

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE RADCLIFFE SCHOOL**

Wolverton

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110532

Headteacher: Mrs E Gifford

Lead inspector: Mrs M J Kerry

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 259314

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	12 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	960
School address:	Aylesbury Street West Wolverton Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK12 5BT
Telephone number:	(01908) 312 579
Fax number:	(01908) 322 718
Appropriate authority:	Milton Keynes
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Norman Miles
Date of previous inspection:	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The Radcliffe School is a mixed age 12 - 18 Foundation School. The main school is smaller than average, but the sixth form is larger than average with considerably more students in Year 12 than in Year 13. The school serves a socially diverse area, with one ward falling within the bottom third of wards nationally and others more economically favoured. A significant proportion of students have low social skills and low attainment on entry to the school. The school is designated as being in challenging circumstances. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and those with statements is broadly average. There are a significant number (13 per cent) of students from ethnic minority background, predominantly Pakistani. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is higher than in most schools and is increasing, although a relatively small number are at the early stages of acquiring English; 170 of these students are supported by designated funding. There are a small number of refugees and asylum seekers. The school is involved in Duke of Edinburgh Award, Project Trident, Young Enterprise and an Excellence cluster.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9931	Mrs M J Kerry	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
9051	Mrs H Barter	Lay inspector	
2739	Mr I Benson	Team inspector	Geography Psychology
12844	Mr M Saunders	Team inspector	English
27416	Mr T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics
32240	Mrs G Kelsey	Team inspector	Science 11-16
18076	Mr H Dodd	Team inspector	Biology
28175	Mrs J Goodman	Team inspector	Art and design
2183	Dr P Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology
19152	Mr R Merryfield	Team inspector	History
31879	Mr D Rhodes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
24887	Mrs Y Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
12475	Mr S Johnson	Team inspector	Music
15590	Mrs S Slocombe	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16 Special educational needs
23268	Dr K Corrigan	Team inspector	Business education Physical education post-16
12003	Dr A Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This school is failing to provide its students with an acceptable standard of education.** In the main school there is significant underachievement in Years 8 to 11, standards of attainment are too low and teaching is unsatisfactory. Management has not been effective in achieving sufficient improvement. The school provides **unsatisfactory value for money**.

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- There is significant underachievement in Years 8 to 11. Teaching is inconsistent in quality. Standards of attainment at age 14 and age 16 are too low.
- The monitoring and evaluation of change, including that by the headteacher, are ineffective and have failed to secure sufficient improvement since the last inspection. The school's rate of progress is too slow.
- Teaching does not set high enough expectations of work and behaviour, especially in Years 8 and 9.
- The good quality curriculum is complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for enrichment and good community links enhance students' learning.
- Governance has been increasingly effective in calling the school to account, but still has some weaknesses.
- Leadership has recognised the right priorities for improvement, but there are still weaknesses in development planning.
- The sixth form provides a cost effective and satisfactory quality of education.

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

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Students do not achieve as well as they could.** In the main school the standards students reach are well below national average and are too low. There has been some improvement in standards achieved at the end of Year 9, but the rate of progress is not sufficient to tackle the underachievement present in the school. Progress in raising standards and achievement is too slow, especially at age 16. A significant proportion of students are not reaching their potential across a range of subjects.

In science, information and communication technology (ICT), art, citizenship, design and technology, geography, music and religious education students underachieve. In mathematics, English, modern foreign languages and physical education achievement is satisfactory and in business studies and history, it is good. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language do not make the progress they are capable of because of deficiencies in the arrangements to support their learning. Those who are gifted and talented achieve in line with their ability and this has been the area in which the school's results have shown improvement.

In the sixth form the situation is better. Standards are in line with the national average and students achieve according to their capability. In the courses inspected in detail, achievement in business

education, English, history and physical education is good; in the other courses inspected it is satisfactory.

The development of students' personal qualities including their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory**. Many students have appropriate attitudes to their work, but there is too much bad behaviour, especially in lessons, which disrupts learning. Attendance has improved since the last inspection but it is still unsatisfactory, especially in the sixth form.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The **quality of education** provided in the main school is **unsatisfactory**. **Teaching and learning** are **unsatisfactory** in Years 8 to 11. There is great inconsistency in the quality of teaching with some which is very good and excellent and some that is unsatisfactory. In too many lessons, unsatisfactory, poor or very poor teaching, lacking pace and challenge and setting inconsistent expectations of behaviour, results in students underachieving. In the sixth form the quality of teaching and learning is good. The curriculum is of good quality and offers students a broad range of courses suitable to their needs. The support, advice and guidance for students is **satisfactory**. Target setting is inconsistent across the school, but is improving. The provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. There are good links with other schools and colleges which support learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are unsatisfactory**, because the work of the school is not effectively monitored and evaluated. The school now has appropriate priorities for improvement and some planning in place to bring about suitable changes. The lack of rigorous evaluation of the continuing and frequent changes in the school means that extensive programmes of improvement have not yielded as much benefit to students as they should have done. The governing body has been increasingly effective in calling the school to account and has begun to contribute to improvement. However, statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship for all students and ensuring that students receive their National Curriculum entitlement to ICT have not been met. This has affected students' achievement and their personal development. The school provides **unsatisfactory value for money**.

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

Parents and students, particularly sixth form students, support the school. Students in the main school are concerned about the inconsistent expectations teachers have of behaviour. Parents feel some confusion about how progress is reported to them, because the grades used on reports do not have a clear and consistent meaning. Students have a good opportunity to express their views through the school council.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

**Develop robust processes of evaluation to use the information gained from monitoring to:**

- Undertake rigorous evaluation of overall school effectiveness, including that of the sixth form.
- Evaluate the effect of major initiatives in order to decide whether they achieve their stated objectives and provide value for money.

**Raise standards of attainment and tackle the significant amount of underachievement in the main school by:**

- Improving the quality of teaching in the main school, especially in Years 8 and 9.
- Achieving a greater degree of consistency in behaviour management.

- Supporting those with middle management responsibilities effectively.
- Ensuring that a range of performance data is analysed and used rigorously to support both individual students' progress and whole school improvement.

**Implement a consistent and rigorous approach to social inclusion through:**

- Ensuring that the provision for students with special educational needs is consistent and co-ordinated across the school.
- Improving significantly the monitoring of progress of students with English as an additional language (EAL) and the liaison with departments to support achievement.
- Meeting the requirement to monitor the achievement of students from ethnic groups.

**Meet statutory requirements for:**

- The provision of ICT across the curriculum in the main school: providing a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Rectify an omission from the prospectus so that parents are informed of the right to withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship.

**And in respect of the sixth form:**

- Improve the monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching and learning across all subjects and courses.
- Make more effective use of performance data to track students' progress, achievement and, as a priority, attendance.



## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE RADCLIFFE SCHOOL

It is of average size and offers a wide range of GCE AS / A-level and vocational courses to meet the learning needs of students, most of whom progress from Year 11 into the school's sixth form.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This inclusive sixth form provides a satisfactory and cost-effective education for its students. Results were below the national average in 2002, but improved in 2003. Standards of work seen are in line with the national average, confirming this improvement. Students achieve overall as well as could be expected and better than expected in some subjects. Their learning benefits from good quality teaching. However, some underachievement is apparent in the small number of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory. There is clear progression in learning through the courses provided and the good support and guidance for students. Levels of students' attendance are too low. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of teaching is good and enables students to achieve as well as can be expected.
- Students benefit from a good quality curriculum with a range of GCE and GNVQ subjects and courses provided at levels to suit their interest and meet their aspirations.
- Students are committed to their life and work in the sixth form and contribute proudly to the wider life of the school and the community it serves.
- Procedures to monitor attendance are poor and attendance is unsatisfactory.
- There are no procedures for monitoring and evaluating the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Good.</b> Standards in English are below average but the good teaching enables students to achieve well. Leadership and management are good.
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are at the national average and students achieve as expected. Teaching and leadership and management are good.
Science	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in <b>biology</b> are at the national average and, as a result of satisfactory teaching students achieve as expected. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards across the courses are average. Satisfactory teaching enables students to achieve as expected. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Humanities	<b>Very good in history.</b> Standards are above average and, because of very good teaching students achieve well. Leadership and management are excellent. <b>Satisfactory in psychology.</b> Standards are above average. Good teaching promotes good achievement. Leadership and management are good.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in <b>art</b> are below average. Good teaching enables students to achieve as expected. Leadership and management are satisfactory
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in <b>PE</b> are below average. Good teaching results in appropriate achievement. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Standards across the range of courses are average. Good teaching enables students to achieve well. Leadership and management are very good.
General education	<b>Satisfactory</b> in the extended tutorial sessions seen.

*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*

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*good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Students have appropriate access to advice and support from tutors, the careers advisers and the head of sixth form or Year 13 manager. There is an increasingly effective review programme that, each half term, monitors progress in academic and personal development. Students value this and appreciate the frankness of the discussions as part of the support provided to enable them to be more effective in organising and managing their work. Students have good access to advice regarding university entrance and guidance on education, training and employment.

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

The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. There are clear expectations of students. There is monitoring of teaching and learning within subjects and sampling of the provision by the head of sixth form. There are examples of good leadership and management practice to be found in history, business studies, English, mathematics and psychology. There are, however, no procedures for monitoring and evaluating the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

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

Most students enjoy being members of the sixth form and value the opportunities provided through the curriculum to prepare for life beyond school. With the new arrangements for tutorial time, most feel that they have a source of personal support and guidance. The atmosphere within the sixth form leads to the development of good relationships. Students feel that there is ready access to subject teachers and tutors.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Standards of attainment in the main school are too low. Although there is a trend of improvement at Year 9, progress is not fast enough to address the underachievement within the school. At Year 11 attainment is too low and there is significant underachievement. Standards at the end of Year 11 have declined since the last inspection when they were below average. In the sixth form, results are below average, but this represents achievement which is satisfactory from students' starting points.

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

- Significant underachievement in the main school is caused by teaching that is too inconsistent in quality and by disruptions to learning which result from students' behaviour.
- Attainment in the main school is too low and is below the school's targets.
- There is now a trend of improvement in standards at the end of Year 9, well supported by the work of local education authority (LEA) consultants.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs and English as an additional language is unsatisfactory.
- There is good achievement in vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form and in history throughout the school.
- Attainment in the sixth form is below average, but this represents achievement from students' starting points which is satisfactory and in some respects good.

#### **Commentary**

1. Attainment has been well below average at the end of Year 9, following a decline from below average standards after the last inspection. There is now a rising trend and overall performance in 2003 is just reaching below average, as work seen in school confirmed. The improvement in these results has been due to improved performance in English. In 2003, there was the first evidence of improvement in the results in mathematics.
2. The performance of the school is below its statutory targets which are realistically based on the students' potential. Performance is also below the school's own very aspirational targets. Although there is now some established progress at the end of Year 9, well supported by the work of external consultants, the school is still not enabling students to reach their potential and their attainment is too low.
3. Standards at the end of Year 11 have declined since the last inspection, when results obtained just after the last inspection were below average. Results are now well below average and, although there is a slow rising trend, there is not the established trend of improvement seen in the Year 9 results. The rise in capped average points score is very slight this year and the overall points score has fallen back. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\*-G grades in GCSE examinations has fallen since the previous inspection. As at Year 9, the trend in improvement is too slow and this is reflected in the fact that a considerable amount of underachievement was observed in the school. Attainment is too low and the decline has not been successfully addressed. The school's own value added work confirms that there is considerable underachievement at Year 11 and performance is below statutory targets.
4. Students are not achieving as much as they could because the quality of teaching is not consistent and some teachers do not manage the challenging behaviour of some students well. In over a third of lessons in Years 8 and 9, achievement was judged to be unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the situation was slightly better with underachievement noted in just over one quarter of lessons. This is because, as students move through the school, they acquire

better learning and social habits and so their rate of progress increases. Overall however, there is a significant amount of underachievement and students are not moving on fast enough to overcome the deficits in learning, literacy and social skills that many of them have when they arrive.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.2 (31.3)	33.3 (33)
mathematics	30.5 (30.8)	34.7 (34.4)
science	29.3 (29.1)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 211 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	25.9 (20.8)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	79.8 (86.7)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	26.5 (n/a)	34.6 (n/a)

*There were 228 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. In most subjects students with special educational needs do not make sufficient progress or achieve as much as they should. Teaching does not always take account of the students' individual needs and abilities and often tasks and activities are too difficult for students with limited literacy and numeracy skills. In some lessons there are too many students who require individual help for the teacher to provide adequate assistance. Where students, either individually or in groups, are supported by teaching assistants they make satisfactory, sometimes good, progress and achieve well, but there are too many lessons where no support is available.
6. Targets on students' individual education plans (IEPs) are helpful in focussing work at an appropriate level but they are used inconsistently. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are not recorded on the special needs register and therefore their individual needs are not clearly identified and support is not provided. Disruptive behaviour is not always managed well and this has an adverse effect on the learning and achievement of all students. Where students are withdrawn from subject lessons for additional literacy or numeracy tuition they make satisfactory progress, but this is at the expense of other subjects, in particular, modern foreign languages. There is a limited number of staff presently available to support students.
7. The situation is different for those students who are gifted and talented. The school makes good provision for these students and their achievement is satisfactory. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of students gaining five or more A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations. This is directly linked to the well-managed arrangements for supporting gifted and talented students, which has enabled these students to achieve to a satisfactory level.
8. The arrangements for supporting the achievement of students with English as an additional language (EAL) are not satisfactory. The support offered to students at the early stages of language acquisition is inadequate. There are no proper progress records to inform teaching and learning, there is a lack of liaison with departments so that lessons are not planned to

allow students to access the learning and there is a general lack of understanding of the learning needs of these students. In subject areas where learning needs are well understood, the learning of students with EAL is well supported, but the lack of effective co-ordination keeps these examples of good practice isolated within a department. The area has not been adequately monitored and supported by senior management. The action plan for EAL, newly in place, is addressing the right areas but it is late in the day, especially given that the school is aware of an increasing number of students in need of English language support entering the school.

