

INSPECTION REPORT

BUNGAY HIGH SCHOOL

Queen's Road, Bungay

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124835

Headteacher: Ann Todd

Lead inspector: Peter McGregor

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th March 2004

Inspection number: 259299

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:	954
School address:	Queen's Road Bungay Suffolk
Postcode:	NR35 1RW
Telephone number:	01986 892140
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Mary Greenwood
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bungay High is a 13-18, co-educational, community comprehensive school of average size, with a larger than average sixth form. The school has specialist science college status and has achieved Healthy Schools, Football Association and Partnership Promotion awards over recent years. Community provision on site includes adult education courses, science college work with other schools, and teenage health work. There are 745 students aged 14 to 16 in the main school and 209 students in the sixth form. All years have more girls than boys except Year 9. Over 98 percent of the students are white. A very small number of students are from Asian, African and Chinese backgrounds. English is the mother tongue for nearly all students at the school. About 9 percent of students have special educational needs, a below average proportion compared with England as a whole. These students' needs are mainly dyslexia, moderate learning, severe learning, or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A small number of students have speech or communication difficulties, visual impairment, a physical disability, or are autistic. An average proportion of students, 2.0 percent, have a Statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students taking free school meals is below the national average. The numbers of students arriving at the school other than at the time of first admission or leaving at other than the usual time of transfer are much lower than the national proportions. The area around the school is socially and economically mixed, and broadly average overall. Students of a full range of prior attainment enter the school in Year 9. The overall entry standard varies between average and below average, as indicated by the national test scores students gained when they were in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Entry into the sixth form is open to all, irrespective of their achievements at the age of sixteen, subject to students finding a course that suits their needs and aspirations. Entry standards into the sixth form are broadly average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3525	Peter McGregor	Lead inspector	Chemistry in the sixth form
9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector	
32278	David Roberts	Team inspector	English English in the sixth form
5525	Richard Cooper	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics in the sixth form
32777	James McVeigh	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form
11258	Ivor Rushforth	Team inspector	Art
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Citizenship
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology in the sixth form
15621	Dr Linda Prince	Team inspector	Geography Leisure and tourism in the sixth form
10817	George Rayner	Team inspector	History History in the sixth form
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) ICT in the sixth form
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language French in the sixth form
8104	Joan Child	Team inspector	Music
32724	Geoff Jepson	Team inspector	Physical education
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	Religious education Vocational courses in Years 10 and 11
2652	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs Psychology in the sixth form
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Physics in the sixth form

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bungay High is a good school with some very good aspects and also a number of weaker areas. Inconsistencies in some areas are restricting the rate at which the school can progress. Students' achievement - how they build on what they know to raise their standards - is good overall. The quality of teaching is good overall, strongest in the sixth form, and weakest, although still good in Year 9. Leadership is good and management sound. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Very good and excellent teaching in vocational courses, English and design and technology leads to students' very good achievement in those areas; teaching, learning and achievement in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory overall
- Excellent and varied extra-curricular opportunities involve many students at levels appropriate for each individual. They help to improve standards as well as students' interest and motivation
- As part of good curriculum provision overall, very imaginative and high quality college-linked courses benefit students greatly in raising their levels of skill and self-esteem; the time available for religious education and ICT is insufficient in Years 10 and 11 for students to achieve well
- Good leadership provides a clear vision for the school and a commitment to meeting the needs of all students; management has inconsistencies in checking how well policies are implemented and how weaknesses in teaching and learning are identified and dealt with
- Very good support for students, both academically and personally, results in an ethos where everyone matters and behaviour is generally good; a very small number of students have been identified as instigators of anti-social behaviour, including bullying
- The reliability of ICT equipment is uncertain which restricts the use made of computers for teaching and learning in some subjects
- Reports to parents are not detailed enough and are unsatisfactory

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, with standards, achievements and teaching broadly the same. Attitudes and personal development are as good but behaviour is not. The greatest area of improvement is in the curriculum where good progress has been made. ICT is much better but improvements are still needed. Very good support for students has continued. Links with schools, colleges and the community are much improved but reporting to parents is worse. Leadership and management of the relatively new team are not as effective as reported in 1998 but, with a new agenda and vision, good progress is being made towards identified targets.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Students' achievements are good overall. They enter Year 9 with average standards overall but a great range of prior knowledge. Results in Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science were above average in 2003. Students did particularly well in science at the upper levels. Year 9 test results and GCSE results have been above average for several years, but the trend of improvement is not as good as that seen nationally. Sixth form results in 2003 were average overall and have been for several years. Current standards in Years 9, 10 and 11 and in the sixth form focus subjects are above average and achievement is good. Those with special educational needs often make very good progress when supported, in and out of classes. Students achieve very well where teaching is very effective, such as in English, and underachieve in modern languages where teaching is insufficiently effective. Students show average competence in language and mathematics across the curriculum. Their ICT skills are average when used to support learning in other subjects. **Students' personal qualities, including their social, moral, spiritual and**

cultural development are good. The school promotes social and moral development very well and cultural understanding well. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies are often very worthwhile experiences for the students. Attendance is good throughout the school and punctuality very good. Students behave very well around the school and well overall. Attitudes to learning are generally very good in lessons, particularly in the sixth form, though a small number of disruptive incidents occur which do impact on the achievement made in those sessions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school offers a good quality of education, taking account of the needs and capabilities of each student. **Teaching is good** overall throughout the school. Some excellent or very good teaching results in students learning very effectively. In many lessons, teachers' strong subject knowledge and positive relationships combine to help students' learning progress at a good pace. Occasionally an unsatisfactory approach or style of teaching has a negative effect. Many aspects of support and guidance for students are very good; a few health and safety issues mean that care is good overall. The curriculum is good and very good in the sixth form, with some excellent aspects, particularly extra-curricular activity, but a shortfall in time for ICT and religious education in some years. Links with parents are satisfactory, except for the quality of reports, and are very good with the community and other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is good, appropriately informed and involved. Governors do not ensure a daily act of collective worship or full coverage of religious education in the sixth form. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is good, with a clear vision for a high achieving and inclusive school. Management is well structured and sound overall. Weaknesses in monitoring of teaching and learning and the implementation of policies lead to delegated tasks not always being effectively carried out. Planning is detailed and good with clear priorities for improvement. Governors and managers have been very successful in attaining specialist science college status which is having a very good impact on the students. The school's finances are well managed with resources being used in the best interests of the students.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are positive about the school, the teachers' expectations that their children will work hard and the high level of care, with very good arrangements for settling students in. Most find that their children make good progress. In contrast, they are concerned about inconsistent teaching and do not feel well informed about progress. Students like school and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. They feel that they are expected to work hard, can talk to staff about any problems they have and can get good support to help them improve their work. Those students on vocational courses speak very highly of the opportunities the courses have given them. A few parents and students were concerned about bullying in the school. The inspection team supports all the parents' and students' views, although it found that the school works very hard to resolve incidents of bullying, as they become known, and these only involve a very few students.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Achieve greater consistency in areas of management such as identifying and eliminating weaknesses in teaching and learning, particularly modern foreign languages, implementing school policies, and the regular use of reliable computers in all subjects
- Continue to work with students, parents and external agencies to remove all instances of anti-social behaviour by a small minority of students
- Improve the quality of reports and communication with parents about their children's progress
- Increase the time available in Years 10 and 11 for religious education and ICT

and, to meet statutory requirements

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students
- cover the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education in the sixth form

THE SIXTH FORM AT BUNGAY HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The education provided for sixth form students is good and cost effective. Students with a very wide spread of attainment represented at the start of Year 12 achieve well. Strengths in teaching and leadership are significant factors in their success, along with the students' own very positive attitudes and the quality of the curriculum provided. ICT is not used as a tool for learning as much as it should be.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well in nearly all their subjects
- Strong, clear leadership has maintained good achievement in academic courses whilst developing a very good range of vocational courses
- Very well motivated students respond with maturity to the opportunities they are given
- The expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus are not fully met in the provision for religious education

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>Very good in English literature. Students achieve very well because of teaching that applies very good academic rigour and secures lively student involvement.</p> <p>Satisfactory in French. Good teaching observed resulted in good speaking and listening skills for the students. Weaknesses in teaching over time are unhelpful to student motivation and achievement.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Satisfactory. An inclusive range of courses, with student numbers increasing as well as the standards they achieve. Some teaching is good but there are weaknesses as well.</p>
Science	<p>Good in biology. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good and they have very good attitudes to their studies. The department runs efficiently and is well organised. Insufficient use of target setting.</p> <p>Good in chemistry. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good and they use it well when explaining and responding to questions. Relationships are very good. Insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning.</p> <p>Good in physics. Very supportive staff who usually teach well. Some good discussion and practical work. Not all lessons are well planned resulting in some weaknesses in teaching.</p> <p>Very good in psychology. A strong emphasis on the use of up-to-date psychological research in teaching. Very good teaching of relevant statistics. Interested and enthusiastic students taking a popular subject.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p>Good. Very good assessment helps students to make progress in their learning. The focus on examination requirements is very helpful. Occasionally, less positive student attitudes result in too little being achieved.</p>
Humanities	<p>Good in history. Achievement, teaching and learning are generally good and often very good, enthusing students. Occasionally class discussions do not involve all students. Leadership is determined to make history enjoyable.</p>

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Engineering, design and manufacturing	Good in design and technology. Students build well on their prior attainment through good teaching and their own very positive attitudes. Programmes and courses are very well managed, involving effective team teaching.
Business	No focus subject in this area. Courses were sampled.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in AVCE leisure and tourism: The teaching of leisure and tourism is a strength of the school's vocational provision. The department is a well run and enthusiastic section of the school.
Health and social care	No focus subject in this area. Courses were sampled.
Visual and performing arts and media	No focus subject in this area. Courses were sampled.
Personal development and general programmes	No focus subject in this area. Courses were sampled.

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 many sampled subjects, a similar spread of provision was seen as in those focused on. In A-level drama, geography and business, in AVCEs in travel and tourism, leisure and recreation, and health and social care, and NVQ early years and education courses, what is provided is very good. For example, students benefit from very good extra-curricular activities in drama, very good guidance and support in the AVCEs and rigorous assessment practice in business. In most other subjects the quality is good, although in one applied course the lack of pace resulted in an unsatisfactory lesson. Most students in Year 12 now take general studies and enjoy studying a wide range of topics; they have very good opportunities for debating and using their general knowledge.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Good support is provided for the students as they enter the sixth form, move through it and prepare to move on to employment or further and higher education. Advice on careers is well informed, with good individual guidance provided, using the Connexions service as needed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Good leadership and satisfactory management are helping to shape a good sixth form. Students benefit from the extension in the number of vocational courses, better induction systems into the sixth ensuring that programmes are balanced and realistically matched to students' aspirations, and good involvement of governors in steering the open access approach to the sixth form are indicative of the good provision for students. Monitoring of what is taking place is not yet sufficiently rigorous for teaching and learning and tutorial work, so unhelpful inconsistencies in approach are not being resolved.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are very positive about school and the support they receive from teachers. Those on vocational courses feel that these courses are meeting their needs well and will provide them with the qualifications they need. The students' views are supported by the inspectors.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Reaping the benefits of hard work and exercise back in the classroom

As in many schools, Bungay has some students in Years 10 and 11 – not a large number – who really cannot find enthusiasm for the subjects they study at GCSE or equivalent. They have not had much success in them in the past and find school quite demoralising. A huge difference has come about in their approach and attitude because of an alternative curriculum set up for them. It is not a soft option though!

The students spend one morning a week taking part in outdoor activities, including rock climbing, cycling, canoeing and orienteering. The tasks are very demanding and students are pushed to go past their 'comfort zones'. Residential trips are arranged with a strong emphasis on outdoor work, but also group activities, teaching the students how to work as part of a team. The challenges they set themselves and the successes they experience taking part in these activities have a knock-on effect on their approach to other work, and result in young people who apply themselves in subjects they find difficult or uninteresting.

The courses are very well planned and the students themselves play as large a part as they can in organising the events. The school managed to raise substantial finance to help fund the course, ensuring that cost would not prevent any of the students from taking part.

Specialist college initiatives are bringing science to life for the whole community

As a specialist science college, the school has carried out some excellent work in building up strong community links. These are proving very helpful in local primary and middle schools and to a number of adults in the rural community around the school.

Examples of the initiatives in hand are:

- in each local primary school, a website is being set up so that the pupils in different schools can 'talk' to each other
- a roadshow of fun science activities has been prepared that has visited all the primary schools from which pupils transfer to Bungay, increasing students' interest in science
- science fairs for pupils and students of a range of ages. A planetarium, hospital pharmacy and the local police have been involved. Through practical activities, the fairs have shown the relevance of science in different areas.
- helping to organise the interchange of staff teaching science in primary and middle schools, so each knows better what is taking place in the others' school.
- helping to establish science clubs in primary and middle schools so pupils can pursue areas of interest out of school hours
- day and evening classes have been set up for single parents in ICT, food and hygiene, first aid, fun science and photography, to try to persuade adults to return to learning and improve their career opportunities.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Results in Year 9 national tests in 2003 were above average, indicating good achievement. The 2003 GCSE examinations results were above average and represented sound achievement. Current standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average and students are achieving **well** from their starting points.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' standards and achievement in English are very good throughout the school
- Students did well in the national tests in Year 9 in 2003, particularly in science at the upper levels
- Standards and achievement are not high enough in modern foreign languages
- Students' skills in the use of ICT in several subjects are not developed enough
- Targets are over-ambitious and do not take account of the schools successful and growing number of vocational courses, which do not add to the school's average points total at GCSE, but do provide the students with a very good education

Commentary

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

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

Please note that the GCSE/GNVQ grades above refer to ‘capped average points’, where the best eight results for each pupil are used to calculate the grade. This data is not available for 2001.

1. Students’ attainment in the Year 9 national tests taken in 2003, in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, were all above the national average. Compared with similar schools, that is those that had an intake of students who achieved similarly in Year 6, these results were above average, showing good achievement overall. The science results were much better than those in similar schools. Students at Bungay High, because they transfer from the middle schools at the end of Year 8, have had under a year to settle down and then take the tests. In most schools the students transfer at age eleven and then have three years before taking the tests. These good outcomes reflect well upon the successful transfer arrangements between middle and high schools. The trend of improvement over the past five years has been below the national trend of improvement, and the targets the school has set itself have not been met in any of the three core subjects. Although the entry standard into the school has been broadly average for a number of years, covering the full range of student capability (from the extremely capable to those who struggle with academic work), the standard has been dropping, with a higher proportion of lower attainers. Targets have not taken full account of this situation. The school’s results show that girls have outperformed boys, even allowing for national differences in attainment.

2. In the GCSE examinations, results were above average in 2003, with 56 percent of the students attaining five A*-C grades and over 92 percent attaining five A*-G grades. The average points figure for the school, which takes account of all students’ results, showed above average standards. These results indicate sound achievement, considering the students’ attainment in national tests in Year 9. Targets were not met in terms of the proportion of students who achieved five A*-C grades and five A*-G grades in 2003; even higher targets have been set for 2004. Students’ underachievements in modern foreign languages, and to a lesser extent in mathematics, are contributory causes of this. The school’s results at GCSE have remained steady at their current figure for the past four years, although GCSE results in the country as a whole have been rising. Boys and girls, over time, have attained similar results although from year to year there have been variations.

