

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHCLIFFE SCHOOL AND LANGUAGE COLLEGE

Christchurch

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113906

Headteacher: Ms Judith Potts

Lead inspector: N A Pett

Dates of inspection: 23rd - 26th February 2004

Inspection number: 259317

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1264
School address:	Parkside Highcliffe Christchurch Dorset
Postcode:	BH23 4QD
Telephone number:	(01452) 273 381
Fax number:	(01452) 271 405
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Axton
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an 11-18 co-educational comprehensive school located on the easterly outskirts of Christchurch, a resort town on the south coast. It serves the immediate area of the town but pupils also attend from a significant number of outlying villages, and a significant proportion live in the county of Hampshire. There are 1264 pupils on roll, making it bigger in size to other secondary schools nationally. The roll has increased markedly since the last inspection with the opening of a sixth form in 1998, operating in partnership with two other schools. There are 163 students enrolled in the sixth form at this school, making it of average size. Pupils and students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, although a significant proportion enjoy social and economic advantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. A small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic heritage and no pupils are identified as requiring support for English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the main school is broadly above average but is average on entry into the sixth form because of the open entry policy. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs, and holding statements to address their specific needs, is below average. In the sixth form, there are 10 identified students. The main categories are for disability and for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school was designated as a specialist language college in 2000, and has recently received 3 achievement awards from the Specialist Schools Trust for its improvement and added value given. Additionally, it has received the International school award from the British Council.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17331	N A Pett	Lead inspector	
11104	M Fleming	Lay inspector	
15372	P Walker	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
18967	B Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics
1779	D Leonard	Team inspector	Science Biology
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art Business studies
1782	A Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology Electronics
31863	A Cornelius	Team inspector	Geography
30216	A Elliott	Team inspector	History
20767	J Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
22953	P Dacombe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
24026	C Holland	Team inspector	Music Creative arts
18755	R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education
10448	M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
32252	D Wring	Team inspector	CACHE
28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	Psychology Expressive arts
27674	J Coe	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 8
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9 - 14
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14 - 22
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22 - 24
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25 - 56
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	57

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good and effective school. It has some very good practices which are significant strengths and which reflect the vision for continuing improvement to become a centre of excellence. The very good ethos supports pupils and students very well so that they develop into mature and responsible young people. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Public examination results are well above average at GCSE, and the good and improving quality of education enables pupils and students to achieve well academically. The headteacher provides very good leadership with outstanding qualities and the school is well managed. It is giving very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- It is a very orderly community with a very good learning ethos.
- Relationships are very good and this is an inclusive school.
- There is a very good partnership with other schools and the community.
- The specialist language college status is well used.
- The effective procedures for monitoring and evaluation are raising standards.
- ICT is a powerful tool in school management and development.
- The range and consistency of learning styles and use of assessment can be further improved.
- The provision for spiritual and cultural development, and programmes for PSHE and citizenship, need improving.
- Resources and accommodation still need improving.
- Some statutory requirements are not met.

Overall, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. The effective leadership and management has built very well on the significant changes in provision, especially through much better strategic planning. The introduction of the sixth form (1998) and the specialist language college status (2000) have been well implemented and have added significantly to the overall quality of education. Examination results have been raised well, especially in narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' performance. The overall quality of teaching has been improved, as have the procedures for assessment. Pupils' reports have been well improved. The accommodation is being very effectively improved. The use of ICT is developing very well and it is being used very effectively in school management. Unsatisfactory progress has been made in relation to a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	D	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 pupils attained at the end of Year 9.

Pupils achieve well and attain well above average results in their tests and examinations.

Standards on entry are above average overall. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. The 2003 GCSE examinations results show that against their prior attainment, pupils' results were well above average for the average points score. Results at GCE in the sixth form are below average but, taking into account students' wide range of prior attainment, they achieve well. Standards in Year 9 are well

above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Only in ICT are standards below average, and through better arrangements they are at least average in Years 7 and 8. Standards in Year 11 are above average overall, with well above average standards in English and music. Standards in the sixth form are average, although a significant number of students attain very good results and enter higher education. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented also achieve well overall.