9. There is no monitoring of the achievement of ethnic minority students by the school. This is a major omission and does not meet statutory requirements. Inspection evidence indicated that there is not significant underachievement amongst ethnic minority students, but no attempt has been made to monitor and evaluate these students' performance and this is unsatisfactory in terms of inclusion.
10. Although there is widespread underachievement, there are also areas where students achieve well. In history throughout the school there is good achievement. The achievement of students in business studies, both in Years 10 and 11 and post-16, is good. In the vocational area there is good success in raising aspirations for further study and providing appropriate pathways which support achievement. In an area where aspirations for many families are low, this aspect of the school's work is having a significant effect in raising achievement.

### **Sixth form**

11. In the sixth form results in 2002 were below average but this represents at least satisfactory achievement from students' starting points. Results in 2003 improved somewhat and standards of work seen confirm this improvement. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and supports achievement well. The broad range of courses on offer allows students with varying learning needs to make satisfactory progress in their chosen areas of study. In the nine subjects inspected in detail achievement is at least satisfactory. It is satisfactory in mathematics, ICT, art, biology, and physical education (PE). In English, business education and history, achievement is good. Teaching and learning observed in vocational courses other than business supported the judgement of good achievement indicated by the results in these subjects. Standards in the sixth form have been maintained since the last inspection.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98 (97)	94.8 (n/a)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	12.1 (14)	39.4 (n/a)
Average point score per pupil	200.8 (214.8)	214.8 (n/a)

*There were 70 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Although students attitudes are satisfactory, their behaviour is unsatisfactory in the main school. Their personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects is satisfactory, supported by extensive enrichment activities. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Unsatisfactory and some very poor behaviour by a significant minority has a negative effect on the quality of learning.

- Low-level disruptive behaviour, leading to loss of time in lessons, affects the level of achievement.
- The majority of students have positive attitudes to their work and behave well when teaching captures their interest.
- An extensive programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities contributes well to students' social and cultural development.
- Opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of students are limited in many subjects.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship which limits spiritual development further.
- Students' attendance is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

12. In lessons, although many students show good attitudes to work, there are too many examples of disruptive behaviour by a significant minority affecting the quality of learning. This includes instances of very poor behaviour, such as fighting in the classroom. On too many occasions behaviour is rowdy, rude or uncooperative. In some instances even teaching which was good was thrown off track by the persistently bad behaviour of students. This contributes significantly to the underachievement evident in the school. There are also too many examples of low-level disruptive behaviour taking up teachers' time and slowing down the progress of the class so that all students do not do as well as they should in the lesson.
13. When students with special educational needs are withdrawn from subject lessons to the special needs base they concentrate, behave well and are interested in their work. Because their learning needs are met within very small groups focussing on literacy and numeracy tasks they behave well. In class, however, instances of inappropriate or disruptive behaviour are not well managed by some teachers. Students with very disruptive behaviour are referred to a Progress Centre that has recently been established within the school. Here they receive appropriate guidance from teachers and mentors. The liaison between the special educational needs department, the in-school Progress Centre and the mentoring programme is not sufficiently close. As a result, the support programme for students with disruptive behaviour lacks consistency, clarity and coherence.
14. The school has a clear, well formulated policy document for behaviour management. It is not consistently applied across all departments. Students themselves rightly feel that the policy should be more strictly implemented. Because many students enter with low levels of social learning and behaviour which is undisciplined, this inconsistency leads to too much unsatisfactory and disruptive behaviour. Racist incidents are rare and the students feel that the instances of bullying that occur are dealt with effectively.
15. Around school behaviour during inspection week was satisfactory. Despite corridors which are narrow and space which is restricted in the dining area, behaviour is satisfactory when moving between lessons, at lunchtimes and before and after school. Members of the senior management team play an effective role in ensuring an orderly, if sometimes noisy, environment.
16. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The strengths are in social and cultural development. The co-ordination of the school's policies for the personal development of the students has been improved since the last inspection, with senior staff having responsibility for each key stage. A well-structured assembly programme effectively introduces students to a suitable range of topics including drug use, sexual behaviour, racial prejudice and bullying. However, the very limited number of assemblies and the lack of any tutor-based alternative, means that the impact on students' personal development, including their spiritual development, is limited. This year the structure of the school day has been changed, resulting in shorter tutor time. Planning on how to use this restructured tutor time, including how an act of collective worship might be included, has been inadequate.

17. The opportunities for spiritual development are limited in many subjects. The spiritual development of students is unsatisfactory overall and in a number of lessons students showed a lack of respect for the views and beliefs of others. Good examples of work promoting spiritual development were seen in English, history and religious education, but, as with other aspects of the school's work, they remain isolated within departments. Moral development is satisfactory overall, with the school's behaviour policy laying a strong emphasis on knowing right from wrong. Some subjects contribute well, such as history where students explore the morality of events such as the Holocaust and citizenship, where the issues of racial stereotyping are discussed. However in many subjects there is little opportunity provided for moral development. Provision for social and cultural development of the students is good. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is outstanding. Students gain good experience of the workings of democracy and have a worthwhile opportunity to show leadership and responsibility through the school council. Work from other cultures studied in subjects such as music and art enables students to increase their understanding of different cultural traditions. Attendance at after school clubs provides students with special educational needs with a range of good opportunities to develop their social skills by mixing with others, broaden their interests and increase their knowledge.
18. Students' attendance is unsatisfactory, with particular weakness in the sixth form. Attendance in the main school is below the national average, although in 2003 levels have approached the national average. Attendance is significantly below the school's own aspirational but realistic target of 92 per cent. The school, in conjunction with the educational welfare officer, works hard to monitor absences and to impress upon students and parents the importance of regular attendance. As a result, there has been some improvement in overall attendance levels, although there are still some persistent non-attenders and some students who truant. In some tutor groups issues relating to attendance are not rigorously dealt with and in some classes there is confusion about the exact number on roll. Punctuality to school and at lessons is satisfactory.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002 (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.5	School data	1.4
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

## Exclusions

There has been a significant reduction in exclusions since the last inspection. The number of fixed-term exclusions is broadly average for this size of school. Some students are supported within the Progress Centre rather than being excluded from the school and this has resulted in a reduction of the number of permanent exclusions.

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	745	58	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	63	1	0

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

## Sixth form

19. Students enjoy being members of the sixth form and benefit from the many opportunities provided for them to develop as learners and people. The majority of students respond well to the clear expectations the school has of them, their behaviour and attitudes. They benefit greatly from the school and are proud of the many ways in which they contribute to its life and work, for example, in the SEN paired reading programme, through contributions to main school assemblies, by charity fund-raising and by guiding visitors during open evenings. They respond well in lessons, show positive and mature attitudes and a capacity for independent learning.
20. Attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The school's expectations for students' attendance have been made clearer this term. However, overall, the procedures to monitor attendance are poor. The lack of effective procedures means that the school is unable, for example, to account for the exact numbers of students present on-site during morning or afternoon sessions. This is a health and safety concern.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is unsatisfactory in the main school because teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The overall quality of education in the sixth form is satisfactory, with teaching and learning that are good.

### Teaching and learning

In the main school, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Too much teaching which is unsatisfactory, poor or very poor leads to underachievement. In the sixth form good teaching and learning lead to satisfactory achievement, with good achievement in some courses. Assessment is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the main school is unsatisfactory, with some which is poor or very poor.
- Teaching in Years 8 and 9 does not set high enough expectations of work and behaviour.
- Teaching which is satisfactory often does not enable students to achieve enough, because of their learning deficits, or problems with disruptive behaviour.
- The teaching of students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory and has declined since the last inspection. Support in class for students with EAL does not meet their learning needs.
- There is a significant proportion of teaching which is good or better and there are some examples of excellence.
- Even teaching which is good is sometimes undermined by the bad behaviour of some students, depressing achievement.
- The assessment for learning policy is improving the quality of assessment and students' knowledge of their own learning.
- The quality of sixth form teaching and learning has improved and is good.

### Commentary



21. There is a significant difference between the quality of teaching in the main school and that in the sixth form.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 166 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	29 (17%)	63 (39%)	48 (29%)	16 (10%)	4 (2%)	2 (1%)

*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.*

22. In the main school, the teaching in one in six lessons is unsatisfactory, poor or very poor and teaching overall is unsatisfactory. Students' learning typically lags behind the teaching, as might be expected in a school in challenging circumstances, where learning and social skills are less developed. Students' learning in the main school is unsatisfactory.
23. In over one third of lessons in Years 8 and 9 and in just over a quarter in Years 10 and 11, there was underachievement. There were two main reasons for this underachievement: the bad behaviour of students disrupting learning and weak teaching. Sometimes just one factor led to unsatisfactory achievement, but more often a combination of factors was involved. The ethos for learning in classrooms is fragile and can be easily lost as a result of bad behaviour or unexpected events, such as difficulty with a video. Once the momentum of the lesson is lost it is difficult to get things back under control. This is an environment where less skilled teachers or those who are inexperienced find it particularly difficult to cope. Generally, when teaching is effective learning is successful, although often teaching which is no better than satisfactory does not enable students to achieve as well as they might. On occasions the persistent disruptive behaviour of students can undermine even teaching which is of good quality, again resulting in underachievement.
24. There has been some improvement in teaching since the last inspection, with a higher proportion which is good or better. In the main school about half the teaching now falls into this category. Of this, one fifth is very good or excellent. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in English, history and business education. There is a significant amount of good quality teaching and this is a strength. Improving the quality of teaching has been the main focus of improvement work in the school over five years. There has not been sufficient improvement since the last inspection, especially in the teaching in Year 8 which was a specific weakness at that time. There are pockets of good and excellent practice, but this good practice has not spread effectively through the school and raised the quality of the teaching. This is a serious concern. The lack of consistency in students' learning across the curriculum and in the management of their behaviour, means that too many do not make sufficient secure progress. Only some subjects are making a strong enough contribution to developing learning skills. In addition, the support for basic skills development through the provision for literacy and language, mathematics across the curriculum and ICT competence is not given sufficient emphasis.
25. The teaching of students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory because work in subject lessons is not always well matched to their needs and abilities, disruptive behaviour is not managed effectively and there is insufficient support provided in subject lessons. Where teaching assistants are deployed they provide effective support. In the special needs base where students are in small groups with much individual attention, teaching is satisfactory.
26. The procedures in the special educational needs department for identifying students with low levels of literacy and numeracy are not adequately co-ordinated with the English and mathematics departments. As a result, students' progress and achievement is not closely monitored. Some teachers use students' individual education targets to inform their planning, but this is not consistent practice throughout the school.

27. There are weaknesses in the teaching of students with EAL in the early stages of language acquisition. Lack of liaison by the co-ordinator with departments means that the subject lessons these students attend are not planned with sufficient regard to their learning needs. The support given in class is inappropriate for the students' needs. There are examples of good practice in the teaching of these students, but they are isolated within departments.
28. Many teachers have a good command of their subject and plan learning effectively. Where teaching is weaker, it is in terms of expectations, especially expectations of behaviour and the challenge offered to learners. In a number of subjects in Years 8 and 9 the pace of lessons was not sufficiently brisk, leading to a use of time that was not wholly effective. Teaching in Year 8 was a weakness at the last inspection and has not improved sufficiently. Students' application to learning is unsatisfactory when they enter the school and this continues during Years 8 and 9. Their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is also unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9.
29. In Years 10 and 11 students' application has improved to satisfactory and by the sixth form it is good. There is a similar increase in students' capacity to work independently. The strongest feature of students' learning is their knowledge and understanding of how to improve. This is an effect of the school's work on target setting. However, although this is satisfactory, there is still a significant degree of variability, so typical of much of the work of this school and students' understanding of how to improve is weaker in Years 8 and 9.
30. There is a significant proportion of teaching which is of high quality, found across a range of subjects. Very good or excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, PE, religious education, business education, science, art, and health and social care. In these instances stronger practitioners overcome the fragile learning ethos and really push students on.
31. The use of homework to support learning was satisfactory or good, except in science and modern foreign languages, where it was unsatisfactory.
32. Assessment, although satisfactory, has some important weaknesses and again these are in Years 8 and 9, rather than in Years 10 and 11. The thoroughness and consistency of assessment in Years 8 and 9 are satisfactory, but its responsiveness to individual learning needs is unsatisfactory. This, combined with weaknesses in teaching, is a significant factor in explaining why a good quality curriculum, which should enable students to achieve, is not having better success.

### **Sixth form**

33. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good, with very little that is unsatisfactory and three quarters that is good or better. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, this is related to weak subject knowledge. There is good pace and challenge, time is used well and the learning of students, who by now have reasonably well developed learning skills, is good. In the sixth form there are high expectations of behaviour in classrooms and students' behaviour in class is very good. Students are well motivated by the broad range of courses on offer, including those who undertake vocational courses.
34. Assessment in the sixth form is good, particularly with regard to individual learning needs. This means that students know how to improve. Students apply themselves to their work well. They are encouraged by teachers to work independently and their capacity for independent learning is good.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is of good quality and is complemented by a wide range of learning opportunities to support the development of students as learners and people, including in personal, social and health

education (PSHE), extra-curricular activities and enrichment programmes. There are clear progression routes through the school that prepare students well for life beyond school. Provision for students who have special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good quality curriculum is complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for enrichment.
- Progression in learning from age 14 – 19 is well planned.
- Students are provided with a good range of subjects and courses that offer a variety of accreditations at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form.
- Provision for students who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

35. The school provides a broad curriculum that is of good quality. The translation of the school's embryonic curriculum policy into provision has resulted in an innovative and well-conceived approach to meeting the learning needs of students in Years 8 to 11. The three "routes to success" - foundation, intermediate and higher - enable a variety of approaches to be adopted to learning in the National Curriculum and religious education (RE), complemented by other subjects, a wide range of extra-curricular activities and the enrichment programme. The aim is that the provision within the three flexible curriculum routes will more effectively support students' intellectual and personal growth. For most students the provision is appropriate. Within each route there is significant movement in order to ensure that each student is more appropriately challenged and can achieve well. However, moving students between the routes is less frequent and requires quite radical changes for students.
36. The strength of the curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is found in the range of opportunities available to them. All students study core subjects, including RE and also select from a range of options leading to a mixture of GCSE courses in academic and vocational areas. There is an alternative curriculum option focused on work related learning. Students following this latter option benefit greatly from the experience but also make good gains in their self-esteem and are able to plan confidently for their future. All students receive good support and guidance in making these key decisions about their future learning. As a result, the progression route through the curriculum for 14-19 year old students is clearly established.
37. This approach to providing a rich and varied range of opportunities to meet students' learning needs is cost-effective. However, there is currently no system to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.
38. The provision for students who have English as an additional language is unsatisfactory. Students in the early stages of language acquisition do not always have appropriate support for their learning. Their access to the curriculum is limited, their progress is not systematically monitored and the overall effectiveness of the provision is not evaluated.
39. The provision for students who have special educational needs is unsatisfactory as students' needs are not identified and assessed appropriately, insufficient support is available and students are withdrawn too often from subject lessons. Not enough guidance on suitable teaching strategies and resources is provided to assist subject teachers to meet students' needs. The co-ordinator has been in post less than a year and has rightly concentrated initially on ensuring that statutory requirements are met. There has been insufficient support from senior management and the area has not been monitored closely. Good provision is made within the programme of withdrawal for basic skills learning. However, the amount of support in mainstream classrooms is inadequate. There are students with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have not been assessed and placed on the special educational needs register

of the Code of Practice. Curriculum support for such students is, as a result, not always available and thus their behaviour in lessons deteriorates quickly and disrupts learning. The special needs base is adequately resourced, but lacks sufficient working computers.