3. In 2003, GCSE results were at an average standard or above in all subjects except German, where they were below average. The highest results, which were well above average, were in history, drama, music and English literature. Taking account of the capabilities of the students following each course, students’ examination success was greatest in design and technology and weakest in French and German, mathematics and art.

4. The current school focus is on modern foreign languages, and to a lesser extent mathematics (subjects parents remarked upon in their questionnaire responses about the school), and on students on the C/D boundary in a range of subjects. Clear target setting for individual students, mentoring and additional support are beginning to make inroads into the C/D boundary group, helping them to attain C grades.

5. Standards seen during the inspection were above average overall and students’ achievements were good. In Year 9, standards were above average in several subjects, and overall. Their achievement was good, but a small minority of students were silly in lessons and this

detracted from their and other students' progress. The best achievement and highest standards were in English, where students are doing very well as a result of very effective teaching. The worst picture was in modern foreign languages where standards are below average and achievement unsatisfactory. Although some good lessons were observed, the quality of work in the students' books was poor in several cases.

6. In Years 10 and 11, within the overall good achievement, a similar picture was seen in English and modern foreign languages as in Year 9. In mathematics, although achievement is satisfactory overall, success depends to too great an extent upon which class the student is in, because of the variability in the quality of teaching. Students' success in religious education is restricted by the lack of time to cover all the expected areas in the locally Agreed Syllabus. In all other subjects students, are making satisfactory or better progress. This includes geography, where there has been underachievement in the past, and citizenship even though implementation of the scheme of work across subjects is not fully operational. Students' achievements would be higher if the quality of teaching and learning within and across departments was more consistently effective. Standards and achievement in the vocational courses available are very good, reflecting very good curriculum planning and teaching. The school has responded most effectively to the needs of several lower attaining students, those not interested in a number of National Curriculum subjects, and has provided stimulating relevant work, linked to college courses. The academic courses suit the needs of the high attaining students, who do well, attaining the top A* GCSE grades in a range of subjects.

7. The very few students for whom English is an additional language, and are at an early stage of acquisition of English, make satisfactory progress as a result of the support from their peers, and in lessons from their teachers.

8. Students with special educational needs make progress similar to that of their colleagues in the classes where they are taught, dependent on the quality of teaching. Where specialist support is provided through teaching assistants, both in class and in withdrawal sessions, progress and achievement are often very good. Students make very good progress in acquiring literacy skills and in personal development in withdrawal lessons. Overall, students with special educational needs make good progress in Years 9, 10 and 11.

9. Student competence in literacy is average, as is their competence in mathematics. Promotion of higher standards is more apparent in literacy than mathematics. The whole school literacy policy is not yet implemented rigorously across all departments and there is no whole school mathematics policy to assist with improving standards. Several staff do focus on both skill areas and achieve significant success. In ICT there is good planning in subjects but standards are average because of difficulties in gaining access to reliable computers in the school.

10. Overall, the standards students attain and their achievements are similar to those reported six years ago although strengths tend to be higher today and weaknesses greater. Overall satisfactory improvement has been made.

Sixth form

Standards are above average in the focus subjects and students achieve **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average results are attained in a range of subjects in GCE examinations
- Students' achievements are very good in vocational subjects
- The ICT skills of sixth formers are insufficiently developed

Commentary

11. In the 2003 GCE examinations, students attained average standards, representing good achievement. The open access sixth form means students with C grades at GCSE have been opting for A-level courses and many of these have achieved passes. Girls outperformed boys in

2003, achieving well above average standards. Boys' results were average overall. The boys' and girls' attainment does vary from year to year, depending to a great extent upon the abilities of the students opting into sixth form courses. Results ranged from well above to well below average in 2003. The highest attainment was in English literature and drama, and the lowest in mathematics, physics and business studies. Attainment in the vocational A-level leisure and tourism was above average for the students taking these courses. No subjects stood out as representing particularly high or low achievement in 2003 when account is taken of students' capabilities, with most students achieving similarly across the sixth form subjects.

12. Current standards in the A-level focus subjects are above average and students' achievements are good, and very good in a few cases. Vocational courses taught by expert staff are proving popular and very successful. English is another high achievement subject where students enjoy the work and do well, as a result of very effective teaching. Achievements in mathematics are satisfactory overall, with variation depending upon the quality of teaching that students experience. ICT skills are used too infrequently in sixth form courses. Religious education achievements are satisfactory in Year 12, because the subject is provided through the general studies course taught to most students, but in Year 13 with little emphasis on the subject, achievement is not high enough.

13. Overall, standards and achievement today are broadly similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection in 1998. Satisfactory progress has been made in maintaining this level.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attendance and behaviour are **good**. Their attitudes to learning are **very good**. Students' personal development is **good** overall. Provision for social and moral development is very good, it is good for cultural and satisfactory for spiritual development – these judgements represent **good** provision overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students behaviour is very good around the school site
- The misbehaviour of a few students disrupts the learning of others in a minority of lessons
- Students' punctuality is very good
- School assemblies are very good in promoting students' personal development

Commentary

14. The school has good procedures for promoting attendance that have effectively improved attendance over the last three years. Students attend regularly and there is very little lateness.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	1.0
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

15. Students are very positive about school. They work hard and want to do well. The vast majority of students are attentive and collaborate with each other very well. Where attitudes are less good it is often, but not always, linked to the teacher not varying the teaching style sufficiently to keep the students' interest and to match work to their capabilities. Many students participate in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities the school provides and take a pride in representing their school.

16. Students are exceptionally polite and considerate to visitors, going out of their way to be helpful. They move sensibly around the site and wait patiently where there is congestion in narrow corridors and at bottlenecks. Behaviour in lessons is usually good and often very good. Both parents

and students say that poor behaviour can disrupt the learning of others and in a few lessons this is the case. When students misbehave, teachers do not deal with it consistently. In some lessons challenging behaviour is effectively dealt with so that the lesson progresses smoothly, while in a small minority silliness has a detrimental effect on the learning of the class. Parents and students also raised concerns about bullying. These concerns are justified to some extent. The school is well aware of a very small number of students who have harassed different students over a number of years and has worked very hard to resolve this issue. Incidents are dealt with quickly and in depth and this has succeeded in reducing the problem significantly. All the students spoken to felt that they could discuss any problems they may have with a member of staff who would take them seriously. Most students also thought that if they had been victims of bullying the school had successfully resolved the problems and they felt safe and happy at school now.

17. Students with special educational needs emerge as confident, independent learners where teachers know them well and respond to specific targets. This is more often the case than not.

18. The staff and governors use exclusions judiciously and appropriately. When a student's conduct or approach is at odds with the positive ethos of the school and is impacting on the lives of other students, he/she is excluded. Procedures are followed carefully. Senior staff, and year heads in particular, work very hard to minimise the number, taking all reasonable measures to keep such students in school. The number of exclusions is higher than six years ago at the time of the last report.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	923	55	5
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	10		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – any other mixed background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Chinese	3		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

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

19. There are very good opportunities across the curriculum for students to explore moral issues and to develop their social skills. Consequently, relationships within the school community are very good. Religious education and citizenship lessons both make a strong contribution to this area. For example, in Years 10 and 11 students study the moral dilemma of Jewish and non-Jewish people in Poland during World War II in religious education lessons. There is a good range of opportunities for students to develop their cultural awareness especially in the arts and in the out-of-school activities. Lessons in citizenship effectively challenge some students' stereotypical views and encourage them to consider what it would be like to be in different circumstances. For example, how they would feel if they were a refugee. The very high quality assemblies make a further contribution to students' personal development by getting them to reflect across a range of moral, social and cultural issues. An assembly based on a teacher's personal experience of apartheid in South Africa was very powerful. Opportunities for spiritual development were not always developed well in lessons, but an assembly for Year 11 students where they reflected on the role of religions in the world, for good or evil, was very effective.

20. The strengths in attendance, relationships and attitudes to learning have been maintained since the last inspection. Although there has been a slight decline in the standards of behaviour, overall improvement is satisfactory.

Sixth form

Students appreciate the quality of life in the sixth form, generally working hard, and have very positive attitudes to the school.

Main strength

- Students have very good attitudes to learning and provide good support in the school

Commentary

21. Students behave very well, are very positive about their courses and take a good amount of responsibility for their work. Those students on vocational courses value the range of opportunities that are available to them. Attendance is good and the subject teachers closely monitor attendance at lessons. Students' personal development is good with general studies making a good contribution to understanding moral and ethical dilemmas. Students play an active role in the school community as prefects, and develop their leadership skills through, for example, the community sports leadership programme.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. The teaching quality and assessment are good overall as is the quality of the curriculum, and the care, health and welfare of the students. Links with parents are satisfactory and very good with other educational institutions and the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching observed was good overall resulting in good learning and achievement. Assessment is effective and stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Year 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use well to help students learn
- Where teaching was very good or excellent, students were challenged and interested by the approach taken; in a few lessons, misbehaviour by a small number of students affected the learning of others
- The best teaching, which was very good, was in English, vocational subjects, and design and technology and the least successful was in modern foreign languages, with some weaknesses in mathematics
- Not all teachers have a good understanding of the individual education plans of students in their classes with special educational needs

Commentary

22. Teachers have a quiet confidence in their ability to explain ideas and concepts well, and to match work to the needs and capabilities of the students. This stems from their good subject knowledge, as teachers are only timetabled to teach subjects in which they have good expertise. Expectations are high, a point made by both students and parents in a questionnaire they completed about the school, and this means students of all abilities are challenged by the work set.

23. Relationships between teachers and students are often very good and this results in a relaxed and pleasant working environment. Lessons are often well planned and structured which makes work interesting and enjoyable to students. A good range of activities is used and in several of the best lessons the approach recommended in the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 was employed. Good short introductions which involved the students in their learning were followed by a range of activities. Lessons ended with reflective summary sessions where teachers assessed students' knowledge to enable them to plan follow-up lessons.

24. In setted and mixed ability classes, high and low attaining students were challenged where teachers knew their students well and knew how to pitch work to their capabilities. In lessons for mixed ability classes a range of different materials was provided that supported the lowest attainers and challenged students who found the work rather easier. In most lessons the learning intentions for the session were shared with the class and students were encouraged to ask questions about any points they failed to understand. In subjects such as design and technology, science and art and design, a good emphasis on practical activity involved students in improving their making and investigative skills as well as appreciating underlying concepts and ideas.

25. Boys and girls were treated with equal care and consideration in lessons observed, teachers generally aware of their different learning styles. The teaching of students with special educational needs was sound overall. They were well supported when teaching assistants were available. When this was not the case and relatively large numbers of students had individual education plans in a class, their learning was sometimes less satisfactory than that of other students because teachers found it difficult to respond to all their needs. This was particularly the case in mixed ability classes, for example in ICT, where teachers then had to make choices about the amount of time they could allocate to individuals. When individual students were tracked during the inspection it was found, in one or two cases, that teachers interpreted the individual education plans in different ways, which was unhelpful to the students as they moved from lesson to lesson.

26. The highest attaining students, including a number who are gifted and talented, generally do well, particularly in setted classes. Teachers' good subject knowledge is of great benefit here as students ask demanding questions and teachers respond with confidence and provide additional challenges. In the very large classes, a few over thirty, teachers found it difficult to provide these students with sufficient time. Relationships between students and teachers are such, however, that at the ends of lessons teachers and small groups of students continued discussions into breaktimes and lunch breaks. The very small number of students with English as an additional language are very well integrated into life at the school. Through peer support and generally good teaching, they are supported well and make sound progress with their learning.

27. A small group of lower attaining and very challenging Year 9 students was utterly absorbed in an excellent English lesson in which they learned how to develop their writing skills. Here, the teacher's excellent planning, inline with national guidance, ensured that the work had a progressive, logical structure that made it easy for the students to learn very well. The students also found the attractive classroom displays of word definitions very helpful. The motivation of the class was sustained by excellent relationships with the teacher and by very astute use of praise that encouraged students to aspire to high standards. The work prepared for the stated student in the group was exemplary; consequently that student was able to make progress at the same rate as others in the group. A similar quality of teaching and learning was seen in a mixed ability Year 11 food technology lesson, where students were finishing off their projects on vegetable products. Here again, the structure of the lesson followed the national strategy. High expectations and very good relationships helped students to enjoy the work and do well. The use of a good quality video was very useful. The high pace of work was maintained throughout the session as the teacher carefully directed the students' efforts.

28. In the few unsatisfactory lessons and those which, although satisfactory overall, had some weaknesses, the students' behaviour was often not managed well and the attitudes to learning of a group of students were negative. For example, in a Year 9 lower set being taught German, students arrived in a very bubbly frame of mind and never settled to the work in hand, They interrupted the lesson through shouting out and their conduct was not managed well enough. The lesson started without the students knowing what it was to be about and they did not become engaged in their learning. In a similarly ineffective mathematics lesson for a lower set in Year 11, there was too much teacher talk and students spoke as they wished, with a number not involved. In this lesson, explanations were difficult to follow at times and questions asked did not enable the teacher to gauge the extent of students' understanding. Inconsistencies in approach amongst staff within departments are unhelpful in the school's drive to achieve high standards.

29. The school's approach to assessment is good overall. Targets are agreed with the middle schools from which most of the students transfer, based on national benchmarks. These individual student targets are then passed to the students and their parents along with areas of development. Students in Years 10 and 11 are aware of their targets although they are not always sure exactly what they have to do to improve their work. There is particularly good practice in English and history where teaching is tightly matched to assessment. When GCSE results did not match the school's assessment of students' grades in history, the examination board was challenged and several grades were improved on remarking. In Year 9, the core subjects have set good clear targets for students, but there is inconsistent practice in conveying those to them. In other areas practice and use of assessment is varied, some departments being consistently good, others not using the data as the school plans, to focus on raising achievement.

30. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of teaching described in the report was a little better than that seen today. Assessment is better now than in 1998. Overall satisfactory progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of relationships between staff and students is very good indeed and facilitates communication and learning in most lessons
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well for the benefit of the students
- There are good aspects to assessment but self-assessment is used inconsistently
- Students have insufficient access to ICT in lessons

Commentary

31. Teachers communicate very effectively in most of their lessons and develop very good working relationships with the students. They have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and of examination board requirements. This knowledge is used to good effect to guide students' learning. Information and ideas are explained rather than 'given' to the students, who are expected to think and involve themselves in the process of learning. In some mathematics lessons, students reflected upon what they did and did not understand. In chemistry, humour was used to very good effect to maintain motivation and interest, and in history the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject had a similarly positive effect.

32. The best teaching of focus subjects was of English, psychology and leisure and tourism, where the quality was very good and students achieved very well, enjoying learning. The quality in several sampled subjects was similarly effective, particularly in music and the vocational courses, health and social care, travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. The academic rigour in English lessons, opportunities for psychological investigations, and expert knowledge and quality of relationships in the vocational courses, were key contributory characteristics of this very successful teaching and learning.

33. In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, or satisfactory with some minor weaknesses, the learning was usually sound or better because of the positive attitudes of the students and their good, mature learning skills. This was not the case in one Year 12 lesson where students did little work and showed no interest in the proceedings. Minor weaknesses in teaching usually involved insufficient emphasis on planning for an effective lesson, teacher talk at the expense of student involvement and insufficient use of, and access to, ICT.

34. Students are generally aware of their standards, what teachers' expectations of them are, and what they have to do to improve. In the majority of lessons, teachers review the work covered with well-managed question and answer sessions and are able to gauge understanding and students' knowledge. Assessment in the sixth form is good, and sometimes very good, particularly in the vocational courses, where self-assessment and recording are used regularly. Student self-assessment is not consistent across all subjects, a situation the school has recognised, and this aspect of the assessment process forms part of the school improvement plan.

35. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment currently is broadly similar to that described at the time of the last inspection. Improvements in all three areas have been satisfactory over the intervening period.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 167 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8 (5%)	52 (31%)	57 (34%)	42 (27%)	7 (4%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

All students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares them well for further study and employment. These opportunities are **good** in Years 9 to 11 and **very good** in the sixth form. Extra-curricular opportunities provide **excellent** support for learning and provide a **very good** range of additional experiences.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has some outstanding innovative and vocational courses
- Unreliable ICT resources are restricting students’ achievements and result in negative attitudes from both staff and students
- Opportunities for students to take part in extra-curricular enrichment activities are excellent
- Insufficient time is available for ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11

Commentary

36. The curriculum for Years 9 to 11 includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, as required. The school offers a short course GCSE in ICT for all students which ensures that each student has the opportunity to develop a good range of core skills in ICT, but the ICT curriculum across subjects is much more mixed and inconsistent. The physical education courses are appreciated by many of the students, and include a fitness course in Years 10 and 11 introduced at the request of students. Several subjects have good curriculum links with the middle schools, particularly science, which enable students to build on their previous learning. A large number of students take a modern foreign language at GCSE and about thirty in Year 10 are currently studying both French and German. Most students study a broad science course worth two GCSEs and two classes of students study the three separate sciences – including many higher attainers. There is insufficient time available for ICT and for religious education in Years 10 and 11, which results in some underachievement in both subjects.

37. The school has disappled a large number of students from some subjects of the National Curriculum and has provided an excellent range of vocational and interesting courses. Enterprise skills, outdoor activities, countryside studies - including residential experiences, and college based work - show that the school is working hard to meet the needs of all of its students. These courses focus on the development of students' self-esteem and self-confidence in addition to providing them with a range of certificated skills. Courses with a strong vocational aspect, such as leisure and tourism, child development, health and social care, and business studies also provide the students in Years 10 and 11 with a very good range of opportunities, which they appreciate. Planning for teaching of citizenship is satisfactory. This relatively new area is not a clear focus in subject areas, however, and plans to deliver citizenship in lessons do not always materialise.

38. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular provision in lunch times and after school, which is available to all students. This improves student achievement and personal development. It provides enriching experiences for gifted and talented students who further develop interests with challenging work. In physical education, for example, talented students have wide-ranging opportunities to perform at a very high level in a number of sporting activities, including football and cricket. Staff give very generously of their time, and are instrumental in engaging the students through their own example and enthusiasm.

39. There are particular strengths in the range of sporting and musical programmes offered. Sports include leisure activities such as salsa dancing, tae kwon do and girls' soccer, rugby, netball, basketball and fitness training. Older students act as assistant referees in soccer matches. In music there are wind, rock and jazz bands and a string ensemble. Many students stay after school to practise their instruments or to join a formal rehearsal. Many students also benefit from participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and there are groups for public speaking and publishing a school newspaper. Different visiting specialists and speakers provide regular opportunities for enrichment. Students with special educational needs have access to the learning support centre at lunchtimes. Some, including those who have statements of special educational needs, have an opportunity to attend a residential course. The activities are extremely well supported by students. The school systematically monitors student attendance and evaluates the effectiveness of the activities. The impact on students has been found to be very positive.

40. The curriculum is reviewed annually as part of the development planning process which enables the school to respond quickly and flexibly to issues, concerns and initiatives. Since the time of the last inspection good improvement has been made, with significant expansion in the opportunities offered. Issues have been tackled in areas of weakness such as PSHE, vocational education and time for art, and strengths have been maintained. The issue of time shortage for ICT and religious education has yet to be resolved.

41. The educational resources available meet the needs of the curriculum. The numbers, qualifications and experience of teaching and non-teaching staff are appropriately matched to the curriculum in most areas. The school has been unable to appoint a special educational needs co-ordinator, but the area is satisfactorily covered. Teachers are well matched to the curriculum in nearly all subjects and the school uses a network of links including teacher-training establishments to facilitate recruitment.

42. Accommodation is generally good with particular strengths in the specialist facilities for English, physical education, special educational needs and vocational courses. They are good in design and technology, and sound in science, where preparation rooms are inadequate and inefficient but are about to be refurbished. In mathematics some rooms are overcrowded, restricting the ability of teachers to circulate and support learning. Too many computers have been installed in ICT rooms so that it is not possible to combine work away from computers with use of machines, which is established good practice. The number of computers has greatly increased but their installation has not been managed successfully and this has led to unreliability and slowness providing a disincentive for them to be used as a tool for raising standards. Other resources, including textbooks and equipment are generally good and meet the needs of the students. The library, with a good supply of books, is appreciated by students and provides a useful facility, although a somewhat noisy environment at times. The overall quality of resources and usage is similar to that described in the last report, with several strengths but with weaknesses in ICT. Satisfactory improvement has been made overall.

Sixth form

The curriculum in the sixth form is **very good**. It meets the needs, interests and attainment of students well in almost all areas.

Main strength and weakness

- Students have access to a very good and wide range of courses, including specialist, general and vocational ones
- The Agreed Syllabus requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not fully met

Commentary

43. There are twenty AS/A2 courses and six AVCE, BTEC and NVQ vocational courses, a one year intermediate GNVQ course, opportunities to study outdoor education and to retake GCSE in mathematics and English, for just over 200 students in the sixth form. These courses meet the students' needs very well and help prepare them for the next stages of their lives. The provision in

drama is very good. Students respond very well to the high degree of responsibility accorded to them and to the wide range of opportunities within and beyond the curriculum. In science there are planned opportunities for gifted and talented students to ensure they are challenged by the work. In physical education, students have the opportunity to gain a sports leadership award. Key skills are covered through chosen subjects but this provision is not managed for each student and results in inconsistencies. Only one small group of boys is studying ICT as an examination subject and students, in general, have too few opportunities to use ICT for independent research and in lessons. The unreliability of the network results in numerous 'crashes' which in turn means students and staff do not make full use of the machines available.

44. Students have to argue their case to opt out of the good general studies programme in Year 12, rather than opt into it as in previous years, which has improved the breadth of curriculum provision for many, considerably. A small number go on to take the AS examination, but the course itself enables the students to learn about many aspects of society today in Britain. Religious education and citizenship are included in the programme, but as not all students take the subject in Year 12, the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education in the sixth form are not met. They are not met in Year 13 where there is no specific course which ensures students are taught the required knowledge.

45. The dropout rates in the sixth form are low, indicating satisfaction with the curriculum approach and the selection of courses. The exception is modern foreign languages, where significant numbers do not continue study into Year 13. Group sizes are very small in a few subjects, but the school rightly continues to offer the wide range because of the distance from the nearest alternative school or college. The curriculum was judged to be good six years ago and is so now, though broader and better to some extent. Change has been good overall.

46. The educational resources available are satisfactory for the sixth form. Staffing is appropriate with many knowledgeable staff. Specialist accommodation, with the exception of that for ICT, is generally good, as are resources. The lack of computers specifically for sixth form use and the unreliability of those available result in negative attitudes towards this important resource. Sixth formers' social accommodation is good and well cared for. The sixth form have raised money to improve their own facilities. Improvements in sixth form resources since the last report in 1998 have been satisfactory overall.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare and health and safety of students is **good** overall, with several very good aspects, particularly for the most vulnerable students. Students are monitored and supported well as they move through the school. The school provides opportunities to seek students' views about the work and development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know students very well and provide effective support and guidance for their safety and security; a few minor issues of health and safety remain
- The induction for new students is very good and this ensures effective settling in and continuity in their learning
- Good systems of monitoring progress ensure that students receive effective support and guidance, especially when choosing courses and careers
- A highly innovative and potentially very successful computer system is being introduced, which should enable all students to be tracked as they progress through the school and for the information to be used to assist with teaching and learning

Commentary

47. The school generally provides a healthy and secure environment. Teachers are made aware of child protection issues and kept up to date and briefed, as necessary, in staff meetings. Senior managers are rigorous and demanding in ensuring that the care and welfare of the students with the greatest needs have the highest priority, and to this end spend substantial amounts of time

supporting students both within and outside the working day. Arrangements for providing first aid are good and meet requirements. Students are well supervised outside lessons before and after school and during break periods. They know that staff are to hand if needed and value the care provided. The headteacher and senior staff have been at the forefront of local initiatives that involve groups such as the police in ensuring that all students' rights are sacrosanct. Every effort is made to ensure, for example, that illegal substances are not brought into school and that appropriate external agencies are involved when students need support. Such support sometimes, as a last resort, leads to exclusions, which are indicative of the good balance the school achieves in caring for the individual but not at the expense of the school community. This time-consuming and demanding work is excellent and reflects upon the caring and supportive ethos established at the school.

48. Although managers deal with all identified bullying very effectively, written procedures are not as good as they could be and not all staff and students are sufficiently clear about them. The school council is soon to be involved in reviewing the policy. This will give students the opportunity to contribute their perspective on how the school should deal with the issue as well as giving them a clear view on procedures.

49. The school has taken on several specialist staff in the areas of teenage health, counselling and youth work, providing a co-ordinated approach to these aspects of the students' welfare. This approach is working well and students are benefiting.

50. Good risk assessments are in place in the physical education and design and technology departments. The preparation area in science is currently unsatisfactory, but its complete refurbishment is imminent. Health and safety written procedures are out of date in science. In ICT the wiring arrangements in some areas need a health and safety check. A central register of yearly checks on equipment is not kept although, in general, legal requirements are followed. Presently departments take responsibility for this and what is taking place is not well enough monitored.

51. The pastoral system is well managed and structured, so that heads of year know what is expected of them. Staff working in the school know the students very well and students appreciate the individual support they receive. Students can turn to a variety of sources of guidance such as tutors, heads of year, teaching assistants, support staff, the careers adviser and a counsellor. Sixth form students are piloting a programme to mentor and further support younger students in school. Students receive good careers advice as they move through the school which prepares them well for the next stage, either in school or in the work place. This useful careers advice with well-organised work experience in Year 10 helps students to make appropriate decisions.

52. Overall, tutors are making satisfactory use of tutor group time. The time is used well by students to relax, socialise and prepare for their lessons. Tutors use this time to discuss a range of issues, but not all of them are confident in leading discussions so the time is not always used productively. What is taking place is not being monitored sufficiently well and so inconsistencies are not being identified and resolved. Students on the school council discuss matters which are of interest to all students and this is having an impact on school life. Students' views are valued, but no mechanisms exist for taking account of ideas they have, except through the council.

53. Arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress are managed satisfactorily. These systems form an effective base to monitor students' achievements. A complex and extremely detailed computer-based scheme is being prepared by senior managers, which will ensure that all student information is available on a single system, accessible by all staff. A pilot form is already being run by a senior manager. It includes many spreadsheets of individual student data, such as attendance, examination and test information which is then arranged into individual class data, as needed. Class seating plans are also available. The system enables teachers to find data quickly and to use it as needed in the classroom. This innovative work is not linked, however, to currently available commercial software used by many schools.

54. The care provided is a very positive aspect of the school, with great strengths, as well as a few areas that need further improvement. Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection, maintaining the best areas and making improvements in others.

Sixth form

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good information is made available to students and new management is improving and developing systems, but these are not well monitored to judge their effectiveness
- Most students feel well supported and cared for and are positive about the help they receive
- There are too few opportunities for students to lead and take responsibility

Commentary

55. The quality of care is good and much improved since the previous report. Students receive well-informed advice on careers, especially on further or higher education as well as employment and job opportunities. They are encouraged to do work experience and have responsibility to seek such employment, with additional guidance from the strong Connexions service available.

56. Links to other institutions are helpful. Students are encouraged to aim high and feel very well supported. They are involved in setting personal targets and there are good opportunities in most lessons for them to express their views. School council members are encouraged to improve school life but they do not have the opportunity to lead this discussion.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with feeder middle schools are very good
- Very good links with colleges extend opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11
- Very good links with the local community enhance the curriculum and result in improved resources
- Reports to parents are unsatisfactory

Commentary

57. The science college status has strengthened what was already a good partnership with middle schools. A very good programme of meetings between subject co-ordinators enables them to share information about the curriculum and students' attainment. This makes a strong contribution to the smooth and successful transfer of students from middle to high school. The school has extended the range of vocational work available for students in Years 10 and 11 by working closely with local colleges to develop courses that meet their needs. This is very good practice.

58. The school has been successful in gaining the support of the local business community and other organisations to support its work in a number of areas. Members of the local community provide work experience placements for students in Year 10. In addition, they have contributed their expertise to the science fairs and materials for work related courses. Recent initiatives of providing cookery classes for single fathers and their children and providing a forum for young mothers to come together and learn new skills are appreciated by those on the programmes. The numbers involved are small, but the quality of the programme is good and reflects the caring and supportive school ethos.

59. The school works in partnership with parents where it can and involves them at an early stage if there are problems. The information provided for parents about the life of the school is good, with fortnightly newsletters going home to each family. As well as providing important dates and administrative data, the newsletter celebrates the success of individual students, for example footballing success with a professional club, gaining places at Britain's top universities or where students carry out very worthwhile actions to support others.

60. Information about students' progress through parents' consultation evenings and reports is satisfactory overall, but the reports on their own are unsatisfactory. Reports do not evaluate progress in different subjects or give subject specific information about attainment. Reports are currently under review to ensure that they provide parents with the clear views and judgements of teachers on individual students, as well as being administratively easy to prepare. A number of parents expressed the wish for earlier consultation evenings in Year 9, to enable them to be able to work with their children to bring about improvements during their first year at the school. The school is aware of this parental concern and is planning to improve the situation.

61. The headteacher consults parents about some issues through the parents' association. For example, parents were asked for their views about whether the school should apply for science college status and whether school uniform should be continued. This useful link does not, however, involve a large number of parents who could make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

62. Substantial improvements have been made in links with the local community, other schools and colleges since the last inspection. Information for parents is not as good as in 1998. Overall, improvement is satisfactory.

Sixth form

Links with the community and other institutions are **very good** and they support students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with local colleges are very effective in providing high quality vocational courses
- Reports to parents are unsatisfactory
- Better curriculum links are needed with other schools providing less popular subjects

Commentary

63. Local industry and commerce are very involved with the school and provide worthwhile placements. The school's links with local colleges allow the school to offer students a range of vocational courses such as managing the countryside and hairdressing in the sixth form. These help to ensure that the school lives up to its aim of matching work to the needs and capabilities of the students. The school has identified the need to try linking with other sixth form providers because of the cost of providing a wide range of courses, even though substantial journeys may be involved for the students.

64. Links with local universities are very good and the students benefit from these, gaining an insight into higher education. Opportunities are found for students to visit university departments and lecturers visit the school, for example in English, and become involved in the teaching.

