courses
- Staff work very hard at promoting pupils' self-esteem and developing very good relationships, and so most behave well, are confident and attentive and strive for success; a few pupils in the main school do not and they interrupt others' learning
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship
- Senior managers have complementary skills, which result in efficient and effective management. They are supported well by heads of department and pastoral staff

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. A substantial number of key issues were identified five years ago, which have been dealt with well, overall. Pupils' achievements and standards are now higher. Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is carried out well by senior managers, but the approach in some departments is not rigorous enough. Boys' work, in some areas, remains not as good as girls'. The quality of teaching has improved. Governance, which was weak five years ago, is now much better. Other areas, such as the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are much improved, apart from an emphasis on valuing other cultures. Leadership and management are much more successful than five years ago.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Achievement** - which is a measure of pupils' success, taking account of their abilities - **is good overall**, as seen in the above average results at GCSE. Pupils at Leiston did very well compared with those in similar schools, in the top five percent of such schools in the country. Pupils' achievements in Years 9, 10 and 11 are good. The standards pupils attain currently, relative to the national picture, are average in Years 9 and 11. Standards in Year 10 are below those expected for pupils of their ages, reflecting their lower attainment on entry. Pupils with special educational needs do well, and very well when with specialist support. In Year 9, English achievement is very good with well above average attainment, in science pupils achieve well, reaching average standards and, in maths, average standards reflect satisfactory achievement. Achievement is good in English and science in Year 11, and satisfactory in maths. Standards are broadly similar to or a little above national expectations in all three subjects.

Attainment in other subjects is generally of an average standard in Year 9, representing good achievement. In Year 11, standards in subjects other than the core are nearly all above average or average, and achievement good overall. Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship because the course is not effectively planned for and taught. Low and middle ability pupils do well, as do high attainers in some subjects but not all. There is a good and effective focus on the use of English across subjects of the curriculum and a satisfactory emphasis on using maths. The shortfall in the number of computers available restricts pupils' competence in ICT use across the curriculum. In the sixth form, standards are below average in Year 12 and broadly average in Year 13, reflecting the capabilities of the range of students taking courses in each year. Achievement was good or very good in most subjects inspected, and is very good overall.

**Pupils' personal qualities are good.** Attendance is good and similar to the national average as a result of the school's rigorous procedures for promoting regular attendance and punctuality. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are good, supported by **very good provision for moral and social development** and a strong ethos. **Spiritual and cultural provision is satisfactory.** Behaviour is good overall. A small minority of pupils sometimes misbehave in lessons. In the sixth form, students' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. Sixth form students' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good overall.** In Years 9, 11 and the sixth form, it is particularly good but satisfactory in Year 10, where pupils are much more challenging. The greatest strengths in teaching and learning are very good subject knowledge of staff and good use of three-part lessons and assessment data. A weakness which restricts pupils' achievements concerns difficulties in managing a few pupils' behaviour. The curriculum is good overall and satisfactory in Years 9 to 11. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and a good range of courses is offered, including vocational work in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. There are very good subject and pastoral links with the main middle schools from which most pupils transfer. The timetable has weaknesses and planning for PSHE and citizenship is unsatisfactory. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good, with the exception of ICT resources. Procedures for the care, welfare, health and safety and protection of pupils are very good. Links with parents are strong and helpful.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Good leadership and management overall.** Their success is seen in the good and very good outcomes for the pupils. There are some unhelpful inconsistencies in departmental practices, in marking and teaching and learning. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not consistently carried out. The governors challenge the headteacher and provide appropriate support; they are effective in much that they do. They do not meet statutory requirements in the provision of a daily act of collective worship and teaching religious education in the sixth form. Governance is satisfactory overall.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents at their meeting about the school were very positive and supportive. They value the education provided for their children. They see that the school has improved and continues to do so. In their questionnaires, many strengths were identified, particularly the progress their children make, the high expectations of the staff and the quality of leadership and management. Pupils also had positive views about their school, highlighting similar areas. Minority concerns included some misbehaviour and irregularities in homework and marking. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed and also that some inconsistencies in practice do result in the minority concerns.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- improve timetabling structure and planning for PSHE and citizenship
- ensure that subjects have enough computers to make appropriate use of ICT in learning
- ensure that the few pupils that misbehave are more effectively managed

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the school provides a daily act of collective worship and that pupils are taught religious education in the sixth form

## SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form is very effective** and successful, enabling students to achieve well or very well in their courses and to be well prepared for the next stages in their lives. It is very well led and has continued to improve over the last five years. It is cost effective.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The sixth form is open to students of all abilities and from all backgrounds, providing them with very many opportunities through the range of courses
- Students are very well taught and achieve very well, particularly in Year 13
- Students are encouraged to show initiative and take responsibilities; some tend to be 'passive acceptors' of information in Year 12 and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning
- Students provide very good support to pupils in the main school, helping them in many ways
- Students have insufficient access to computers
- The timetabling problem in the main school of bunched lessons is also an issue in the sixth
- The quality of care and support provided is very good
- Students are not taught religious education, as required by statute

### 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	<b>Very good in English.</b> Teachers have very good subject expertise and motivate the students to achieve very well. Resources for learning are excellent <b>Good in French.</b> Teaching is generally good. Students enjoy learning. Not enough use is made of ICT and high attainers should be challenged more
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Good working relationships between teachers and students result in productive learning. More discussion and debate would be helpful
Science	<b>Good in chemistry.</b> Excellent notes guide students' learning. Good focus on exam requirements in teaching. Irregular marking and assessment
Information and communication technology	Lessons in this area were sampled
Humanities	<b>Good in geography.</b> Enthusiastic and effective teaching and so students achieve well. Insufficient use of ICT, and work could be more demanding for the highest attainers. <b>Good in psychology.</b> Very good, well planned teaching results in high standards. Students take responsibility for their learning in Year 13, but are too passive at times in Year 12
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Lessons in this area were sampled
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good in music technology.</b> Excellent teacher knowledge and skills are very helpful to student learning. Very good links with outside groups enrich the curriculum
Hospitality, sports, leisure and	Lessons in this area were sampled



travel

Business Lessons in this area were sampled

Health and social care **Very good.** Students helped most effectively to become independent learners. Very effective teaching and constructive feedback on assignments

General education Lessons in this area were sampled

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*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'.*

In the other seventeen subjects and courses sampled, the quality of provision was satisfactory or better. In most cases teaching, learning and achievement were good or better. Students were well motivated, although interest, expectations and work rates were significantly higher in Year 13 than Year 12. Of particular note are: teaching and learning of A-level art were excellent, and very good in design and technology, theatre studies, sports leadership award and AS physical education; the CLAIT ICT course taken by all sixth formers is enabling students to make very good progress, often from quite a low base line for the pupils' ages and abilities.

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Advice, which includes personal interviews for all students, is very good, and encompasses support for university applications and for those students who do not wish to go onto further or higher education. Tutors stay with their tutees for two years and know them very well, making good use of assessment data. Students are very positive about the sixth form and the guidance staff provide. The new PSHE course provides them with a good depth of information about matters relevant to their lives. Even where the sixth formers have criticisms, such as insufficient access to computers, they are encouraged to take the initiative and make improvements themselves. They have confidence in the sixth form council and play a very active role in the life of the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Very good leadership and good management.** A new and effective sixth form staff team work very well together. They monitor achievement, effort and attendance, and give this information to students and parents to help bring about further improvements. The school is aware that sixth formers need to be more involved in whole school issues and are working to achieve this. Managers have responded very effectively to the curriculum needs of students, providing vocational and academic courses from which all benefit, including some very high attainers and others who struggle with academic work. 'Bunching' lessons together in the timetable is unhelpful for continuity in learning. Facilities are good but sixth form teachers and students have insufficient access to ICT. Teaching and learning is monitored within subject areas. Although the quality is very good overall, some weaknesses remain, particularly with regard to passive approaches in Year 12 and some inconsistencies in setting and marking of work.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students in their questionnaire responses were very positive about life in the sixth form. They said that they like the school, make good progress, and that the teaching is good – staff have high expectations of them, have expert knowledge, are accessible and help them to learn how to study independently. They feel comfortable about approaching the school, are encouraged to develop a mature attitude and are treated fairly. They were very pleased about their induction into the sixth form. The most positive response made by students was that they considered the school to be very well led and managed. A sizeable minority felt that improvements were needed in some areas. Discussions with sixth formers to find the depth of dissatisfaction indicated that issues were relatively minor and they had no serious concerns. Differences in approaches of staff were their only issue.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE**

#### **Arkwright Scholarships for technology**

Design and technology is a very popular and successful subject at Leiston, which is seen to have credibility and great value. The success of students in gaining Arkwright Scholarships - four in the past ten years against national fields of hundreds of students - has done much to keep the subject at the forefront of pupils' minds as one to consider in the sixth form as well as in Years 10 and 11.

The school has two nuclear power stations on its doorstep, with their real application of design and technology, which adds further weight to the importance of the subject at school.

The benefits of the scholarships to the student and school are considerable. As well as the pride and prestige in the award comes financial reward. The student receives over £200 per year for two years to support her/him during the A-level course, and the school receives a similar sum.

Displays of past Arkwright Scholars' work in the school captivate students and show the very high quality of their projects. Teachers talk with pride of the students' successes; the design and technology department is one of the highest achieving areas in the school. The Scholarship system acts as a great motivator to teachers and students alike.

#### **High quality community education from which many pupils benefit**

The school has an excellent youth centre in amongst the school buildings where pupils and students can relax and receive help with a great range of issues important to teenagers. The centre, with its staff funded separately by the county community education service, is available three lunchtimes a week for pool, darts and other games, as well as providing opportunities for the young people to purchase soft drinks and snacks. It is an excellent haven, away from classrooms and other school buildings (which a number of youngsters may associate with problems).

Individual and group sessions are planned covering areas such as conflict with adults, drugs, self-esteem, peer pressure and bullying, which affect young people's lives. Experts in these fields are contacted to help individuals where this is wanted. Nothing is compulsory, however. Students who start sessions can cancel them without any ramifications for themselves or others. The emphasis is on partnership and support, not control. Progress is measured in terms of the young people's personal development.

One of the keys to the centre's success is the independence of its staff, yet working in extremely close co-operation with school staff. Many young people have been helped by the facility over recent years, which has enabled them to benefit from the teaching and other aspects of school life at Leiston.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils' achievements are good overall in Years 9 to 11, better in Years 9 and 11 than Year 10. Standards are average in Years 9 and 11 and below average in Year 10. There are variations between subjects but overall boys and girls are achieving similarly. Pupils of all abilities do well but middle and low attainers do better than high attainers in a few subjects. In the sixth form, standards are broadly average and achievements very good. Results have improved for the past three years.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at GCSE were above average in 2002 and 2003 representing good achievement
- In comparison with schools with a similar profile, achievement was excellent in GCSE average points scored and in Year 9 tests in English
- Pupils have achieved very well over many years in design and technology
- Achievement is very good overall in Year13, and in English and health and social care courses in the sixth form
- There is underachievement in ICT because of a lack of computers and in PSHE and citizenship because courses are not well enough structured
- A minority of Year 12 students lack motivation and do not always achieve as much as they could

## Commentary

1. In the 2003 national assessments taken in Year 9, attainment was well above average in English, and similar to national expectations in mathematics and science. When Leiston results are compared with schools with similar Year 6 entry standards, achievement was:
  - excellent in English – in the top five percent of all such schools nationwide
  - good in mathematics and
  - very good in science.
2. The English results are much higher than those attained in 2002 and in previous years. The mathematics results are similar to those of 2002 and the science results lower. The trend in these results is upwards in English, but fluctuating in mathematics and science. The overall trend of improvement in attainment is similar to the national trend of improvement.
3. At GCSE, the school results fluctuate as the entry standard into the school varies year on year. The school's own value added data shows this clearly. In 2003, 56 percent attained five A\*-C passes, a fall from the high figure of 64 percent in 2000, but significantly higher than the 47 percent in 1998, the time of the last inspection. In 2002 and 2003, school results were above average compared with national data. When the school's results in 2002 are compared with others that attained a similar standard in the Year 9 national tests, results were well above average. This indicates very good achievement, particularly for middle ability pupils. The same comparison for 2003 results shows that they were even higher against similar schools.
4. The 2002 data indicates that the highest achieving subject was design and technology, with relative weaknesses in mathematics, art, business studies and French. In 2003, standards in most of the weaker subjects improved, particularly so in business studies and mathematics. Results in art continue to indicate some underachievement and geography results dropped to an unsatisfactory level. Design and technology continued to show high achievement. The school's own value added data has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in results. Each year the relative success of each teacher with each teaching group is identified and shared by senior managers with the head of department and teacher concerned. This enables individuals to look for the reasons for their successes, or otherwise. In business studies and French great improvements have been achieved because of this approach. The fall in geography results has been traced to a change in syllabus.
5. The school set itself very high targets for the Year 9 national tests, which it just failed to meet in English and science, but met in mathematics. At GCSE, the school intended that 64 percent of pupils should attain five A\* to C passes and 97 percent attain five A\*-G passes. The A\*-C pass target was overambitious as staffing problems affected a few subjects. The A\*-G pass target was met.