40. Planning to meet the needs of gifted and talented students has recently been revised and procedures now in place are good. Students participate in special projects, some out of school, which are designed to stimulate their interests and expand their knowledge and understanding. Teachers are expected to provide tasks and activities that are appropriate to the students' abilities and which will extend them fully.
41. Good opportunities are provided through the wider curriculum, including PSHE and citizenship and the extensive extra-curricular and enrichment programmes to support students' personal development. Study support programmes, high levels of participation in lessons and the sporting and cultural life of the school enable students to develop positive attitudes and personal qualities. Within the taught curriculum students have many opportunities to explore issues that relate directly to them and to the future. Their responses, for example, to worldwide problems show good levels of understanding and the ability to empathise with the moral and economic dilemmas faced by others.
42. The school is fully staffed and deployment is generally satisfactory. There has been a regular turnover of staff and this has particularly affected mathematics, ICT and design and technology. Accommodation is appropriate to meet the needs of the curriculum and resources for learning are adequate.

### **Sixth form**

43. The post-16 curriculum is of good quality. It offers students a comprehensive programme of specialist teaching in academic subjects and a range of vocational courses that can be accredited at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught within each course. This wide range of provision is enhanced by other learning opportunities that include general studies, RE and a well-planned enrichment programme.
44. The 14-19 curriculum is planned to enable clear progression in learning from the main school into post-16 courses. However, although the admission criteria for the sixth form are well known to Year 11 students, they are not clearly stated for parents and applicants from outside the school. Students in the school receive clear guidance and advice regarding admission to subjects and courses. Their transfer into post-16 subjects and courses is carefully managed.

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

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Students are provided with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to express their views about the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students have good and trusting relationships with staff and feel well cared for.
- Not all staff have the same expectations of behaviour and this is a cause of concern to students.
- There is good quality support for those students who are at risk of dropping out of school.
- The school works effectively with outside agencies to care for its students.
- There are good induction arrangements for students who are new to the school.
- The use of target setting to help students know how to improve is improving.

### **Commentary**

45. The school cares well for its students. Most parents feel that students are treated as individuals and are given good support. Students have good relationships with staff and say that they support them well when they have concerns. They feel that bullying is dealt with properly by senior staff. Students are rightly concerned, however, about the way in which behaviour is managed in the classroom and the impact that this can have on their sense of well-being and the quality of support and guidance offered to them in some lessons. Inspection evidence supports both the positive and negative views of students. The school council deals with significant matters and provides a good forum for students to contribute to the life of the school.
46. Arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare, health and safety of all students, including any who are at risk or in public care, are good. Students who are unwell or who have specific medical needs are well cared for by the matron. The school works effectively with the support agencies available to help students who are at risk of exclusion or who are disillusioned with their education. Mentors for learning, attendance and induction support individual students well when they are at risk of becoming disaffected from school life. There are good induction arrangements for students transferring from their primary schools which help them to settle in well to new routines.
47. The pastoral care available to students is well led and managed by year managers and senior staff. Most tutors use their time with students well to set expectations, for example, for homework and attendance, although some tutors do not check student planners regularly. Teaching assistants play a good role in supporting students in lessons. Students, especially those with special educational needs, do not achieve as well when such support is not available. Most teachers offer students sound support, advice and guidance, both in lessons and in feedback to them when marking their work. Target setting, which helps students learn how to improve their work, is improving although it is not used rigorously by all subject departments. Students are provided with satisfactory advice and guidance when making choices about careers or future studies.
48. The procedures for identifying and assessing students with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. Whilst poor literacy and numeracy skills provide the main criteria that trigger an individual education plan and in some cases additional support, students with emotional and behavioural problems are not systematically identified and assessed. Support is not well targeted on those with the greatest need. The procedures for the annual review of students with statements fully meet statutory requirements. Good relationships help students to have confidence when talking to staff and to be receptive to advice and guidance.

## **Sixth form**

49. The quality of support, advice and guidance offered to students in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. The strength of the support is in the knowledge that teachers have of students and, in many cases, of their families. However, the monitoring of students' attendance is wholly inadequate. Students are positive about the sixth form and feel well supported both in lessons and in terms of the advice that they receive about what to do when they leave the school. The regular tutor period makes good provision for informal tutor-student contact and for offering advice about higher education or careers counselling and guidance. The "Aim higher" initiative also provides good encouragement and advice for students, including those who are gifted and talented, who wish to apply for higher education placements.
50. Formal progress reviews ensure that students have a regular opportunity to discuss any concerns they have about sixth form study and the demands of sixth form life. Students appreciate the frankness of the exchanges during the review. Most of the targets set at reviews are challenging. Students who are causing concern are the focus of more detailed monitoring.

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

There is a satisfactory partnership with parents. The school makes good use of the wider community and partnerships outside the school. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has satisfactory links with parents.
- The reporting of progress is frequent, but the grades used are ambiguous and confusing for parents.
- The school deals well with parents' individual complaints and concerns.
- The school has good links with the community.
- There are good educational links with other schools and other institutions.

### **Commentary**

51. The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Parents are well informed about aspects of the organisation of the school and about the beliefs and values that underpin school life. They receive half termly progress checks and an annual report on their child's progress. Reports are produced to a common format, show targets for improvement and often include much helpful comment for parents about how improvement might be achieved. However, the grades given for achievement on the report are confusing and there is sometimes a discrepancy between end of year examination results and the comments offered on students' performance.
52. Parents generally support the school, although at present the school has no formal means of seeking their views. There is the opportunity for parents to be more closely involved in the work of the school through the very recently introduced mentoring scheme, but as yet it is too early to evaluate its impact.
53. The school makes good use of the local area and community to enrich the curriculum for all students. Visits to art galleries, museums and local sports clubs in Milton Keynes, for example, extend students' experiences outside the school environment. Students are able to demonstrate their musicianship in performances at local theatres and at the Royal Albert Hall. Students undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award participate in voluntary community activities, such as working with elderly people and youth clubs, which contribute well to their learning in citizenship. Students engage in charity fundraising, Young Enterprise schemes and community projects which promote their social development well. Members of the governing body are active in developing the school's role in the community and in promoting a positive image of the school as part of the regeneration of the local area.
54. The school has good links with other schools through its membership of the Excellence Cluster. Where possible, the school extends students' experiences by giving them opportunities to work with other students in middle and primary schools. Regular meetings between teachers and senior managers extend the curriculum links between the primary and secondary phases. The school is developing a good range of sporting links with other schools and clubs as part of its bid for Sports College status. It makes good use of its business partnerships to extend opportunities for students' learning both in and out of school. These are wide-ranging and are well matched to students' needs; for example, there are business days for more able students and work experience and placements as part of some students' extended learning programmes.

### **Sixth form**

55. The partnership with parents continues into the sixth form. Parents are well involved in reviewing areas of concern, arising from the progress review, monitoring of attendance or the annual report. The school and home work effectively in support of each student.

56. Links with partner middle and other schools are strong. Sixth form students are proud of their ambassadorial role in working with younger students both within middle schools and in local community projects. Well over four-fifths of sixth form students are involved in such programmes and they benefit greatly from the personal and organisational skills they develop.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership, including that of the headteacher, is satisfactory. Management, including that of the headteacher, is ineffective. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection and progress that has been made is not secure. The significant weakness in implementing and evaluating the very frequent changes introduced is the main reason for the school requiring special measures. Governance is unsatisfactory, because it has not ensured that statutory requirements are met and this has a significant impact on students' achievement and personal development. Governance is increasingly effective in calling the school to account and contributing to improvement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Monitoring and evaluation, including that by the headteacher, is poor.
- The lack of effective evaluation of the impact of change is a major weakness, especially given the scale of recent and continuing change and the introduction of costly initiatives.
- The distribution of management responsibilities is inequitable and incoherent and does not support effective educational improvement.
- Governance has been increasingly effective in monitoring and calling the school to account, but there are weaknesses in ensuring that statutory requirements are met.
- The identification of the correct priorities for school improvement has set the school on the right track, but progress is too slow.

### **Commentary**

57. The most significant and fundamental weakness is insufficient understanding by the headteacher and leadership group of how to monitor and evaluate the effects of change. New initiatives are frequently being put in place or previous ones restarted. Although these initiatives may be appropriate, they are not securely evaluated in terms of their impact on standards. Because of this, overall performance is not moving forward as fast as it should. The school is a fragile organisation; improvement that has been made is not secure and the rate of progress in improving teaching and learning and tackling underachievement is too slow. Where sustainable improvement has been made so far, it has been materially assisted by the work of LEA consultants working with teachers to implement the Key Stage 3 Strategy.
58. Ineffective management adversely affects a number of areas of the school's work. The most significant examples are:
- The quality of teaching is not subject to rigorous monitoring and consequently there is too much variation leading to underachievement by significant numbers of students. There is a lack of understanding by the headteacher and senior managers about how to monitor and evaluate effectively. Teaching and learning suffer and the impact of improvement work is not sufficient, despite considerable effort expended by middle managers.
  - Students' behaviour is not well managed with expectations based on a consistent implementation of the behaviour policy. As a result, students do not know what the boundaries are. The ethos for learning, especially in some classrooms, is fragile.
  - The school has sought, through a major programme of individual coaching and mentoring for teachers, to improve the quality of teaching and learning, but this has not been effective. The teaching and learning policy on which improvement is based, is very recent and is weak. It does not define what practice at this particular school, with these particular students, needs to be in order to improve achievement.

- The school sees the curriculum team leader structure as a major driver of improvement, but it is not working effectively. Inspection evidence shows very variable effectiveness in the spreading of good practice, which is a major thrust of this initiative. The weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation mean that the school is not in a position to assure that this very costly arrangement is giving value for money.
- The headteacher and senior managers have not successfully dealt with long-standing problems identified in the last inspection report, notably in design and technology and ICT. A number of areas have made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.
- Senior managers have neglected important areas of the school's work. For example, the time of the senior manager currently responsible for inclusion has been diverted to other priorities. This was at a time when provision for both students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language needed urgent attention and monitoring. This has resulted in underachievement for these students.
- The school does not monitor the achievement of ethnic minority students. This is a breach of statutory requirements and a serious weakness in the school's inclusion practice.
- The responsibilities of senior managers lack coherence and equity. For example, major responsibilities for data analysis and strategic financial planning are borne by one deputy headteacher. As a result of this overload there has not been sufficient rigorous analysis of data to evaluate effectiveness.
- The management structure does not give sufficient emphasis and recognition to some leadership roles. For example, the lack of a citizenship co-ordinator to manage and lead the subject on a day-to-day basis means that provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- Many of those responsible at middle management level for leading areas of the school's work feel unsure in their responsibilities. Although roles have been clearly defined through job descriptions, these managers have not received effective support from the headteacher and senior managers to put those roles into practice. This includes some curriculum team leaders, who have a major whole school responsibility for improvement in addition to a significant teaching timetable.
- Staff morale is low and a significant number of staff lack confidence in management.
- Until very recently senior managers failed to provide teachers with a suitable database drawing together the various sources of information on progress which are available. This led to onerous procedures for analysing data which took up teachers' time and adversely affected the analysis of data to support students' learning. There is now an assistant headteacher with a specific brief to improve the quality and usability of the data supplied to staff.
- Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation mean that the school cannot evaluate value for money rigorously.

59. The leadership of the headteacher and of senior managers is satisfactory. The senior leadership group has, only recently, identified priorities and taken action that has achieved some improvement. Prior to this, progress on improving standards had stalled, following a decline after the last inspection. It is only recently that the school has recognised inclusion and achievement for all as significant priorities for improvement. Even now, however, the school development plan does not focus sufficiently on increasing average points score. There is still a preoccupation in the school's thinking with the threshold measure of 5+A\*-C. The work on formulating a teaching and learning policy is a right priority. There has been good leadership in curriculum innovation.
60. The school has made a good start in planning to identify and raise the achievement of specific groups of students. Increasing the focus on achievement, especially the plan in place for Years 8 and 9, is a step in the right direction. Planning for specific groups of students in Years 10 and 11 is weak, however, in terms of how these students are to be identified and, especially, in how the success of the plan is to be monitored and evaluated. As this is a key area of the school's work, this is a significant weakness.