This is a very orderly community. Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, although a small minority of pupils do not always respond sensibly. Attendance is above average. Pupils and students respond very well to the opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although there are some shortcomings in the provision.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is good. Teaching is consistently good, with examples of very good teaching in a significant proportion of lessons. This leads to good learning and supports pupils' and students' good achievement. Assessment procedures are good, although they are not yet used consistently, and learning styles do not always challenge pupils sufficiently. The range of courses in the curriculum is good, providing effectively for the academic needs and aspirations of pupils and students. However, the programme for personal, health and social education is not consistently well taught, especially in tutor time, and statutory requirements for citizenship are not met. There is effective careers advice and good links with further and higher education institutions. Extra-curricular activities and opportunities to enrich the curriculum are very good and include many competitive sporting activities, drama and musical performances. The quality of individual care, support and guidance is very good but the management for health and safety has some shortcomings. Most parents and carers contribute effectively to the life of the school and are very supportive of their children's education. Links with the primary and secondary schools are very good and there are good links with the community at large, reflecting advantages from the language college status. Further improvements are required in accommodation and resources, particularly so for music and physical education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership is very good and management is good overall, with examples of very good practice, and is a strength of the school. The headteacher has a very clear vision and has initiated very good improvement through her strong and very effective leadership. The leadership and management of the senior staff team is very good, and that of subject leaders and pastoral staff is good, with some very good practice. The potential exists to further improve standards and provision. The approach to self-evaluation leads to effective strategic development planning. ICT is being very well developed as a management tool to support school improvement. The governors have developed their role and are very supportive, having a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are well involved in planning but do not fulfil some of their statutory duties for the curriculum, and the management of some aspects of health and safety need attention. They work hard to gain best value from spending and are managing the budget difficulties very well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents consider that this is a good school and are very supportive of the work that it does. They are very pleased with academic standards, and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible young people. Pupils and students are very proud of their school and consider that it provides a very good education.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend the range of learning styles so that work set consistently meets the needs of pupils.
- Use marking and assessment consistently to help pupils further improve their achievement.
- The use of tutorial time, especially for PSHE.
- Ensure that opportunities for spiritual and cultural development, and for general studies in the sixth form, are developed.
- The resources and accommodation.
- The monitoring of risk assessments.

and, to meet statutory requirements for:

- The teaching of citizenship.
- A daily act of collective worship.
- Religious education in the sixth form.

THE SIXTH FORM AT HIGHCLIFFE SCHOOL AND LANGUAGE COLLEGE

The sixth form is broadly the same size as that found nationally and through its partnership provides a wide curriculum of GCE, AS and A2, and vocational courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective sixth form which has developed very well since it was opened in 1998. It is well led and is cost-effective. Access is open to a very good range of academic and vocational courses which meets students' needs well. Teaching is good and students learn well. Although standards are average overall, examination results show that many students achieve very well.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The provision is very well augmented through links with two other schools and has led to an increase in the number of students continuing their education.
- Results in GCE AS, A2 and vocational examinations have improved and most students achieve well, with examples of very good achievement and attainment.
- Good benefit is derived from the opportunities associated with the specialist status for languages.
- The programme for general studies is not effectively planned
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, modern foreign languages and communication	Provision in English is good. Standards are average, yet rising, and achievement is good, as is the quality of teaching and learning. Provision in French is very good. Standards are above average. The thorough planning and very good teaching help students to achieve well.
Mathematics	Provision is good and improving. Standards are average but the teaching and learning are good, which is supporting achievement well.
Science	Provision in biology is very good. Standards are above average. Students achieve very well through effective teaching.
Humanities	Provision in history is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Standards are average but students achieve well. Provision in psychology is good. There is a rising trend in standards as teaching and learning are good, resulting in students' good achievement.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in electronics is very good. Although standards are average, students achieve well through excellent teaching and learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in performing arts is sound. Standards are average. Teaching, learning and students' achievement are satisfactory.
Health and social care	Provision in CACHE (Child Care and Education) is very good. Standards are very high and students achieve well. The quality of teaching is very good.

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

The following subjects were sampled:

German, Spanish, chemistry, physics, information and communication technology, geography, law, physical education, art, music technology, media studies, film, photography, and health and social care.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