6. Current standards in Year 9 are broadly average, but do vary from subject to subject, from well above average in English to below average in ICT and design and technology. The pupils are only at Leiston for one year of the usual three year course for Years 7 to 9 and so standards are dependent to a certain extent upon pupils' knowledge and understanding on entry. The very good continuity arrangements between middle and high schools go some way to overcome any problems but, in some specialist areas, the challenge remains substantial. Standards are below average in ICT because there are insufficient computers available for pupils to develop their skills in a range of subjects.
7. In Year 11, standards are average or above average in most examined subjects, and well above expectations in music. Standards in PSHE and citizenship are below average because the courses are not well enough structured and there is insufficient specific teaching of citizenship. Overall, standards are similar to national expectations at the age of sixteen. Staffing issues have caused problems in mathematics, which has affected standards, but these are now largely addressed.
8. Pupils' achievements are good in Year 9, particularly so in English. In Years 10 and 11 the picture is better overall, with good work in most subjects. Achievement in Year 11 is significantly better than in Year 10, where pupils are less mature and have not fully adjusted to the expectations of staff at Leiston. Achievement, in the main, reflects the good quality of teaching and learning taking place in the main school; where these are better, so is achievement.
9. Pupils' competence in English is good, because teachers have an appropriate focus on improving reading, writing and speaking and listening. In mathematics, pupils' competence is satisfactory. Number, tabulation and graphical work is taught well and applied in some subjects but not all
10. High, middle and low attaining pupils do well when teaching is very effective and matched to the varying needs of pupils in classes. The school is aware that, in past examinations, high attainers have not been as successful as middle and low attainers and is working to resolve the issue. In lessons observed and in work sampled, generally, pupils of all abilities were challenged but, occasionally, either higher attainers or less motivated pupils underachieved through lack of challenge.
11. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs across the school is good. These pupils achieve at least as well as others, and in some cases, better. Very good progress and achievement was apparent when specialist staff supported individuals in the learning support centre. In one or two subjects, such as ICT, a shortfall in the number of support staff available meant that these pupils received less support than they needed at times.
12. Standards and achievement are generally better than at the time of the last inspection. Good progress has been made overall and high standards have been maintained in design and technology

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.1 (33)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.4 (35.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.5 (34.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 184 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	56 (53)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.4 (34.7)	37.0 (34.7)

*There were 172 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

### **Sixth form**

13. The overall trend in examination results is one of improvement. In 2002, the last year for which there is validated data, overall results were below average. Results of boys were below average and those of girls broadly average. In 2003 the results were a little higher overall and boys' results were higher than girls. The fluctuations in boys' and girls' results – where one gender outperforms the other one year, and the picture is reversed the next - reflects the capabilities and prior learning of the examination cohort rather than differences in the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements. All pupils in the main school can gain entry into the sixth form; it is an open access sixth and so comparisons with national averages indicate little about students' achievements. The pass rate has improved over the past three years, to a proportion of over 95 percent in 2003. The proportion of higher grade passes – A, B or C grades - has also increased over the past three years and in 2003 it was over 60 percent.
14. The highest attaining subjects in 2002 were biology, chemistry and history which were all above or well above national averages. The most popular subjects were English and design and technology. The lowest attaining subjects were geography, sociology and mathematics. In 2003 the highest attaining subjects were art, English and geography.
15. Current standards in the subjects focused on are broadly average, with the highest attainment in English. Pupils' achievements relative to their capabilities are good overall, and much better and very good in Year 13. Their achievements are good in Year 12. Taking account of the sampled subjects as well, the overall picture in the sixth form is one of very good achievement. Students taking English, music technology or health and social care are achieving very well and in almost all other subjects achievement is good. In French achievement is satisfactory, but high attainers are not achieving as highly as they might.
16. By the end of Year 13, many students are confident and secure in their knowledge of taught subjects. Most, if not all, are articulate and communicate well. They use number confidently. ICT skills are of a lower order, as a result of a lack of use of computers in the main school, but standards are improving rapidly as all students follow the CLAIT course. A number of students in Year 12 are less interested in their work than they might be, and although teaching can be very effective, the students' achievements are not because of their relatively passive attitudes.
17. The few students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers, because they are often highly motivated and teachers try to match work to their needs.

18. Students' achievements are much better than at the time of the last inspection, when improvements were needed. Progress in teaching, learning and therefore achievement since 1998 has been very good.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	89.9 (83.7)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	21.9 (25.2)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	211.4 (219.0)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 51 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year  
( \* validated data is not available for sixth forms in 2003 )*

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to school and to their learning are good, supported by very good provision for moral and social development and a strong ethos. Behaviour is good overall, especially around the school. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. In the sixth form, students' attitudes, values and personal development are promoted very successfully and are very good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory in the sixth form and good in the main school where great efforts are made to encourage regular attendance and good time-keeping. Attendance and exclusions figures are broadly average.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Respect for others and a polite and considerate nature are valued, which results in most pupils having positive attitudes to their education
- Behaviour around the school and in many lessons is very good because procedures to promote personal development are effective, but the quality is marred by misbehaviour and silliness in a minority of lessons
- Not enough emphasis is placed on developing multi-cultural understanding
- Very good use is made of the school's referral unit to improve behaviour of persistent and occasional offenders
- Very good strategies are in place, including targets, to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality.
- Sixth form students are mature and sensible, particularly in Year 13 and have a very good influence on the life of the school

**Commentary**

19. The school sets high expectations for pupils' attitudes to work and for their behaviour. Most pupils show interest and enthusiasm, settle quickly to work, listen carefully and concentrate well in lessons. They work effectively both in groups and independently. At break and at lunchtimes pupils mix happily together and no-one is left out. Most pupils are keen to come to school and are friendly, courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. In the majority of lessons there is good respect for the ideas and opinions of others, adults are good role models and give pupils a clear idea of right and wrong. A few pupils do not concentrate and their behaviour, when teaching is less demanding, is sometimes unsatisfactory. The behaviour strategy is aimed at rewarding and praising good behaviour whilst taking a very firm and consistent stand against any behaviour that is inappropriate - and it works well. Pupils handle resources with care and respect the school's premises and there is no evidence of graffiti or litter.

20. Students with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards learning and other aspects of school. When taught in the learning support centre or as part of a support group, they are engaged in their learning and try hard. Students working in these settings are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and to work towards being independent. In subjects, they try hard and behave well, particularly when supported by a learning support assistant. In occasional lessons, where the teaching and management of students is less structured and focused, conduct of some students with special educational needs is less positive.
21. The community ethos is at the heart of the school and this provides both a spiritual and a practical dimension, but planning for spirituality across the school is inconsistent. A poem written by a pupil in Year 9 had clear elements of spirituality. The school promotes social and moral development very well and this is reflected in the good and often very good behaviour in and around the school. The school does not have a daily act of collective worship but in assemblies and in some enhancement sessions there are opportunities for reflection and moral issues such as bullying are discussed. Pupils take part in the broad range of extra-curricular activities and extension work such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and this makes a very good contribution to their social development. They raise funds for those less fortunate, for example the Children in Need Appeal. There are many visitors and visits both social and educational, which successfully extend pupils' experience. Although there are many opportunities for pupils to take part in local, national and pastoral activities, which are of enormous benefit, these are predominantly European and Western. Study of the wider and more diverse world of other faiths and cultures, which would raise pupils' awareness of living in a multi-cultural society, is less well developed.
22. Pupils enjoy school and most attend regularly and on time. Parents and pupils understand the procedures for ensuring good attendance, which include targets and certificates for good and improved attendance. During the reporting period attendance was lower than usual due to some long-term illness and failure of one pupil to attend. The school has very efficient procedures for following up any problems.

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	10%	School data:	1.1%
National data:	7.8%	National data:	1.2%

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

During the previous year, the proportion was just about the average for temporary exclusions at 5.3%. Figures in the table show a disproportionate number of exclusions of black pupils but this was only a very small number of individuals.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
667	31	1
4		
2		
1		

Mixed – any other mixed background	4		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	5	
Any other ethnic group	3		

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

## Sixth Form

23. Students in the sixth form enjoy school and are a valued part of the community; they provide a good model for younger pupils. There is a very wide range of prior learning and capability amongst the students but all work together harmoniously. They help with main school activities such as reading recovery schemes and with individual classes. For example, a Year 9 drama lesson was more successful than it might otherwise have been because of the presence of a sixth former, assisting the teacher. In a minority of lessons, sixth form students are passive learners but in most cases they work with enthusiasm and dedication to their task.
24. The refurbishment of the sixth form common room has provided a much better social and learning atmosphere, where Year 12 and 13 mix rather more than they have done in the past. Sixth formers' behaviour is very good overall and often excellent in Year 13. The local education authority have introduced a measure aimed at improving attendance, which is currently satisfactory, through the payment of a cash incentive to those parents whose children are regular attenders in the sixth form.
25. Current attitudes, behaviour and personal development of students in the sixth form are similarly good to those reported in 1998, with students showing very good study skills and organisation. Maintaining these very good qualities through very effective promotion of students' social and moral development represents good progress since the last report.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in the sixth form. The curriculum is good overall, with very good extra-curricular opportunities in the main school. Care and welfare and links with parents and the community are very good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching observed was good in Years 9 and Year 11, and satisfactory in Year 10. In the sixth form the quality was very good. The outcome of this good and very good work is effective learning in the main school and very effective work in the sixth form. Very good use is made of assessment information to help improve standards.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and relationships with the pupils and students, result in good learning in the main school and very good work in the sixth form.
- The specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very effective



- The very good school assessment system provides a common framework for use by teachers which helps pupils to know what to do to improve; this is not always implemented fully
- In a small number of lessons, teaching was not as effective as it should have been, for reasons specific to individual teachers
- Insufficient use is made of ICT in lessons and, in a few lessons, disruptive pupils interrupted others' learning

## Commentary

26. The quality of teaching observed in Years 9 and 11 was good, with much that was very good. The range of judgements on the quality of individual lessons was from excellent to unsatisfactory, with approaching four in every five seen good or better. The quality was not as good in Year 10, because of the attitudes of a small number of pupils who made the task of teaching some groups more difficult.
27. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it to good effect in helping pupils to learn. They are confident practitioners in the main, explaining ideas carefully to pupils who appreciate the time teachers provide and their patience in explaining points.
28. Planning is usually detailed, with clear learning objectives shared with the pupils, interesting and varied activities, and well structured plenary sessions where pupils' understanding is challenged. In some of the most successful lessons, teachers were anecdotal and made the work very interesting and relevant to the class. The national strategy for teaching and learning in Year 9 (it is intended for Years 7 to 9) is thoroughly implemented by most staff and pupils benefit from the approach.
29. Resources are used well. Where interactive whiteboards were available, as in science, these gave an extra dimension to lessons which motivated the pupils. The library is used well and good resource boxes of books are made available to subjects on request, which are of a great help in some humanities lessons. The school has fewer computers than are needed, however, and so pupils have insufficient access to ICT in lessons.
30. Most staff have high expectations and challenge pupils well. Questioning is thorough which helps pupils acquire new knowledge. Because expectations are generally high and work is interesting pupils remain involved, concentrating on the tasks in hand. The younger pupils have relatively weak independent learning skills, but as they progress through the school they improve, as they are taught how to learn effectively.
31. Boys and girls are usually taught equally well, although boys' attitudes to learning were not always as positive as those of the girls.
32. Homework is set in all subjects, and during the week of the inspection the work required was appropriate and sufficient. Pupils and parents, commented, however, that the homework timetable was not always adhered to and not all set work was marked or commented upon. The overall picture is satisfactory, but greater consistency is needed in some subject areas.
33. A Year 9 music lesson exemplified several of the teaching and learning strengths referred to. The lesson on composing a backing track 'The Blues', was very well planned, the new tasks developing from those learnt in the last lesson. The pace was rapid and the teacher demonstrated musical points very effectively using knowledge and skills very well. Pupils took responsibility for much of their own learning. They remained motivated and pupils of all abilities achieved very good standards. In a similarly effective business studies lesson with a Year 11 class, on the impact of the Euro, here too the teacher used in-depth subject knowledge to capture the attention and interest of the class. Assessment was rigorous and helpful and pupils responded to suggestions for improvement very well

indeed. Extension work was available for the fastest workers and many were keen to do it. In both of these lessons the relationships between the teachers and pupils were very good and pupils' interest and enjoyment in the subjects were enhanced by what took place.

34. The teaching of students who attend the learning support centre and who are helped through the support option in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Teachers know and understand the students very well. Strong and trusting relationships have been developed. A relaxed but businesslike atmosphere is consistently achieved which is underpinned by high expectations. Year 11 students made very effective use of their time and the specialist support available in a support session. They arrived with coursework to complete, and worked independently with only occasional skilled teacher intervention. A Year 9 student with a temporary disability worked conscientiously to complete the work that his class were attempting in another part of the school. The teacher had planned and researched well to co-ordinate and support this learning to correspond with the experience of his peers.
35. The teaching of students with special educational needs across subjects is good. Teachers use the helpful information provided in individual education plans and other available support and information to plan well. A group of lower attaining boys, with a range of special needs, attained well when learning basic skills in rugby. The teacher's knowledge of the students allowed him to stage and link learning effectively, engaging and motivating the students. Learning support assistants make a very positive contribution in most lessons to the learning of students with special educational needs. Where possible they adopt an active and positive approach from which other students also benefit. At times, teachers could make better use of the knowledge and experience that learning support assistants have of individual students, to help further improve their achievements.
36. An individual session for a small number of pupils new to the school with little spoken or written English, caught their interest and made a good contribution to their ICT skills and their self-esteem, as well as improving their English. The school has only occasional experience of pupils in the early stages of learning English but its very caring atmosphere and structured approach to learning result in good achievements and effective progress in English language acquisition.
37. Few significant weaknesses were apparent in the teaching observed apart from insufficient use of ICT and where a minority of disruptive pupils interrupted the learning of others. This disruption sometimes followed from insufficiently challenging work, where pupils became bored. Occasionally teachers did not share learning intentions with their classes, they did too much of the talking and tended to ask 'closed' questions. Where these characteristics were apparent, it was often the high attainers who were the most disadvantaged, in both mixed ability and setted classes.
38. The quality of teaching is much better than at the time of the last inspection, although the general picture remains the same, with the best quality in the sixth form and the weakest in Year 10. The teaching observed during this inspection challenged the pupils much more than that seen in 1998. The quality of assessment is also better than previously described, with very good improvement in modern languages procedures.

## **Assessment**

39. The very clear whole-school assessment policy provides a common framework which successfully supports a cycle of teaching and learning. The school acquires a wealth of information, including information from feeder middle schools, which it analyses very well. The student tracker booklet assists teachers in planning to meet individual needs. It ensures that most pupils know what level they have reached and what their targets are. The student self-monitoring record card supports their development as active learners, by

encouraging pupils to reflect on how hard they are working, and whether they are maximising their potential. Although the school assessment system is used well in planning, in some lessons teachers do not make effective use of the information they have. This reduces the positive impact of the assessment system on pupils' progress in those lessons. The school has started a programme to monitor and improve consistency of use but this has not yet fully achieved its aim. Teachers' marking gives helpful guidance on how pupils can improve. Individual education plans are used well to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. There has been good improvement in assessment since the last inspection.