65. Reports to parents include some useful information, but do not include expected detail. As in the main school, procedures for reporting to parents are being reviewed. Parents' evenings where students' work is discussed take place.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **good** and management is **satisfactory** in the main school. Governance is good in all but two matters of statutory compliance - collective worship and religious education in the sixth form. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is good. Although management is sound overall, with a number of strengths, weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching and learning and the implementation of policies, result in on-going inconsistencies. Subject leadership is generally good and it is very good in several subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good governing body is well informed, caring and committed to the school
- The headteacher has a clear vision of the school as a community that taps the potential of every person who learns and teaches there
- Management is generally sound, but does not ensure that delegated tasks are always effectively carried out
- The leadership of senior and middle managers is generally effective
- Although the school has set up a clear procedure for monitoring teaching and learning, this is not applied consistently to secure improvement
- Financial management is good and the principles of best value are effectively followed

Commentary

66. The governors are very well led and successfully generate both challenge and support for the headteacher and the leadership team. Governors work closely with the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They have had good oversight of the school's planning and contributed appropriately to the specialist science status development. They are actively involved in identifying priorities and are not afraid to take difficult decisions. This was particularly evident when they supported the introduction of pre-16 vocational courses. They knew that there would be an impact on GCSE result tables, but went ahead because they saw the benefits that individual students would gain. They have not, however, fulfilled the statutory duties with regard to providing a daily act of collective worship.

67. The headteacher leads a school that is popular with parents and in which students achieve well. Under her leadership, the school has moved forward in some significant ways particularly in achieving its specialist status and in radically increasing the availability of good vocational learning to students who do not fully benefit from more academic courses. Other leaders share the headteacher's vision, although not all have found it easy to adapt to new approaches. Senior leaders have been involved in both the planning and the implementation of the school's improvement strategy. As leadership has been sensitively aware of the need to move forward as a cohesive team, even where this may be challenging or threatening to some, improvements have sometimes been introduced in a staged way, so their dynamic impact and the rate of improvement have been less than they might otherwise have been. The school has formulated a good strategic improvement plan, which is set out in a comprehensive and clear document.

68. The specialist science status reflects the popularity of the sciences, particularly in the sixth form. Excellent developments are already in train in several areas. Enhanced links with science teaching in the local primary and middle schools provide better continuity in learning for the students. Science fairs are being hosted for the pupils of these schools. Strong links are developing with a local university science and medical departments and a major industrial company has supported a science day in the school. Students are benefiting from these well managed and successful curriculum initiatives.

69. The best subject leadership is in English, drama, design and technology, history and vocational education, where it is very good. Leadership of the taught ICT courses is also very good, but that of cross curricular ICT is not effective in ensuring that the school's stock of computers is having sufficient impact in all subject areas. There are unsatisfactory elements in the leadership of mathematics where policies have not been fully implemented and in management of modern languages where, in spite of a good long-term vision, weaknesses have not been addressed with sufficient resolution.

70. Within the senior leadership team there is a clear view of the role that the special needs department should play in the school. In spite of its best efforts, the school has not been able to appoint a co-ordinator for this area. This is affecting the quality of leadership being given to the subject departments and consequently the consistency of the support that they give within their own areas. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with a commitment to improvement, but the detailed implementation of the vision is not yet thorough enough. The school does, however, make effective provision for a wide range of needs, ranging from those with visual impairment, to those with complex needs combining physical with emotional and behaviour difficulties.

71. Management structures are good, with the main tasks of senior staff clearly stated. However, the action that flows from this structure and the school's plans is not always fully effective. This is because procedures for monitoring how well delegated tasks have been carried out, and that policies have been implemented, are relatively weak. Consequently, while the school has clear procedures for most areas of its work, these are sometimes implemented inconsistently. Aspects of school life where routine systems are not ensuring thorough implementation are: monitoring use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy; whole-school use of policies for literacy, citizenship and ICT across the curriculum; application of the behaviour code with respect to such matters as eating in class; and following the health and safety policy.

72. The school is committed to providing good training for newly qualified and serving teachers. In partnership with a local university, it makes a good contribution towards initial teacher training. In-service training is well focused on the school's priorities, balanced by a supportive concern for meeting the individual needs of its staff. However, the records that the school keeps centrally are incomplete, which prevents it from managing training well enough to ensure an equitable provision for all staff, or ensuring that the impact of training is shared so that improvements follow. All permanent staff benefit from proper induction procedures, although those for short-term supply staff are weak.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,101,215	Balance from previous year	159,547
Total expenditure	3,204,019	Balance carried forward to the next	56,743
Expenditure per pupil	3,299		

73. The school finances are managed well. Spending is prioritised in line with the school improvement plan and the school succeeds well in securing best value for its spending. The accounts have recently been properly audited and have been approved by the auditors. The school's small carry-over amount of under two percent of expenditure is due to delayed building and improvement works. The school's possible budget shortfall in the coming year has been pre-empted by governors and senior managers, by reducing the number of sets in English, mathematics and science. This is making classes larger and the task harder to support individual needs. This difficult and appropriate decision means that budgetary issues have been addressed in the short and medium term.

74. The school is more effective than it was six years ago in some areas, such as the match of the curriculum to the needs of the students, similar in other ways such as students' examination successes and their achievements, but behaviour is not as good as it was. The vision is new and clear but weaknesses in monitoring of what takes place in practice results in inconsistencies. Governance is as effective as described in the last report, but leadership and management less so. The overall picture is broadly similar to that in 1998, but with a new agenda and vision and good progress being made towards these ends. Improvement is satisfactory.

Sixth form

Governors have been effective in helping to shape the sixth form. The sixth form is **well led** and **satisfactorily** managed. Leadership has brought good improvement in the curriculum that is offered to students and the guidance that they receive, but management has not fully resolved inconsistencies in teaching and learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good and has made a significant contribution to improving the curriculum and providing guidance for students
- Management is sound, but has not monitored teaching and learning with full effectiveness
- Governance is effective

Commentary

75. The governors have good knowledge of the many strengths and few weaknesses of the sixth form. They openly seek to understand curricular developments and have made difficult decisions about developing vocational courses, knowing that these impact on the school in general. They work well within the finance committee to monitor the funding between the sixth form and the main school. The governors are aware that they have not ensured that all sixth form students receive religious education in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus. They have begun to address this issue and most Year 12 students now have access to religious education through general studies.

76. Leadership in the sixth form is characterised by clear awareness of what needs to be done to improve, and energy and effectiveness in implementing this. The impact of this is evident in the good improvement that has taken place in the period of just over a year since the present arrangements were put in place. During this time, the curriculum has been improved to provide both a wider range of A-level courses and better provision for those students who benefit more from vocational courses. There has also been significant improvement in the quality of guidance given to students when choosing their courses and procedures for ensuring that students enrol for the courses most suitable to their needs. These measures are strongly in tune with the school's vision for its sixth form of welcoming and appropriately providing for all students, whatever their aptitudes and needs. The pastoral team is beginning to contribute to the work of the sixth form but inconsistencies in the work of tutors, and the overlap of work in monitoring academic as well as pastoral performance, are not yet resolved.

77. Although the day-to-day organisation of the sixth form is generally sound, management has not been fully effective in monitoring a situation where inconsistency exists in teaching and learning. Although its quality is often very good, a larger proportion has weaknesses than is usually the case in sixth forms. Students, and some parents, referred to 'cancelled lessons' when teachers were not available. Students were unhappy with this wasted lesson time. No cancelled lessons were identified during the inspection, but they remain an unacceptable aspect of provision. As in the main school, some aspects are better than six years ago at the time of the last inspection, but other areas are less effective.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **very good**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were well above average
- Students make very good progress as a result of enthusiastic and well-structured teaching
- Very good leadership ensures that teachers work as a team to improve students' attainment
- Students do not have adequate, planned access to ICT

Commentary

Examination results

78. In the national tests taken in 2003 by fourteen-year-old students, English results were above the national average. Girls' results were better than boys'. At GCSE, the 2003 results in both English language and English literature were well above the national average. The results of both boys and girls were also well above their respective national averages.

Standards and achievement

79. When students join the school, their standards in English are average. Their examination results therefore represent very good achievement and reflect the steady improvement in students' standards during their time at the school. By the time students complete Year 11, their standards are well above average. The examination results are underpinned by the systematic development of students' abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening. These skills are developed in a consistent way in English lessons. All students learn to plan their writing with an awareness of topic, audience and purpose. By the time they reach Year 11, higher attaining students are able to write with insight and sensitivity about demanding literature, such as the poetry of Carol Duffy or the plays of Tennessee Williams. The writing of lower attaining students also progresses well as a result of the very structured teaching, although these students tend to write descriptively rather than analytically. Students of all abilities are given many opportunities to improve their speaking and listening through the pair and group discussions that are regular features of lessons. Here they learn to use evidence to justify opinions and to explain their views logically and clearly.

Teaching and learning

80. As a result of the very good teaching, students learn very well. Teachers adopt a common approach to planning their lessons, drawing on the national strategy for raising the attainment of younger secondary students. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and contain a very good range of activities so that students can learn in a variety of ways. Teachers ensure that activities in lessons are sharply focused and have a clear purpose that is apparent to the students. Written work is marked thoroughly and students receive clear guidance on how to reach appropriate GCSE grades or National Curriculum levels. Students are thus encouraged to have high aspirations.

81. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to use this to foster the learning of students of all abilities. During the inspection, a group of higher attaining Year 11 students responded very well to an academically demanding lesson on the poetry of Whitman, while a group of lower attaining students made excellent progress with their writing skills because the teacher designed the lesson in a way that took full account of their individual needs. The careful planning for the particular ability of each class accounts for the very good progress made by students with special needs. A teaching assistant was present in only one lesson inspected; teamwork there was of a high order. By studying literature from other cultures, students gain an insight into the perspectives of people in the wider world.

82. Students' ability to undertake research and to present their work in a variety of ways is limited because they do not have sufficient access to ICT resources.

Leadership and management

83. A strong sense of teamwork and commitment amongst teachers derives from clear, common objectives and very good organisation. The scheme of work is thorough and detailed. Teaching is monitored systematically so that good ideas can be shared and implemented widely. Teachers receive helpful support and guidance. At the time of the previous inspection, English was a strong feature of the school's provision. Since then, the overall position has been maintained, with some important improvements, for example in the attainment of boys at GCSE in relation to the national average and in the overall quality of teaching. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in 1998, with very good potential for further improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

84. The school makes satisfactory provision for the development of students' literacy. Overall standards observed during the inspection were average. Across the curriculum there are examples of how teachers seek to develop students' literacy in a variety of ways. For instance, in history lessons students have many opportunities to write at length, with structured guidance given to those students who find the tasks difficult. In most subjects there is appropriate emphasis on the relevant key words and technical vocabulary. However, these good practices are not wholly consistent. The leadership of the school has undertaken some evaluation of the impact of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in the school. Further improvement in students' standards depends on the consistent implementation of the principles and practices set out in the NLS. The school library is a good resource that is valued by the students. During the inspection, there was a very good response from students in Years 9 to 11 to a lunchtime meeting of a school newspaper group, largely run by sixth formers.

Modern foreign languages

Most students take French and German in Year 9. At the end of the first term students choose to continue with either language to GCSE. Two small groups continue with both languages at an accelerated pace in the time allocated. About four-fifths of all students study a modern foreign language to GCSE. This is a far greater proportion than the national average, which makes it difficult to compare the school's results with results nationally. A direct comparison would be less favourable to the school. During the inspection both languages were focused on.

Provision in French and German is **unsatisfactory**.

(in both French and German)	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of many students' written work is poor and the departmental marking policy is not implemented consistently; both contribute to lower than expected standards in French and German
- Insufficient monitoring of achievement and attainment has taken place
- Difficulties in finding specialist teaching staff have had an adverse impact on standards and achievement, particularly in German
- The new leadership has introduced very good systems for tracking progress and attainment resulting in teachers and students having clearer targets

Commentary

Examination results

85. On entry to the school in Year 9, standards are average. Results in teacher assessments in 2003 in modern foreign languages were above what is expected nationally at the age of fourteen. At the age of sixteen results in French were average and well below average in German. Girls attained significantly higher results than boys at both ages, especially in German.

Standards and achievement

86. By the end of Year 9 in French, most students have average listening and speaking skills and some higher attaining students can use two or three tenses within specific contexts. The written work of most students is poor, however, and there are few examples of average standards in their books. The presentation of many books is very poor. The pronunciation of many students is very anglicised, but in one Year 9 class higher attaining students followed a lesson conducted almost entirely in French and answered questions confidently and with good accents using the perfect tense. Overall the standards observed are much lower than those recorded in last years' teacher assessments. By the end of Year 11 in French, higher attainers produce oral and written work in line with GCSE requirements for the higher grades, but the standards achieved by most students are below average and their written work is particularly poor.

87. By the end of Year 9 in German, most students' grasp of basic grammar and vocabulary is well below average, but higher attainers speak and write accurately on some topics. The written work of many is badly presented and contains incomplete tasks. Many students do not do corrections systematically, which impedes progress. The pronunciation of many students is anglicised as it is in French. By the end of Year 11 in German, many students have a limited vocabulary base and have many gaps in their knowledge of key structures. Some high attainers in both Years 10 and 11 can produce accurate spoken and written German. In one Year 10 German class, students spoke confidently and some had a good grasp of grammatical patterns, which enabled them to write accurately about GCSE topics using some complex sentences.

88. Overall students do less well in French and German than in their other subjects. This and the quality of written work shows that they are not achieving satisfactorily.

Teaching and learning

89. All teachers have good linguistic skills, but they do not always use French and German systematically, which impedes the development of listening and speaking. Lessons are well prepared and generally brisk and well structured. Teachers make lesson objectives clear and divide lessons into distinct parts in order to help students learn more effectively. In a few unsatisfactory lessons, students were inattentive when the teacher was talking and did not concentrate when they were set reading or writing tasks. In good lessons students were very responsive and listened carefully to the teacher and worked well in pairs to consolidate their learning. In a Year 9 German class of high attainers, students were very responsive from the beginning to the end of the lesson and consequently achieved well in acquiring new language and structures. In a Year 11 French class, students achieved well because of the brisk pace and imaginative pair work. ICT provides opportunities for independent learning in some lessons. Students with special educational needs are supported by their teachers in lessons and achieve in line with their peers.

Leadership and management

90. The faculty has new leadership, but has experienced major staffing difficulties, which have resulted in ineffective teaching and underachievement over several years. A clear vision and very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department is resulting in substantial positive change. New strategies have recently been implemented, which are slowly starting to raise standards, with new schemes of work for Year 9 and a uniform structure for all modern languages lessons. The tracking system introduced is enabling department managers to follow individual pupil achievement, using their middle schools' information as well, and to put in hand improvement strategies. Monitoring remains underdeveloped, however, and so insufficient improvements have been achieved to date. The German exchange and trips to France are helping to improve motivation and raise standards. Accommodation and resources have improved since the last inspection. Improvement is unsatisfactory overall because of lower standards and worse achievement than in 1998.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some very good teaching was observed where students achieved very well
- Weaknesses in other teaching are not being dealt with well enough
- The poor presentation of some students' work hinders their achievement
- Students have insufficient access to reliable ICT

Commentary

Examination results

91. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, students' standards were above average nationally and compared with similar schools. At the end of Year 11 in 2003, the proportion of students gaining a GCSE A*-C grade was similar to the national figure. Results were lower than in other subjects indicating some underachievement in 2003.

Standards and achievement

92. Higher attaining students currently show good recall and understanding of technical language. Year 11 higher attaining students used sophisticated mathematical techniques and showed good understanding of some difficult conceptual ideas, such as the difference between a histogram and a bar-chart. Lower attainers determined the contents of a bag by using sampling and showed a good understanding of the concepts of sample size and bias in results. Achievement was class and teacher dependent. Where teaching and learning were particularly effective and the students had positive approaches, achievement was very good; where these characteristics were not present, achievement was unsatisfactory. Year 9 students' achievements were better overall than the quality of teaching because most students had positive approaches to learning. Considering their standards at age eleven in the middle schools, which were average, they make good progress by the age of fourteen. Students' books show above average standards in Year 9 and an average standard and satisfactory achievement in the GCSE classes, but the quality of presentation of work varied greatly. In some cases it was very well laid out with good quality work; in others it was very untidy, had spelling mistakes in key words as well as graffiti.