There is good provision for induction procedures. Students are well supported through the monitoring of their academic and personal development, with regular tutor meetings to which students are encouraged to contribute and assess their own progress. The procedures for assessment are well developed and students are aware of how well they are doing and are given advice as to how work might be improved. The support available to students who are experiencing problems is generally very good, and is held in high regard by local caring agencies. Guidance for further and higher education and for alternative career pathways is well managed. However, there is no cohesive programme for personal development or for general studies, and the statutory requirements for religious education are not met.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. The team is under the direction of a deputy headteacher who works in partnership with the head of sixth form. Senior staff and tutor teams work effectively to monitor students' progress and welfare. There is a very good partnership with the two other schools which provide the wide range of courses and opportunities on offer. A clear vision exists for future developments. The ethos of the sixth form is still developing and the profile of the sixth form is underdeveloped in the main school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The students have very positive views about the sixth form three sites. However, they are also very proud of their own school, and acknowledge their role as the senior members of the community and for its growth. They also appreciate the recently-opened sixth form accommodation which has added very good teaching, private study and social areas. Students consider that they are well taught and that their form tutors and subject teachers are readily available to help them when they are in difficulties. Those who undertake the role, enjoy the responsibility that they have for whole-school duties and supporting younger pupils. Students consider that there is a wide range of subjects which meet their needs and aspirations. Most consider that they are given responsibility for their life and work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils enter the school with broadly above average standards and by the end of Years 9 and 11 standards are **well above average overall**. These standards are well reflected in the test and examination results which are well above average. Pupils achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National Curriculum Test and GCSE examination are well above average and reflect pupils' good achievement overall.
- There is a rising trend in pupils' attainment with good achievement overall
- Standards by the end of Year 9 and 11 for the current cohorts of pupils are above average overall.
- Standards in ICT are below average in Year 9.

Commentary

1. National Curriculum test results in 2003 were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics in comparison with all schools nationally, and well above average overall. Results, based on pupils' prior attainment at the age of 11, were average in English, above average in mathematics and below average in science, and average overall. At the higher levels, results were average for English, and below average for mathematics and science. This represents at least satisfactory added value, and a significant proportion of lower attainers achieve well. Girls performed better than boys in English and mathematics with little difference in science. The gap has narrowed over the last 4 years in English yet it was largest in mathematics in 2003. Test results show a rise over the last four years at a rate above the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.5 (36.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.4 (37.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.6 (34.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 220 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. At GCSE, the overall results were well above average in comparison to all schools nationally for the percentage gaining 5 A*-C and 5 A*-G grades. The average points score was well above average in relation to all schools, and average in comparison with similar schools. The targets set for 2003 results were met. Girls performed slightly better than boys. Higher attainers often fulfil their potential, and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain well. The average points trend has been broadly in line with the national trend, and results show clear improvement from the last inspection. In relation to prior attainment, results were well above average, showing significant added value. In this context, results were well above average for 5 A*-C grades and very high for the percentage gaining 5 A*-G grades. Overall, added value to pupils' performance is above average when pupils' mobility is taken into account. This analysis is a strength of the school.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	67 (70)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.5 (34.7)	33.1 (34.7)

There were 217 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards by the end of Year 9 reflect previous test results. Standards are well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. In most other subjects, standards are above average. The exceptions are in information and communication technology where standards are below average and in religious education, where they are average in relation to the requirements of the locally-agreed syllabus. By the end of Year 11, standards rise overall, indicating pupils' continuing progress and increasing added value. Standards are well above average in English and for those pupils who take music and design and technology courses. In religious education, standards rise to above average, in information and communication technology to average and in modern foreign languages, standards are above average in French and average in German and Spanish, but rising.
4. The factors behind these above-average standards and good achievement lie in the sustained good quality of teaching and pupils' literacy skills. Pupils' capability in language and literacy across the curriculum is good, and many can converse fluently with good vocabulary, which they understand and use appropriately. Many write well for a wide range of purposes and audiences. Similarly, pupils' basic numeracy is above average and they have the skills to cope with the demands of other subjects.
5. In information and communication technology, the variation in standards has been brought about by the provision. Because pupils in Year 9 have only had limited access to resources and teaching time, their standards are below average. Conversely, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have had better provision and their standards are average overall, with pupils who have well above average knowledge, understanding and skills. Thus, as cohorts in Years 7 to 9 move through the school, standards clearly have the potential to rise. In Years 10 and 11, better access to resources has led to average standards.
6. Overall, standards in citizenship are above average because of the school's ethos of high expectations, work covered in subjects across the curriculum and opportunities for service. However, curriculum requirements are not met for the discrete teaching of citizenship, and as pupils' progress is not assessed, a secure judgement cannot be reached.
7. There is little difference in the achievement and attainment of boys and girls, overall. Most pupils who are gifted and talented achieve well and attain above average standards, fulfilling their potential. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because the staff are well aware of their needs and seek to address them effectively. Most make good progress, particularly with literacy, and grow in confidence as a result of a range of support, both within mainstream classrooms and through specialist intervention. Target-setting for these pupils forms part of a whole-school target-setting process. However, the systems for fully monitoring their progress, including the additional targets set by specialist staff and outside agencies, are not secure. Occasionally, work set does not always meet the needs of different capabilities, and this can be seen for both lower and middle attainers, and thus their achievement suffers.
8. Whilst the overall standards are above average and achievement is at least good, which is a reflection of the good level of expectations and good teaching, the effective use of assessment

and the mentoring of pupils is inconsistent. The monitoring and evaluation structures are developing well and leading to improving target-setting. However, to raise standards and achievement further, more consistency is required in applying the good procedures for assessment.