## **The sixth form**

40. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good and this is a key element in the learning successes of the students. Virtually all the lessons observed were satisfactory or better and about four in every five were good or better. One of the greatest strengths was teachers' subject knowledge, for example in English and chemistry, which resulted in challenging and demanding questions. Specific technical language relevant to each subject was used with confidence by teachers, which gave students confidence. Students often questioned their teachers very well, particularly in Year 13 and very good understanding developed from this. Teachers' expectations were usually high as were those of many of the students.
41. Year 13 students have developed very good learning skills because teaching is so effective. Interesting and relevant tasks, for example in music technology where pupils were composing, result in students who listen well and concentrate hard. The best teaching and learning overall in the subjects focused on was in English, music technology and health and social care, although very good and excellent lessons were observed in other focus and sampled subjects as well. In the sampled subject art the quality was excellent and the quality was very good in the sports courses taught.
42. In an excellent art lesson sampled, the quality of questioning was of the highest order, enabling students to reflect and build on what they had achieved. The very good teacher knowledge of each student in the group ensured that the challenge and expectations were appropriate. The students had complete confidence in the teacher's technical ability and understanding which facilitated discussions. Very effective teaching of English in a close textual study with a Year 13 class included: a clear introduction, setting the context for the session including learning intentions; paired work followed by groups feeding back to the whole class; and a thorough, detailed plenary. Students responded with confidence and great enjoyment in the lesson, concentrating hard. Few lessons had significant weaknesses. Occasionally teachers spoke for too long, and students in Year 12 were inclined not to question points that needed clarification. There is a tendency for some to be passive listeners and learners. By year 13, however, the growth in student confidence is apparent and debate and discussion between teachers and students is very good indeed.
43. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is as effective as in the main school. Teachers and learning support assistants know their pupils very well and work to ensure that tasks match their prior learning and capabilities. In a music lesson, for example, work was carefully differentiated to meet the expectations of all students, including those with special educational needs. All students gained in confidence and knowledge as a result.
44. The quality of teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection. Good progress has been made in improving the proportion of the highest quality

## **Assessment**

45. In the eight focus subjects assessment was, in general, good. A-level expectations are well understood and conveyed carefully to students. GNVQ assessment requirements are a strength. Assessment is excellent in health and social care and very good in English and music. Students are provided with good information about how to improve. In some subjects, day-to-day assessment could be improved. There is some variation in mathematics and a shortfall of marking and question setting in chemistry. Teachers analyse student's work well and give effective advice on how they can improve. Students take increasing responsibility for analysis of their progress so that by Year 13 carry they carry it out very effectively.
46. The benefits of the whole school assessment policy are carried into the sixth form. The assessment system is used in teaching in the sixth form in most subjects. The sixth form individual student progress tracker is useful in supporting students' learning, as it focuses their attention on achieving agreed targets through taking personal responsibility for their own progress. Teachers provide specific advice to students as a result of their assessment of their progress, in response both to their performance in lessons and to their written work.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 136 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8 ( 6%)	42 ( 31%)	56 ( 41%)	24 ( 18%)	6 ( 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**

The curriculum overall is satisfactory in Years 9 to 11 and good in the sixth form, with a number of strengths but also some weaknesses. In many ways the main school curriculum is broad and effective; a good range of extra-curricular activities is provided. In Years 9 to 11, ICT is not well enough planned for across the curriculum and PSHE and citizenship courses are not yet meeting expectations.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum partnership with the main middle school from which pupils transfer is very effective.
- A good range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form is provided and curriculum planning is good in most areas with the exception of ICT across the curriculum
- Provision for PSHE and citizenship is unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11
- The statutory requirement for religious education is not met in the sixth form.
- The timetable with 'bunched' lessons hampers the quality of some teaching and learning
- Planning to meet the requirements of pupils with special educational needs is good
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities are available for pupils in Years 9 to 11

## **Commentary**

47. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for Years 9 to 11 with the exception of ICT. Sufficient time is allocated for teaching of specific ICT skills, an issue at the time of the last report. However, ICT is not planned for specifically in schemes of work across all

subjects of the curriculum because of difficulties in booking the restricted resources available.

48. The allocation of time to subjects mentioned in the last report has improved and the curriculum in Years 9 to 11 now has appropriate breadth and balance. A relative weakness is the unhelpful timetabling of some subjects, whereby lessons are concentrated in one part of the week or length of sessions are inappropriate. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum provides a good range of courses that suit pupils' aptitudes and abilities. Pupils follow a core curriculum of National Curriculum subjects as well as a short course GCSE in religious education. In addition to the core subjects there is a good choice of academic courses and an innovative and flexible range of vocational courses organised in partnership with local colleges of further education. This is effective for pupils the school has identified as in need of an alternative curriculum.
49. Pupils benefit greatly from Leiston's very good partnership with the main feeder middle schools. Work is started in Year 8 in the middle schools and completed in Year 9. Pupils referred to how good this process was, showing how their earlier experiences were valued and built upon. The Year 9 curriculum covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Pupils have the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages, French which they started in the middle schools and Spanish. Japanese is offered to a group of pupils with special educational needs who are finding the programme of study in French too difficult.
50. The provision for PSHE is unsatisfactory. There is no structured programme for the present school year. Sex and relationships education and drugs education are delivered as specific focus sessions to each tutor group by an outside speaker so in this respect are satisfactory. Work for other elements is being devised on an ad hoc basis by different tutors and this is unsatisfactory. Most sessions are not seen as relevant by the pupils and they are not valued. Citizenship does not have separate lessons and is taught within other subjects. It is not made explicit to pupils and as a consequence they do not understand the concept of citizenship. Although there are opportunities for pupils to participate in school activities which promote responsible action, such as school and form councils, the Pathfinder project, raising money for charity and school productions, pupils do not make links to citizenship.
51. All pupils regardless of their individual needs, including the more able and those with English as additional language, receive equal access to the curriculum. Pupils identified as needing support are monitored so that their special needs are met by appropriate schemes of work within the curriculum. The school is committed to an inclusive policy where students are rarely withdrawn from mainstream classes for specialist teaching. Some students in Years 10 and 11 benefit and are motivated by attending a vocational college placement. This option is supported by structured study time in place of a modern foreign language. Students appreciate this option and use the study time well, seeking support from the specialist teachers appropriately. A small number of students are placed in the Learning Support Centre. Staff ensure that, so far as is possible, students working in the centre receive the full curriculum entitlement. Students respond well to being placed in the centre and make good gains in learning as well as receiving emotional and social support or other types of help and guidance. Students with Specific Learning Difficulties have only limited access to specialist teaching.
52. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. This covers cultural, sporting, academic and leisure activities as well as study support. The list is full and varied, for example very good drama productions praised by parents, students receiving Community Sports Leaders' Award as a result of work at school, concerts, choir, sport, Duke of Edinburgh Award, residential visits, visits abroad and summer schools. Several subject areas enrich their provision by providing 'drop-in' clubs which offer study support and

extension activities. These give pupils good opportunities to extend their knowledge, and their team and social skills.

53. Careers guidance is good and is well supported by outside agencies. Year 9 pupils receive guidance on the choice of their options. Work experience is well planned for pupils in Year 10 who appreciate the opportunities this provides.
54. The school is fully staffed with a good match of qualified and experienced teaching staff in nearly all areas of the curriculum. An adequate number of learning support and technical staff support the curriculum and students' learning. The school works hard to recruit staff: there is a commitment to supporting teachers following the Graduate Recruitment Programme. Due attention is given to planning for the replacement of staff known to be leaving, particularly those with significant responsibilities.
55. Accommodation across the school has improved. Many areas have been refurbished to provide an attractive and comfortable learning environment. Specialist classrooms and workshops are safe and well maintained. Some specialist rooms are used for the teaching of other subjects. This places a constraint to the range of teaching and learning strategies. Sixth form access to study areas where students can use computers is limited.
56. Most subjects have at least adequate, and in some cases, good resources which support the curriculum. Sufficient funds are allocated to subjects to allow them to maintain and extend their resources. There is insufficient access to computers by subject areas or for students to study independently. The library does not have an extensive range of resources, but is well supported by the county library service.

## **Sixth Form**

57. Students are given a great deal of support before they join the sixth form to ensure that they make suitable choices. They appreciate the wide range of opportunities and feel they are given good guidance based on their prior attainment, hopes and aspirations. The gap between the level of work, particularly from GCSE to AS level, and the way in which students are expected to study post 16 is appreciated by the school, and tutor and subject teacher support is substantial to enable the transition to be as smooth as possible.
58. The curriculum in the sixth form is good in many ways with a wide range of courses, vocational and academic, at a variety of levels. The students find that it is planned to meet their needs and appreciate that it enables students who do not satisfy the 'A' level entry requirements to have access to education post 16. Religious education is not planned for according to the locally Agreed syllabus, however, as is statutorily required. Seventeen AS level subject courses, such as English, art, chemistry and history can lead onto A2 courses. AVCE and GNVQ Intermediate are offered in business studies and health and social care. In addition, students can choose AS courses in psychology and in further maths, GCSE in Spanish, Japanese and Art, and the Community Sports Leader Award in physical education. The school does not currently offer an ICT course leading to AS/A2 or AVCE qualifications
59. All students follow courses in PSHE, ICT (CLAIT level 2) and physical education each week, providing a good balance in their studies. The school has well advanced plans to increase the number of vocational courses from September 2004, introducing GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and a pre-employment programme. The pre-employment programme is particularly important because a significant number of sixth formers do leave after Year 12 to go into employment. A further dimension to the school's forward planning in the curriculum is a general studies course for all students from 2004. This will further enhance the good breath currently available.

60. A sound range of extra-curricular activities is available for sixth formers. Various visits are arranged as part of studies in specific subjects such as English and geography. Students have access to the excellent leisure and fitness facilities in the town leisure centre on the school site. They are given opportunities to help younger pupils with their reading, in food technology lessons, drama and as assistant librarians. A small number of sports fixtures are played, for example in rugby, netball and badminton, and the students themselves plan a range of social events.
61. The time available for teaching is appropriate. The timetable is effective for some subjects but not for others, as in the main school. Some A-level subjects have all their lessons bunched together, for example in one subject all five lessons ran consecutively at the end of one day and the start of the next, which is unhelpful in achieving good contact with students and monitoring their achievements.
62. Sixth form accommodation and resources are good with the exception of the number of computers available. Staffing is good, with sufficient appropriately knowledgeable teachers for all courses taught.
63. Sound progress has been made in improving the sixth form curriculum, maintaining the strengths in the range of subjects, and extending the range of vocational courses, but areas of relative weakness remain such as the timetable structure and the need for religious education for all.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school's procedures for the welfare, safety and protection of its pupils are very good. The support and guidance given to pupils are also very good overall, throughout the school. Arrangements for seeking pupils' views through the student council are satisfactory in the main school, and very good in the sixth form.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Child protection arrangements and monitoring of health and safety issues are very good
- Staff know pupils and students very well and provide very good access to advice and help throughout the school
- Excellent level of supervision is provided throughout the school day
- Very good use of assessment data results in very good monitoring of achievement and personal development

### **Commentary**

64. Good training in child protection has been provided for all staff and helpful guidance is published in the staff handbook. Liaison and co-operation with relevant outside agencies is very effective. These measures indicate how seriously the school takes this issue and the importance it places on maximising the care it provides for all its pupils.
65. Health and safety are monitored rigorously. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately and recorded and there are regular checks of items such as electrical and physical education equipment by outside contractors. Recommendations made in a recent health and safety audit are all in hand. The level of supervision of pupils at all times throughout the school day is excellent and makes a significant contribution to safety as well as cementing relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils understand what is and is not acceptable whilst at school. Procedures for the protection of pupils when using the Internet are very good.

66. The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle in a variety of ways. Opportunities to participate in exercise outside the school day are wide-ranging and popular. The choice of food at lunch times includes a very good variety of healthy options and pupils are encouraged to choose from these. The food is of good quality, enjoyable and appreciated by staff and pupils – it plays an important part in the pupils' lives at school and this is understood by school managers.
67. Relationships in the school are very good and pupils are very well known to their teachers. Pupils feel confident about talking to an adult if they have any concerns. Both the learning support centre and the Connexions adviser base operate an open door policy and pupils know that they can go to these areas if they feel the need for one-to-one counselling. Access to support and advice, whether related to personal concerns or to career opportunities, is therefore very good.
68. Assessment data is substantial, carefully presented and very well used to provide information on pupils' achievements and personal development. Systems of rewards and sanctions are very good. The progress of pupils is tracked carefully by senior and middle managers and this leads to good analysis of the links between attendance, behaviour and achievement, which are then reported to parents.
69. The staff listen to pupils' views and value their ideas and comments. An instance of this was seen during the inspection, when pupils expressed the desire for a non-uniform day to raise money for 'Children in Need' and, despite some misgivings, their request was accepted. Arrangements for pupils to state their opinions through the student council are satisfactory at present. The council in the main school is not yet well enough established for pupils' voices to be clearly heard and for action to result from concerns or ideas for improvement.
70. Pupils with special educational needs are cared for very well. Teachers and other staff know about the needs of individual students and are sensitive to them. Students are able to access support or advice through the services offered by the school, such as the learning support centre, the Connexions Service and the community outreach worker. Links between specialist and pastoral staff are strong. This allows information to pass efficiently between parties, which benefits the pupils. The learning support centre and the special needs rooms are staffed during social times, and pupils use these areas as a sanctuary and to make contact with the staff they know well.
71. Access for students with physical disabilities has been improved. There are two adapted toilets and an adapted shower. Access to ground floors is good with an extensive network of ramps. Access to higher floors is not possible.
72. At the time of the last inspection support and guidance was judged to be effective, with good support and satisfactory academic monitoring. The situation is much better today and the care provided for the pupils is a strength of the school.

### **Sixth form**

73. The very good quality of care provided in the main school is maintained in the sixth form and students' voices are listened to, to a much greater extent. Students are very positive about the sixth form, and feel they have the ability to bring about changes in their environment and curriculum.
74. A new team of sixth form tutors monitor achievement, effort and attendance very carefully and provide this information to students and parents. Advice, which includes personal interviews for all students, is very good and encompasses support for UCAS applications and for those students who do not wish to proceed to higher education but go into



employment. Students are very positive about the sixth form, and the life chances that it provides. In areas where they have a grievance, for example their access to sufficient computer technology, they act practically themselves to bring about improvement. They have confidence in the sixth form council, which is an active elected body which plays an important role in the life of the school.