61. Governance overall is unsatisfactory. However, it is beginning to make an important contribution to improvement. The governing body has improved its procedures and monitoring and is increasingly effective in calling the school to account. Governors are becoming aware of where the school's main strengths and weaknesses lie. Their monitoring is now extending from the performance of departments to the work of the headteacher and the leadership group. This is the area of governance where greatest development is needed.
62. The headteacher and governors have not been effective in ensuring that statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is met and that the curriculum for ICT was properly in place. These were key issues in the last report. These omissions have hampered students' spiritual development and their achievement, not just in ICT as a subject but more widely across the curriculum. Following the last inspection governors ensured that the school was properly resourced with computer hardware, but their monitoring has not been sufficiently effective in establishing how well this supported students' learning. The importance placed by governors on the Specialist College bid, although motivated by an understandable desire to take the lead in community regeneration, did not show a good understanding of the effectiveness of the school itself. Recently, governors have become very closely involved in activities such as formulating a policy for collective worship or redrafting the complaints procedure: whilst this work has been undertaken with the best interests of students in mind, it is coming very close to undertaking an operational rather than a strategic role.
63. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Although there have been some significant improvements, notably to the curriculum, there has not been sufficient improvement in standards, the quality of teaching and learning and achievement.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,899,259	Balance from previous year	112,726
Total expenditure	4,011,162	Balance carried forward to the next	823
Expenditure per student	4,112		

**Note re budget:** These balances relate to the budget for recurrent expenditure set by governors for this year. The school also has a deficit of £291,670 licensed by the LEA in connection with costs incurred following a fire in 2000 which destroyed the art and music accommodation. A capital balance as at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2003 of £140,802 relates to monies still owing for the new art and music block which has been completed this term.

## Sixth form

64. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The clear expectations set by the school inform the work and educational direction of the sixth form. A weekly assembly and daily tutorial sessions help to reinforce the aims and values that underpin its organisational effectiveness. The sixth form currently operates within its funding limits.
65. The management of the sixth form is satisfactory. Recently some clear procedures have been established for hearing students' views and monitoring attendance and progress. These contribute positively to a more effective approach to the half-termly progress review. Within post-16 subjects and courses management is excellent in history, very good in business studies, good in English, mathematics and psychology and satisfactory in the remainder of the subjects inspected in detail. Teaching and learning are monitored by each curriculum team leader and sampled by the head of sixth form. The sixth form is cost-effective and contributes

much to the school's life and work. There is, however, no procedure for evaluating the impact of teaching on standards and achievement, or of the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong team ethos of the department encourages generally high standards of teaching.
- Students do not make sufficient progress in Years 10 and 11.
- The detail of schemes of work and lesson plans enables students to learn well.
- Teachers know their subject and their students well and establish and maintain good relationships.
- In Years 8 and 9 some students, considering their ability, are in the wrong route for learning.
- Some teaching groups are too large to allow proper attention to be given to students' particular needs.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not sufficiently well directed.

#### Commentary

66. Students' attainment in English when they enter the school is well below average. Results in tests taken in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, but showed that students had made satisfactory progress. Performance in GCSE examinations was well below national expectations, but better in English than in other subjects. The rate of progress made in the early years is not maintained in Years 10 and 11.
67. This picture was largely confirmed by the inspection. In Years 8 and 9 the strong focus on literacy gives students a good platform for development. For example, a foundation route student in Year 8, for whom English was an additional language, moved from simple writing about *The Pied Piper* to a sophisticated analysis of how newspapers appeal to different audiences. This example illustrates two points: firstly, the strides that many students make, and secondly, the fact that the route system places some students in classes which do not actually match their potential. Achievement in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 many students write with flair and understanding (in imagined diaries of characters from *Hobson's Choice*, for example, or in analyses of the animal imagery in *Jeckyll and Hyde*). Most students who attend make progress over time. This suggests that students are beginning to do justice to themselves in the upper school. However, in some classes there are high rates of absence. In addition, many students are unable to use talk to learn from each other or to be independent of their teachers. This means that, taken across the board, there is not sufficient improvement in Years 10 and 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory.
68. The overall standard of teaching is good. This often results only in satisfactory learning because many students find it difficult to listen attentively or to concentrate. Very good learning can happen however. In one outstanding Year 8 lesson low attaining students came to understand the effect of two war poems through a brilliantly judged combination of tightly timed activities, teacher intervention and materials which offered manageable challenge. Not surprisingly students enjoyed the lesson and their own success. By contrast a poor Year 11 lesson showed how easily things can fall apart. The material and the proposed activities did not immediately claim attention. Behaviour became and remained so bad as to frustrate any attempt to take learning forward. Therefore, although generally the proportion of good and better teaching was high, this overall judgement masks a more complex and uneven picture as

regards achievement. Too few students respect each other's right to learn in an orderly environment.

69. The leadership of the department is good. A strong team ethos leads to effective collaborative planning. The head of department provides a very good model of student-centred teaching and confident subject knowledge. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has led to tightly managed teaching from which younger students have benefited. These are substantial achievements in difficult circumstances. The remoteness of the accommodation means the department is isolated. Students frequently arrive late for lessons. Some groups are too large, so classrooms are cramped and individual needs are very difficult to meet. Given these conditions and more particularly the challenging nature of the learning needs of many students, the monitoring of the department's work needs to be more finely tuned. Marking, for instance, is inconsistent because it does not always indicate to students what they need to do to improve. Where teachers struggle they need close support which in current circumstances is difficult to provide.
70. Nevertheless, because of the convincingly upward trend of achievement, the increasingly successful focus on literacy and the generally good standard of teaching, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

71. Standards of literacy are low when students come into the school. Because of this many departments have a strong emphasis on literacy development. Inspectors saw well-directed approaches to reading, writing and discussion (in English, history, RE, art and modern foreign languages) which clearly improved students' skills and confidence. This was not the case in all departments however and therefore the overall impact of the school's literacy initiative is weakened. The recently appointed literacy co-ordinator is not given time specifically to audit, monitor and evaluate students' progress in relation to the literacy programme currently being followed. Therefore, the impact of staff training and of the welcome involvement of LEA consultants is not properly monitored by the school.

### **Drama**

72. Standards in drama at GCSE were well below the national average in 2003. Students do poorly in drama in comparison to the standards they achieve in other subjects. Drama is now part of the curriculum in Years 8 and 9; this is an improvement in the provision since the last inspection. Teaching was judged to be satisfactory in the three lessons observed, but learning unsatisfactory on account of poor behaviour. This inhibited co-operation and concentration; necessary conditions for adequate practical work. There are too few specialist teachers to cover the drama curriculum across the school and this is a contributory factor in students' low achievement in the subject.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teachers have excellent foreign language knowledge.
- Students make insufficient progress in Years 8 and 9 in French.
- Schemes of work for French in Years 8 and 9 do not ensure that all students achieve well.
- Teaching does not adequately provide for the abler students' range of language learning needs in French in Years 8 and 9.
- Standards in French and German have improved in Years 10 and 11 and at GCSE.
- Students achieve well in writing in French in Years 10 and 11.

- Boys show confidence in speaking in German in Years 10 and 11.
- The lack of textbooks limits all students' opportunities for home study.

## Commentary

73. Standards in Year 9 teacher assessments in 2002 and 2003 were below expectations in modern languages overall. In 2002, GCSE results in German were above average and in French results were average. In 2003, they were average overall, being slightly above average in German and below average in French. In both years, students, especially boys, performed better in German compared with all their other subjects. GCSE results in modern foreign languages have improved since the previous report.
74. In the current Year 9, standards are below expectations and achievement is unsatisfactory overall. In German, achievement is satisfactory. In French, achievement is unsatisfactory. This is mainly because the schemes of work which teachers follow are insufficiently challenging and do not match students' differing capabilities in each of the ability bands and in each set. Unsatisfactory links with middle schools result in students entering the school with a very wide range of learning needs in both languages. Additionally, school systems do not allow students to easily change bands according to their varying rates of progress in modern foreign languages in Year 8. In Year 11, standards are average overall and students' achievement is satisfactory, mainly because teachers link their lessons and assessment clearly to the requirements of the GCSE examination. In all years, insufficient textbooks result in limited home study opportunities for all students.
75. In all years, students make good progress in listening, due to the teachers' consistent use in lessons of their excellent foreign language knowledge. In speaking, students, especially the boys in Years 10 and 11, make good progress in German, but in French in Years 8 and 9, students have insufficient language to express themselves well. In reading students make unsatisfactory progress in French in Years 8 and 9 and satisfactory progress in all years in German. In writing, in Years 8 and 9 most students are heavily dependent on prompt sheets. By Year 11, able students write very well in French and adequately in German, using a range of tenses and a sound topic based vocabulary, whereas average and lower attaining students write confidently but more simply. Students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and they have good attitudes to learning.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall; teaching is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Approximately half of the lessons seen were good or better. In Years 8 and 9, teaching and learning are good in German because teachers plan and deliver lessons at a good pace. In French in Years 8 and 9, able students do not achieve well, because teachers' expectations are not high enough. In Years 8 and 9 in both languages, assessment is unsatisfactory. Although teachers mark work thoroughly and students correct written work well, formal assessment is not consistently implemented throughout the department, students' individual targets are not rigorous enough, nor are they always linked to the National Curriculum.
77. Leadership is satisfactory and management is unsatisfactory. The departmental head has exceptional enthusiasm for modern foreign languages, leads an effective team and has overseen good improvement since the last inspection. However, the schemes of work in Years 8 and 9 all require thorough revision and the departmental development plan needs to be linked to classroom practice. Standards in Years 10 and 11, behaviour, the achievement of boys and the continuity of staffing have all improved since the last inspection.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination and test results, in 2003, were well below average with underachievement evident in GCSE results.
- There has been improvement for the first time this year in results in Year 9 tests.
- Where there is insufficient support for students with special educational or behavioural needs, progress and learning are adversely affected.
- Unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons adversely affects learning opportunities.
- The curriculum team leader provides good leadership and management, which are bringing about an improvement in standards of students' work, a very good assessment system and a quality of teaching which is good overall.
- Some unsatisfactory teaching limits students' progress.
- The use of ICT is not developed sufficiently as a teaching or learning tool, to enhance the experiences of all students.

### Commentary

78. This is an improving department. Standards in mathematics are well below average when students enter the school in Year 8. Although attainment in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 was well below average, this is the best result for many years and is the first step in reversing a declining trend. Boys attained better results than girls, especially in the higher grades. Students' performance in mathematics was better than in science and English. GCSE results in 2003 were also well below the national average and below average when compared to students' previous attainment in Year 9. This was an improvement on previous years, but still represented underachievement by most students. The standard of attainment of some students was reduced, due to prolonged problems with staffing. Boys attained better results than girls in the higher grades.
79. In all years, the current profile of attainment is below that expected for each age group. However, the highest attaining students, in Year 11, are making very good progress towards attaining A or A\* grades and are being entered for an extra GCSE examination in statistics. They were seen working confidently, using position vectors. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated socially and are represented at all levels of attainment. Generally, students work well and achievement is satisfactory in lessons. The quality of students' work is mathematically sound and clearly presented, reflecting improving application and interest in the work they do.
80. However, the poor behaviour of a significant minority of students in some lessons restricts opportunities for students to achieve well. This has an impact on the rate of progress of students and slows their ability to improve rapidly toward the next level of attainment. The application to work, in classes containing the lowest attaining students, varies widely and is dependent upon the amount of disruption caused by students. There is a direct link between the amount of extra learning support given to those with specific learning needs and the behaviour and the progress made in these lessons. Where support is adequate, students make good progress and achieve well. Where there is insufficient or no specific support there is often disruption, as students are unable to engage in their learning.
81. Teaching is good overall and frequently better. In the best lessons teachers exploit the lively nature of students to provide interesting work at a challenging pace. Very good use is made of the three-part lesson to add structure to students' learning. Generally, lessons are well planned and focus on the development of key vocabulary and the understanding of learning targets. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, planning was insufficient and both methodology and

classroom management were inappropriate for the diverse range of students in the group. This resulted in students making little or no progress during the lesson. The marking and assessment of students' work is very good and students know their targets and how well they are doing towards attaining them. The day-to-day marking of work is very good and contains constructive advice for improvement. During lessons, most teachers are very aware of the needs of individuals and ensure that all students have opportunities to participate. All teachers care about the success of their students and provide extra support activities beyond the timetabled lessons.

82. The curriculum team leader provides good leadership and management of the subject. She has clear vision and enthusiasm to improve standards of mathematics teaching and a desire to offer students the best opportunities for achieving their potential. She is an effective teacher and provides a good role model for the department. Schemes of work provide effective support for the teachers within the department, especially those new to teaching. However, the provision of opportunities to use ICT within mathematics is unsatisfactory. The curriculum team leader has successfully managed a large turnover in staff and the department has only two teachers who were present at the last inspection. Improvement from the low standards of the last inspection is good but provision is not yet at a satisfactory level. The potential to improve further is good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

83. The initiative for developing students' numeracy skills in all curriculum subjects was re-launched with the recent appointment of a numeracy manager. His membership at management team meetings and the provision of support funding emphasise the school's commitment to enhancing students' numeracy skills. A whole school audit and monitoring process have begun and work has commenced to set a standard that is to be used in all subject areas. Whilst this is a correct priority, it is late in the day. Students' numeracy skills are below those expected for their age. They are sufficient to support students' learning in other areas of the curriculum, only because there are low levels of attainment in these areas. Some subjects such as design and technology, English, history, geography, citizenship, modern foreign languages and science take opportunities to develop numeracy skills. However, the development of numeracy in ICT lessons is unsatisfactory and opportunities for development are overlooked.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- Unsatisfactory leadership and management have resulted in unsatisfactory standards of attainment.
- Poor classroom management allows disruptive behaviour to adversely affect achievement.
- A limited range of learning opportunities fails to capture the interest and harness the energies of students.
- Investigative skills are underdeveloped.
- Improving strategies in Key Stage 3 are beginning to impact on classroom practice with the support of external consultants.
- Assessments are beginning to inform target setting but outcomes need to be shared with students to raise standards.

#### **Commentary**

84. In 2003 National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 showed a significant improvement in the proportion of students attaining Levels 5 and 6 and were the best results for some years.

Boys outperformed girls. Although these results now show an upward trend over time they are still well below comparative results for similar schools. Overall standards of attainment are too low.

85. Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are below the national average. This has been the trend for several years. In the 2003 examinations a change to the proportions of students entered for different courses improved results although standards in double award science remain low compared with other subjects in the school. There remain very few grades higher than C, a feature continuing from the last report. Boys and girls attain similar standards.
86. Achievement in all years is unsatisfactory. In 2003 a large proportion of students made unsatisfactory progress by the end of Year 9, considering their prior attainment. Teacher assessments considerably exceeded national test results. In a number of lessons seen during the week of the inspection achievement was limited by disruptive behaviour. This affected significant numbers of students and resulted in few students being able to make progress. Where achievement is good in Year 8 innovative teaching styles and high expectations channel the energies of students into the learning and there are no behavioural problems. The provision for students with EAL and SEN in Year 8 is good, because the curriculum team leader has a good understanding of individual learning needs. This good practice has not spread throughout the department however, because of the lack of effective teamwork described below.
87. There is still underachievement of investigative skills particularly in Years 8 and 9, as noted in the last report. Students are given instructions to complete relatively low level tasks which insufficiently develop the higher order skills of interpretation and evaluation. A poor and unimaginative range of equipment is used by students to help them explore ideas in the course of their learning. This leads to poor development of practical capability and experience. Over reliance on worksheets and booklets limits achievement to oversimplified responses and prevents students from synthesising their own ideas through extended writing. Literacy skills in Years 8 and 9 are being well developed through the use of key words to give access to scientific vocabulary. This results from the Key Stage 3 Strategy supported by the local education authority.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9. The inappropriate behaviour of students in Years 8 and 9 is not always managed effectively by teachers. The learning of the majority is disadvantaged in these classes. Although the inexperience of some staff is a contributing factor, the planning and delivery of lessons by some well experienced teachers makes inadequate demands on students. These students then take the opportunity to be disruptive. Where teaching is satisfactory or good, high expectations to complete more demanding tasks capture the interest of students and enhance learning. There is weakness in the planning of appropriately differentiated lessons which is limiting the achievement of the more able. The marking of students' work is inconsistent and rarely includes comments about strengths and weaknesses from which students could identify areas for improvement. Students are also insufficiently involved in the assessment procedures, resulting in them being largely unaware of their own progress or standards of attainment.
89. Recent lack of strong leadership and management of the department has resulted in a lack of team purpose and effectiveness. This still prevails despite deficiencies being recognised by a newly appointed curriculum team leader. Priorities for the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in new strategies designed to have an effect on classroom practice. This work is welcomed by teachers and supported by LEA consultancy. There is a lack of clarity in leadership roles and in considered monitoring and evaluation of the priorities for development. Improvement in these areas will require significant support from the senior management of the school. The use of data to inform target setting and assessment for learning is an improving aspect of the management of the department and is being shared with team members. Sharing assessments and targets with students as a necessary tool for



raising standards is not used to sufficient effect. Despite indications of a capacity for future improvement, given the necessary support, the leadership and management of the department are currently unsatisfactory.

90. Overall improvement in science since the last report is unsatisfactory.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 have been well below national expectations.
- An imaginative scheme of work for students in Years 8 to 9 has been introduced.
- Achievement has improved but is still unsatisfactory.
- There has been a major problem with recruitment of key staff and there is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
- Cross-curricular provision of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory and insufficiently rigorously monitored.
- Resources and accommodation are good, but inadequate maintenance of the facilities means that they do not support students' learning well enough.

### **Commentary**

91. The 2003 teacher assessments of students in Year 9 show standards are well below national expectations. However, the quality of work seen in lessons and the scrutiny of students' work give a clear indication that the current cohort should improve on these assessments. Levels of attainment on entry are well below average and the legacy of underachievement, together with the fragmented nature of the current provision, mean that achievement is unsatisfactory.
92. Results at GCSE have been well below national expectations as recent recruitment difficulties have resulted in students being taught by a number of different temporary teachers. This has had a negative effect on their examination results. Since the current staff were appointed, measures have been taken to improve the situation. A scrutiny of the work being done by students in the present Years 10 and 11 indicates that an improvement in performance should occur next year.
93. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below national averages, but all students now follow a recently introduced and challenging course with a suitable time allocation over Years 8 and 9. This should enable most students to make satisfactory progress. The full effect of this has yet to be evaluated. Students use desktop publishing and presentational software to communicate information and are familiar with the Internet and how to refine searches, usually making good use of the available material.
94. Standards in Year 11 are below expectations. Standards attained by the students in the GCSE short course are still below national expectations although there has been a distinct improvement recently. In work seen, students demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of using ICT to solve problems, selecting appropriate software to use when designing, implementing, testing and evaluating their solutions. Their work is well presented and organised and most annotate their work to indicate a critical awareness of what they have achieved and what they can do to improve.
95. There is a considerable difference in students' ICT experience depending which of the three curriculum routes they follow. The students in Years 10 and 11 following the higher route take a GCSE short course in ICT. Those students following the intermediate route in Year 10 take an

ICT course based on key skills which will be accredited either externally by RSA or internally, whilst those students following the foundation route are given an opportunity to learn basic ICT skills. Those students following the intermediate route in Year 11 do not have discrete ICT lessons, gaining their ICT experiences as an integral part of the vocational courses they follow. Those following the foundation route gain their ICT opportunities through Team Enterprise. As a result of this very disparate provision, National Curriculum requirements are not met; in particular, most students do not *"apply the concepts and techniques of using information and communication technology to measure, respond to, control and automate events"*.

96. Teaching of ICT is satisfactory. Lesson planning is generally good. Lesson aims are clearly stated and displayed and students are usually clear about what is expected of them. Students are usually given good quality support material that helps them to become more independent and targets for completion of tasks. Students are not always well motivated and the behaviour and attitudes of a minority inhibit learning and depress achievement. The best teaching features energy and enthusiasm, giving students the clear message that ICT is well worth the effort, but in too many lessons disruptive behaviour causes learning to be less than satisfactory. Setting of homework is not consistent and many students have homework set only occasionally. Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 8 to 11.
97. The arrangements for leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject leader also has responsibility for another major curriculum area. There is no whole school monitoring of student provision and consequently students are not receiving their full National Curriculum entitlement. ICT is taught by 14 teachers only one of whom has a formal qualification in the subject. This means that teachers are insecure in their knowledge of the subject. However, teachers' dedication to the improvement of their own knowledge is beginning to have beneficial effects.
98. A computer systems manager provides essential support, but the task of keeping the extensive school-wide network of approximately 200 computers functioning smoothly is daunting. Each of the ICT rooms is well equipped with a suite of networked computers and printing facilities, but too often there are computers which cannot be used because of technical difficulties. All students have e-mail addresses but are not yet able to access the school's intranet and their own workspace from outside the school.
99. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is still no whole school strategy for the provision of ICT opportunities for students in all curriculum areas and statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 are still not met. The capability of teachers in ICT has been extended by a series of training programmes, but there is still a great deal to be done. The school is now adequately resourced in terms of hardware and software, but lack of reliable access to computers is inhibiting learning and development.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

100. The cross-curricular provision of ICT is unsatisfactory overall. In most subjects students either do not use ICT at all or merely use word-processing or desktop publishing to enhance their own written work. Good use of ICT in, for example, research using the Internet, occurs only rarely. Teachers in most departments do not have a high level of capability in the use of ICT and few use ICT in their teaching. Limited access to resources for students in some subjects means that there are inadequate opportunities to acquire subject specific ICT skills. There is no whole-school scheme of work or school-wide procedure to monitor provision and assess students' performance.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 11 remain stubbornly well below the national average.
- In a number of lessons in Years 8, 9 and 11 students underachieve, including those who have behavioural difficulties and those with English as an additional language.
- There is insufficient application of ICT to support students' learning.
- Recently, standards of students' work by the end of Year 9 have improved and are now in line with those for students of a similar age nationally.
- Assessment and marking of work in Years 10 and 11 are detailed and provide students with clear guidance about what they need to do to improve the standard and quality of their work.

#### Commentary

101. Since the last inspection, a planned approach to improvement has brought about a revised system for assessing the National Curriculum levels students have reached by the end of Year 9. Standards are now in line with the average, having been well below that for a considerable period. The schemes of work and planning of teaching and learning have also been revised. The standards being reached by the end of Year 11 are still well below average and have not improved since the last inspection. Work seen in Year 11 is indicative of the results gained in the 2003 GCSE examinations. However, the work currently being produced by students in Year 10 is of a higher standard than that usually found at this stage of the course.
102. Achievement in the main school is unsatisfactory. In most lessons in Years 8, 9 and 11 there is underachievement. The main factors contributing to students' underachievement are the lack of good management of challenging behaviour; the poor attitudes and the barriers some students have to learning; and the inability of some learners to concentrate and use previous knowledge and understanding to undertake and complete the task. For students who have English as an additional language, access to the learning is not always assured. This is largely because of inadequate support for their low levels of understanding of written and spoken English.
103. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although there is some that is good and some that is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good there is consistent challenge and demand provided for all students that enables them to reach at least satisfactory levels of achievement. However, in lessons where teaching is satisfactory or unsatisfactory, achievement is often unsatisfactory. Learning is not always well sequenced, teaching methods do not always take account of the barriers to learning of some class members and challenge is often insufficient to allow all students to make adequate progress. Teaching in Years 8, 9 and 11 is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of all learners. There are examples of effective teaching as in a well planned Year 9 lesson, where all students, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, made good progress in developing and applying their knowledge of longitude and latitude. This was achieved through active involvement in the learning, the use of well designed tasks to which all had access and constant challenge that maintained interest and ensured good achievement.
104. Work is generally well marked and assessed. The students in Years 10 and 11 greatly value the detailed comments on their work that identify what has been done well and provide guidance on which aspects of the assignment could be further improved. While literacy and numeracy improve as students move through the main school, there is inconsistency in the marking relating to spelling, grammar and the use of appropriate vocabulary, especially in Years 8 and 9.

105. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and benefit from the support of the social sciences curriculum team and its leader. The subject course manager and curriculum team leader regularly monitor teaching and learning. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy for foundation subjects is providing a clear focus on more effective teaching and learning, well supported by the work of an external consultant and the school's advanced skills teacher. However, the support work has not adequately addressed the issue of the underachievement present within geography lessons. While the present curriculum and schemes of work provide good support for the teaching of geography and the meeting of statutory requirements, the use and application of ICT to support students' learning is insufficient. To date, planning for improvement has been successful in raising standards at the end of Year 9, although there needs to be greater clarity about the evidence needed to reach National Curriculum Levels 6 and 7. The improvements have not effectively tackled the well below average GCSE results, especially the high proportion of students gaining grades D and E.

## **History**

Provision In history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The variety of teaching styles actively involves students very well in their own learning.
- Excellent leadership and management have transformed the subject.
- Very good attitudes lead to highly productive classroom relationships.
- The breadth of knowledge and understanding of Year 8 and 9 students could be increased by broadening the curriculum.
- National data is not used to monitor achievement at GCSE level.

## **Commentary**

106. In the end of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003, four-fifths of students reached the expected level compared to the two-thirds who did so nationally. This represents good achievement as attainment on entry is below average, with poor literacy skills and limited historical knowledge being of particular significance. In the 2003 GCSE examinations nearly all students gained a pass grade and the proportion achieving grades A\* to C was above average. These results reflected good achievement and a significant improvement on the two previous years.
107. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen are consistent with expectations. The majority of students complete high quality work on a rather restricted range of selected topics linked to assignments on which they usually score highly. This approach develops their skills well, although their understanding of chronology and breadth of historical knowledge are restricted. Overall, however, students achieve well.
108. By the end of Year 11, standards are above expectations. There is clear evidence of good achievement across different attainment levels. Students explain, discuss and assess their own and others' work critically and support each other's learning well. Many have well-developed ICT skills and use computers extensively in the presentation of their work. Of particular note is the ability of most students to infer information perceptively from sources and to explain the related thought processes. Overall standards of literacy are good. As in earlier years students with special educational needs and/or English as an additional language, continue to achieve well.
109. History lessons are characterised by positive attitudes and often very good behaviour. On the few occasions when there are difficult students, very good classroom management and the breadth of teaching activities effectively diffuses potential disruption. At GCSE level the majority

of students are very committed to the subject, contribute readily and positively in lessons, attend after school revision classes and accept responsibility for their own learning.

110. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Strengths include a wide variety of teaching styles and tasks which actively involve students in their own learning. Learning objectives are consistently shared with students and lesson planning is very thorough, with particular attention paid to 'starters' which demand attention and concentration from the outset. The clarity and consistency of teachers' high expectations and the obvious effort that has gone into devising lessons, invite a concomitant response from students. At GCSE level students benefit from excellent preparation for their examinations because of the attention paid to improving their skills. For example, there is regular practice in marking each other's answers using modified examination mark schemes. In addition students are frequently challenged by teachers to identify which skills they are practising and what they are learning. Work is closely marked and although occasional minor factual and spelling errors are sometimes overlooked, much helpful guidance identifying scope for improvement is offered.
111. The quality of leadership and management is excellent. The curriculum team leader has worked extremely hard to produce comprehensive policies which underlie the consistency of the department's practice and are regularly reviewed. Improving the quality of teaching as a means of raising attainment, has been a continual focus and much thought has gone into how learning takes place. She is an admirable role model for staff and students and is very well supported by the close working relationships in the department.
112. There is scope for making use of all available national data to monitor achievement at GCSE level, but overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

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

- Standards are below average and results well below average.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are currently satisfactory.
- Leadership and management are good.

#### **Commentary**

113. Standards in religious education in Year 9 are below average as they also are in Year 11. Results in the GCSE short course in religious education in recent years have been well below average. In 2003, only 16 students achieved grades A\*-C. Students have a very limited knowledge of religious ideas or of key figures; some Year 11 students claimed not to have heard of Gandhi. Low levels of literacy prevent many from reading and writing about basic religious concepts, or of discussing them in a meaningful way. Achievement is unsatisfactory and students do not reach a high enough standard.
114. There is a legacy of underachievement. Many students have been disadvantaged by not being taught by experienced and competent teachers in the recent past. Last year, there was no course manager for religious education and half of the classes were taught by non-specialists. This did nothing for the status of the subject in the eyes of the students, many of whom – including GCSE candidates – began the current year with standards well below average. The appointment of a course manager from September 2003 means that there are again two specialist teachers.

115. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory and issues of underachievement are already being effectively tackled. A significant proportion of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better and none was unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, plan well, employ interesting methods and use a range of resources in an appropriate way. An example of this was the showing of relevant video film clips accompanied by task sheets for students to complete, so that their attention was focused on key words and concepts in the film extracts. Although some of the sheets pose fairly elementary tasks, at other times teachers are in danger of expecting too much from students whose religious knowledge is very basic. They do, however, with the occasional help of teaching assistants, give good support to students with special needs or language difficulties, in Years 8 and 9 in particular.
116. The biggest obstacle to learning is the negative attitude of a significant minority of students in many classes, right up to Year 11. They do not value religious education and show little respect for the beliefs and values of others. This is often accompanied by unacceptable behaviour, such as calling out and talking when the teacher or others are trying to speak. Although the teachers manage behaviour with reasonable success, this type of behaviour reduces the time available in lessons for reflection on concepts, such as commitment or openness. As a result, learning is limited to facts about religion with insufficient emphasis on learning from religion.
117. The improvements that are beginning to be apparent were started last year by the curriculum team leader, who, as part of her wider role, started to shake up religious education. The subsequent appointment of a course manager with a very clear vision of where the subject should be going means that religious education is now well led and managed. The curriculum team leader has directed resources to the subject and schemes of work and teaching materials are being updated by the course manager. There is good monitoring and evaluation of teaching, good arrangements for assessment and the less experienced specialist now has the support of a course manager who is a very good role model. There are still areas for improvement, such as the introduction of more ICT into religious education teaching, but the high quality wall displays in the two well equipped specialist rooms are indicative of where the subject is going. Provision was not good at the time of the last inspection; results show that it worsened subsequently, but it is now beginning the long journey up again.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- The achievement of students is unsatisfactory.
- The development of students' designing and making skills in Years 8 to 10 is weak.
- The high turnover of specialist staff adversely affects standards.
- The vision and plans for future development are very good.
- The leadership of the department is good.
- The use of ICT needs to be improved.

#### **Commentary**

118. Standards on entry to Year 8 are variable and currently slightly below the national average. The method of assessment overestimates students' attainment. By the time students reach the end of Year 9 standards are well below the national average. Girls perform significantly better than boys. Standards and achievement seen in lessons were unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs and EAL in the low band make unsatisfactory progress and are in

need of the help of specialist learning assistants. Students with EAL in the top band make the same progress as other students.

119. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory. The range of materials used by students is broad and includes textiles. All teachers help students to learn key words well and have good relationships with their students. Homework is regularly set and marked satisfactorily. In good lessons teachers gain the interest of students by introducing topics well and using questions to involve them in the work. When teaching is less effective, the work is not fully explained and students are required to spend significant amounts of time copying notes and diagrams from the board. As a result, the pace is slow, interest is lost and students go off task. At the end of Year 9, students' designing and making skills are not sufficiently developed to enable them to make satisfactory progress, with the exception of work in textiles.
120. An increasing proportion of students is opting to take the subject in Years 10 and 11. Standards have been falling steadily over the past three years. In 2003, standards were particularly low due to the very high turnover of specialist teachers. The GCSE examination results showed that only one out of ten students obtained A\* - C grades and less than half obtained A\* - G grades, a low result compared to the national average. Students did best in food technology. Standards and achievement seen in lessons were unsatisfactory.
121. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Some of the teaching methods used in Year 10 are innovative but do not help students develop their basic designing and making skills sufficiently. The majority of students' work in Year 11 is untidy and exhibits low levels of skill. Many drawings are hand drawn. ICT is not used sufficiently to present work, research topics and analyse results.
122. The new head of department has made a good beginning. New schemes of work for Years 8 and 9 have been introduced. The vision and plans for future development are very good. The unqualified teachers, although they have received some training and support, have not been enabled to become qualified. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards remain well below the national average and work in the sixth form has discontinued.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

Provision in art is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Years 8 and 9 are too low and there is significant underachievement.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently well to improve achievement in Years 8 and 9.
- There has been no improvement of subject-based use of ICT since the previous inspection.
- There is good support for students in Years 10 and 11 through a detailed assessment framework.
- Students use sketchbooks well as a central part of the working process.

### **Commentary**

123. Standards on entry and at the end of Year 9 are below national average expectations. Many students have difficulty in drawing accurately from observation and controlling the application of tone, although some higher attaining students have sound drawing skills. There is little evidence of work that enables students to develop personal qualities through the use of imagination. At the end of Year 11, recent examination results show that standards are well below national averages, although work observed during the inspection indicates that standards have improved considerably in the current Years 10 and 11. Students use a range

of source material, including the work of artists. All students use sketchbooks as a useful part of the working process. Higher attaining students produce visually attractive sketchbooks which explore texture, colour and image. Lower attaining students, while collecting information and images, seldom move beyond their initial creative responses.

124. Although achievement by the end of Year 8 is satisfactory and students develop sound working practices, achievement by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory. This is because Year 9 students are not sufficiently challenged to develop the necessary skills and understanding. However, the constructive use of sketchbooks is a strength throughout these two years. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Students achieve well in Year 10 on transition from Year 9, because of sound planning by teachers, good assessment procedures and the use of target setting. In Year 11, achievement is satisfactory, although high attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged to develop individual strengths and interests.
125. Teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9. Teachers show students how to use sketchbooks constructively, so that students learn to collect, record and experiment as part of the working process. However, planning, especially in Year 9, does not engage and challenge students and for this reason they do not develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to progress to Year 10. Because lesson planning and delivery sometimes lacks clarity and variety, students become confused about learning outcomes or fail to understand the purpose of activities. There is no evidence of subject-related ICT activities in students' work in Years 8 and 9 or Years 10 and 11.
126. Teaching and learning is good in Years 10 and 11. A useful assessment framework ensures that all students are clear about assessment objectives and know how to improve their work. Therefore students pursue a logical and structured learning path. Teachers' planning ensures that students use a range of materials and techniques, so that many coursework folders contain lively and inventive work, including drawing, painting, collage, print, relief and three-dimensional work. Use of materials and development of ideas are explored by students in their sketchbooks, providing sound evidence for each of the GCSE assessment objectives.
127. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The art department has overcome considerable problems in recent years, including staffing issues and a major fire which caused serious damage to accommodation. The art department has recently moved into a purpose-built art and music block on the main school site. The new building offers very good studio and teaching facilities and a dedicated computer suite for independent or group study. There is evidence of improvement in key areas, for example, assessment and target setting in Years 10 and 11, which is making a tangible difference to achievement. Significant efforts to make links with examination boards and partner schools are resulting in improved practice through wider understanding of teaching and assessment for examinations in Year 11. There is good teamwork and mutual support within the department, although the impact of the curriculum team management structure is not yet apparent. The understanding and implementation of suitable behaviour management and teaching strategies are unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9.
128. Although some of the positive features identified in the previous inspection report are still evident in Years 10 and 11, others, such as standards at GCSE, have not been maintained. There has been no improvement in subject-based ICT training for teachers since the previous inspection. There are encouraging signs that, with good teamwork and the evident enthusiasm of teachers, the standards of work and achievement of students will improve. Overall, however, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.



## Music

The provision for music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment and achievement are below average and there is significant underachievement.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the students are unsatisfactory and mean that learning is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory.
- The department has excellent accommodation and very good resources, which are well used.
- The instrumental teaching and extra-curricular performance opportunities are good.
- Marking of students' work is of a high standard.

### Commentary

129. Standards of attainment and achievement in Years 8 to 9 are below average. In Years 10 to 11, standards are also below average, although more variable, with some students achieving good performance standards. GCSE results in 2003 are well below average and indicate a downward trend over the last three years.
130. In work seen, instrumental students achieve good standards, project work is well presented, reflecting good research and higher attaining students produce interesting work when tackling open-ended composition projects. However, students do not read music well and their compositions are limited, relying mainly on the manipulation of effects with little melodic development. Year 8 students are doing work that would normally be covered in Year 7 and students in Years 10 and 11 still struggle with basic notation which severely hampers their progress when composing. Students are not doing as well as they should, except in instrumental lessons where they make good progress over time. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Students with special needs and students with EAL achieve well as a result of good individual attention and the essentially practical nature of the work set.
131. The teaching has many strengths and is satisfactory overall; however, some problems in management and control lead to a loss of pace and time in many lessons. Lack of application by students, as a result of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, affects the quality of learning, which is unsatisfactory. The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use it well when planning lessons. Marking is thorough and helpful, telling students how they can improve. There is a good variety of activities and resources are well used. Homework is set consistently and is well used to support students' learning through consolidation and research. Instrumental teachers have very good specialist skills which are used effectively in demonstrating and performing with their students.
132. A weakness of the teaching is that work is not always well matched to students' ability. Usually every student is working at the same task regardless of their prior attainment; this sometimes results in higher attaining students not being challenged and lower attaining students struggling with tasks that are too difficult. At present there is insufficient use of ICT but the necessary resources have only recently been acquired and the department has now started to develop this area.
133. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Priorities have been determined by the need to bring the department through a difficult period after the accommodation was destroyed by fire and the leadership has worked well to achieve this. However, now there is insufficient focus on raising standards of musicianship; for example through careful monitoring of students' progress and analysing the information provided. Schemes of work are not properly

tailored to students' needs. The instrumental teaching is well organised and good opportunities are provided for out of school activities.

134. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. There has been some improvement in standards in Years 8 and 9, with less unsatisfactory teaching and accommodation and resources have improved significantly. However, standards in Years 10 and 11 are still below average and GCSE results are significantly lower than they were at the last inspection.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

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

- There are unsatisfactory standards and achievement in GCSE examinations.
- Inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory, management of students with challenging and disruptive behaviour contributes to underachievement.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge.
- There is a wide range of good quality extra-curricular activities.
- Accommodation and facilities are very good.
- Non-participation by disaffected students in some activities leads to underachievement.

#### **Commentary**

135. On entry to the school most students have limited experience of physical activities and games. Information received from their previous schools varies in quality and is often insufficiently detailed. As part of a national initiative, a teacher from the physical education department is providing very effective support to four local primary schools, raising the subject profile and improving the teaching and assessment.
136. The standards reached by students in lessons are satisfactory overall and in line with national expectations. They are unsatisfactory for those studying for GCSE where the majority score well in practical aspects of the subject, but find the theory part more challenging. Recently introduced procedures allow teachers to monitor students' coursework more closely, helping to identify where students are experiencing difficulties and to ensure that work is completed on time.
137. The progress and achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The range of teachers' individual expertise, enthusiasm and good subject knowledge provide students with informed and specialised teaching. Activities are well planned and appropriate so that skills and understanding are developed logically, but there are occasions where teachers do not manage the behaviour of a few disruptive students in a firm, consistent manner. The frequency and pattern of students' non-participation are satisfactorily monitored and documented. However, non-participation, a concern raised by the previous inspection, is still an issue in a few lessons. Aerobics, which had been introduced to motivate girls reluctant to take a full part in some activities, has been discontinued due to staff shortages. Its reintroduction would be of benefit.
138. Activities are well planned so that students improve their performance by building logically on previously learned skills, techniques and strategies. Year 8 students effectively learn the importance of working together by the introduction of team games and show improving skills and understanding in various games. In gymnastics in Year 9, both boys and girls made good progress in the lesson observed where they were developing vaulting skills as part of a topic

on 'flight'. The teaching was very good with activities well matched to the students' abilities. The components of vaults were introduced gradually so that students worked with increasing confidence and attempted more difficult vaults safely and successfully. They were encouraged to evaluate their own and others' performances and adapt their skills accordingly. In Years 10 and 11 students continue to develop their understanding of and improve their strategies and techniques in, a number of games and activities. The few students with above average skills are given additional responsibilities and tasks. For instance they lead warm up activities at the start of lessons and several achieve the Junior Sports Leader award for their contribution to the subject. Assessment procedures are good with students receiving grades regularly for effort and achievement.

139. The staff give freely of their time after school to provide a variety of well-attended physical activities and games where students can further develop their interests, expertise and social skills. School teams and individual students take part successfully in many inter-school competitions. The department has very good specialised indoor and outdoor facilities that enable a variety of activities to take place simultaneously and include a dedicated room for the teaching of theory.
140. The two recently appointed heads of department have taken the responsibility at short notice. They provide satisfactory leadership and management and all members of staff work well together in organising and managing the tasks necessary for the department's smooth running. Recently planned improvements are only partially implemented and have yet to impact fully. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection and most areas for improvement identified in the previous report have been addressed.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

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

- Achievement in business studies is good with nearly all intermediate GNVQ students gaining at least a pass in 2003.
- The majority of students are making good progress in lessons and over time.
- Leadership and management of the business area are very good with a clear vision for developing the subject.
- Assessment of students' coursework is thorough and accurate.
- The department is only now beginning to analyse, evaluate and use appropriate data to evaluate subject progress and inform planning.

#### **Commentary**

141. The department caters for a wide range of ability with many students gaining better than predicted results at the intermediate level of the full GNVQ examination. In 2003 87 per cent gained at least a pass grade, the equivalent of four GCSEs. This resulted from much good teaching in the classroom and teachers having a very good understanding of the demands of the subject specifications, particularly the use of the assessment criteria to grade and improve students' work. The department was less successful with the part one GNVQ with just 37 per cent of students achieving a pass. The department has recently begun to deliver the applied GCSE course in business, with a similar cohort of average to low attaining students due to complete the course in 2004. Where teaching is stimulating, classroom management is effective and students are repeatedly praised for their contributions, they make good progress in lessons, achieve well and have a positive attitude to the subject. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. Achievement is good.