Teaching and learning

93. There is some very good teaching, where lessons are well planned and offer an exciting and challenging experience for students. As one student expressed it, “(the teacher) motivates us”. In these lessons students learnt well and achievement was good. There are positive relationships between most staff and students and a genuine willingness to learn by the majority of students. In other lessons, where planning was inadequate and time was spent controlling the poor behaviour of a minority of students, achievement was unsatisfactory. For example in a Year 9 class, the work was not challenging and there were low expectations and therefore students wasted time and behaviour deteriorated. Students with special educational needs achieved as well as their peers. In one excellent lesson, they enjoyed a range of mathematical activities and thrived on the work. Much of the interaction in lessons was teacher initiated and few instances were observed of students discussing mathematical ideas. When they did, they learnt more. There is insufficient use of ICT in mathematics lessons because staff are unwilling to use them at present as teaching time can be lost in sorting out technical difficulties. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is satisfactory with most teachers using a numerical warm-up at the start of lessons linked to lesson objectives and this helps to consolidate learning. Learning support assistants working with the department make a positive contribution to the learning experience of the students and ease the workload of teaching staff.

Leadership and management

94. The school has encouraged members of the department to take responsibility for management of aspects of the department’s work and this is proving effective. The curriculum is well planned, with opportunities for ICT built into schemes of work. The department is well resourced although the large numbers of students in some classes - in one case 32 - restricts the teacher’s ability to monitor students’ work. There is explicit guidance in the department handbook on the presentation and marking of work but it is not consistently followed. Role models of senior staff are not always as good as they should be and the department has been slow in responding to known weaknesses in teaching and learning. Monitoring of work, teaching and learning has not been successful in stopping unsatisfactory teaching and insufficient support has been provided when underachievement in particular classes was apparent. The department, although currently providing a satisfactory mathematical education, is less successful in several areas than at the time of the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

95. No whole school policy was available promoting numeracy across departments, though some departments have taken steps to include opportunities. In science and music, the approach has resulted in students making good progress as they are given specific help to improve their mathematical skills. In other departments, individual teachers often provide appropriate help, but the picture is inconsistent. The student view was aptly summarised by a Year 9 pupil who said, “I do wish all staff would get their act together and use technical terms in a similar way”. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics lessons is satisfactory although opportunities to reinforce this knowledge are not always taken in other subjects. Overall, the quality of promotion of mathematics across the curriculum is barely satisfactory and students’ competence is average.

SCIENCE

The department offers several courses in Years 10 and 11. The courses observed were the double award co-ordinated science and the single sciences of biology, chemistry and physics, taught as a triple award option.

Provision in science is **good**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and effective lesson structure help students to achieve well
- Students have good attitudes to their work so remain attentive in lessons and are productive
- Innovative and worthwhile approaches to curriculum development have been instrumental in helping the school to achieve specialist science college status
- The heads of separate science departments are effective in their developing roles as middle managers
- Monitoring across the faculty is insufficiently rigorous in removing inconsistencies in teaching

Commentary

Examination results

96. In 2003 national tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations in Year 11, results were above average.

Standards and achievement

97. In Year 9, standards seen during the inspection were above expectations, which represents good achievement as students start this stage of their education with average standards. By Year 11 standards are also above average with students attaining, currently, significantly above average standards in their module examinations. Students are achieving well in their GCSE years.

Teaching and learning

98. In the most effective Year 9 teaching, good use is made of short starter activities, such as identifying statements as true or false, that immediately engage students' interest. Effective plenaries were also observed in these sessions, such as 'chemical bingo', that clearly informed the teacher of the learning that had gone on. The lesson structure maintains pace, interest and enjoyment for students in the best lessons. Where the suggested teaching and learning techniques in the national strategy were not used, lessons started more slowly and it was harder to engage students' interest and to keep them on task. In a few lessons, activities went on for too long and become boring. In Years 10 and 11, the most successful lessons continued to employ the national strategy approach. Time pressures in some of these lessons resulted in rushed plenaries. Where this was the case, teachers were less secure about what students did and did not understand. Students usually settle to work quickly, join in activities constructively and take pride in their work. Exercises are marked regularly, but with variable quality because the school's marking policy is not always adhered to. Several teachers regularly write comments that help students to improve. Not all students are aware of the standard of their work, however, and do not record their own progress so lack an overview of their performance. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is

developing well and is currently good. Technicians give good support to lessons despite their cramped preparation area. High and low attaining students alike achieved well overall. Any variation in the progress they made was dependent upon the overall quality of teaching of the lesson.

Leadership and management

99. Overall, the faculty functions well, enabling students to achieve well and attain above average standards. The school has been very successful in gaining science college status with innovative curriculum work. This includes science fairs and very effective curriculum continuity, led by the department, between primary and middle schools and the high school. Science co-ordinators of these schools meet regularly to plan work, and science activities during vacation time are used well to promote interest in science. Teachers share expertise by giving lessons in middle schools and thoroughly planning bridging projects, which students start in middle school and finish after transfer to the high school.

100. Each of the three science departments function well as they develop a more autonomous approach. The intention of getting the three departments to run as separate units is hampered by the lack of clear lines of responsibilities, written policies and effective monitoring. Monitoring generally is not as effective as it could be in securing, for example, a consistent approach to the implementation of the national strategy in science lessons and of the policy on marking. The safety policy is out of date and too general and does not reflect the current situation within the department. A good range of visits and other activities meet the needs of interested students, but as yet there is no science club or special provision for the highest attaining students. Overall, the accommodation is good. Sufficient, spacious laboratories, a greenhouse and good use of display provide a comfortable and stimulating environment for students, although the preparation room is cramped and has some health and safety concerns. Since the last inspection, ICT provision and use has improved and students continue to make good progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in the discrete subject of ICT is **good**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A lack of curriculum time has led to some unsatisfactory achievement in the current Year 11
- The department provides very useful additional lessons which support learning
- Very good assessment practice helps students to do well
- A rigorous review of health and safety of the school's ICT facilities is needed

Commentary

Examination results

101. In 2003, about half the students gained grades A* -C in the short course GCSE. Some students take the examination in Year 10 and it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with national statistics. This is the second year that the short GCSE course has been taught to Year 11. It is the first year for the full course GCSE, for which some students opt, and so there are no results for this.

Standards and achievement

102. ICT is taught as a discrete subject to all students in Years 9 to 11. The adoption of the national strategy and its curriculum time for ICT is helping to raise standards in Year 9, where students cover the full range of relevant areas, such as databases, spreadsheets and control. They can write detailed instructions to operate a set of traffic lights. Most of the current Year 10 and 11 students have insufficient curriculum time to achieve their full potential in building on this skills base. All Year 10 students have one fifty-minute lesson a week of discrete ICT where they follow a GCSE short course. This does cover the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Around half the year group take advantage of out-of-hours ICT sessions provided by the department and their achievement is consequently better than for students who are limited to class time. Students opting for the full GCSE have a generous time allocation and standards of work seen were above average. These students were achieving well.

Teaching and learning

103. Marking and assessment play an important role in students' learning and the detailed writing structures provided contribute to good learning. Work is assessed well and students are very clear about what they need to do and how to improve. The department's expertise in assessment is a strength. The best lessons were well planned, following a three-part structure where work was carefully explained. For example, Year 9 students were learning how to write a simple program to operate a pelican crossing. This was demonstrated to the class using a data projector before students were given the opportunity to write a set of instructions for themselves. Students were supported by the teacher as they engaged in the activity, before an effective plenary session where they reflected on what they had learned. There is good support for learning in ICT through the department's website. Where learning was less successful, insufficient time was given to the introduction to tasks and students were set on with work without a clear understanding of what to do. Students of a great range of capability and prior knowledge are taught together and the teachers are often hard pressed to respond to individual students' requests for help. Insufficient extra support is available for students with special educational needs which exacerbates the problem. Teachers work very hard at setting targets for large numbers of students whom they see for just one lesson each week, but some of these are imprecise and are of little value to the students.

Leadership and management

104. The vision for the department is clear, appropriate and is being rigorously implemented. New courses have been introduced and there is a good team ethos. Successful mentoring has resulted in good teaching from less experienced members of the department and courses are very well structured. The detailed scheme of work is regularly reviewed and updated. A system is in place to keep track of students who are not completing the assignments and ICT staff provide well-attended extra lessons in the February half term and during the Easter break to help students catch up and improve their examination chances. The ICT rooms are staffed throughout breaks, lunchtimes and after school to give students access to the computers available. The increase in the number of computers available has not been accompanied by improvements in accommodation and the cabling has not been installed securely. A review of health and safety in the department is urgently required. There are many more computers compared with the time of the last inspection but, considering the issues still to be resolved, improvements since 1998 are satisfactory.

ICT across the curriculum

105. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Examples of good use exist in design and technology where the facilities for computer-aided design are well used. In history, good use is made of websites and in physical education there are well-organised materials kept on computer and a range of monitors and digital cameras are used effectively. Science staff use computers to good effect in lessons, both for data capture and research. In English, mathematics, and some other subjects, however, opportunities to use ICT to enhance the achievement of students are missed. Staff do not feel confident in their own use of computers, and the unreliability of the network deters staff from investing time in computer-based learning. Plans are in place to improve the reliability of the network but staff confidence and understanding of learning possibilities needs to be increased through further training. When students use ICT to support their learning, their competence is about

average. While there has been a substantial increase in the number of machines, the impact of this increased provision on standards has not been monitored. The responsibilities for the leadership and management of ICT across the curriculum are unclear.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strength and weaknesses

- Good relationships in the majority of lessons between staff and students encourage an atmosphere of learning
- Teachers consistently use a wide variety of activities and resources which capture the imagination of students and contribute to achievement
- The team are enthusiastic about teaching and want to continue improving their own practice
- Inconsistencies in marking and assessment mean that not all students understand what they could do to improve their learning

Commentary

Examination results

106. The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below those reported nationally. The department has already put into place new teaching and learning strategies and administration procedures to address the 'dip' in results at the end of Year 9. GCSE results were above the national average nationally. Boys performed better than girls at the highest grades.

Standards and achievement

107. Current standards are average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement is satisfactory. Students can use a range of geographical vocabulary and can speak with confidence within physical geography about contours, relief, valley formation and aspects of climate. Older students are able to converse about factors which impact on human geography – location, choice, tourism, planning and external influences. They use a range of ways to present data and findings, for example on maps, diagrams, annotated sketches and in written text, often word processed for coursework. Expectations of presentation skills are inconsistent across the department and work is sometimes undated, untitled and unfinished.

Teaching and learning

108. There are good relationships between the teachers and students and amongst the students. A small number of boys in Year 9 can be disruptive if not fully engaged in the learning. Work is well structured, with all lessons having clear aims for each session and a context for the learning. Not all lessons have a plenary session and often the end of the lesson is 'rushed'. Pace is good in lessons, however, and teachers are skilled at questioning techniques, which they use well to ensure all the students are involved. Students with special educational needs are generally well supported but teachers do not always relate the work to students' individual education plans. Marking of work tells students what they need to improve but does not indicate how they should go about it.

Leadership and management

109. The leadership is good and the department has a clear vision of how to develop further. The local education authority has encouraged the department to share its good practice with other local schools, with the intention of spreading good ideas and also learn from the experience. Curriculum planning is effective in promoting consistency and continuity in learning. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently effective in improving the quality of teaching and students' achievements. The use of data is improving and records of student progress are used to predict likely future success and set targets with an element of aspiration within them.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Students enjoy history and do well in the subject at GCSE
- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching encourages students to achieve well
- The department has very good staff role models for other staff and students
- Support for literacy and ICT is well planned and effective

Commentary

Examination results

110. GCSE results were well above average in 2003. The proportion of students gaining A*-C grades was significantly higher than in 2002. While girls did less well in history than their other subjects, records for previous years show this is not a long-term problem. Teacher assessments of the standards of students at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003.

Standards and achievement

111. In Year 9, most students move forward well from standards that are approaching above average at the start of the year. Most have secure knowledge of the topics studied and are able to bring good understanding to bear when explaining these. This was shown, for example, in work in which students described the appalling conditions in the First World War trenches and explained why, nevertheless, men volunteered for front line service. In Years 10 and 11, most students show that their studies in earlier years, in which they often revisit topics and issues from different perspectives, have been very productive in developing understanding of links and inter-relationships.

Teaching and learning

112. In all years, the general quality of teaching and learning is good, and sometimes very good. Teaching is characterised by the teachers' own enjoyment of the subject, which is powerful in influencing students' response. Most lessons have a stimulating pace and good planning that provides short, sharp and varied tasks. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They use this to good effect to explain work to students, for example when they analyse historical sources and make links with other periods and events. Teachers understand examination requirements and guide the students carefully on how to get high marks. Frequent writing tasks,

supported by good resources, help students to practice their examination techniques and improve the quality of their writing. In a few lessons, monitoring of students was not as effective as it could have been, so the few less well-motivated students worked in a leisurely way that reduced their achievement.

Leadership and management

113. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and shared commitment to the subject and the students. The department is well run on a day-to-day basis. Good use is made of assessment information to track and support the achievement of individual students. Data is not used well to check the quality of teaching and assessment across the department in Year 9. Curriculum planning is good and data on students' achievements in Years 10 and 11 has been used very effectively to select a new syllabus that suits the capabilities of the students. A strong commitment to ICT shows in several planned activities in the scheme of work for each year group. This is also true of citizenship, with all students receiving a grade in Year 9 assessments. Citizenship activities, however, could be more clearly identified so that students fully understand the relevance of their work in this area. There have been improvements since the last inspection in standards, achievement, assessment, and support to improve writing skills.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strength and weakness

- Standards attained in Years 10 and 11 are below average because students have insufficient time to study this subject
- Year 9 students learn well because they respond positively and are challenged to think about and discuss important issues

Commentary

Examination results

114. There are no religious education results for 2003.

Standards and achievement

115. Students in Year 9 enter the school with average standards of religious knowledge, skills and understanding. Their achievement is satisfactory over the year because their standards at present are average. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement in lessons remains satisfactory, despite their very limited access to the subject. Most have sound knowledge and understanding of religious responses to social and moral dilemmas. They are prevented from developing the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding outlined within the locally Agreed Syllabus by the lack of time. Their overall achievement is therefore unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

116. Students in Year 9 learn well because they are challenged by good teaching to explore their own beliefs and ideas. All teaching was at least satisfactory and there were instances of very good work. Planning for lessons was generally appropriate and matched to the students' previous knowledge and understanding. Assessment is improving. Students are provided with level descriptions that they can use to identify their progress. When teaching was at its best, students asked searching questions. Exploring the beliefs that might be held by a vicar, in a Year 9 lesson, students developed a very clear understanding because of the teachers' skilled questions. Students with special educational needs are involved in lessons, are supported and achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 overall was satisfactory. When Year 10 students explored the impact of the holocaust, they learned and achieved well because the teacher challenged them to consider their own prejudices and reaction to discrimination. Extension work for able students was available to push them further. Good planning of lessons ensures that all students have opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. There were times when the teaching was not well paced and achievement was not as good as it could have been. A small number of students underachieved in one lesson because their recall of 'Jakob the Liar' was poor due to the two-week gap between lessons – this showed the problem that stems from the lack of time for the subject. This slowed the pace of learning for the whole class. Year 10 and 11 students also needed more opportunities to write in depth about what they know, understand and believe.