75. Insufficient evidence is available in the last report to indicate specifically the progress made in caring for students in Years 12 and 13.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has very good links with parents and carers who support their children and the school very well. Very effective communication takes place between home and school. High quality and extensive links with the community and with other schools and colleges add to the support and care provided for all pupils, especially the planned transfer of pupils at the ages of sixteen, seventeen and eighteen. Educational links with further education colleges support sixth form students very well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are strongly involved through a very effective 'friends' association and through helping with a range of activities and supporting their children; communication with parents is very good
- Local businesses and services are very involved with the school
- Excellent links with local schools help to ease transition from one to the next
- Parents are very supportive of the school and confident that their children do well

### **Commentary**

76. The school works very hard to establish worthwhile links with parents and carers, who praise the school staff for their efforts and what they achieve. Parents and carers welcome the help they receive and have great respect for the leadership and management of the school. Other strengths they identified were the progress their children make, the high expectations of the staff and the very strong encouragement from teachers for pupils, which helps them to gain in maturity and appreciate the education provided. The inspection team confirms these positive findings. Some parents provide good assistance with, for example, swimming and on visits to places of interest. Many help their children well at home using the pupils' planners well and attending the regular consultation evenings. They provide very good support to the successful friends association in their social and fundraising activities.
77. The school provides parents with very good information about their children's progress. Parents receive written annual reports, which are clear and helpful. They include the next steps in their children's learning. Regular meetings provide parents with good opportunities to find out about their children's progress and a helpful booklet 'be in the know' has excellent advice for parents of pupils in Year 11. Regular newsletters keep parents very well informed about events and successes in school. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are attractive, readable and informative and meet statutory requirements. The school asks parents for their views, listens and acts upon their responses. There is a clear and effective procedure for dealing with complaints.
78. The school's links with the community and with other educational establishments are very good indeed. There are excellent links with the local feeder middle schools, through a formal pyramid of schools. The induction programme into Year 9 is appreciated by the pupils. They settle in quickly and well. Middle school staff value the school's commitment to promoting continuity in learning. The town leisure centre on site provides an excellent

facility for the school and pupils have the opportunity to work where they meet with families and adults using the centre.

79. The school is at the centre of the local community. Pupils entertain elderly people at Christmas. Parents and the local community support school productions and other activities very well. Members of the Rotary Club act as mentors for some pupils in Year 11, providing very useful and appreciated guidance. The school nurse, the educational welfare officer and the community policeman, visit regularly and involve themselves in the life of the school. For example, community police give lessons to Year 10 pupils about the dangers of illegal substance abuse. The on-site youth club, which operates in the evening and at lunch times is a very good facility. The nearby power station has donated some substantial facilities to the school from which the pupils benefit, such as a minibus and computers.
80. Community education workers provide very good support to pupils needing help in a range of areas and to those returning from illness or exclusion. The partnership between these staff and those employed at the school is excellent and pupils benefit from this high quality provision.
81. Adult education thrives at the school, with courses in a range of areas taking place on several evenings each week. The headteacher liaises closely with the manager to ensure that what is provided is of high quality and reflects appropriately upon the school.
82. The special educational needs team has very effective links and liaison with the many external agencies. This results in the support services being appropriately accessible to students and parents. Parents are involved in annual review of Statement meetings, but are not routinely involved in review of individual education plan meetings. Strong links with many parents of students with special educational needs means that problems in school are usually addressed at an early stage. This is very good practice.
83. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection, with better provision in the quality of information provided and the involvement of the community in school life

## **Sixth Form**

84. The significant strengths in the main school links with the community and parents are equally true in the sixth form.
85. A very good range of links has been established with further education colleges. Students have access to very good support and guidance to help them in their choices for the future. In addition to academic information, such as regular assessments which enable students to make informed choices about what are and are not reasonable future possibilities. The Connexions service on site provides very good careers and other advice which the students appreciate. Students have the opportunity to participate in work placements and community service, for example the crime prevention panel which meets in the school and has a student representative. These very good links enable students to make the very best use of their time in the sixth form

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. Although the governance of the school has significant strengths, not all statutory requirements are met and governance is satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Management systems are good.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides a clear vision and is an excellent communicator
- Complementary skills amongst senior managers are very helpful in achieving a successful school
- Assessment data is very well managed and interpreted, to help raise achievement
- A well-established self-review system ensures that senior managers have a clear view of the school's qualities; monitoring of teaching and learning is not consistently implemented in all subject areas and a few curriculum issues have still to be resolved
- An open-entry and inclusive sixth form has been established where the range of courses suit the needs of students
- A strong team has been created to manage and lead developments in the sixth form

## Commentary

86. The governors know the school well. They have worked closely with the headteacher in developing the school as a successful technology college where pupils achieve well. Governors challenge the headteacher and other managers effectively, holding them to account for what takes place in the school. The governing body has a good mix of expertise and experience amongst its members and they use this well for the benefit of the school. There are appropriate committees and working parties with delegated powers. Procedures, such as recording and reporting minutes are well established. Most statutory requirements are fully met but governors have not fulfilled their legal obligations in ensuring that the school holds a daily act of collective worship and complies with the requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form.
87. The inspiring leadership of the headteacher has been the significant factor in moving the school forwards. He speaks with authority, but also humility, listening well, and responding clearly but with sensitivity. He has created a strong ethos of achievement and learning throughout the school which is appreciated by pupils, students, parents and carers, the staff and governors. All pupils are valued. The school's profile in the community has been greatly improved and it is now very well regarded. Other senior managers and key staff share the headteacher's vision and work to implement it. The headteacher is seconded to work for the local education authority for two days each week and senior managers maintain the school's successes very effectively in his absence. Subject and year leaders provide a clear sense of direction, creating effective teams and making good use of assessment information. Systems and approaches have at their heart the wellbeing and academic and vocational success of the pupils.
88. The school's good self review system is based on using the outcomes of pupil assessments to judge teaching and learning. It has helped the school to improve pupils' achievement. Although lessons are observed for teacher appraisal, not enough use is made of lesson observation to improve teaching and share good practice. The school's performance management policy and approach are appropriate.
89. The headteacher is quick to seize opportunities to enhance what is provided for the pupils. The school's success in gaining technology college status has helped to provide much improved learning facilities. However the number of computers is not sufficient to allow pupils to use them across all subjects. Citizenship has not been fully planned for and taught as a subject in Years 7 to 11. Induction of new staff is good, and the staff handbook provides comprehensive advice to new staff, students and temporary teachers. Professional development is viewed as an important strategy for improving practice, and the involvement of the school in teacher training has been used to further enhance the quality of teaching.
90. Finance staff are well qualified and provide the governors and headteacher with very good information. This leads to wise decisions being taken, to make good use of the budget.

Forward planning is effective in preventing potential problems. Additionally, the school is adept at seeking out additional funding sources. Principles of best value are in place, and the two minor issues from the last financial audit have been addressed.

91. Management of administrative and support staff is good, with clear lines of responsibility.
92. The present school timetable, although satisfactory overall has some inappropriate elements which lead to a number of pupils experiencing bunching of lessons in a particular subject. The timetable is in new hands from the start of the coming year, and there is a clear awareness that this arrangement, which detracts from pupils learning, needs to be resolved.
93. The leadership of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the learning support centre, is strong. A clear and well-communicated philosophy permeates through the specialist staff to all areas and aspects of the school. This effective leadership is very well supported by the headteacher, senior staff and the link governor. The management of routines and procedures is also a strength. For example, the process for writing and reviewing individual education plans is well established. A shortfall in administrative support results in some inefficiencies in the use of specialist staff. Management of specialist staff, including the learning support assistants is sensitive and flexible, contributing to their effectiveness. Staff understand their roles and value the support and guidance they are given. Students' records are well ordered and complete. The school's policy for special educational needs is comprehensive. Funds provided for pupils with special educational needs are very carefully and effectively managed. They are used to support the specialist provision and also shared across subject areas to aid the learning and experience of these pupils in mainstream classes. The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the provision for special educational needs are thorough; the outcomes are informative, accurate and acted upon.
94. The leadership and management of the school, as seen in the improved outcomes for the pupils are better than at the time of the last inspection. The key issues for action identified six years ago have been dealt with and, in nearly all areas of school life, the quality of provision and what is achieved are better. Governance is much better than reported in the last inspection

## **Sixth form**

95. The sixth form is very effectively led and well managed. Key strengths of the sixth form are the very good curriculum opportunities provided for students of all abilities, and the very good teaching quality which results in very good achievements. A newly created sixth form team of tutors provides very good support. Systems are in place to monitor achievement and to provide advice so that students can build on their achievements and work towards their chosen career paths.
96. Management structures are good and clear. Sixth form finances are well managed. Currently the sixth form is supported by curriculum time from the main school. A planned reduction in this support will result in a self-financing Year 12 and 13 as the expected numbers in the sixth form, particularly Year 13 arrive. Some relatively small sixth form groups are justified because alternative provision is too far from the local area for the students to travel. Sixth form facilities in departments have improved as separate funding for courses post 16 are allocated. Students' only area of concern with regard to facilities is the shortfall in the number of computers.
97. Substantial improvements have taken place in the sixth form and strengths identified six years ago at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Improvement in the sixth form since 1998 has been good.

***Financial information for the whole school in the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,608,865
Total expenditure	2,535,693
Expenditure per pupil	3,813

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	168,241
Balance carried forward to the next	241,413

# 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 **very good**

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement was excellent in the 2003 national tests considering the pupils' capabilities, with well above average test results compared with the national picture
- Some enthusiastic and very effective teaching helps pupils learn
- Very good planning of courses and lessons supports teachers in meeting pupils' learning needs
- Teachers have high expectations, placing value on pupils' self-esteem as well as achievement
- Very good teacher self-review results in improved teaching and learning
- Insufficient use is made of ICT within English classrooms to enhance learning opportunities

#### Commentary

98. Year 9 national test results in 2003 were well above the national average and very high when compared with similar schools. Results were in the top five percent of those achieved by similar schools. Over time, boys' and girls' attainment has improved in line with national rates with a significant increase in 2003. GCSE English results in 2003 were slightly above the national average and well above in English literature, reflecting the trend in recent years. Results in both subjects have improved significantly since 2000. Girls have performed in line with national trends over time and boys above national trends. Year 9 and 11 English results were higher overall than those in mathematics and science.
99. Pupils enter the school with average attainment levels and both boys and girls make very good progress by the end of Year 9. Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening skills is well above average. Pupils contribute to teacher led discussions with confidence and enthusiasm. Higher attainers articulate ideas clearly, and listen well to each other and teachers, with sustained concentration. Structured pair and group activities support the full ability range in their learning. Reading aloud is of an above average standard and pupils read demanding texts at sight. Higher attaining pupils make perceptive and extended commentaries on their texts, selecting quotations to support their analysis of ideas and language. Most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of plot and characters in the texts studied. Personal and narrative writing is generally sustained. Pupils write in a variety of forms and for a range of readers. Teachers focus on improving structure and technical accuracy across the ability range through the good use of drafting skills. Note-taking is effectively taught and so pupils have this skill. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve as well as their peers.

100. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above national averages in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Pupils listen with sustained concentration during group and class discussions. They express themselves clearly and confidently, for instance when exploring the impact of poetic devices. When responding to reading, higher attainers make perceptive notes on the coursework and examination texts, including a wide range of poems, short stories, plays and novels. Challenging texts are studied by all abilities, for instance pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century love poetry in preparation for a comparative coursework assignment. Higher attainers can explore the impact of writers' choice of language and imagery. Many students write both analytically and creatively for different purposes and readers. Lower attaining pupils produce detailed responses to carefully structured tasks.
101. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in all year groups enabling good progress to occur. Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm and personal interest in the lessons. They work co-operatively in small group tasks and listen carefully during class teaching.
102. Features of good teaching include positive relationships between teachers and pupils, careful planning and high expectations. These combine to produce effective learning. Teachers emphasise pupils' self-esteem, promoting personal achievement through the development of language skills. Marking is constructive, recognises achievement and encourages a clear focus on written accuracy and fluency. There are good examples of assessment, including specific targets and self-assessment which encourage independent learning. This practice is not established for all pupils. ICT is used insufficiently.
103. Leadership of the department focuses on raising standards throughout Years 9 to 11. The department's good self-evaluation indicates how further improvements will be made. Work is supported by comprehensive documentation, stating expectations and requirements. The development plan priorities are appropriate and contribute to school objectives. Systematic monitoring of lessons is not carried out although informal observation is. Staff share a common purpose and work as a team. The curriculum is broad, balanced and carefully planned to meet National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. Accommodation is very good. A suite of rooms, established since the last inspection, aids communication and the level of support one teacher can provide for another. The department is well resourced in terms of texts and materials, although ICT resources are not as good as they could be. Good displays encourage learning and achievement. English is making a good contribution to pupils' learning needs and personal development. Pupils' attainment and achievement have improved since the last inspection as has the quality of teaching.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

104. The school's provision for the development of literacy is good and standards are above average across Years 9 to 11. Although currently there is no whole-school policy, departments do follow guidance documents available when planning schemes of work. Literacy is effectively co-ordinated by a senior manager and all staff have attended school-based training in order to implement this national initiative.
105. Pupils demonstrate good literacy skills in a range of subjects. In art, geography, history, music and science, the pupils are expected to use terminology and key vocabulary in a way that develops their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers of English and modern foreign languages use the same terminology when presenting word, sentence and text level objectives. As a direct consequence of in-school training and planning, in art lessons pupils are required to structure their written responses through the use of writing frames. Good extended writing is also evident in history where pupils make significant progress within Year 9 in readiness for the demands of essay writing at GCSE. Group discussion features strongly in religious education, history and science, the latter

encouraging pupils' collaborative skills through talk. Evaluative skills are evident in drama. In most subjects from Years 9 to 11, pupils are able to speak clearly and listen with concentration to the teacher and each other. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in developing literacy skills through the focused work of learning support assistants.