142. The quality of teaching is good overall and often better with very good student-teacher relationships in most classes. The teacher's clear, authoritative delivery in a very good Year 10 lesson on the aims and objectives of businesses ensured that all students made very good progress in applying these to real business situations. In an excellent Year 10 business lesson as part of the school's Youth Award course, the students ran a 'team enterprise' business, planning, making and selling Christmas decorations and also developing their personal skills in teamwork, problem solving and communication. Challenging behaviour from lively students was handled effectively in good Year 11 lessons on methods of payment and break-even analysis where students were given clear direction and structured activities which focused on learning the fundamentals of these two topics. All written work is marked appropriately but there is not enough detailed feedback which provides both praise and advice on how to improve.
143. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department provides a very good role model as a teacher and sets a clear vision for the development of the subject. This latter includes ensuring there is a clear progression route for students to continue with their business studies at the appropriate level in the sixth form. Opportunities for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills have been identified and effective lessons actively promote development of these skills. With a number of teachers involved in delivering the subject the procedures for evaluating teaching and sharing good practice are not sufficiently robust to ensure consistently good teaching. Assessment of students' portfolios of coursework is thorough and accurately matched to the demands of the specifications. The department is now beginning to analyse, evaluate and use more accurate and relevant data to inform lesson and curriculum planning. There was no specific business section in the last report.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

The teaching of personal, social and health education, taught as a discrete one-hour lesson for the first time this term, was satisfactory in the lessons seen. It was strongest in Years 8 and 9. There was some poor and very poor teaching in Year 11. Students in one Year 11 lesson were obviously unused to working in PSHE lessons. For a subject which needs to be central in supporting students' development as people and learners, this is not satisfactory.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average and there is unsatisfactory achievement overall.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
- There is ineffective leadership and management, with unsatisfactory arrangements for assessing and reporting on citizenship.

### **Commentary**

144. Citizenship is taught within personal, social and health education, although some aspects of it are taught in other curriculum areas. The school has not yet addressed in any detail how the subject might be assessed, so much of the evidence on standards comes from the work students were seen doing in the tutorial periods and from relevant work in other subjects. The Year 11 religious education work on prejudice and discrimination, for example, contributes to the citizenship curriculum, but standards of knowledge and understanding – as in many of the tutorial periods – are not high. Some of the better work done is of a more practical nature, such as the community work associated with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, or with the school council. The election of representatives for the latter means that students have gained some understanding of democracy in action, even if only a minority can serve on the

council. Achievement in citizenship as a National Curriculum subject is unsatisfactory overall because of incomplete coverage which does not ensure that all students receive their entitlement.

145. The teaching of citizenship, where it happens, is satisfactory overall. Although the work done in tutorial periods is by non-specialists, they follow a clear scheme of work which enables satisfactory and sometimes good learning to take place. In a few lessons, however, negative student attitudes hinder learning. Good use has been made of citizenship days, where outside speakers have made a valuable contribution. Local issues, such as sport, leisure and the community, can be considered in some detail. The overall provision is piecemeal, with no teachers responsible for covering more than a part of the citizenship curriculum.
146. There is unsatisfactory leadership of citizenship; no one person in the school is responsible for the subject. Heads of year take responsibility for the provision in tutorial periods; the assistant heads responsible for key stages have an overview though PHSE. Although the content of lessons is derived from the statutory curriculum, there has not been any recent audit to ascertain whether or not there is adequate cross-curricular coverage of those topics not covered under personal, social and health education. Systematic monitoring of teaching cannot therefore take place and assessment – in the absence of any progress data – is not viable. The school is aware of the need to report on citizenship; last year, it was subsumed within personal, social and health education. Ideas have been floated for this year, including issuing citizenship ‘awards’ and making use of self-assessment. Unless someone is appointed to co-ordinate the subject, the management of citizenship will remain poor and underachievement will continue. This is an issue for senior management to address.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	36.4	90.0	0.0	42.7	10.0	39.0
Communication studies	8	62.5	94.2	0.0	36.1	13.8	38.5
General studies	26	30.8	78.6	3.8	25.7	8.5	30.0
Geography	6	83.3	88.3	16.7	36.4	26.7	36.3
Psychology	14	7.1	83.2	0.0	32.5	1.4	33.6
Sports / PE studies	5	80.0	88.2	0.0	27.7	18.0	33.8

**Note 1:** The results tabulated above represent only those “cashed in” by students. However, inspectors in their subject reports take account of the entire range of graded results, whether or not they have been “cashed in”.

**Note 2:** Subject data is only included in the above table if there are five or more entries.

**Note 3:** In 2002, in addition to those listed above, the school had results in French, food studies, German, music, physics and sociology.

### *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	7	85.7	96.1	14.3	48.7	62.9	85.1
Business studies	5	100	96.4	0.0	32.8	60.0	76.5
Business (VCE)	10	90.0	87.1	0.0	16.5	48.0	60.1
English literature	17	94.1	98.5	29.4	43.7	71.8	84.3
General studies	19	100	90.1	5.3	29.1	62.1	69.3
Geography	6	100	97.1	33.3	40.5	76.7	80.9
History	11	100	97.1	0.0	41.0	54.5	81.2
Mathematics	13	100	93.3	7.7	52.2	67.7	84.7

**Note 1:** Subject data is only included in both of the above tables if there are five or more entries.

**Note 2:** In 2002, in addition to those listed above, the school had results in biology, chemistry, French, German, further mathematics, physics and sociology.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Although the focus subject in this area is English, one lesson each of Italian and German were sampled. In both lessons teaching and students' achievement were good.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables students to learn effectively.
- Teaching methods usually promote students' independence and confidence.
- Teachers' high expectations lead to accelerated progress and better than expected results.
- GCSE students in the sixth form are not taught satisfactorily.

### Commentary

147. About 70 students study English in the sixth form. Substantial numbers retaking the GCSE examination discontinue the course, but most students complete their GCE AS and A2 courses. Standards achieved in GCE AS and A2 level examinations in 2003, although below the national average, were a substantial improvement on recent results. Most students, both male and female, did better than predicted.
148. The work seen during the inspection was in line with these standards. Although initially reticent, in lessons that involve discussion and presentation students talk with increasing confidence and perception. This feeds through into writing that is at least competent and at best original and incisive. For example: getting to grips with the background to Blake's *Innocence and Experience*, both the poems and the art, is demanding reading and writing, but was impressively managed by the majority of students. They write in increasingly well-organised ways as they progress through Years 12 and 13. They use ICT to draft and present their work, showing good understanding of the texts on the course. The achievement of GCE AS and A2 level students is, therefore, good. In the work seen male and female students were doing equally well. They respond to the high expectations of their teachers by producing work of real quality.
149. The quality of teaching and learning at GCE advanced level is good and enables students to achieve well. The two lessons observed made considerable demands of students (presentations on aspects of Othello and analyses of Blake's two chimney sweep poems) to which they responded impressively. Teachers' own subject knowledge expertly underpinned students' growing appreciation of context and technique and the activities of the lessons provided a good balance of support and challenge. Marking of written work and comments on the quality of discussion, are detailed, to the point and clearly related to the assessment criteria of the course. In these various ways students are well supported. They value the care and attention given to them, but are clear too about the teaching from which they benefit most. The challenge of critical discussion makes for better learning than passive listening or going through worksheets. The GCSE lesson observed took the latter approach and was poor. The students were acquiescent but uninvolved. Very little progress was made. This is a weakness in otherwise good provision for learning in the sixth form.
150. Leadership and management are good. Sensibly detailed schemes of work, imaginative lesson planning, the use of assessment to advance students' learning and achievement and the overall high quality of teaching testify to good oversight of the subject. As in the main school, there is a weakness in monitoring and evaluating the department's work in order to make the best teaching general.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

151. Students have well developed skills in communication. These skills are nurtured within each subject and course they are undertaking. In geography students show good levels of literacy and use technical terminology appropriately to express clearly details of physical features and processes. Students in business studies use a range of methods, including text and explanatory diagrams, to explain how markets operate. Similarly in history, students' oral and written work shows a keen use of evaluative language to support differing points of view and a clear development of higher order writing skills. In other subjects, such as mathematics and biology, students' oral presentations show good use of language to present problems, explore processes and express viewpoints.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a 100 per cent success rate at GCE advanced level due to high quality teaching.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching that slows students' progress.
- Very good classroom relationships between students and teachers provide a challenging learning atmosphere.
- Induction procedures ensure students are well matched to courses.

### Commentary

152. GCE advanced supplementary (AS), advanced level (A-level) and further mathematics courses were inspected. Resit GCSE courses were not inspected.
153. The school does not submit GCE AS mathematics modules for accreditation at the traditional time and therefore there are no data for this level. Three students took GCE A-level in 2003 and all were successful. The trend of 100 per cent pass rate, evident in previous years, was continued. However students did not attain as well as expected. In previous years, achievement has been better than in 2003.
154. Current numbers of students studying mathematics have improved and standards of attainment are in line with those expected in A-level courses. Achievement is satisfactory. The number of male and female students varies each year but there is a predominance of male students on the courses. The range of competence of Year 12 students is wide and some display a lack of confidence in their own ability to find solutions. For example, in a lesson on arithmetic series, students of all abilities were reluctant to use the newly developed formulae and were uncertain that their ideas were valid. On the occasion when clear structures for presenting solutions were not given, many were unable to progress successfully.
155. Students cover their programmes of study well and, by Year 13, have gained more belief in their abilities. They achieve well in lessons, developing new methods for integration and make good progress, but they are often slowed by their inability to recall basic techniques learned earlier. Students following the further mathematics course make rapid progress. They were seen consolidating their methods for integrating a wide variety of functions and making decisions as to the most effective and elegant solutions. Students from minority ethnic groups take a full part in their lessons and achieve in line with others of similar ability. Students' work, seen in their files and books, is of high quality and is mathematically rigorous, reflecting very good attitudes to their work and a good level of understanding of mathematical process.
156. Teaching is generally good due to teachers' good subject knowledge and wide experience of teaching to advanced level. This enables good learning by students and provides solid



foundations for further progress. On the occasion when the teacher's knowledge base was insufficient, this led to unsatisfactory teaching and, as a result, students lacked understanding of the process and the background theory to their new work. Teachers know their students well and provide appropriate challenge and pace in lessons. Relationships are very good between students and teachers, which enables free discussion of ideas and misunderstandings, providing rapid resolution of learning difficulties. Teachers care about the success of their students and give freely of their time, beyond curriculum commitment, to provide support for groups of students and individuals.

157. Both leadership and management of the courses are good. The curriculum team leader provides the most appropriate courses to meet students' requirements and the sample induction period ensures that students are able to benefit from their time studying mathematics. Staffing and resources are adequate to support students' progress and plans are in place to ensure that all students make the required progress. There is a very effective assessment system by which students are monitored and kept informed of their progress towards their target grades. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

158. The key skills element, "application of number", is tracked through activities in the subjects and courses that students study. Students' general level of numeracy and mathematical ability is satisfactory and supports their learning in the courses they undertake. In science lessons, students display very high levels of mathematical skill as they manipulate complex formulae and results from experiments. In psychology lessons, students analyse data for patterns using correlation formulae and, in history, good mathematical skills are applied to the analysis of changes in political representation. Satisfactory use of mathematical skills is evident in other subject areas. For example, in geography lessons, advanced statistical analyses are made and in PE lessons students are able to track fitness levels and heart rates accurately.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus subject in science was biology. However, two GCE advanced level lessons were sampled: one in chemistry and the other in physics. In both lessons, the quality of teaching and the level of students' achievement were good.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are knowledgeable and show enthusiasm for their subject.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Relationships between teachers and the students who persevere to the end of the AS or A-level courses are good.
- A significant proportion of students who start the AS course fail to complete it.
- Retention rate at GCE AS and A-level is below the national average.
- There is insufficient use made of assessment data.

### **Commentary**

159. Standards at GCE advanced level between 1998 and 2001 were well below national averages. In 2002 and 2003, no students were entered for the GCE A-level examinations. A similar picture exists at AS level. The general standard achieved in 2001 was well below the national average and no students obtained a GCE AS award in 2002. However, the GCE AS results in 2003 were encouraging; they were just above the national average. This represents good

achievement for these students. The standard of work observed during the inspection, in lessons and from the scrutiny of students' work was broadly in line with national averages in Year 12 and above average in Year 13.

160. The retention rate, especially for students following the GCE AS level course, is too low. A consistently unsatisfactory pattern has existed over the last three years. Under half of the students who start the GCE AS level course normally complete it. Not all of those who do complete the AS course go on to study the subject in Year 13. In this academic year, three students have continued into Year 13 but almost half of the students who initially started the GCE AS course have already left. The entry requirements for admission onto the GCE AS course are not sufficiently rigorous.
161. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and enables students to achieve as would be expected. Teachers know their subject well and teach with enthusiasm. Questioning is good and makes the students think. Explanations are clear and humour is used effectively to enhance the learning process. Teacher-student relationships are good and a productive learning environment is created in lessons. Although there is some inconsistency in the marking of students' day-to-day work, unit tests and coursework assignments are conscientiously assessed with plenty of guidance given to students on how they can improve their work.
162. The management of the post-16 biology provision is satisfactory, but leadership is unsatisfactory because of confusion about the role. A sound scheme of work is in place, but there is no handbook and no departmental development plan. Insufficient use is made of assessment data. A more detailed analysis of the outcome of students' performance in the GCE AS and A2 units could, for example, be used to improve the future teaching and learning of these modules. There is a serious lack of technical support - only two technicians for the entire science department - and this together with the relatively short duration of the lessons (60 minutes with no double-periods timetabled) results in insufficient practical work taking place.
163. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is still a high student dropout rate but standards appear to have improved over the last two years.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Teaching is generally sound.
- Teachers do not have an extensive knowledge of the subject.
- Independent learning is encouraged.
- Access to ICT resources is available for most students.

### **Commentary**

164. The school offers a GCE AS level ICT course in Year 12, a GCE A2 course in Year 13 and a CLAIT course for students in Year 12.
165. Students studied ICT as a GCE AS course for the first time in the academic year 2002 - 2003 and all gained pass grades. These students are now in Year 13 studying for GCE A2 ICT. From work seen in lessons and in their portfolios, standards are in line with the average and achievement is satisfactory. Students are confident and skilful in creating and testing complex database applications and recognising the high standards of information and communication technology work demanded by modern companies.