Sixth form

Standards achieved by sixth form students

Entry to the sixth form is open and there is a wide range of prior attainment as shown in GCSE results. Students build on their previous success. Achievement is good and standards are broadly average, but rising, as is seen in the GCE AS and A2 examination results.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good achievement.
- Results have improved in recent years.

Commentary

9. Results in the AS and A2 examinations in 2003 show that the average points score was below the national average. Since the sixth form was opened after the last inspection, no judgement can be made about overall improvement in results. Although results have varied between different year groups, there has been a general improvement and a continuing picture of added value, and most students perform better than would be expected for their GCSE results. Close links exist with the other schools in the sixth form partnership to support students' achievement.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.3 (88.8)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.1 (23.5)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	211.4 (192.9)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

10. From inspection evidence, standards show some variation but are never below average overall and in some subjects, standards are higher, and are a good reflection of previous examination results at both AS and A2 levels. Standards are well above average in physical education, above average in mathematics, electronics, geography, modern languages, science subjects and in the health-related studies course, CACHE. In all other subjects standards are at least average. These standards and the good achievement are brought about through the good provision. They are also supported because a significant proportion of students have good language and literacy skills. Such students, both male and female, engage in effective discussion and write very well; they can produce cogent arguments and enjoy questioning a premise. Good use is made of ICT to support learning and students generally have the numerical skills to meet other subject demands. Many students benefit from the links with the partnership schools. Overall, the experience of further study is raising students' self-esteem and confidence in learning. The monitoring of standards through assessment varies, as with the main school. Whilst students are aware of how well they are doing, further development is required to address the shortfalls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

These are a strength of the school. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations set for them and their attitudes and behaviour contribute very well to their attainment and achievement. The rate of attendance is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is an orderly community.
- Pupils respond well to opportunities for their personal development.
- Pupils display good qualities of citizenship.
- Pupils support each other and respect differences very well.
- The provision for spiritual and cultural development requires strengthening.

Commentary

11. This is an orderly community with a very positive ethos of high expectations, encouraging pupils to behave well and to work productively. Pupils are very proud of their school and its achievements and generally like school. This is shown by their good attendance, which is better than the national average, and the rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average. A few pupils are late at the start of the school day, often because of transport problems, but pupils are generally sufficiently well motivated to ensure they are ready to start lessons on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0.2
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

12. Very good attitudes to learning and behaviour show that pupils have a good sense of personal responsibility. Teachers are good role models and the school as a community shows a strong sense of mutual respect. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. Pupils develop a very good sense of purpose as they progress through the school.
13. Most pupils exhibit a high level of motivation, participating very well in lessons and maintain a good pace in their learning, which helps their progress. Most pupils value the rewards that they receive for their work, of which they are justly proud. Pupils are comfortable asking for support from teachers for academic or personal problems, and are confident of receiving it. Their confidence that their views, through tutorial sessions or School Council, are taken into account develops a strong sense of belonging. Pupils value being treated as young adults and the responsibilities gained, for example as 'helping hands' and through relevant prefectorial duties, enhance that status. Pupils willingly take on responsibility for their own learning and participate enthusiastically in many activities outside lessons, including extra opportunities to extend their learning. Many pupils respond well to the opportunities to work independently and collaboratively, applying knowledge and skills effectively. However, more opportunities could be given to further develop such skills. The inclusive ethos of the learning support team promotes a positive approach to the behaviour, attitudes and learning of pupils with special educational needs. Their interest and involvement in both the personal and academic development of pupils is very good. Pupils' positive attitudes towards staff mean that they seek help when they need it, knowing that the response is likely to be positive.
14. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good, with a significant number of pupils exhibiting very good standards. Nevertheless, there is a small minority who do not respond

sensibly and they can disrupt learning. Pupils are confident that any incidence of bullying is well handled, and there is little need to exclude pupils on any significant scale, although as the table below shows, it is used as a final resort. The school deals well with any incidents of harassment.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1201	32	1
White – any other White background	18	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	12	0	0