## Drama

106. Overall, the provision for drama is good. GCSE results in 2003 were close to the national average. These pupils were the first group to follow a specific GCSE drama course. In the lessons seen, standards in all year groups were above average. Girls achieve higher standards than boys. Pupils work very well together in both preparation and performance. They have a good knowledge and understanding of drama terms and techniques, which they use confidently. Many pupils create characterisations in original and convincing ways. For example, Year 10 pupils demonstrated empathy in their dramatic monologues. Pupils have good speaking and listening skills. The majority of performed work is filmed and reviewed to encourage self- and peer-evaluation; further opportunities to develop these skills could have been created in some lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated and achieve success.
107. Teaching and learning are good in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' good subject knowledge provides the pupils with the confidence to work with independence and initiative. There are high expectations and good management skills so time in lessons is productive; learning occurs at a good pace and pupils make good progress, achieving well. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and respect the self-discipline and co-operation required for achieving high standards. Relationships are trusting and purposeful, especially in GCSE lessons.
108. The accommodation and resources for drama are satisfactory although improvements are needed to flooring and the lighting system. Drama provides enrichment through a range of extra-curricular activities including lunch-time and after-school clubs to prepare for different school and local community-based performances. Currently pupils are rehearsing for a production of 'Daisy Pulls It Off'. Visiting actors present workshops and regular theatre visits are organised. Leadership and management are good.

## French and Spanish

Provision in French and Spanish is **good**

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are well qualified, competent and enthusiastic
- French and Spanish are usually spoken at all times during lessons, and lessons have a variety of relevant and interesting activities
- Pupils behave well and their attitudes are positive
- There is little evidence of the use of ICT to enhance learning
- Marking and target setting lack consistency across the department



## Commentary

109. In 2002, the proportion of pupils achieving A\* to C in French was broadly in line with the national average. Results were higher in 2003 and above average. The considerable improvement in 2003 represents good achievement by the pupils involved. Spanish has yet to be taken at GCSE by a substantial number of pupils.
110. Standards in French and Spanish in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectations. In all lessons seen, pupils made clear gains in knowledge, enjoying their lessons and gaining confidence in speaking and understanding the language. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well: the setting system and carefully planned work and learning materials create an environment in which they can succeed. In one French lesson they used the past tense in short sentences and much of their written work seen was of comparable quality to that of pupils in middle-ability sets. Higher attainers are not always challenged appropriately.
111. In Year 11, standards are average. In relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 10, pupils' achievement in both foreign languages is good. The pupils understand instructions and respond to questioning without much guidance from the teacher or written prompts. Pupils are able to identify and apply patterns in the language (for example verb endings in the past, future and present tenses) and higher attainers are able to put this into practice to communicate their ideas in speech and writing when left to their own devices.
112. Almost all lessons seen were good or better and none was unsatisfactory. Every lesson begins with a short task which is relevant and motivates pupils. Teachers used a wide range of successful strategies to promote good learning. In good and very good lessons, pupils are kept focused by the brisk pace and frequent change of activity. Pupils are co-operative, work well in pairs and groups and change activity without fuss. They are well prepared. Teachers plan well and have a good mastery of the language they teach and, as a result, pupils make progress in learning new material and in consolidating previous knowledge and skills. Pupils in all years have an opportunity to come into contact with a native speaker in French. Marking is regular but sometimes gives too few suggestions on how to improve.
113. Twenty pupils went on a very successful and worthwhile exchange visit to Spain this year. There are e-mail links with a school in Madrid but generally use of ICT in languages is insufficient. Accommodation is good with all the rooms grouped together in the same area, enabling staff to share ideas easily. Resources are good and helpful to learning apart from the lack of access to the ICT room on a regular basis.
114. The department operates very well as a team. Newly established schemes of work are in use. The issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed apart from the use of ICT as a tool for learning. There are clear strategies in place to raise standards and the profile of languages within the school. Spanish has been introduced in Year 9 and is proving popular. Pupils with special educational needs who find the level of French in Year 9 too difficult have the opportunity to learn Japanese (which they enjoy a lot). The national strategy for Year 9 is followed, and the quality of the environment in languages rooms is colourful, relevant and conducive to learning. By analyzing their results the department identified that the weakest skill area for pupils who just failed to achieve a C grade was the speaking examination. As a consequence, a booklet has been developed with examples of role plays, conversations, questions and model answers.
115. Close links exist between the middle schools and the department, using the very effective 'pyramid of schools' in the local area to maximise communication about modern

foreign languages .The department's procedures for assessment have much improved since the last inspection. The information from assessment and testing is analyzed and used to monitor the progress of pupils. All pupils are aware of their attainment levels or grades but they need more information on how to make progress.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some very effective teaching results in very good achievement though some is unsatisfactory and results in pupils not learning enough
- Very good curriculum continuity strategies for pupils transferring from middle schools contributed to the good achievement in Year 9 national tests in 2003
- Insufficiently rigorous monitoring results in unhelpful inconsistencies in marking and teaching approaches
- Access to and therefore use of ICT is insufficient
- Very high department morale and spirit is engendered by effective leadership

### Commentary

116. In Year 9, the pupils achieved well in the national tests in 2003 considering their prior attainment. Standards were above average when compared with similar schools. High attainers did very well and better than in English and science. Boys' and girls' results were broadly similar. Over time the trend of improvement in these test results has been similar to the national trend, but with variations from year to year. At GCSE, mathematics results were significantly lower than in other subjects in 2002, but results in 2003 were higher and broadly average for the school and nationally. Fifty percent of pupils gained passes in the higher grade range, A\*-C, showing satisfactory achievement in 2003. Virtually all pupils gained an A\* to G pass, indicating that lower and middle attaining pupils did well.
117. Current standards are broadly average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. National Curriculum requirements are covered well in Year 9, with a good balance of work across expected areas, reflecting the department's scheme of work for number, algebra, shape and space, handling data and problem solving. On the GCSE course, lower attainers worked hard to complete money problems accurately, whilst higher attainers worked accurately and successfully in calculating surface areas and volumes of a range of prisms.
118. The teaching quality observed varied widely, with a high proportion of lessons where teaching and learning were very good, but also a minority of unsatisfactory lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning reflected the quality of teaching to a great extent, but a small number of pupils were provocative and challenging.

119. Strengths in teaching which led to motivated successful learners, included:
- very effective starts to lessons where pupils became engaged in number exercises
  - teachers' very good subject knowledge so they explained answers carefully and effectively, often with enthusiasm
  - a very good non-confrontational style, which minimised disruption of lessons and helped to involve pupils in their learning
- Weaknesses observed which restricted pupils' achievements included:
- not following the department guidance on lesson structure, so lessons were not as interesting as they should have been
  - teachers 'talking at' pupils for extended periods and not finding out what pupils can and cannot do. Where some pupils became frustrated, they misbehaved, disrupting learning
  - unclear explanations, which resulted in passive acceptance by some (often by girls) and misbehaviour by others (a few boys)
  - a variable quality of marking with insufficient constructive criticism in some books.
120. In an example of very good practice for a lower attaining Year 10 set, where pupils were learning ways of analysing and presenting data, the teacher used knowledge of mathematics to very good effect by introducing more advanced work on stem and leaf techniques. This captured the pupils' attention and led to very good progress and achievement. An upper Year 11 set, however, underachieved when insufficient account was taken of their ability; the lesson lacked pace and interest.
121. The curriculum is well planned. Teachers from local middle schools do some teaching of Year 9 in Leiston and Leiston staff carry out some teaching in the middle schools. This is very good practice. A useful handbook provides guidance for department members on what to teach, and how to teach effectively, with a very good emphasis on assessment techniques that help pupils to learn. New, good quality textbooks have been purchased. The department does use the school's computers for teaching, but has insufficient access to ICT. Year 10 pupils can take GCSE statistics by attending lunchtime lessons and support sessions are available for pupils to help them improve national test and GCSE results; these are very good opportunities and are appreciated by pupils.
122. The good leadership is seen in the strong department ethos and team work. A good departmental development plan specifies priorities for improvement, but staffing difficulties have restricted the progress that it has been possible to make. In-service training is good, staff share ideas and help one another. More rigorous monitoring is needed, particularly of the quality of teaching and learning and the implementation of assessment guidance. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with improvements in GCSE standards but a number of areas where further improvements are needed.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

123. Pupils' skills in using mathematics are sound. Mental sessions at the start of many mathematics lessons are very helpful in improving pupils' abilities to use numbers accurately and with confidence. In subjects such as design and technology, geography and science, areas of mathematics such as manipulating numbers, measurement, co-ordinates and algebra, are used effectively. An example of very effective use of mathematics was observed in an English lesson. The number of facts and faults (points that could have been affected by actions) identified in significant moments in a section of text were plotted on a graph. This enabled the pupils to see very clearly the extent to which the character being studied could have influenced the outcome. In a food technology lesson, pupils used fractions carefully and accurately in order to subdivide some dough into twelve equivalent pieces. There is no overall strategy for cross-curricular mathematics, however, which could help with achieving greater consistency of good practice, replicating the very good practice seen in these two examples.

## SCIENCE

Provision in **science** is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and pupils achieve well
- A group of very good teachers act as role models for the department
- Weaknesses in teaching restrict some pupils' achievements
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good
- Above average attainers are challenged well
- Good recent improvement in leadership and management includes very good developments in ICT

### Commentary

124. At the end of Year 9, test results in 2003 met national expectations both at level 5 and level 6. Considering the pupils' prior attainment, their achievement was very good, with well above average results compared with similar schools. The trend has been rising over time. GCSE results in science in 2003 were average, indicating good value added and achievement since the pupils arrived in the school in Year 9.
125. Standards observed in Year 9 met national expectations. In Year 11, standards were above average. Results in the phase exams, which count towards GCSE results, were the highest ever and investigatory coursework was good. Standards in literacy and numeracy are also above average. Pupils' attitudes are generally good and contribute to the good achievement. Occasionally, attitudes were not spontaneously good and had to be worked for with good behaviour management. Pupils enter the school with average test results from Year 6, but their social development is not as high, which inhibits their achievements initially in areas such as practical work.
126. Teaching, overall, was good and no difference in quality was seen between year groups. Where teaching was good or very good, it was characterised by very good pace, good behaviour management and good planning for literacy. Teaching provided good challenge for high and lower attainers alike and for pupils with special educational needs, particularly in the 'science plus' certificate groups, who are not entered for GCSE. Teaching was enhanced by good recognition of what pupils had already learned, particularly in the feeder schools. The use of ICT in teaching, through the projectors in each laboratory, was a particularly strong feature. Where teaching was less good, there were some weaknesses in behaviour management, in coping with above average pupils, in maintaining pace and being conscious of pupils' learning. There was also some variation in marking. However the weaknesses were much exceeded by the strengths and the dominating impression of the department is the existence of good role models, whose practice can be disseminated.

127. There have been some very good departmental initiatives, such as the improvement of the curriculum through the use of ICT. Very good links with the community include the main feeder schools and local businesses. Some of the changes have not yet been completed and the curriculum and monitoring of achievement are still developing. Team building and support for new teachers is good. There could be further documentation of literacy, numeracy, ICT and citizenship. Although they are implicit in the schemes of work and the practice of the best teachers, they could be further emphasised in order to disseminate the best practice. Staffing is good and accommodation and resources are satisfactory. There have been improvements since the previous report in several areas. These include: the rising trend at GCSE; the move towards equality of opportunity and achievement of boys with girls; and improvement of challenge for the above average and maintenance of very good support for pupils with special educational needs. In particular, assessment arrangements have been much improved. Some problems remain over pupil access to ICT, especially for data logging.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 9 have been well below average, indicating underachievement
- Current progress is rapid because of good teaching
- High quality learning materials enable pupils to work independently
- Some elements of ICT are not taught sufficiently because the school has insufficient computers
- The school has not as yet developed e-learning between school, home and the wider community

### Commentary

128. The accurate teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 and 2003 show that pupils' standards were well below average. GCSE courses have just been introduced and no pupils have, as yet, taken examinations in this subject.
129. In the past, Year 9 pupils have not had sufficient opportunity to use computers, so have not achieved as well as they should. Pupils' achievements in using computers are now satisfactory because of the good quality teaching they receive and the new facilities used for specific ICT lessons. GCSE pupils are making up for the lost time and are now making rapid progress, due again to the good teaching and the very good learning materials that have been developed. A good standard of work was seen that included image and text manipulation, databases, and spreadsheets, all linked to suitable themes.

130. In all of the lessons observed the pupils enjoyed working with the new technology and therefore their attitudes and behaviour were very good. There is a too little support, however, for pupils with special educational needs. Some rooms lack ICT visual display equipment, and this has a negative impact on achievement.
131. Year 9 discrete teaching is good because of the excellent electronic and printed learning resources. These lessons are well planned and ensure that pupils can progress independently. Not all of these study topics are linked to the requirements of other subjects. Pupils are not, therefore, gaining the potential dual benefit from this work. In the Year 10 and 11 lessons, teachers use similar approaches to make the work manageable for pupils. Teachers share their assessment judgements effectively with pupils, which helps keep them on target. One of the main ICT rooms has two sections, which restricts the teacher's ability to monitor all pupils effectively during lessons, when the least motivated and underachieving pupils migrate away from the main teaching area.
132. Teachers use modern technology well when it is available and have very good relationships with pupils. This facilitates effective learning. Good opportunities are made to extend the development of literacy and numeracy through the use of the specially designed study units. Control technology is only available in the form of simulation software and, although the expectation is that this is being taught by another department, this is not happening. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of this area is therefore weaker than it should be.
133. The direction for the department is clear and appropriate and significant strides are being made in improving standards and achievement, albeit from a low base point. The shortfall in computers is soon to be addressed with a planned major investment in more new computers. The management of the department is complex and difficult, involving non-specialists across a range of subjects. The main focus of work is concerned with developing sufficient ICT skills, but this approach does not allow for the growth in ICT as a subject in its own right where specialist knowledge is required. All pupils now have one lesson of ICT each week, timetabled in an ICT room. The school has established a satisfactory ICT infrastructure, but the system does not as yet allow pupils to e-mail work between school, home and the wider community. The school has adequate monitoring systems to prevent Internet misuse, but not in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and achievement that make up the ICT provision. The quality of provision, in terms of the number of computers available and the pupils' standards and achievements, is much better than at the time of the last inspection, but that provision is now only barely satisfactory overall.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

134. Some good, effective use is made of ICT in a range of subjects, for example in science through the use of interactive whiteboards. There is insufficient use of ICT in several subjects, however, which is restricting pupils' achievements and their appreciation of the value of ICT as a tool for learning. There are fewer computers than is usual for a school of this size on which pupils can apply their skills (learnt in specific ICT lessons). The current structured teaching of ICT skills is a very helpful start, but the taught course does not always offer sufficient challenge to the higher attaining pupils.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 9 and 11 is good
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and support for pupils leads to effective learning
- Pupils have too few opportunities to apply and practice their ICT skills
- Pupils respond well in lessons
- Pupils are not encouraged enough to produce well presented work

### Commentary

135. GCSE examination results were well below the national average in 2003; they were below the average for the school and well below results in geography in previous years. These unsatisfactory outcomes can be traced to a GCSE syllabus change that has now been reversed.
136. Pupils join the school with average standards and most achieve well in Year 9. They acquire a sound knowledge of the themes and places studied and a strength is the quality of their written work. A small number of pupils with poor literacy skills do not achieve as well as they might because there are insufficient learning assistants in classes in all years. Pupils are not always encouraged to draw accurate and neat maps, graphs and diagrams, which lessens the effectiveness of their learning. Increased enquiry work in Year 9 is successfully developing their ability to work independently.
137. The pupils who have chosen to study geography in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well. They have a good understanding of the inter-relationship of human and physical factors, for example in Year 11 work on the effect of climate and relief on population density. In Year 10 they produce coursework of a good standard as a result of very well planned fieldwork on the Suffolk coast. This contributes to their clear understanding of the processes that erode and build-up the land.
138. Teaching is effective, and some is very good, and so pupils learn well. Lessons were well planned and moved at a brisk pace so that pupils produced work of a good quality. The thorough planning enables pupils to build upon their existing knowledge and to extend their understanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to enrich the lessons with good examples and to draw links between the different topics studied. Pupils appreciate the very helpful advice and support they receive. Good use is made of assessment information so teachers match work to the needs of the pupils. As a result pupils sustain their concentration and complete their work. Marking is thorough and in most cases provides information as to how pupils can improve the standard of their work. Pupils' contributions are valued so they are very willing to answer questions. The teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and make these very clear. Targeted questioning was used to confirm understanding and to ensure that all were included. Pupils were asked 'how?', 'why?' and 'what next?' questions. This benefits their enquiry work and examination coursework. An appropriate emphasis is placed on developing literacy skills. Teachers make good use of the library.
139. Relationships are very positive, pupils responding with interest and enthusiasm to lively and challenging teaching. Many clearly enjoy the subject. Homework supports learning

and is set regularly. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their ICT skills.