Leadership and management

117. The programme of study in Year 9 is satisfactory and meets the locally Agreed Syllabus requirements. There is insufficient lesson time for Year 10 and 11 programmes to be taught. Despite satisfactory or better teaching and appropriate curriculum planning, achievements are not good enough. Existing arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning outcomes for students are not as rigorous as they could be. Reporting to parents does not follow the guidance of the Agreed Syllabus, as parents are not informed about standards and what students can do, know and understand in religious education. At the time of the last inspection the shortage of time was an issue and it remains so today; in other ways the quality of provision and outcomes are broadly the same.

TECHNOLOGY

The inspection covered all four areas of design and technology offered at the school – resistant materials, food technology, textiles technology and graphics.

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

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	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

- Good teaching encourages good learning and very positive student attitudes
- Standards in food and textiles technology are well above average
- Effective assessment procedures enable students to improve their work
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are too high
- Good use is made of ICT in designing and manufacturing

Commentary

Examination results

118. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average but students' current standards indicate that this was an over-estimate. GCSE results overall were above average for A* to C and A* to G grades. The proportion of girls gaining A* to C grades was well above their national average and the proportion of boys was above their national average. Girls did better in design and technology than in most of their other GCSE subjects, and boys did as well as in their other subjects. Results for food and textiles continued to be well above average and, in 2003, results for graphics improved to also be well above average.

Standards and achievement

119. Students develop their designing and making skills progressively in Year 9 and overall achievement is good. They take part in research, develop ideas and use good recording skills. Knowledge and skills develop through using a range of materials and techniques. Practical work is good but coursework folders could be better organised and kept, to reflect the positive attitudes and hard work which most students put into individual pieces of work. The well-structured courses, which take place in Years 10 and 11, enable most students to address the requirements of the examination well and, overall, achievement is good. Most students produce well-presented coursework, which contain good research and developmental work. Presentation and recording skills are good. Effective use is made of computers including aspects of computer control, computer-aided design and manufacturing.

Teaching and learning

120. Students have the benefit of some very knowledgeable teachers, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Courses are well structured and planned. In most lessons, a variety of teaching methods are employed and time is used very effectively. Students develop appropriate knowledge and skills as they progress through the courses. They are well managed and taught; they develop positive attitudes and have respect for their own work and the contributions of others. Students show good levels of concentration, particularly when involved in practical work. Many spend a lot of time in presenting their coursework to a high standard and homework is used well to reinforce learning. Marking and assessment procedures are thorough and enable students to improve their work.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management are very good. An effective team approach has been established and systems are in place to enable good use to be made of available time and resources. Departmental documentation is good with detailed programmes of work. Very good use is made of analysis of student data to improve both students' and departmental performance. Assessment procedures are good and being reviewed to make teacher assessments more accurate. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and used well, but the working environment in resistant materials should be better. Many of the strengths seen today were also apparent in 1998 at the time of the last inspection. Maintaining these represents good improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were inspected and reported on in detail. Drama was sampled. The school's provision for drama is very good. Results at GCSE are well above the national average. In their lessons, students displayed a very good command of a wide range of dramatic techniques and worked with enthusiasm and commitment. The quality of teaching was very good and fostered the ability of the students to work independently. Students responded with maturity to the high level of trust placed in them and they valued the guidance they received on how to improve their performances. The very good extra-curricular provision in drama makes a strong contribution to the self-confidence and maturity of the students involved, as well as to their dramatic skills. The subject is very well led and managed, with a clear sense of direction and very good organisation.

Art and design

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

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve high standards in their practical art skills as a result of enthusiastic, knowledgeable teaching and they respond well to high expectations of work and conduct
- Teachers use assessment well to ensure that students are clear how to achieve their potential, particularly at GCSE
- The ratio of boys to girls studying art and design at GCSE is very low compared to the national average so the department should look at a wider range of teaching methods to improve the recruitment of boys
- Students' skills in using ICT as a creative art and design tool are underdeveloped because of insufficient opportunities to use computers in lessons

Commentary

Examination results

122. In 2003 the GCSE art and design results were above average compared with the national picture. The girls' examination results are broadly similar to the national average at grades A*-C but for the highest grades they did very well. The GCSE art and design results at A* - C for the small cohort of boys in 2003 was above the national average. Results have improved significantly since 2001.

Standards and achievement

123. The attainment of girls in Year 9 is generally higher than that of boys, particularly at National Curriculum level 6 and beyond but most boys achieve the expected standard for their age. The standard of practical art skills is good, with the highest attaining students able to draw from observation with accuracy and to create solidity and space in their work as a result of focused teaching. They apply competently and carefully when using watercolour in still-life painting and study the work of notable artists to develop their knowledge and technical skills. Less able students draw with basic competence and limited skills in picture making but nevertheless achieve well in relation to their ability. Students are developing good research skills and extending their knowledge of art and design by investigating artists' work visually. Presentation skills are well developed as a result of high teacher expectations and they improve their literacy and oracy in art and design through discussion and writing about works of art.

124. In Year 10, students build upon their previous skills and quickly demonstrate confidence and competence in drawing and painting, simple textiles and in 3D work. They are able to research effectively using the internet and art books and record their findings imaginatively in their sketchbooks and this is a strength. In Year 11, the quality of presentation is very high and the sketchbooks show imagination, high commitment and motivation. The standard of observation drawing and painting is good but there are insufficient opportunities for students to extend their skills by working on a large scale. Students are knowledgeable about well-known artists but not about contemporary art practice, despite a visit to a London gallery. They research and develop ideas confidently using a variety of resource and reference materials from which they create their final

piece of work but need to place a greater emphasis on direct observation in this process. They know their targets for GCSE and monitor their progress against the examination requirements by an effective process of self and teacher assessment.

Teaching and learning

125. Teaching in art and design is consistently good and this helps students achieve well in the subject. Teachers are well qualified and deployed. Lessons are well planned so that students are productive and hardworking. Quality displays and visual resources are well used to promote learning about art and design and this creates a good ethos for learning. Teachers use practical demonstrations, questioning, praise and instructions well so that students are clear about their tasks but sometimes learning is limited by a lack of opportunity for them to think creatively and offer ideas and opinions. Students have positive attitudes to art and design, behave well and, when given the opportunity, work collaboratively.

Leadership and management

126. The art and design department has positive leadership and sound evaluative processes that have identified areas for improvement. The art rooms are small, resources are of good quality but scarce and this, together with the inadequacy of the ICT provision, is having an adverse impact upon learning and achievement. The displays of students' work in the school are attractive and enliven the social and cultural ethos. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection maintaining several areas of strength, but ICT remains an area of weakness.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of teaching based on very good subject knowledge
- A very good range of extra-curricular music activities is provided
- Expectations are occasionally too high in lessons
- There are sufficient electronic keyboards but ICT provision is otherwise unsatisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

127. GCSE results for the small number of students opting for the course were well above national averages. Teacher assessments in Year 9 indicated that standards were above average in 2003.

Standards and achievement

128. Students make good progress and achieve well when engaged in practical music-making in Year 9, but are less successful in listening and appraising activities. Standards in musical performance and composition are well above average in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10 students are performing and composing very well. Standards of analysis and musical comprehension are also above average.

Teaching and learning

129. Teaching is good across Years 9 to 11 with very good subject expertise and good planning for a broad-based curriculum. Lessons proceed at a good pace and there are effective strategies to involve students in their progress and achievement. Teacher expectations are high, which produces very good achievement in performing and composing especially in Years 10 and 11. However expectations are sometimes too high, for example when students are required to analyse and reflect on music they hear. This occasionally creates difficulties for less able students in this area of the music curriculum.

130. Sixty-five students take instrumental lessons through a subsidised scheme and approaching one hundred take part in a range of extra-curricular activities including two school bands, two rock bands, a jazz band and string ensemble. Bi-annual productions involve a further fifty students. In addition a significant number of students return to the department at break, lunchtimes and after school to complete their practical work. These high numbers reflect the success of the department in promoting music as an enjoyable and challenging activity.

Leadership and management

131. The department is well led and managed with appropriate aims and objectives. Schemes of work are clear and planning is good. A key example of good planning is the carousel arrangement which ensures that all Year 9 students are engaged in two out of the three musical activities in each lesson. Assessment procedures are good, and students are involved in self-evaluation at the end of each unit of work. National Curriculum levels are discussed with students. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with good achievement and above average standards maintained. There is now a small but significant increase in time for music in Year 9. Access to ICT is not always easy, but the supply of electronic keyboards is now sufficient for student needs and an additional ensemble space has been provided.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' very good attitudes and behaviour assist their learning
- Teachers know their students well and usually have appropriately high expectations of them
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities promote students' interest in physical education and sport in general and assist in their good achievements
- In GCSE theory, some students' work is insufficiently detailed

Commentary

Examination results

132. No students have taken the GCSE examination yet in this new course.

Standards and achievement

133. Standards on entry at Year 9 are generally average although below average in some activities that are new to students, but generally attainment is average. Overall, standards seen were average in all areas, representing good achievement. For example in a lesson on service in badminton, girls were able to adjust racket speed to influence shuttle flight and therefore hit targets. This showed a good appreciation of this particular skill. In Years 10 and 11, standards seen were above average in both core and GCSE courses, representing good progress and achievement. In core lessons, students study for the Junior Sports Leader Award and show high levels of confidence and ability in organising and leading activities, particularly in circuit training. In GCSE work, standards seen in a Year 10 lesson on defensive tactics in football were well above average, with students showing very good skills and understanding in pressing and covering space. The more able students showed very good control in a game. They achieved well. In GCSE theory standards were not as high, and average overall. The quality of presentation and content was inconsistent. Some students' work lacked the detail needed for them to achieve high grades. Written tasks were appropriately connected to the physical aspect of the subject, for example in Year 10 on the benefits of exercise in sport.

Teaching and learning

134. Teachers have high expectations of students' standards of dress, their behaviour and attitudes. Relationships between staff and students are very good and students interact well with each other. Teachers deal sensitively and positively with any difficulties that students may have so that there is minimum disruption to learning. Students are given every opportunity to learn in a supportive environment and respond well to good coaching from staff. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work well as a team. They have energy and enthusiasm and this generates a similar response from students. Assessment and recording of students' work is generally good although more attention to detail at GCSE level and higher expectations in theory are needed.

Leadership and management

135. There is a strong sense of purpose in the department. Staff have a good spread of skills and knowledge and professional development is emphasised. Good risk assessment policies are in place and health and safety are addressed effectively. Accommodation and resources are good but there is an urgent need for refurbishment to the changing rooms which are unsatisfactory. The use of the available facilities is complicated by timetabling arrangements which mean a large number of students need to use them at the same time, although the problem is well managed by the department.

136. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available for all ages and abilities of students, for both boys and girls. There is great commitment in terms of time and energy from teachers who are well supported by an array of coaches and other volunteers from local and professional clubs. On one evening, for example, inter-school competitive rugby and football, girls' football training coached by a local professional coach, fitness training and martial arts were all taking place. Large numbers of students are involved in these sporting activities and they are well supported by parents and the local community.

137. The overall quality of provision is better than described in the last report, with better achievement and a greater range of extra-curricular activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

In addition to GCSE courses, the school offers several vocational courses. Each of these is taken by a small number of students who, in most cases, are guided on to them because they are likely to succeed in practical based programmes and a full range of traditional GCSE courses is not appropriate for them. The Awarding Body Consortium (ABC) catering and hospitality course was inspected in depth and most other courses were sampled:

- The course in hair and beauty is certificated by the BTEC. One excellent lesson was seen. This is an effective course in which students are motivated by the relevance of the activities and the opportunities to undertake practical work on their fellow students. In Year 11, all students involved are in line to attain a merit or distinction.
- In enterprise skills one very good lesson was seen. Students were very well motivated, because the very good teaching engaged and involved them in practical work.
- The countryside course is accredited by the ABC at a local college. Work and competence assessments were seen. The course is very well planned and engages students in both the theory and practice of conservation work. Two very good lessons were observed. Students were very well taught in laying a hedgerow and there are strong links to the conservation work being undertaken around The Broads.
- The construction industry course was not sampled, but students on this course say that it is very enjoyable and they are learning important worthwhile skills.

Catering and hospitality studies

Provision for catering and hospitality studies is **very good**.

	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths

- Very good teaching and high expectations of mature behaviour result in very positive students who achieve very well
- Very good assessment procedures give students a clear picture of their progress and how they can improve their work
- Students thoroughly enjoy the course and appreciate the opportunity the school has given them to take part in it

Commentary

Standards and achievement

138. The standards attained by students in Year 10 and 11 catering and hospitality courses are below average compared with national standards as a whole. They achieve very well given that their knowledge, understanding and skills at the start of the courses were often well below average for their age. All Year 11 students are expected to gain the full award.

Teaching and learning

139. The very well planned teaching ensures that learning is very good. Lessons include a range of enjoyable and challenging activities for all levels of ability. Students improve and develop throughout the course their cooking skills, knowledge and understanding of food hygiene, and attention to health and safety. The teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and commitment inspire and challenge students. They manage them very well, encouraging them to become independent

learners as they enter their final year. Their high expectations of mature behaviour create an extremely positive response. Teachers have developed clear procedures that result in very good use being made of time and resources. They give effective explanations, demonstrate techniques and build in an element of realism, as was seen in the preparation of a stuffed chicken meal and Café Italiano. Very clear direction on what they have to do to achieve the necessary standards is given in each session. Learning is well supported by very good assessment and evaluation by the teachers. They have a very good command of their subject. Projects are well planned with stimulating introductions that are often supported by the teachers' own resources. Several students said that they develop their cooking skills by practising at home.

140. Students on the course say that they find the work extremely challenging, but also highly interesting. The way in which these programmes enable students to work independently and in a mature manner is excellent. Students speak very highly of the opportunity and challenge the vocational courses arranged by the school provide for them.

Leadership and management

141. A highly committed team monitor performance of students very thoroughly. They know students' strengths and areas that need improvement very well. They have worked hard with external providers to ensure that students benefit from taking the most appropriate courses available to them. Students' progress is very well supported by the intervention and guidance that they give. The data on each student is well used to plan personal programmes and challenges. The curriculum is enhanced with an interesting range of activities and there are several innovative approaches, such as the ABC programmes being developed successfully. These courses are recent additions to the curriculum and so improvements since the last inspection cannot be judged.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for PSHE was sampled and that for citizenship focused on more closely. PSHE provision is good. It is taught to form classes by teachers who specialise in the area, and some citizenship elements are taught specifically within this provision. Teaching and learning are effective and achievement is good. Leadership and management of the course are also good. The programme is well organised and the school meets its statutory obligation to teach students about drugs and sex and relationships. Teachers plan a good variety of activities and provide a wide range of materials. PSHE activities encourage students to discuss and read information relating to healthy life styles and, by working together, to develop good relationships through mutual discussion of the issues raised. Standards of speaking and listening are good in these lessons. The pace of lessons is good and students respond well and participate fully. The monitoring of students is still at an early stage and more needs to be done to ensure that students make satisfactory progress in all lessons.