166. There is a much bigger group of students now in Year 12 studying GCE AS who show a very mature attitude to their learning, being confident and independent learners. They show a keen appreciation of what is required for an ICT solution to a problem, selecting appropriate software to perform specific tasks. Taking account of work seen, attainment is in line with the average and achievement is satisfactory.
167. The group of students in Year 12 studying for the CLAIT qualification in basic ICT displayed maturity and independence in their learning. They are making sound progress towards acquiring a useful range of ICT skills. All are at ease with the research methods of the Internet and are capable of creating complex spreadsheet models. The standards they are reaching in the course are about average and their achievement is satisfactory. However, low levels of attendance affect students' attainment and achievement. During the inspection attendance on this course was considerably less than 50 per cent of those enrolled.
168. All the students observed showed interest, enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject. Their attitudes are good. When they are working individually on coursework, they help each other and discussion is common. These discussions are always relevant to the work and contribute significantly to the quality of learning.
169. In the lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory and enabled students to achieve appropriately. Teachers' lack of detailed knowledge of the subject is compensated for by the attitudes they show towards increasing their own learning and by the way in which they direct students towards sources of information. The good teaching draws out the students who are very well motivated and keen to succeed. When students are working individually, teachers make good use of their time, discussing coursework with them.
170. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The courses offered meet the needs of the students who are able to put the ICT skills obtained to good use in the rest of their courses.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

171. Teachers and students in other sixth form subjects make use of the information and communication technology resources, but access difficulties are cited as preventing more widespread use. The Internet as a learning resource is widely utilised. Most students are familiar and confident with the use of presentation software and most use desktop publishing software effectively to enhance their written work. Students' competence in ICT skills are sufficient for the demands of their courses.

## **HUMANITIES**

Although history and psychology were the focus of the inspection in this area, two lessons of **geography** and one of **sociology** were sampled. In geography teaching was good in one lesson and satisfactory in the other. As a result of the teacher's high expectations and consistent challenge in the teaching, students' achievement was generally good. In sociology the teaching was satisfactory.

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The variety of teaching styles actively involves students in their own learning.
- Students receive excellent support enabling them to become independent learners.
- Excellent leadership and management have transformed the subject.
- Not all students read sufficiently widely around the subject.

## Commentary

172. In 2003, as in the previous year, all candidates secured a pass grade at GCE A-level. The proportion of students gaining grades A and B was a few percentage points above the equivalent national figure for 2002.
173. Standards in the sixth form are above average. In Year 12 attainment is closer to average, although the source analysis and evaluation skills of most GCE AS students are well developed at this relatively early stage of the course. Standards rise as students adjust to the demands of Year 13 work. Students compile substantial files of appropriately challenging, accurately completed work that often makes very good use of a wide range of learning strategies. They understand and use subject specific terminology well and many have a good breadth of vocabulary. Higher attaining students make very good use of structured activities to demonstrate conceptual and causal links. They use computers for research, compiling notes and writing essays; of particular note was their good use of different coloured text and highlighting in revision notes. Some students' work includes too much narrative and insufficient analysis and evaluation and there are occasional weaknesses in the style, spelling or precision of their written English.
174. Standards are rising because of the very good teaching and the very positive attitudes that students bring to the subject. Lessons are well paced and very thoroughly planned. The range of teaching tasks and activities involves students very well in developing independence in their learning. They co-operate closely with each other and develop their ICT and communication skills very well, in joint presentations on Hitler's takeover of Czechoslovakia, for example. A combination of the supported marking of each other's work and their teachers' detailed comments outlining targets for improvement, result in students having a very good understanding of examination requirements and plenty of practice at meeting them.
175. The subject benefits from excellent leadership and management. The head of department has worked extremely hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Good practice is shared across the whole department by, for example, collaborative lesson planning, common resources and the observation of each other's lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good; it results in standards of classwork and homework that are above average and achievement that is good.
- Students have good attitudes and enjoy profitable relationships with peers and their teacher.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There is too much inconsistency in the demands made on students.
- The range of resources, media and use of ICT to support learning is too limited.

## Commentary

176. There has been a change of teacher in the past year. There is uncertainty about entries for external examinations and as a result there were no recent GCE advanced level results available. Those for GCE AS level in 2003 are just below the targets set for each student. The new psychology teacher has established a rigorous approach to work and has set high standards for her students. Standards of work in homework and class work are above average. Work seen indicates that in Year 12 students are developing good levels of

knowledge and understanding of developmental psychology. In Year 13 students are gaining in confidence as they master the understanding of social psychology and develop higher order writing skills.

177. Students achieve well and make good progress from modest starting points. In class, Year 13 students respond well to questions and generally each can present argument and evidence to support their point of view. All of the Year 12 students, including those with English as an additional language, are achieving well. Their grasp of the key concepts within developmental psychology, as well as the ability to formulate views at this stage of the course, are impressive. One of the Year 12 groups is large and this presents considerable demands, for both students and teacher, especially during whole class discussion and activities. Students make good progress in the further development and application of both literacy and number skills.
178. The quality of teaching is never less than good. Detailed lesson planning is informed by good subject knowledge, high expectations and well-defined learning objectives. Starter activities and learning tasks are carefully designed to focus on the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and both subject-specific and cross-curricular skills. The pace and energy of the lesson as well as the active involvement of students in the learning ensures that productivity – orally and in writing – is high and of good quality. At times, because of the gaps in Year 13 students' learning, more time is spent in direct teaching and assisting them in putting together a coherent and comprehensive understanding of some topics previously covered. This leads to some variation in expectation across groups in Years 12 and 13, but all students are developing independent thinking and learning skills. Even at this stage of their course, Year 12 students are learning to use effectively, within their work, higher order critical and writing skills. Students respond very positively to the subject; as a result both teaching and learning benefit from the good relationships students have with peers and their teacher.
179. Students' work is carefully and regularly marked. Detailed comments provide a clear evaluation of what each student has achieved and guidance about what could be improved. Useful oral and written feedback is provided and well used as the focus of detailed group discussion. In both Years 12 and 13 students have been able to analyse essays written in response to an examination-style question using a structured mark scheme. Students as a result have a greater understanding about how the assessment objectives of the examination are applied to the marking of their work. They are also clear about the skills needed to produce better-structured assignments and a higher standard of response to both short questions and essays.
180. Leadership and management of the subject are good. A clear educational direction is provided through the effective partnership that the curriculum team leader for social sciences has developed with the newly appointed psychology teacher. There is a good range of resources but there are gaps in the provision of periodicals, videotape and direct access for students to ICT. There was no psychology report in the last inspection.

### **Sixth form religious education**

181. No religious education lessons were seen during the inspection, but issues related to faith and values are covered in general studies, taken by all students. Provision is also being made for day conferences on belief-related issues. These meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focus in this area was art. However, one lesson of **drama** was also sampled. The quality of teaching was satisfactory but students' achievement was unsatisfactory.

### Sixth form music

Music was not fully inspected in the sixth form but the work was sampled by the observation of two Year 12 lessons. There is currently no group in Year 13 and very few students have taken A-level courses in recent years. However take-up for the course has improved and there are six students in the current group. Standards on entry to the course varied as only half the group had taken music at GCSE. Overall standards are below average but the teaching is good and students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting point. Lessons are well planned and provide appropriate challenges. There is a good level of individual attention and the students have very good attitudes and work well independently. There is good use made of ICT in composition work where students are able to use sophisticated sequencing software with confidence.

### Art

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make constructive use of self-assessment through their clear understanding of the assessment objectives.
- Challenging unit themes offer pathways for individual students to develop their skills.
- Further work is needed to improve the standards of students' work in GCE AS and A2 courses.
- Students do not make sufficiently effective use of ICT to support their learning.

### Commentary

182. Recent examination results indicate that standards at post-16 are below national expectations, although AS results in 2002 were close to the national average. However, work observed during the inspection indicates that standards are improving considerably in Years 12 and 13. All students keep personal sketchbooks, the most successful of which contain drawings of high quality, vibrant design work, creative ideas and the investigation of the work of artists, showing breadth and depth of understanding. Students' work on display in the department includes large-scale sculpture and painting which demonstrate both technical skill and independent creativity. There is little evidence of the use of subject-related ICT.
183. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in lessons seen during the inspection. All students develop knowledge, understanding and technical skills and there is challenge and structure in their working practices.
184. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is well planned, including regular monitoring of students' working processes and challenging unit themes. Students are effectively encouraged to extend their knowledge, skills and creative ideas so that they become mature and independent learners. There are a number of good opportunities for students to be involved with professional artists, through involvement in the Royal Academy outreach programme and other artists' residencies.
185. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers are working together to develop planning and assessment practices that support achievement. The new sixth-form studio includes a practical workspace, seminar room and a well-equipped ICT suite that offers good provision for independent study.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In this area, physical education was the inspection focus. However, lessons were also sampled in **leisure and tourism** and **travel and tourism** courses. In the GNVQ (intermediate) leisure and tourism lesson both teaching and students' achievement were good, while in the GCE advanced travel and tourism lesson, the teaching was excellent and achievement was very good.

### Physical education

Provision in physical education (PE) is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in practical lessons is good and benefits from very good student-teacher relationships.
- Students are enthusiastic about their learning in the new BTEC National Diploma.
- Preparation and planning for the course have been poor and are only now being tackled effectively.
- The recent tracking of students' progress is unsatisfactory.
- The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for PE students is very good.
- The course benefits from very good practical and theory accommodation and resources.

### Commentary

186. Students entered for A-level sports studies have usually gained at least a pass in the subject although in 2003 only five of the seven students passed, two gaining a D grade and three an E grade. This is below the national average but some previous results have been around the national average, for example those in 2000 and 2001. Achievement is generally satisfactory and students usually achieve as well as predicted. Preparation and planning for the new BTEC National Diploma, which began in 2002, have been poor and these areas are only now being tackled effectively. However, Year 12 students have enthusiastically taken up the new course and work productively in practical lessons. Students demonstrated a broad range of ability in these classes. Overall standards in PE are in line with the average and achievement is satisfactory.
187. Teaching of sixth form classes is good. The wide range of ability in the Year 12 National Diploma classes is accommodated by carefully constructed lessons that contain a range of differentiated activities. In practical lessons, very good student-teacher relationships and challenging questions ensure that the learning of new topics and sports is good. In a very good lesson on the preparation for and participation in speed drills in the training and fitness unit, students worked conscientiously as individuals and co-operatively in groups. They were able to evaluate their own and others' performances. Year 12 students made good progress when being introduced to table tennis serves and tactics when the teacher gave very clear explanations throughout a range of progressive activities. In Year 13 the small number of students on the National Diploma and the GCE A-level sports studies are given a range of relevant and stimulating material to assist them in understanding of, for example, the media's treatment of sport and energy systems and sporting activity.
188. Leadership and management of the course are satisfactory. The preparation and planning for the new course, including the approval process, have been poor. The resulting difficulties are only now being tackled effectively. A workable plan to ensure the successful delivery of the new course is still not fully in place. The three Year 13 students are working hard to catch up and are benefiting from the additional support and guidance offered. The PE team work collaboratively to ensure that the course is delivered consistently and have now put in place carefully constructed programmes of study. Teachers are good role models for students. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for sixth formers generally is very good, particularly the development of opportunities for students to coach sport in the feeder schools.

The very good accommodation and resources, including a dedicated classroom for theory lessons, provide a stimulating working environment for students. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

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

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- A broad range of business qualifications is offered, ensuring that the needs of all students are met.
- Achievement across the range of provision for business is good.
- The quality of teaching overall is good, with very good student-teacher relationships.
- Assessment of students' coursework is thorough and accurate.

#### **Commentary**

189. All students on the courses leading to GCE A-level and VCE usually gain at least a pass grade. Results are usually in line with, or just below the national average. In 2003 five of the six students completing the A-level course passed, two gaining a B grade. Seven of the eight VCE students gained a pass with a similar spread of grades. The outcome for the VCE was broadly the same in 2002 when nine of the ten students passed. Students achieve well with many reaching standards that are better than their previous GCSE results would indicate. There is, however, a lack of consistency between the departmental and school data used to evaluate the achievement of students. This issue is being tackled and the department is now in a position to reflect more accurately students' progress and the value that the department adds to their learning.
190. The majority of current Year 13 GCE A-level students are achieving well. They have built on the knowledge and understanding gained in their GCE AS studies, where all but one of the 13 students entered in 2003 gained at least a pass with four gaining A or B grades. In the Year 13 lesson, where teaching was very good, students were able to use a range of relevant business terminology when analysing marketing plans. Year 12 VCE students are beginning to understand business terminology, for example when discussing styles of management. Good work was seen in these students' portfolios, for example when applying knowledge of business aims and objectives to their assignment work. There was excellent evidence of students' ICT skills with neatly presented and word-processed work on the competitive business environment. Year 13 students are able to analyse all aspects of customer service in their portfolio work and are achieving well.
191. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a secure grasp of how to apply the necessary criteria for portfolio assessment and provide appropriate support and guidance to students on how to improve. Some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The unnecessary emphasis on classroom discipline in some lessons, rather than praise for contributions, does not always produce a pleasant and productive working environment. Most students, however, have a positive approach to the subject and appreciate the ready access to staff and resources.
192. Leadership and management of the subject are very good with the head of department having a clear vision for the development of the subject. This includes ensuring that there is a clear progression route for students to continue with their business studies at the appropriate level in the sixth form. For example, the provision of the one year GNVQ course at both foundation and intermediate levels ensures that students of all abilities are catered for in the subject. In 2003, 66 per cent gained at least a pass at intermediate level but only a disappointing 33 per cent at



foundation level. The department has put in place a number of strategies to address this situation. There was no specific business section in the last report.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

Extended tutorial sessions in Year 12 and Year 13 were observed. The Year 12 group explored the idea of racial stereotypes, barriers and the concept of the noble savage. In their group work students came up with good ideas about how to overcome prejudice, although they were quite reticent about offering opinions. In the Year 13 group outside speakers gave presentations about opportunities in higher education and work training in the local area. The support for students' personal development given by these sessions was satisfactory.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Sixth form grade*

### *School grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
How inclusive the school is		5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	5
Cost-effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	5

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>5</b>
Students' achievement	4	5

<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	5
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>5</b>
The quality of teaching	3	5
How well students learn	3	5
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	4	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>5</b>
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	5

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