140. The department is committed to improving standards as seen in the change of GCSE syllabus away from that taken when results fell. Documentation is sound and areas for improvement have been clearly noted. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory with higher standards in Year 9 and better achievement by boys. Inconsistencies in teaching remain. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not yet as effective as it could be.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn and achieve well as a result of good teaching
- Assessment procedures are effective
- There are good strategies to improve the achievement of boys
- Timetabling of double periods in Years 10 and 11 slows the pace of lessons and reduces achievement

## Commentary

141. Teacher-assessed standards in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were below the national average. GCSE results were below average but were an improvement on the previous year.
142. On entry many pupils have below average levels of both historical and more general study skills. In Year 9 they produce extended explanatory writing and learn to interpret and evaluate textual and pictorial sources of evidence. They also begin to undertake independent enquiry and research, often with the aid of ICT. A study of social conditions in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, for example, is approached through an investigation into the crimes of Jack the Ripper, helped by the specially designed history site on the school intranet. The achievement of pupils of different attainment levels is good and work seen during the inspection indicates standards are about average overall.
143. History is an increasingly popular subject choice for GCSE and all pupils achieve well. They write at length to produce the more complex explanations required by examination questions and use evidence from sources to reach and support conclusions. The achievement of boys has been improved by the setting of realisable targets, help with



writing, a focus on coursework and the use of ICT wherever possible. Revision sessions in Year 11 are targeted at both those who aspire to the higher grades and those who need more general help with examination technique. Inspection evidence suggests that standards in Year 11 are now in line with expectations.

144. Pupils learn well because teachers set them clear objectives which build on what they have done previously. Tasks are structured with increasing levels of challenge, with good support for pupils with special educational needs and extension materials for higher-attaining pupils. Literacy is developed through frequent reference to keywords and the use of writing frames and essay guides. Teachers know pupils well and give them good individual support. Pupils respond by working hard and with interest. They behave very well. The pace and challenge of lessons is significantly less where double periods are timetabled and pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
145. There is a strong commitment to teamwork. Good working relationships lead to the informal sharing of much good practice and the department monitors and evaluates its work, including teaching, effectively. The departmental action plan shows a clear vision of how the department can improve. Key issues are translated into specific targets, with criteria for success expressed in terms of impact on achievement. Good assessment procedures mean that pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to reach the targets set for them. Extra-curricular activities complement lessons and include off-site visits and a History Club, although not all pupils in Year 9 have the opportunity to undertake work off-site.
146. Lesson planning is now a strength. Resources have improved, particularly stocks of modern textbooks. The department makes the best use of limited access to ICT facilities, and generally, the department is improving.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is mainly good with good teacher-pupil relationships leading to purposeful lessons
- Non-specialist teachers are effectively supported, but a shortage of special staff restricts what could be achieved and monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently rigorous
- Good use is made of ICT to engage boys' learning and resources are well prepared, including use of the school's intranet site.
- Use of discussion and debate develops well students' ability to argue and reason, making use of evidence, particularly in Year 11
- Use of assessment is unsatisfactory

## Commentary

147. Examination results have steadily declined since 2001 with only 29% of students entered achieving A\* - C grades in GCSE in 2003. Standards currently being achieved by Year 11 students suggest that results should improve significantly in 2004, to an average level. In Year 9, standards are also broadly average. One of the main reasons why standards are not higher in Years 9 and 10 is the focus on facts and information, which pupils often use uncritically, rather than developing reflective and evaluative skills. These skills are developed to a significantly higher level in Year 11, where students achieve more as a result of being encouraged to be critical and to justify a position or develop an argument using evidence. In Year 11, pupils construct well-reasoned and logically coherent arguments for and against the existence of God, making good use of the ontological, cosmological and design arguments, as well as the evidence from miracles, the problem of evil and the writings of significant philosophers.
148. The use of ICT has enhanced boys' achievement, so that it is in line with that of girls. In discussion lessons, however, girls achieve more than boys, because they offer extended contributions. Sound strategies are used to include lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, and their achievement is satisfactory.
149. Pupils learn well because in most lessons there are good teacher-pupil relationships and lessons are purposeful, interesting and relevant. Lessons are well-structured with well-prepared resources, particularly where ICT is used, which is having a positive impact on attitudes. Pupils make good use of the resources provided, being able to extract information quickly and interpret charts. They also draw well on previous learning.
150. There is only one specialist teacher within the department. Generally the subject knowledge of teachers is secure, although some are more confident with factual information than with developing students' critical skills. In weaker lessons this results in pupils gaining only superficial understanding and presenting their own points of view rather than engaging analytically and comparatively with differing religious viewpoints.
151. The decision to run the GCSE short course from Year 9 onwards, has led to greater progression in pupils' learning. The use of assessment is currently unsatisfactory, and rigorous systems to profile attainment and set measurable targets for the end of each year need to be put in place.
152. The department makes good use of data to evaluate the subject and take steps towards improvement. The majority of pupils are leaving school with an accreditation for religious education, which was not the position at the time of the last inspection. The subject is popular with a significant take up. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is satisfactory, but needs to be improved through the use of lesson observation, particularly given the high proportion of non-specialist teaching. The redesigning of the scheme of work and the use of ICT have impacted positively on attitudes and achievements, of boys in particular.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good** overall and very good in some areas.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have been some of the best in the school for a number of years, and teaching is consistently good
- The newly installed computer system is not yet being used effectively to support learning, particularly of boys
- The subject lacks a corporate approach to tracking pupils' progress and monitoring teaching and learning across all areas
- The department has gained significant support from the community

### Commentary

153. End of Year 9 results in teacher assessments were below average in 2003. GCSE results have been above average in some areas and girls do well. Boys' results are slightly below average and the gap between the boys' and girls' results is twice that normally seen. Over the last five years there has been an improving trend in results. Results in food technology were well below average in 2003.
154. By the end of Year 9, current pupils' attainment is just in line with expectations. The disjointed previous experience of many of the pupils and a lack of common approaches to designing and making between the different areas of the subject are contributing to standards not being as high as they could be. In practical lessons, pupils achieve very good standards, due to good teaching from knowledgeable staff.
155. By the end of Year 11 students' attainment is above average and achievement is good overall. Relative weaknesses were seen, however, in folder-work. ICT was not used sufficiently to assist presentation and to help students work efficiently. This is a contributory factor to boys doing less well than girls. Pupils are not experiencing a good range of modern materials and components. Computer-aided design and manufacturing is currently not being well used. These omissions are affecting standards, which could be even better. Teachers and technicians provide for pupils with special education needs very well, which helps to ensure they make good progress in the different areas of the subject.
156. In Year 9, good teaching led to lessons that were full of activity and interest, and in which pupils had opportunities to learn new skills and develop their ideas. Teachers have very good subject knowledge of technological and design processes. In food technology this enabled them to demonstrate techniques confidently, which prepared pupils to make their own food products.
157. GCSE teaching is characterised by very good practical and model making skills. Good feedback in lessons ensures that students are involved and given good guidance on how to make progress. Currently, setting of homework varies too much. The local community is used to provide contexts for Year 11 design projects, and these help to make students motivated.
158. Systems for tracking students' progress across the subject are not sufficiently developed to enable quick interpretation. This is due to the lack of a common ICT based system. In the marking of work, teachers do not indicate sufficiently how pupils' work could improve. The planning quality of lessons is too variable and control technology and the use of computer-aided manufacturing are not taught. Opportunities for combining materials with new smart materials and electronic components are limited.

159. The subject is continuing to sustain high and improving standards each year. The department has a track record of pupils winning Arkwright scholarships and awards from local, regional and national events. Nevertheless, the separate nature of food and textiles provision is preventing a corporate style of designing and manufacturing. This is affecting overall standards and achievements of students. Improvements are clear and ongoing.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

The provision in art and design is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

### Strengths and weaknesses

- A very good learning ethos is established but boys do not achieve as well as girls
- Good teaching and thorough marking results in good achievement
- Good use is made of strategies to support pupils' literacy skills
- Not enough use is made of computers

### Commentary

160. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average. Boys' results were not as good as those of girls. The results in 2003 were similar, though the gap between girls and boys was less.
161. In Year 9 pupils make good progress and develop their technical skills. They enter the school with standards which are average or below. Standards of painting seen during the inspection were above average. Standards of drawing were not so high; for example, about a third of pupils do not vary the quality of line and tone for effect. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make further gains in their art work. Their technical skills are above average, as is their ability to explore ideas and research the work of other artists, and cultures. In a unit in Year 11 about identity, pupils had researched a wide range of artists: Francis Bacon, Picasso, Andy Warhol and Egyptian art, to explore techniques and ideas. Boys' achievement is not as high as girls. They do not show the skill to explain in written form, how they have developed their ideas and meanings, nor to make connections with artists and cultures.
162. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively in planning lessons where learning is in small steps. They make good use of lesson displays. These include the aims of the lesson, key words and tasks, and sometimes include exemplar pieces of work by other pupils. This results in pupils making rapid gains, such as in a Year 9 lesson on pointillism. The teacher used paintings by Seurat and other pupils to illustrate the technique. Pupils' subsequent work showed that they had understood how to use complementary colours to produce particular effects. Pupils receive good guidance and support during lessons, and from the thorough marking of their work, which highlights

how they can improve. They also benefit from the clear GCSE support information explaining the examination requirements. Homework is set regularly and helps extend learning.

163. Leadership is focused on raising achievement, particularly that of boys. A development plan sets out a list of priorities for art. This has led to an innovative strategy to improve the quality of pupils' written art work: currently the English department are helping pupils to develop their writing skills in some Year 9 art lessons. The department does not have technician support and one of the art rooms limits activities because of its size. There are no computers in either art room, and pupils do not have enough opportunities to use ICT in their work. Although the intention to raise standards is beginning to bear fruit, work remains to be done and what is achieved currently is similar to what was stated at the time of the last inspection.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- GCSE results were well above the national average in 2003 and achievements are good
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good
- The breadth and quality of extra-curricular provision is very good with valuable links to outside arts organisations
- The Year 9 curriculum provides many opportunities for children to experience music from a wide range of styles and cultures
- The range and use of music technology is very good
- The number of pupils receiving individual instrumental lessons on orchestral instruments is below the national average

## Commentary

164. In 2003 the small number of pupils who had chosen to take GCSE attained standards well above the national average. Pupils enter Year 9 with standards that are in line with the national average. They make good progress and by the end of Year 9 they achieve standards above the national average. Pupils perform fluently and have a good understanding of musical terminology which they use when discussing the subject. By the end of Year 11 pupils achieve standards which are above or well above the national average because they use technology very effectively to produce their own compositions, they work hard and are well taught. Performances are good and demonstrate technical control, good tone and musical phrasing.
165. Teaching is good or very good across all years. A key strength of the teaching is the very good subject knowledge employed. Planning is thorough and there is a good balance between composing, listening and performing. Assessment systems are good and most pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve.

Support given to pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils' attitudes are almost always good. A consequence of this very good teaching is that pupils are confident musicians. In Year 9 they understand the blues chord sequence and the structure of blues lyrics and can apply this understanding to their composing. In Year 11 pupils have a very good understanding of Indian classical music and can apply this understanding to their listening. Sometime pupils do not have the opportunity to perform their work in progress at the end of a lesson. This means that this valuable opportunity for further learning is lost.

166. The department organises many extra-curricular groups which provide high quality musical opportunities for pupils. Links established with music conservatoires result in pupils being able to work with musicians from a range of musical styles and genres.
167. Good formal and informal support is provided within the department. Instrumental teaching is monitored and the results of monitoring are acted upon. The department is working to increase the number of pupils learning an instrument. Rigorous and effective self-evaluation clearly identifies areas for development. The music department's development plan identifies appropriate targets which are well linked to the whole school development plan. Good progress has been made since the last inspection as standards have improved, as has the quality of teaching and learning.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, together with enthusiasm, motivate pupils to achieve well
- A small but significant number of pupils' disruptive behaviour inhibits the learning and achievement of others
- Very good assessment procedures provide continuity from feeder schools, leading to good pupil profiles
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good, with strong community links

### Commentary

168. GCSE results were below average in 2003. Up to this point the results had been steadily rising since 1999. The 2003 cohort included a higher proportion of lower attaining and less well-motivated pupils.
169. Pupils enter the school at the start of Year 9 with average physical skills but often with little formally taught experience of some of the activities, such as rugby. By the end of Year 9 it is clear that more than half the cohort are working at National Curriculum level 5 in almost all their activities and a significant number of pupils are above this level in some, such as netball. Their achievement overall is good. The majority develop a good sense of

spacing and positional play in team games and have a good knowledge and understanding of the rules.