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

15. Pupils' response to the overall provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is well supported through the school's distinctive and positive ethos but the provision is satisfactory overall because is unplanned, and important aspects are easily overlooked. For example, spiritual and cultural developments are not as strong as moral and social development. The school does not yet provide citizenship as a subject within the National Curriculum.
16. The provision for developing pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is satisfactory. Teachers treat pupils with consideration and help them to understand other people's feelings, values and beliefs. A majority of pupils are successfully encouraged to pursue arguments in depth, to consider complex issues and to explore assumptions and outcomes. They show good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Religious education makes a very significant contribution to pupils' understanding of the spiritual dimension to life. In most lessons, however, teachers do not do enough to help pupils to acquire reflective skills or to develop pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness. The school does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Assemblies seen during the inspection were good but the programme of 'Thoughts for the Week' was largely ineffective in tutorial periods at the beginning of the day.
17. The ethos is good at helping pupils to develop an understanding of the principles that distinguish right from wrong, and to apply them. Religious education in Years 10 and 11 is particularly strong, showing pupils how people make moral decisions individually for

themselves and collectively in society. In science, too, teachers draw pupils' attention to the moral dimension of techniques, such as cloning, made possible by advances in knowledge.

18. Pupils learn well the responsibilities of living together in a community through the social provision. In lessons, pupils work effectively in pairs and groups to develop their capacity for collaborative learning. They have opportunities in school to hear from representatives of the community such as the emergency services, and to go out of school to engage in community activities. The school council engenders in pupils a sense that they have a role to fulfil within the school and, through the school, into the wider community. Pupils demonstrate the need to care for others via their participation in paired reading, mentoring and buddy schemes, as well as the charitable work undertaken. For instance, the school arranged for a container of scientific and other equipment to be shipped to the Cape District, South Africa.
19. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development, with some clear strengths. The school's vision, as a language college, of pupils developing a global perspective on the world through engagement with different languages and cultures is outstanding and pupils have increasing opportunities for involvement. Video-conferencing exchanges and other technological links are being explored and developed through the Global Link initiatives, for example school links with Holland, Romania and Sweden, plus a mentoring scheme with an Indian secondary school. Good opportunities exist also in art, music and the expressive arts. Other subjects, such as mathematics and science, showed little explicit attention to the cultural dimension in lessons observed or in schemes of work. Thus pupils have little direct personal experience and are insufficiently prepared for the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary society.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sixth formers generally set a good example to younger pupils.
- Their positive attitudes contribute well to their own development and contribution to the life of the school.

Commentary

20. Students speak very positively about the opportunities that their own school and the partnership provide for their personal development. They are very proud of their school and are good role-models for the younger pupils. Students willingly involve themselves in support roles and participating in school events. Sixth formers generally attend well and they are serious about the manner in which they use their private study time, making good use of their comparatively new facilities. In this time, students enjoy social opportunities but also make good use of the time for their work. A significant number enjoy discussions and display their obvious literacy skills as they converse willingly and fluently. They hold to their opinions yet are respectful of other views. Through their behaviour and attitudes, many show that they have a very well developed sense of moral and social principles. They relate very well together. The positive attitudes of most sixth formers make a significant contribution to their achievement as they work hard and respect the work of their teachers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is **good**, and strengths lie in the very good ethos, the good quality of teaching and the innovations being made in the curriculum, even though it has some shortcomings. The curriculum is very well enhanced through the language college status and by extra-curricular activities and links with the community. However, there are shortcomings in ensuring that all pupils have their entitlement to a formal citizenship curriculum. Care is good overall. In the sixth form, the cohesive links through the partnership provide students with many good opportunities.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good, with examples of very good and outstanding practice, which encourage pupils' and students' good learning. Assessment procedures are developing well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall good quality of teaching and learning leads to pupils' above-average attainment and good achievement.
- Pupils consider that they are generally well taught and that most staff are readily available to help them with any problems.
- In about three out of ten lessons, the teaching and learning could have been better.
- Not all teachers use the good assessment procedures well enough to support achievement.
- The teaching of PSHE and citizenship as a whole school programme needs to be improved.