Citizenship

Overall the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Citizenship does not have a high enough profile for a National Curriculum subject; systems for covering all required aspects of the course are not fully in place
- Students do have opportunities to participate in activities, discuss in groups and share responsibility, preparing them to become good citizens
- Students discuss controversial issues which assist them in gaining a good understanding of the community

Commentary

Standards and achievement

142. Standards are broadly average when students enter the school in Year 9 and students are positive about the progress they had made during their middle school years. A small sample of work seen indicates that work is of an average standard overall. The standard of discussions and students' interest are good in specific citizenship lessons. Some lessons where citizenship was not the main focus were judged satisfactory on their citizenship element. The lack of focus and clarity on the citizenship elements in some other subject lessons meant that students were not always aware that they were studying citizenship. Achievement is therefore very varied but satisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning

143. Currently citizenship is planned within PSHE for all students. It is taught specifically within some of these lessons. Even within PSHE, citizenship is sometimes not sufficiently well identified by headings and divisions in students' work and in explanations by the teacher. Where teaching is enthusiastic, inclusive and knowledgeable and allows well-led discussions, learning and achievement in citizenship are good.

Leadership and management

144. Topics are relevant and planned for in schemes of work. In most subjects, their contributions to learning citizenship are made clear in planning, but coverage of these components is often incidental. Students do not collect written evidence in a satisfactory manner currently, although this has now been formally planned for the coming year. There is no marking policy and the assessment policy is based on contributions made in classes. Assemblies encourage students to be responsible citizens and some link well to lessons. Students are given opportunities to share experiences, take responsibilities and gain from social activities involving good links with the community. Leadership and management of the subject are uncertain and so currently unsatisfactory. As a result, achievements are not as high as they could be.

145. Citizenship is a new subject and so no judgement can be made on progress since the last inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Data on these examinations is not included as accurate helpful information is not 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
Art and design	3	100	98.6	0	50.2	83.3	87.7
Biology	26	100	96.4	42.3	39.2	83.1	78.6
Business studies	10	100	98.7	10	36.8	68	80.1
Chemistry	8	100	97.6	25	49	82.5	84.9
Communication studies	23	100	99.4	43.5	37.8	84.3	82.1
Drama	10	100	99.5	70	40.1	104	83.6
English literature	29	100	99.5	72.4	46.5	97.9	86.5
French	8	100	98.8	37.5	51.5	82.5	87.6
Design and technology	19	100	97.8	26.3	35	76.8	77.9
General studies	3	33.3	94.7	0	31	13.3	73.1
Geography	17	100	98.7	52.9	44.5	85.9	84
German	4	100	98.4	25	47.9	75	84.8
History	27	100	99	48.1	44.6	88.1	84.6
Mathematics	21	100	96.7	33.3	55.6	79	88.8
Physics	20	100	96.7	25	44.6	73	81.7

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

In this area, English literature and French were inspected in detail and language across the curriculum was judged. English language and German were sampled. English Language is a new course, replacing communication studies. In the lesson observed, students made good progress in developing their skill in analysing texts. They displayed a good understanding of technical vocabulary and an ability to apply the concepts they had been taught. Students reported enjoying the analytical nature of the course. One Year 12 German lesson was sampled. Teaching, learning and achievement were good and standards were average. Students were well focused on all tasks and worked collaboratively with each other. The homework task consolidated class work well.

English literature

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	Good

Main strengths

- Very good teaching combines academic rigour with lively student involvement
- Students bring maturity and commitment to their studies and participate very well in lessons

Commentary

Examination results

146. Results at A-level in both 2002 and 2003 were well above average.

Standards and achievement

147. Lessons observed during the inspection and a scrutiny of written work confirm that current standards are well above the national average. By Year 13, students are writing lengthy, accurate and perceptive essays that display a mature ability to structure a critical argument and follow through a line of reasoning, using appropriate evidence to support a point of view. Students show a very good awareness of the social and literary contexts of the works they are studying. For example, in a lesson on aspects of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales", students clearly understood the conventions of courtly love and were able to appreciate its treatment in the tale they were studying. In lessons, students discuss issues, in pairs, groups or as a whole class, with enthusiasm and insight. Students' achievement is very good because they are accustomed to working at a high level. They use language, especially technical language, with accuracy and familiarity. The level of challenge in lessons encourages them to formulate their own responses to literature, based on a deepening experience of demanding texts, such as in a lesson on "Othello" when they discussed the motivation of the central characters.

Teaching and learning

148. Students' very good achievement results from very good teaching. Teachers know their subject well and are thus able to ensure that lessons are not limited to the particular texts being studied for the exam. For example, students could interpret "Othello" in the context of different dramatic treatments of similar themes because discussion ranged over other Shakespeare plays and Greek drama. Lessons have a sharp focus and are conducted briskly. Teachers convey a real

interest in students' ideas. Consequently, relationships in lessons are very good and students have the confidence to participate fully in discussions. In their marking of essays, teachers provide helpful guidance on how students can improve their work and meet examination requirements.

Leadership and management

149. The leadership of the subject ensures a clear focus on student achievement. There is a strong sense of direction in the department, combining enthusiasm and very good teamwork. The course is very well organised and increasing numbers of students are choosing the subject. The high standards and very good achievement evident at the time of the last inspection have been maintained, indicating good improvement over time.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

150. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above average. Some subjects make good provision for developing students' language skills. For example in science, students have the opportunity to redraft and improve their coursework essays. In history, debate is informed by wide cultural and literary references, for example to Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice" in a discussion on Judaism. However, this good work is not consistently evident in all subjects. Some teachers miss opportunities to integrate into their subject, work to improve students' literacy. Support for improving students' language and literacy skills in the sixth form is satisfactory overall.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some individual lessons are good and very good which students enjoy and do well
- Inconsistency in teaching was apparent between what was observed, which was good, and the quality referred to by the students, which had some unsatisfactory aspects
- The poor examination results at the end of Year 12 and high drop out rate after that lead to uneconomical groups

Commentary

Examination results

151. The results at A level in 2003 were average. Students performed slightly less well in French than in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

152. In the lessons observed during the inspection the small number of Year 12 and Year 13 students were taught together. All students coped well with lessons conducted entirely in French and understood recorded texts relating to problems connected with alcohol after pre-teaching of the key vocabulary. They spoke confidently with good accents when answering questions, reading texts out loud, volunteering opinions or making suggestions. Some Year 12 students had gaps in their knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary, but most coursework fulfils requirements. Students displayed good reading comprehension skills and accessed quite long texts quickly when supported

effectively. Students make good progress from Year 12 to 13 in terms of vocabulary and grammar acquisition and the development of communication skills. The students all referred to having private tuition out of school because of their poor results at the end of Year 12 and the lack of progress they had made in some French lessons in the past.

Teaching and learning

153. The teaching observed was carefully structured and designed to help students make good progress by focusing clearly on areas in need of development. Good use was made of authentic material, including texts from the Internet. This motivated students to achieve well in terms of language acquisition. Some of the oral work was lively and included good question and answer sessions and brainstorms. Students worked well independently and strove hard to improve. Work is marked, but students are not always informed of the level of their work or what they need to do to improve. The students commented that some of the lessons observed were not of a similar format to those experienced most of the time. Usually some lessons consist mainly of relatively boring book work.

Leadership and management

154. Insufficient monitoring of the teaching and learning in French results in inconsistencies and, from the evidence of students' views, a number of weaknesses. The good work generated in some lessons is appreciated by students. Issues for the department are the poor examination results in AS and then the high drop out rate after Year 12, which the students indicated was connected to the quality of some of the teaching they experienced. Students' knowledge, however, is better than evidenced by their books and reflects work carried out with tutors out of school hours. Curriculum planning is sound and assessment records likewise. Average standards have been maintained but students' views and the quality of work indicate that improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered the courses in A-level mathematics and AS-level mathematics. A wide range of modules is offered in pure mathematics, statistics, decision mathematics and mechanics. Students have very good access to the complete range. The GCSE retake course was not inspected.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

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

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Increased numbers are studying mathematics and good achievement is apparent for those with a background of taking GCSE 'Intermediate' papers
- Wide combinations of mathematical options are available for students
- The positive relationships between staff and students are helpful to their learning
- Students have insufficient opportunities for developing thinking skills
- Insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning takes place

Commentary

Examination results

155. The standards attained by students at A level in 2002 and 2003 were below national levels. Students achieved well, bearing in mind their prior attainment.

Standards and achievement

156. Standards currently seen indicate that they are at the nationally expected levels for students following the course and that achievement is satisfactory overall. Some students initially find the pure mathematics more challenging; particularly those with an Intermediate background, but value the extra support given by staff to overcome these difficulties. They report that staff are very willing to provide additional help when requested which enables them to appreciate the subject and make progress. Students can apply the principles developed in mechanics to real life situations. Students from an Intermediate background worked well on the A-level topics, although their basic algebraic skills are relatively weak.

157. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and are prepared to admit when they do not understand and ask for further explanation. They are also self-supportive and help explain difficult concepts to each other.

Teaching and learning

158. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching seen varied from very good to unsatisfactory. The very good lessons were marked by quality planning and the staff's good knowledge of each student's strengths and weaknesses. In one lesson, the teacher used very good reflective questioning techniques when discussing the principles of limiting friction and was able to draw out the concepts from the students. In this lesson the teacher also used paired student self-assessment to enhance learning. In another good lesson on linear programming learning was effective because the lesson had been broken down into small achievable steps.

159. Little planning had gone into the unsatisfactory lesson. Time was spent dictating questions for students to look at, which were then attempted by a student on the board. As other students could see little of what was taking place and were not asked to comment, the process added insufficient to the learning of the class. Achievement was satisfactory overall in this lesson because the students attempted the questions independently. In one lesson the teacher spoke for about four fifths of the time. Students then had too little time to carry out the task set, which was to practise the skills taught.

Leadership and management

160. Subject management is satisfactory. There are good procedures for assessing students' attainment and for setting targets. Students know how well they are doing and this contributes to the progress they make. The leadership is unsatisfactory. The issue of monitoring the quality of teaching needs to be addressed and appropriate support or training put in place to ensure that all students receive the same quality of teaching as in the best lessons. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory with increased popularity of the subject and rising standards, but with some areas of weakness such as inconsistency in the quality of teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

161. The mathematical skills of students are broadly average and students are making satisfactory progress. A sound range of opportunities is provided across subjects in the sixth form. Students are able to apply numerical techniques in a variety of situations. They are confident in the way that they apply their understanding of mathematics.

SCIENCE

Biology, chemistry, physics and psychology were inspected on and reported in detail. The school also offers a BTEC course in applied science. One lesson was sampled in this. This is a new course, started in September 2003. A recent assessment by BTEC confirmed that the course was up to standard and students were progressing well, with several gaining merit level in their coursework. However, a Year 12 lesson in the laboratory on an industrial science module was unsatisfactory. The pace of the lesson was slack, leading to students not achieving as much as they should have in the time available.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good so students achieve well
- Students have very good attitudes to their studies so they start their work promptly and make good use of lesson time
- The marking of students' work helps them to improve but target setting is not used well as a tool for raising achievement
- The department runs efficiently and is well organised

Commentary

Examination results

162. The results in 2002 were above average, all students passed and girls did better than boys. In 2003 the results were similar.

Standards and achievement

163. The standards seen during the inspection were above expectations. Students start the course with broadly average standards, although several begin with lower than usual GCSE science grades. By Year 13, students are achieving well.

Teaching and learning

164. Lessons begin promptly and usually involve more than one activity so that students remain interested throughout. Sometimes however, the activities lack variety. Some practical exercises leave enough scope for students to develop their planning skills whilst others offer opportunities for them to practise their experimental skills. Students are safety conscious, well organised and have a good knowledge of basic procedures. They can identify the main experimental errors and suggest ways to reduce them. Overall, however, fewer experiments are carried out during the course than are usually seen. Students show great interest in their lessons and work very well collaboratively. Teachers assess work well. End-of-topic tests are marked thoroughly with corrections given, essays are effectively analysed and coursework marking is detailed with helpful comments included. Students feel well supported by their teachers. They find the comments on their work and the class discussions on their test performance help them to improve. Not all substantial pieces of work are graded and students do not store their own test marks well, so they lack an overview of their own progress. ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance teaching or to help students develop their skills.

Leadership and management

165. The biology teaching team collaborates well together. For example, schemes of work, which help teachers plan their lessons well, have been completed using contributions from the whole team. Monitoring of teaching, which is part of the performance management of the whole science faculty, lacks sufficient rigour and frequency to ensure that best practice is shared effectively. Examination performance data is analysed appropriately to help with planning. The issue of the weaker performance of boys has been recognised and tackled by providing more synoptic questions to practise. Assessment data is used well to track the progress of individual students. Minimum targets are set for each student but are not yet used effectively to drive up achievement. The biology curriculum is satisfactorily enhanced through trips to revision conferences and extended fieldwork at a specialist centre. The accommodation is good and displays of students' work provide a stimulating environment for study. The teaching and learning in the department are well supported by the technician team.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Insufficient evidence to judge

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain ideas and concepts well, so students achieve well
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good; students respond to and ask questions confidently
- Good curriculum leadership and assessment of students' progress gives a clear impetus to improving standards
- Insufficient monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment takes place in the department in order to share good practice

Commentary

Examination results

166. A-level results have been similar to national averages or above in recent years, including 2002 and 2003. Comparing the chemistry results of students with those they achieved in other subjects indicates that they are doing just as well.

Standards and achievement

167. Students are achieving well in both Years 12 and 13, improving their practical and theoretical knowledge of chemistry. A minority in Year 12 find the transition from GCSE science difficult, because the sixth form work is much more mathematical and conceptual. All are persevering with the AS course because they are so well supported by their teachers, who find additional teaching time when it is needed. Students on the AS and A-level courses in Years 12 and 13 respectively are likely to attain results across the full range, but with a high proportion of A and B grades in Year 13. Standards are currently above average in Year 13 and below average in Year 12. Students in Year 12 showed good practical skills as they worked independently on the preparation of a pure, dry sample of potassium iodate (V) and titrated released iodine in solution against sodium thiosulphate. Health and safety risk assessments were strictly adhered to. Students' knowledge of the chemistry

of the reactions was not as secure as it could have been in several cases, which resulted in some 'recipe following'. In a review of a test taken to assess students' knowledge on Hess's law, they floundered with several of the calculations, until assisted. Year 13 students' knowledge and understanding of redox equilibria, a topic many students find relatively difficult, was good and above average.

Teaching and learning

168. The quality of teaching observed was good overall, with several strong aspects. Relationships between the students and staff were very good indeed, with excellent use of humour in some lessons, keeping the students interested and motivated. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well when answering questions. The pace of work in lessons is maintained through a good range of teacher and student led activities. In one lesson students came out to the board to solve problems, which proved very effective in retaining the interest of the class. A very good 'starter' activity in another lesson engaged the students very well and helped them to find important information in a data book quickly and accurately. Problems which challenge students' understanding are regularly set for homework. Minor weaknesses in these good and very good lessons were insufficient assessment of students' knowledge of important facts, and checking their notes to ensure that they are well organised and appropriate for revision.

Leadership and management

169. The department is in the process of changing from one A-level course to another, one more suited to the capabilities and aspirations of the students. Planning is sound and improving. Resources are satisfactory but greater use could be made of ICT once the equipment is available. Little monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment takes place currently when this could be used to spread the good practice observed in the department.