170. Standards in Year 11 overall are average although a good proportion of pupils are above average in specific activities such as netball and football. Achievement is generally good. In lessons where teaching is very good, the pupils are all committed and motivated. This was seen in a GCSE trampoline lesson, and achievement was very good. When a small number of pupils set out to disrupt lessons, however, they prevent other pupils from achieving success.
171. Good lesson planning and a consistent lesson structure characterised the good teaching seen and enabled pupils to learn well. The very good knowledge and understanding of the teachers, together with their enthusiasm which motivates the pupils, are strengths of the department. Pupils of all abilities progress well when teaching is effective and work is planned to meet the needs of individuals. All teaching seen was good, and some was very good, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The assessment procedures which have been developed alongside the main feeder middle schools are very good. The use of ICT is satisfactory at present and the department has ambitious plans to extend this use in the future as resources become available. Teachers offer a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities to extend pupils' experience and skills and pupils take part in these activities with enthusiasm.
172. Good leadership and management of the department have resulted in consistency of practice. This produces a good learning environment for pupils where they are expected to, and do, achieve well. The analysis of examination data to inform and implement strategies to raise achievement is very good.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**

	Year 11
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	-

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge
- There is a strong learning ethos with very good relationships between teachers and pupils
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good
- Marking does not always tell pupils how they can improve

### **Commentary**

173. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average, with boys doing better than girls. However, results in 2003 showed a good improvement, though boys still did better than girls. Pupils currently have good subject knowledge and standards are above

average. For example, they can explain the advantages and disadvantages of membership of the European Union. Their recall of earlier lessons is good, as they discuss terms such as 'assisted areas'. Boys and girls were noted to be making similar progress and achieving well.

174. Teachers plan lessons carefully, with learning broken into manageable steps. They use a good variety of teaching methods which helps pupils to concentrate well. They make effective use of links with local businesses, allowing pupils to understand at first hand the different features of each. Teachers have high expectations and this results in all pupils achieving well. Pupils use computers regularly in lessons, and this helps to further their ICT skills, but their literacy skills, such as note taking, are not as well developed. A very good guide to examination requirements provides pupils with very useful information. Marking of pupils' work does not always make it clear to pupils how they can improve.
175. The department has a clear sense of direction, and the development plan outlines appropriate priorities. Good support is given to non-specialist teachers. There is no formal observation of lessons to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Good use of pupil data results in action being taken to raise standards. The introduction of a new double award course is providing a stimulating and relevant experience for a broader range of pupils. No information is available in the last inspection report to enable a judgement on improvements to be made.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Provision for PSHE is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	N/A	N/A
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- No structured programme is in place for the current school year and pupils are not developing an appropriate understanding of expected topics in the course
- The work presented to pupils at the moment is not valued by them or seen as relevant
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and is not monitored
- Careers education and guidance elements are well taught
- Where speaker to classes are experienced, the delivery of elements of the programme in 'focus' sessions is satisfactory or better.

### Commentary

176. The pupils' level of understanding of values and beliefs and of respect for others was average overall, although their knowledge and recall about issues of health were below average. Such topics are normally addressed through a PSHE programme. Many instances were seen during the inspection of pupils co-operating well with each other, sharing resources, helping each other and working to help others. In discussions, however, it was clear that most pupils were unable to see how such issues were relevant



to their everyday living and to their place in the community and society as a whole. The lack of a structured, developmental programme represents an important lost opportunity to assist pupils in their personal development. Their achievement overall is unsatisfactory.

177. The quality of teaching seen across both key stages was inconsistent. Some lessons were seen where teaching was satisfactory but, because pupils did not value the session, their attitudes hindered their learning. In a lesson in Year 9 on learning styles, teaching was good but pupils' lack of attention and concentration when the teacher was specifically focused on an individual, resulted in unsatisfactory learning. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The quality and effectiveness of the sessions is not monitored rigorously. The aspect of careers education and guidance within PSHE is well planned and of good quality.
178. The leadership and management of this area are in a state of flux at the moment and this has resulted in no one person taking responsibility for ensuring an appropriate quality is provided. Senior managers are relying on the good offices of tutors to produce work for their sessions but it is not monitored or overseen. This has resulted in a loss of vision, structure and progression in the programme. The quality of provision and outcomes are not as good as they was at the time of the last inspection.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	-

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a good range of school and community opportunities in which they can demonstrate responsibility towards themselves and others
- Pupils do not have clear idea about what citizenship is
- Planning for the required course in citizenship is unsatisfactory

## Commentary

179. Pupils can articulate their views well and they are able to consider the viewpoints of other people. The school and form councils enable pupils to understand the democratic process of decision-making. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the legal system, parliament and the finance system are all below average. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
180. No lessons in citizenship were seen, and so there is no evidence of teaching or learning. Although there were lessons where aspects of citizenship were covered, these were not identified in the planning, neither were the citizenship elements made explicit to pupils. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, pupils were considering the impact of discrimination on characters in the novel, 'Of Mice and Men', but no links were made with human rights and citizenship. Currently, pupils are not assessed in citizenship.

181. There is no coherent plan for the teaching and learning of citizenship. The school has identified which subjects contribute to understanding of citizenship, with PSHE being the significant contributor. There are, however, no schemes of work and citizenship is not identified in the schemes of other subjects. A development plan identifies relevant priorities, but progress with implementation is too slow.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight 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, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

### *Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	10	100	91.6	50.0	36.3	84.0	74.1
Business (VCE)	20	75.0	87.1	10.0	16.5	46.0	60.1
Chemistry	11	90.9	94.0	54.5	45.9	83.6	81.1
Communication studies	8	100	98.3	75.0	36.8	97.5	81.1
English literature	39	100	98.5	43.6	43.7	85.1	84.3
Design and technology	21	95.2	95.3	33.3	33.5	76.2	76.5
Geography	13	84.6	97.1	23.1	40.5	58.5	80.9
Health and social care (VCE)	13	96.3	90.1	14.8	16.3	66.7	62.5
History	6	100	97.1	50.0	41.0	90.0	81.2
Mathematics	10	90.0	93.3	20.0	52.2	62.0	84.7
Physics	10	100	92.8	20.0	42.8	68.0	78.6
Sociology	10	100	95.4	20.0	39.6	66.0	79.1

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in detail. The Spanish and Japanese GCSE courses were sampled. During the Spanish lesson observed, students lacked confidence. They showed that they can produce short paragraphs expressing personal response, but the pace of work was rather slow. Achievement was just satisfactory. In the Japanese lesson students were well motivated. The teaching had strengths including good structure and a friendly working atmosphere. The students could have learned more if the planning had been more precise, and therefore provided greater challenge.

### English

Provision in English literature is **very good**

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well from their starting points after GCSE
- Students show a high level of personal interest in their studies
- Teachers demonstrate expertise and enthusiasm which they are able to share successfully with their students
- Excellent materials prepared by the teachers help students to learn

### Commentary

182. Results at A level were similar to the national average in 2002, and much higher in 2003. Students have been particularly successful since the introduction of the new post 16 examinations in 2001. All students have attained pass grades for both AS and A2 and the proportion of students gaining grades C or higher is now high. Boys' performance was below the national average at the last inspection but there has been a significant improvement since 2001 and they now perform as well as girls.
183. High numbers of students opt for English literature in Year 12 and most continue their studies from AS to A2 level, making very good progress over time. The students' achievements, relative to their prior attainment, are very good, generating above average standards. They are very well motivated and work with enthusiasm as well as personal commitment. They contribute positively during a wide range of discussion-based activities.
184. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a thorough appreciation of assessment criteria and examination technique. These strong features are shared explicitly with students through setting and reviewing clear learning objectives. All lessons featured opportunities for paired and group study and students were highly motivated. They responded to texts and the learning activities set very well, showing high-order analytical skills. Speaking and listening skills were very good. Students made perceptive comparisons between texts. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the presentation of

'obsessive' characters was explored in two modern novels, in preparation for a coursework assignment. Students' skills in selecting apt quotations and textual references were well developed. Students draw upon an extensive and critical vocabulary through which they enhance their literary appreciation of challenging texts. Year 12 students successfully analysed the poetic devices in the verse of Dannie Abse to comment upon the impact of language and imagery. Students' work is discussed with them in individual tutorials, enabling each to focus on assessment criteria and to negotiate the appropriate choice of coursework assignments. Teachers have produced some excellent study support materials to structure students' preparation for lessons and to guide their revision programmes. Teachers are also aware of the need to encourage greater levels of independent learning.

185. The department is very well led. Helpful objectives have been agreed with all staff and this system is very well established. Standards have risen because of the very good teaching, highly motivated students, teamwork in the department and the careful, thorough curriculum planning. The department has good induction procedures for new staff. There are regular opportunities for theatre visits to see a range of productions. Progress has been very good since the last inspection in terms of the high numbers choosing the subject as well as students' achievement and attainment in examinations courses.

### English across the curriculum

186. The strong focus across the school on effective oral communication results in improving speaking and listening skills. The quality of written work is more variable, with no consistent approach across departments in the sixth form. Students can retake GCSE English if they have not attained a grade C and they can take the key skills course if they wish. Students' command of English is generally at an average level, but they have made good progress over their school careers, indicating good provision overall.

### French

Provision in French is **good**.

	Year 12
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is now helping students to make good progress
- Students have very positive attitudes and enjoy their learning
- Higher attainers are not set enough demanding extension work
- Students are not encouraged sufficiently to get involved in extra-curricular activities and to use ICT

### Commentary

187. The grades achieved by the students entered for the AS examination in 2002 ranged from D downwards and were below average. Results in 2003 were similar. The evidence seen in lessons, and in the written work of the larger number of students currently

studying French at AS level, shows that standards are now rising and are at least similar, overall, to national expectations. Students are not yet fluent orally but are beginning to develop a good grasp of grammar. Considering their abilities, students' achievement is satisfactory and improving. Currently, middle and low attainers are more successful than high attainers.

188. Teachers are sensitive to the challenges faced by students and provide them with appropriate materials. Their energy, drive and enthusiasm for the subject are evident during lessons, which are well planned and sequenced. They are conducted exclusively in French which gives students the opportunity to develop their listening and speaking skills. Students are encouraged to develop independent and co-operative learning and this helps their personal development. They are not, however, making much use of the Internet for research purposes and for downloading French reading material. The most talented students do not have access to extension material to stretch their knowledge and understanding of the language. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students are working hard. Homework is demanding and regular and the marking is good but targets should be more rigorous, with guidance on how to improve.
189. The course is well managed and long-term planning is good. The team of teachers is committed to building on what has already been achieved. Monitoring of standards and of teaching and learning is taking place and messages are being learnt on how to improve. The larger number of students who have taken up the course is encouraging and ways of improving recruitment to a modern foreign language course are being explored. Students in the sixth form have access to GCSE Spanish and Japanese courses as well and resources, generally, are good, with the exception of ICT. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection, when standards were low and perceptions of the subject were much less positive.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some teaching is very good
- Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and have very good relationships with students
- Several students do not take sufficient pride in the presentation of their work
- Insufficient mathematical discussion and debate takes place within lessons

### Commentary

190. In the 2003 examinations most of the small group taking A-level mathematics achieved a grade E or better, which was an improvement on the 2002 results. In 2002, standards were well below average and no students achieved higher than a grade C. With small group sizes, comparisons with national data are not reliable.

191. Standards seen in lessons were above average and mostly the students' achievements were good. For example, a Year 13 group easily derived trigonometric identities and then proceeded to apply their newly found knowledge. Where achievement was good, teachers had planned the work to take account of what students knew and they systematically built upon this. For instance a teacher, revising the students' knowledge of binomial distributions, developed it so that they could solve complex probability questions. The rate of student progress, and therefore their achievement, is not as good when teachers use closed questions and lead the group through very small steps to extend their subject knowledge.
192. Teaching and learning were very good at times, based on the teachers' good subject knowledge, careful planning, and the good working relationships which exist between students and teachers. These factors combine to deliver a pleasant and productive atmosphere within the classrooms. Teachers often maintain a brisk pace and have high expectations. Students appreciate that teachers are only too willing to explain time and time again, until they understand. Relative weaknesses in the teaching resulted from a drive to move on, without giving students time to discuss the mathematics, to embed their understanding of a topic or to take opportunities for debating mathematical thinking and philosophy.
193. The students are keen and willing learners and they respond well to work which is challenging but within their grasp. They answer questions confidently and occasionally question their teachers, which allows a topic to be extended into new realms, sometimes beyond the syllabus. Some Year 13 students do not present their work in a clear, concise and orderly manner which, in many respects, conflicts with the precision of the subject and detracts from the good standard of the work.
194. One of the stated aims of the department is to raise standards in Years 12 and 13 and it is quite apparent that actions, such as changing to a syllabus judged to be more appropriate for the students, are made with this focus in mind. Curriculum planning is effective as is the assessment regime used. Leadership and management of post 16 mathematics are both good. Since the last inspection, standards have fluctuated but are currently higher, and teaching, learning and achievement are better than in 1998. Good progress has been made over time.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

195. Students speak highly of their mathematical experiences at the school and how these have prepared them for their chosen area of study at post 16, and for higher education and the world of work. The mathematics department run classes for those students who wish to gain a higher grade at GCSE and key skills lessons are in place for any student not achieving a GCSE grade C.
196. The provision of mathematics across the curriculum at post 16 is good.