Physics

Overall the provision in physics is **good**.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Insufficient evidence to judge

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very positive attitudes to learning
- Staff are knowledgeable and the good resources available help students to learn
- The formal monitoring of teaching is inconsistently carried out
- Insufficient use is made of data, which could help match teaching more closely to individual needs

Commentary

Examination results

170. Results in the A-level examination in 2002 were above the national average. Results in 2003 were lower and below average.

Standards and achievement

171. Standards in lessons seen were above average. In a Year 13 lesson, students did calculations quickly and accurately. They worked well in groups to discuss and explain everyday activities in terms of molecular movement and collision theory, showing that they had understood previous work well. Very good relationships created a supportive learning atmosphere, allowing students to present their work confidently and to ask and answer questions of each other. Year 12 students also worked well throughout a double lesson on phasors. They showed their growing understanding of how to add phasors and to explain diffraction through their oral and written work. Students with a broader than average range of abilities take physics. They make good progress to achieve standards which are generally above the national average.

172. Students are very positive about physics. They enjoy the relaxed learning atmosphere and feel that they are treated as adults. They find physics challenging and understand that they need to work hard to succeed. 'Teachers are very supportive, they never give up on you' said the students.

Teaching and learning

173. Teaching overall is good, although lessons seen varied from good to unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers used their very good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons with a good range of activities in them. Students were able to learn through discussion and practical work and teachers assessed their learning through a range of questions and student contributions. In the unsatisfactory lesson, not enough preparation had been done to enable students to achieve the lesson objectives. Poor diagrams shown by the teacher, which could not be seen by the whole class caused confusion and hampered learning.

Leadership and management

174. Leadership of the department is good. The team of qualified physicists work well together. The team has concentrated on improving the scheme of work and tracking its delivery. Teachers know the students well and follow student performance using a variety of data. Technician support for teaching and learning is good. Management of the department is satisfactory. Teaching needs to be more formally monitored so that inconsistencies can be identified and good practice shared. A more in-depth analysis of data, including value added data, would help to develop work to match the needs of all students. Little was said about physics in the last report so no judgement can be made on improvement.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

	Year 12
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well-planned and interesting lessons result in very good achievement
- Students have very good attitudes to their work
- Although the quality of marking is good, the frequency with which students' work is marked is too low

Commentary

Examination results

175. As the course only began in September 2002 students have yet to sit an examination.

Standards and achievement

176. Judging from lesson observation and work scrutiny, students achieve very well. They are likely to achieve at least above average grades when they sit the end of year examination. This is primarily due to their very good attitudes to learning and very good teaching in lessons.

Teaching and learning

177. Teaching is characterised by thorough planning, and a good range of strategies, which engage the students. Great care is taken to ensure that students are exposed to up-to-date psychological research and full, unbiased coverage of the range of models of psychological understanding. Opportunities for psychological investigation are strong features of the work carried out by the students. They bring the subject alive, and lead to good understanding of ethical issues and the need for careful analysis of data. In one lesson, students were studying the behavioural model of abnormality. They successfully gained understanding of classical and operant conditioning as a result of their exposure to an eye-blink investigation which fully engaged them. The teaching of statistics is very successful. It enables students who are anxious about number to use data more confidently. Students demonstrate real enthusiasm for the subject, and contribute their own ideas to lessons, thus supporting the development of knowledge and understanding of each other.

178. The quality of marking of student work is good, giving a clear indication to students of the level they have achieved and of what they must do to improve. The frequency of marking, dictated in part by the demands on the teachers of their other subject duties, does not allow for sufficiently regular feedback, or a regular dialogue with students about the standard of their writing. These are necessary if students are to achieve as well as they could.

Leadership and management

179. Teachers share an exciting vision for psychology. Curriculum planning is detailed and effective. The needs of the subject in the future have been considered with care and good resources are available.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus was on A and AS-level ICT courses, and ICT across the curriculum was judged.

Provision in ICT is **good**.

	Year 12
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths

- The new course is being managed and implemented successfully
- Good class management enables students to learn effectively
- Assessment enables students to make good progress

Commentary

Examination results

180. This is a new course and there are no results.

Standards and achievement

181. Students begin the course with good GCSE results, but the increased opportunities for ICT study in Years 10 and 11 have not had time to impact on the current Year 12. The students taking the sixth form course followed a GCSE short course in ICT and so had a relatively narrow range of ICT skills when beginning the course. The standards of work seen are now average and students achieve well.

Teaching and learning

182. The quality of teaching seen ranged from satisfactory to very good. Evidence from students and their work indicated that teaching and learning over time are good. A particular strength is in assessment, where students are guided very clearly in what they need to produce and what they need to do to gain higher marks. In lessons, good relationships usually lead to a positive learning atmosphere, but this was not always the case and attitudes were sometimes less productive than might be expected in Year 12. Good classroom management skills had to be deployed to enable learning to proceed at times. Students are well supported by their teachers' oral feedback on their work. They are often challenged to explain why they have done things in a certain way, which helps them learn what is needed. The majority of the teaching seen involved students working independently on writing up reports, with the teacher available to offer feedback when required. These lessons were effective. In a theory lesson observed there was a very good focus on examination requirements. Students were engaged with examination practice material, which required them to apply their new learning to specific examination questions.

Leadership and management

183. The new course has been successfully introduced and is well planned. Staffing for the subject has been carefully thought out to take maximum advantage of the strengths of the departmental staff. Successful mentoring has resulted in good teaching from less experienced members of the department and courses are very clearly structured. The detailed scheme of work is regularly reviewed and updated. A system is in place to keep track of students who are not completing their assignments on time. The course is well resourced.

ICT across the curriculum

184. The use of ICT across the sixth form curriculum is unsatisfactory. Some examples exist of subjects referring students to internet sites for research, which is largely carried out at home, and of other uses of ICT. For example in history, a website reference is given for every lesson, in psychology students have developed a booklet using desktop publishing and in business studies computer-based resources support learning well. However, whilst the number of computers is around the national average for secondary schools, students feel reluctant to use them because of their slowness and unreliability. Sixth formers lack dedicated ICT facilities for private study. As for Years 9 to 11, staff lack confidence in the use of computers in the present situation and this aspect of students' learning is not being managed appropriately.

HUMANITIES

In this area, history was reported in detail and geography sampled. Examination results in A-level geography are above the national average, which is an improvement since the last inspection. In a Year 13 lesson, achievement was very good because teaching provided a wide range of activities and resources to stimulate learning. Relationships were good amongst peers and between staff and students.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiastic approach to history is productive in making it enjoyable for students, so that their response contributes strongly to their achievement
- Very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and students' needs helps staff to match support and guidance to individuals
- Teachers, occasionally, do not ensure that all students participate in discussions

Commentary

Examination results

185. A-level results were well above average in 2002. Those for 2003 were above average, but still represent good achievement by the students, when compared with their prior attainment and predicted grades.

Standards and achievement

186. Standards on entry to the course are a little above average for A-level history students. The standards seen in Year 13 are currently above average and, with students achieving well as they embark upon their final revision, many are showing that they can improve further by the time of the examination. Most Year 13 students show considerable depth in their analysis of such topics as the social reforms of the 1906-14 Liberal Government, demonstrating secure understanding of the reasons and awareness of the various historical interpretations.

Teaching and learning

187. Teaching and learning are good over the long term, and lessons seen during the inspection were very good. Teachers have considerable enthusiasm for history and a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. These are effective in generating a very positive response from students and strong guidance to help them in achieving well in their learning and examination performance. Teachers generally succeed in eliciting a high level of participation in discussions. Learning is enhanced by very strong relationships, based upon shared humour. Students' very positive attitudes were apparent in a discussion in which they praised teachers' knowledge, willingness to provide individual support and guidance and ability to make the study of the subject enjoyable. Appropriate depth in learning is provided by tasks that encourage students to adopt an analytical approach when, for example, focusing on such key historical aspects as change, causal relationships and links between events and periods. Students often have good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, such as when independently researching topics and reporting back to the group. Marking of essays is thorough and constructive, clearly identifying what has been done well and what could be improved. Although lessons are usually well managed, teachers occasionally fail to give clear instructions, so that some students do not fully benefit from discussions, as they continue with their own work.

Leadership and management

188. The subject is well organised, with a well-planned curriculum that effectively meets the needs of students. Leadership ensures that the subject maintains a high profile, is popular and provides very good individual guidance and support for students. This is based upon a strong knowledge of their individual needs and awareness of how these can be met. The strength of the vision for history in the school and the extent to which this is shared by all teachers is demonstrated by the very good improvement that has been secured since the last inspection. This has been mainly through maintaining strengths in achievement, teaching and learning and by strongly addressing the main improvement target, which was to provide better opportunities for independent learning.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning mean that students achieve well by the end of Year 13
- Supportive marking and assessment procedures enable students to realise their potential
- Working relationships are very good and foster good personal development and independent learning skills
- Students' knowledge of the use of materials is not as high as their understanding of other areas, and teachers' expectations could be higher at times

Commentary

Examination results

189. Attainment at AS level in 2003 was low, but subsequent re-examination for those who continued the course in their second year improved their grades significantly. In the 2003 A-level examination, almost two thirds of students gained A to C grades and most attained A to E grades. Standards were average. Students make consistent progress through the course and achievement overall is good.

Standards and achievement

190. All students make good advances in knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the course. They analyse existing products, carry out research and are able to develop and evaluate ideas and final solutions. Students follow a series of well-chosen tasks, which develop their knowledge and skills in using materials and become more aware of the role of the designer in using materials and resources wisely. As students move through the courses, learned skills are applied in effective modelling and making but depth of understanding of materials and their application remains weaker. The quality of work in design folders is good. Students consider the conservation and recycling of materials. They explore the use of materials and produce a number of design ideas before developing individual final solutions, which demonstrate good levels of creative thinking. Presentation of work is a strength. Students use a wide range of graphical techniques, including the use of computers, to a good standard. Students show a very positive attitude to their work and spend considerable time in producing their portfolios of work. Working relationships develop well as students follow the course and as a result, personal development is good.

Teaching and learning

191. Shared teaching of the design course is planned and carried out effectively. Teachers have good knowledge of the examination requirements and plan and deliver well-structured courses. Effective team teaching makes good use of teachers' expertise. Teachers generally plan their lessons well but, in some cases, expectations of students could be higher. Setting clearer and more extending targets for learning activities could improve students' work. Regular monitoring and assessment of work, linked to individual feedback to students in lessons, is very effective in reinforcing learning and is enabling students to improve their work.

Leadership and management

192. Leadership and management are both very good. Staff work cooperatively and use their individual areas of expertise well. Courses provide structured and well-organised experiences for students. Resources are used well. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

In this area the courses in drama and music were sampled.

193. In 2002 **drama** results were well above average, and very high in 2003. In the drama lesson inspected, students responded with great maturity to the high degree of responsibility accorded to them for the development of their own learning. The standard of their practical drama was impressive, with a group working on "A Midsummer Night's Dream" producing a performance of a high order. The students were also able to evaluate their performances with perception. The leadership of the subject ensures a clear sense of direction and provides a wide range of very well organised activities within and beyond the curriculum.

194. Teaching and learning in the A-level **music** lesson seen were very good, resulting in very good achievement. Students are committed and enthusiastic learners. As a result of the small numbers, Years 12 and 13 are taught together to good effect. At times they share lessons in theory and analysis, separating for practical work as the need arises. Students' achievement in performing and composing is particularly strong and they contribute significantly to the standards achieved in whole school extra-curricular activities.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In this area the leisure and tourism course was inspected and reported in detail. The school also provides courses in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation, which were sampled.

Very good lessons were seen in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. Students are enthusiastic learners enjoying the courses. Work is very carefully structured to ensure that examination requirements are all met. One-to-one tutorials with each student result in very helpful negotiated targets. Expectations of the students were high and relationships very good indeed. The teacher's very good subject knowledge was used most effectively when questioning the students. ICT skills could have been used more effectively at times. The base for the courses is well organised with easily accessible resources, and this, with the very good teaching, results in very good learning and achievement and highly motivated students.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **very good**.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships in lessons between staff and students encourage an exciting atmosphere for learning
- Teachers use a wide variety of activities and involve students in their own learning
- Good use is made of ICT
- The relatively high percentage of teacher talk when compared with student contributions was unhelpful at times

Commentary

Examination results

195. Results that the vocational courses linked with the leisure and travel sector have been very successful. Vocational qualification leisure and tourism results show that over the period 1998 – 2001 there was steady improvement with students achieving above the national average points score for the subject. Leisure and recreation VCE results for 2002 were well above the national average and in 2003 the results were above average.

Standards and achievement

196. Standards are variable as the classes (GCSE and GNVQ) are all taught together. Overall, in the lessons seen, standards were average. Achievement, however, was very good for students of all abilities. They achieve very well because lessons have a variety of activities which meet the needs of students with differing learning styles. Students have developed good independent learning skills. They select their own materials, follow their own lines of enquiry and make good use of ICT, whether studying event management at Alton Towers or researching eco-tourism in Kenya.

Teaching and learning

197. There are very good relationships between teachers and students and amongst the students. Students take responsibility for their own learning and are happy to support others in their groups when opportunities arise. They have developed good independent learning skills, selecting their own materials, following through their own lines of enquiry and making good use of ICT. Teachers use good questioning techniques and probe answers and opinions from students, but they can talk for too long at times. One-to-one tutorial sessions are most effective in raising students' motivation and keeping individuals focused on important aspects of the work. Staff challenge the students and there is obvious enjoyment in the use of problem-solving skills. Students are encouraged to take the lead in lessons and they learn very effectively from these experiences. For example, in one lesson, students led a brainstorm session, and in another they led in a role-play exercise with the teacher taking on a facilitator / coach role.

Leadership and management

198. Leadership and management of the courses are both very good. There is a real commitment from the team for raising achievement and ensuring that students increase their own self-esteem and take responsibility for learning. The team members work closely together and a good dialogue between teachers improves their own performance. The students are following an appropriate range of assessment regimes and individuals follow different packages of learning which are managed well by the department, resulting in the different qualifications available.

BUSINESS

The business studies course was sampled. In 2002 A-level results were average but they were not as good in 2003. In the sampled lesson there was very good focus on assessment as students planned an essay on business mergers. Very effective learning resulted from students evaluating example essays.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The health and social care AVCE and NVQ early years care and education courses were sampled. The health and social care AVCE course started this year and so there are no results for previous years. The course is meeting the needs of the wide ability range of students on the course. In the lesson observed, the teaching was very good. Students of all abilities achieved well because of the very good guidance and support they received. Students on the NVQ early years care and education course are achieving well. Very good links with local childcare providers enable the students to have relevant placements in the community. In the lesson observed, the very good relationship the teacher had with the students and close monitoring of their work led to very good support and guidance. Consequently the lesson was very good.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

The two areas of general studies and careers were sampled. The AS general studies programme run for Year 12 students has been changed in the current year to one where students have to argue their case if they do not want to take it, the expectation being that all will. In practice most do follow the course, the exceptions being those with timetable clashes. In the two general studies lessons seen, students were well taught and enjoyed the challenge of the work. Wide-ranging topics were studied, with a good focus on current events. Students discussed, for example, the issue of whether Islamic women should be able to wear the veil in this country. This provided good opportunities for debate, with scope for students to make use of their general knowledge to support their views, and to develop their understanding of such a complex issue. In a careers lesson seen, students received good individual tutorial support. The work effectively met the needs of students. Knowledgeable teachers from the school and staff from the Connexions service are providing a good service for the sixth form students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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