### **SCIENCE**

Chemistry was the focus subject. Biology and physics A-level lessons were sampled. In biology, good use was made of an interactive whiteboard to aid learning. Teaching was effective and the students' attitudes to work were good. Teaching of knowledge was thorough and accurate but more limited in mobilising students' scientific knowledge and understanding to help them draw conclusions. Achievement in the observed lesson was good because the students carried through an experiment effectively and thought about what they could conclude from the evidence. A good Year 12 physics lesson was seen on optical properties of materials. The teacher dealt with a wide range of students effectively, accepting answers from higher attaining students and interpreting them

to allow access to the large number of lower attainers. In a course which promotes independent work by the students, the class achieved well as a result of good teaching that was prepared to allow them to learn for themselves in a practical context.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	-

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent notes on all aspects of the AS and A2 syllabuses are provided for students, helping them to achieve well
- Some teaching is very effective
- The department focuses very well on examination board requirements
- Inconsistencies in the regularity with which problems are set and marked are unhelpful
- Poor timetabling makes teaching and learning more difficult than they need be

## Commentary

197. Over the past five years, A-level results have varied between below and above average. Male and female student results have fluctuated greatly. Results in 2002 were above average and students generally achieved grades slightly higher than in their other subjects. In 2003 the results of the small group were not as high as in 2002.
198. Standards seen in lessons were below average overall in Year 12, with some very high attaining students but others who had little understanding of their work. The smaller group in Year 13 had higher and above average standards. Students' achievements for their abilities are sound in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Practical expertise is developed well. For example, students use burettes skilfully and they have a good understanding of risk assessments. They check HAZCARDS thoroughly before using any chemicals. In Year 12, at this early stage in the course, a few students had a clear understanding of different types of bonding and the role of delocalised electrons in a metallic structure, but others were uncertain and lacked knowledge. In Year 13, the small group were much more confident and showed good recall of earlier work on organic chemistry.
199. In the best teaching, which was very good, explanations were clear and detailed and excellent references were made to examination board requirements. In such lessons the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject matter were also excellent. The students were challenged by demanding questions and the pace of work was very good. In one lesson, students were taught very effectively how to interpret data from nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy. Searching questions helped pupils to recall functional group organic chemistry before they moved on to appreciate splitting patterns and shifts. The lesson was very well prepared with challenging questions set near the end of the lesson to reinforce and assess students' understanding. In less successful lessons, students were questioned insufficiently and were content to record information rather than improve their understanding.



200. Excellent notes have been prepared for the students, which enable them to focus specifically on examination board requirements. The outline information on the printed sheets provided directs the students' own studies and discussions in lessons. The time allocation for AS and A2 is appropriate but the way the timetable is constructed results in a poor distribution of periods in the week – currently the students are taught for five consecutive lessons over Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning, which is very unhelpful. Students referred to inconsistent setting and marking of homework, particularly in Year 12, with too few problems set that would challenge their understanding.
201. Leadership and management of the subject are good overall but monitoring and support for teaching and learning has not resulted in a consistently high quality. Leadership is strong and very effective, and management is good. Resources, including modern textbooks for the modules studied, are very good. Insufficient was written about A-level chemistry in the last report for a judgement to be made about the progress since 1998.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

202. Sixth form students cannot study the subject at an advanced level, and the current Year 12 has not had any previous specific ICT teaching in Years 7 to 11, or the opportunity to take an examination in this subject.
203. All students in Year 12 now take an IT CLAIT certificate. In the session observed, students were working on key skills. Teaching was effective, with excellent printed materials, very good relationships and positive advice to students. Good questioning drove the lesson forward. Students of all abilities were involved in the lesson. The course is a 'catch up' for lost time in previous years and is very effective. Standards are well below those expected of students in the sixth form, but they are learning skills new to them, such as desktop publishing and their achievement is very good.

## ICT across the curriculum

204. In a few subjects ICT is used effectively, but the lack of available computers means that students currently have insufficient opportunity to use them in their subject lessons. The students are aware of this and are fundraising themselves to acquire machines for the sixth form study area. Those available in the library and ICT rooms are used regularly by students for research and their own projects, homework and coursework.

## HUMANITIES

205. Geography and psychology were inspected in depth. Other subjects were sampled. The quality of teaching in the observed sociology lesson was very effective and appreciated by the students. Work was both interesting and applied. Teacher knowledge was very good and explanations clear to all. In an A-level history session observed on the Russian revolution, teaching was good but learning satisfactory because the pupils had not prepared thoroughly enough. Achievement in a Year 12 religious education lesson was good. Students showed very good attitudes in a discussion on ethics. Teaching and learning in the session were good and effective use was made of GCSE outcomes to determine AS level targets. Religious education for all is not provided – a breach of statutory requirements.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **good**

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are improving and students are achieving well
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and planning result in good and enthusiastic teaching
- Teachers know students well and monitor their progress effectively
- Not all lessons challenge students sufficiently to learn for themselves
- Students are positive in their attitudes to learning and relationships are very good
- Access to ICT is insufficient, restricting opportunities for students to practice their skills

### Commentary

206. In 2003, all students passed their A-level examinations. This represents a great improvement from 2002, when results were well below average and some of the lowest in the school. The students presently in Year 13 have a good knowledge and understanding of the modules covered. For example, Year 13 students understand clearly the processes that effect change in both human and physical geography and can identify resulting patterns. They use technical terms appropriately and with accuracy. Their written work demonstrates the good progress they have made over the past four terms and the success of the departmental literacy policy of earlier years. Well-prepared fieldwork allows them to collect and interpret data and to test hypotheses. Sometimes they cannot make full use of their ICT skills because access to computers is difficult but they do make good progress in improving their graphical skills. The standards attained, evident in previously completed work and during lessons observed, match expectations at this time in the course and students are achieving well. Students in Year 12 have made good progress in the short time they have followed the course. They are aware that teachers provide good support in easing the transition from GCSE. Their literacy skills have improved significantly as a result of frequent practice in writing short essays. Standards are in line with the level expected at this stage of the course and students are achieving well.
207. Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge. They are aware of course requirements and plan and assess students' work accordingly. They know their students very well and provide them with good advice on how to improve. Very good records are kept and teachers monitor progress effectively. Teachers have high expectations. Students rely heavily on staff, however, and there is insufficient encouragement for them to take more responsibility for their own learning. Some excellent teaching was observed, as in a Year 12 lesson where students evaluated dams as a strategy for river management. This showed them to be aware of the value of geography in understanding issues at various levels. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and relationships between teachers and students and within groups are very good.
208. The leadership and management of the department are good. The modules of the curriculum are carefully sequenced, and this work underpins the very effective topic and lesson planning. A change in syllabus is proving most effective in bringing about improvements from the low standards of 2002. There are regular meetings as well as very useful informal discussions with team members, all of whom are committed to

improvement. The department is developing vocational courses in order to broaden access to the 14 -18 curriculum. Since the previous inspection, students' achievements have improved and library resources for geography are used more effectively, but access to computers remains a problem. Good progress has been made overall.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable – new course

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements in Year 13 are very good because they take responsibility for contributing in lessons
- Teaching is well planned and engages Year 13 students very well
- Some students in Year 12 are too passive in lessons

## Commentary

209. Psychology is offered as a two-year course leading to AS level. As the subject was first offered in the 2002-2003 academic year, 2004 will see the first entry to the exam.
210. In Year 12, students' achievements are satisfactory. Some participated well when learning about the unreliability of eye witness testimony from a short video clip of a mugging in a shop. They made good links to psychological theories about short term memory. Others did not contribute sufficiently, and failed to make as good progress as they could because of this. In Year 13 standards are above average. All students take responsibility for their learning and, in doing so, act as a learning resource for each other. This leads to very good progress. The students were engaged in a heated 'balloon debate' to see which rival theory about abnormal behaviour is best supported by evidence. Pairs of students made a case for the biological, behavioural, psychodynamic and cognitive models of behaviour. As a result of the arguments they heard, Freud was ejected by a clear majority, and the students made significant progress in their understanding of rival psychological theories.
211. Teaching is better in Year 13. Strategies have been more successful in engaging the students as active learners. Very good relationships with the students lead to a shared learning experience. This is very helpful in helping students to maximise their achievements. Lesson planning is good overall. Marking gives students a clear indication of what they must do to improve. Care is taken to present arguments in a balanced way, so that students make their own minds up on the basis of the evidence which they have read, for example from research on the Internet.
212. The school offers psychology in the sixth form in response to student demand for the course. It is a popular and successful subject. The leadership and management of the subject are good – the subject has been established successfully, and there is a good plan to make further improvements.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

213. The teaching and learning in the design and technology A-level course was sampled. The subject was seen being taught very effectively. Year 13 students produce work of high quality. Student portfolios contain very good creative designing. In the lesson seen the teaching inspired students to become designers, and culture issues and art genres influenced the approaches taken by students. The practical work in 2002 was seen to be of a high standard and finished very well. High quality learning with appropriate support from staff encourages students and gives them confidence. Students' achievement is very good.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

214. In addition to the focus area of music and music technology, work in A-level art and AS theatre studies was sampled. In the art lesson observed in Year 13, achievement was excellent because of the very high quality of teaching. The teacher's depth of knowledge and understanding of art, and very effective explanations resulted in excellent one-to-one support for students. Work was challenging and interesting. Discussions were purposeful and stimulating. Relationships were trustful, respectful and relaxed, with a strong learning ethos. The standard of work seen was well above average.
215. One very well taught lesson of AS theatre studies was observed. Students were very articulate and responsive and showed a good level of understanding and appreciation. Achievement was very good for most of the group, although a few students were ill-inclined to work appropriately. The teaching seen showed very good teacher knowledge, and was enthusiastic and highly motivating. Enrichment opportunities offered, through theatre visits, drama workshops and the experience of school productions, are excellent.

### Music technology

Provision in music technology is **very good**

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good teaching seen was characterised by excellent subject knowledge and musical skills
- The music technology course provides very well for the aspirations and interests of sixth form students
- Links with outside bodies enrich the music curriculum
- A small number of students are insufficiently engaged in the course

### Commentary

216. Results of the small numbers taking A-level music and music technology vary from year to year depending upon the capabilities of the students. In 2002 results were higher than many other subjects and above average, but lower in 2003. All students taking A level have passed for the last three years. Current overall standards are as expected for the students' ages, though several students show above and well above attainment. Achievement is good.
217. Teaching in the sixth form is very good, reflecting the teacher's very good musical skills, knowledge of a wide range of musical styles and very good understanding of music technology. Effective questioning in lessons involves students actively in their own learning. The importance attached to this active involvement was clearly in evidence when the teacher worked with students individually on their own compositions. A very good balance was struck between giving students advice on how to develop their own compositions and encouraging them to be responsible for their own artistic decisions. A consequence of very good teaching is that most students' learning and achievement are at least good and often very good. Some examples of compositions using computer technology are of a professional standard and demonstrate sophisticated understanding of complicated software packages. Most students' attitudes towards music are good. However, despite the best efforts of teaching, a small number of girls do not engage positively with the course and are not achieving the standards of which they are capable.
218. The leadership of the music department is very good, with a clear vision for the role of music in the sixth form. The music technology course provides access to music courses for students who otherwise would not be able to continue with their musical education and, in some cases, pursue their ambition of a career in the music industry. Extremely effective links have been made with musical institutions of international renown, including the Royal Academy of Music and the Aldeburgh Festival.
219. The management of the department is very good. Clear identification of priorities and sound financial management have resulted in much improved resources particularly in the area of music technology. The assessment and monitoring of students progress in the sixth form is good with particularly effective use of target setting. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good with particularly strong progress being made in recruiting students to post-16 music courses.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Sports Studies/Physical Education**

220. Physical education was not a focus for the inspection but lessons were sampled in the A-level course and the Community Sports Leaders' Award (CSLA). Students on the A-level course make very good progress and achieve highly. Lesson planning is very good and in the lesson seen teaching was very effective. Activities were varied and very well designed. Students' interest is maintained with a good emphasis on practical work within a course which is mainly theoretical. The CSLA course is popular and successful. The teaching observed was very good, placing a strong emphasis on students giving and receiving feedback and on the importance of analysis and evaluation of activities. This provides students with a very good base upon which they can build, and achieve well.

## **BUSINESS**

221. A lesson in intermediate GNVQ business education was observed. The group of students following this course, and other students on similar courses, are given access to a sixth form education, who would not have succeeded in a typical A-level or AVCE course. They

study health and safety at work and office design, drawing on what they have learnt from their own work experience. Achievement in the lesson seen was good. Students had good attitudes to work and were positive about the impact of the course on their own future, including access to AVCE courses. Their confidence was being built up through good teaching, and their speaking and listening skills were benefiting from the discussions that form a key element of the work.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since last inspection	-

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department ensure a very good learning ethos where support for students is excellent, enabling them to achieve highly.
- Teaching is consistently very good.
- Teachers place very good emphasis on helping students to become independent learners.
- Students are very clear about the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to improve.

### Commentary

222. Results in both the intermediate course and the AVCE course in 2002 were above average; results were similar in 2003. Current standards are above average. Students on both courses make very good progress whatever their standards of attainment prior to entry to the sixth form. They acquire independent study skills under the excellent guidance and support of teachers. They are well motivated and approach their work with enthusiasm and commitment. These factors all combine to ensure they achieve very highly. For example, an assignment on communication had involved the student in considerable detailed research as well as several observation visits to a nursing home. The finished piece of work was very well presented, very well written and of high quality.
223. Teaching and learning were consistently very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is very good. Lessons were very well prepared and structured, and were taught in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere, one in which the students were very clear about what was expected of them. Coursework assignments were marked to show clearly the level at which the student was working and included formative feedback to enable the student to know how to improve. Very good opportunities were given for students to share information gained as a result of independent research. The use of ICT is good.
224. Students are very appreciative of the support they receive. They enjoy their work and the atmosphere and feel that they are treated with respect. They value highly the fact that everyone in the department is totally committed to the welfare and success of the students.

225. The department is very well led and managed. The way in which staff work together provides an excellent role model in terms of co-operation, consistency and harmony. This has created a secure environment with consistent procedures and attitudes which has led to the very good learning ethos. Insufficient evidence is available in the last report to indicate improvements since 1998.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

### **Personal, social and health education**

Provision in PSHE is **good**

226. A range of lessons was observed in the new PSHE course, covering areas of social, health and citizenship development. These areas include a broad range of topics: the nature of science, the law, culture and ethics, finances and food. Teaching seen was good overall, with lively debate and interested students characterising most lessons. In the science session, students showed good learning skills in an unusual lesson involving puzzle boxes, which enabled them to gain insights into the nature of science. In the session on the law, learning was good but achievements were affected by the students' lack of basic knowledge of the law. The lesson showed the importance of the topic in preparing the students for the next stage in their lives. The Year 13 session on student financial management was worthwhile, but did leave a number, who had been unaware of the implications of what it means to be a higher education student today, a little dispirited. The session on health and food was very effective and students learnt much that should be of value to them.
227. The course is well structured, very useful and an effective complement to the examined vocational and academic courses the school offers.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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