Commentary

21. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. During the inspection, it was at least satisfactory in well over nine out of ten lessons, and very good in nearly three out of ten lessons seen and occasionally outstanding. There is very little difference between the quality in Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3) and in Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4). In Years 7 to 9, teaching in Year 8 was weaker than in the other two year groups.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 162 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
8 (5%)	38 (23%)	71 (44%)	37 (23%)	8 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

22. Teaching over time encourages the good achievement of most pupils in Years 7 to 11. Since the last inspection in 1998, good improvements have been made in the overall teaching. This reflects the rigour that has been introduced into the monitoring and evaluation through the work of senior staff and subject leaders. The most consistent and best teaching was seen in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, French, geography, history, music and religious education.
23. The good quality of teaching enables pupils to learn and achieve well. Teachers have good subject expertise and they use this well to ask challenging questions and to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. In the most effective lessons, expectations are high. This is effectively illustrated in the subjects listed above where teaching is consistently good and often very good. The best lessons are well planned and draw on this subject expertise and the strategies that teachers develop, holding the interest of their classes. For example, teachers make very good use of pupils' literacy skills. They initiate good discussions and then set written tasks for different purposes, such as reports, evaluations and essays. This develops the appropriate use of vocabulary and also supports personal development as pupils consider their opinions. There is generally good use of homework across all year groups, consolidating and extending pupils' learning.
24. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well taught by the learning support department. Workshops, individual and group sessions are tailored to these pupils' individual needs and engage their interest effectively. They are also well taught in most subjects, as staff have access electronically to information about their pupils and useful strategies to inform their teaching. However, in some mainstream lessons, teachers do not address needs sufficiently and this hinders the progress of those with the most complex needs. Pupils are generally well

supported by learning support staff, although their role in classrooms is often too reactive, as they are not sufficiently involved in the planning stage of the lesson. This limits their effectiveness in addressing specific subject-related targets. Pupils who are gifted and talented are generally well challenged although there are occasions when they are not set appropriate work, and this undermines their achievement.

25. Expectations for behaviour are generally high and teachers manage their classes well, using effective relationships, and the rewards and sanctions appropriately. This good management of classrooms contributes significantly to the overall ethos of the school, sustaining the climate for learning very well. Where it is particularly good, it encourages pupils to work independently and many quickly acquire this skill and see it as their responsibility to complete assignments. However, not all staff are confident enough to utilise these opportunities and thus raise standards and achievement, as well as preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.
26. On the whole, lesson objectives are clearly stated, so that pupils know what they are about. However, there are instances when teachers do not make the most of lessons, and teaching is only satisfactory and can become unsatisfactory. In a small minority of lessons, it reflects shortcomings in class management, often the result of setting work which does not meet the differing needs of the pupils. In some cases, the highest attainers, including pupils who are gifted and talented, are not sufficiently challenged, whereas in other lessons, the needs of middle and lower attainers are not well met. Even more opportunities could be given to develop independent learning as the school is a very orderly community. The areas where teaching requires most improvement are in ICT in Year 9, and in PSHE/citizenship. In ICT, planning is in its infancy and teaching and learning occasionally lack progression. Not all teachers are making sufficient use of cross-curricular opportunities to support pupils in their application of ICT to their learning. The teaching of PSHE and citizenship is not consistently carried out, as part of the programme is taught by tutors. The overall monitoring and evaluation of this teaching and learning is not consistently managed and this prevents best practice from being shared and improving lessons where it is required. Whilst it is recognised that the school's expectations and ethos contribute extensively to personal development, it needs to ensure that all pupils have the opportunities to be well taught in these areas.
27. Assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was a key issue. Procedures are good, but there is variation in how well they are used. The school has recently established an excellent comprehensive database allowing teachers access to up-to-date assessment information about individual pupils and teaching groups. Teachers can quickly see how a pupil is performing in relation to past performance and to targets for the future. However, some teachers and departments are making better use of information than others, with particular strengths in design and technology, English, geography and mathematics.
28. Pupils usually know their target level or grade because they receive comprehensive progress checks twice a year that are sent home to parents. However, they are often less clear on what they need to do to reach targets, beyond 'work harder'. Day-to-day marking of pupils' work is generally good, but varies in quality between teachers. In the best examples, the school's system of marking codes, together with carefully-phrased comment, is used effectively to show pupils where they are now in relation to national standards and what they need to do to improve. Marking is less helpful when it consists of a tick and encouraging comment. The longer-term objectives of pupils with statements of special educational needs are fulfilled, but the learning support department's recent introduction of a system for short term target setting needs to be reviewed to ensure coherence of focus.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall and support students' achievement well.
- Assessment is developing well although there is inconsistency.

Commentary

29. The overall quality of teaching is good with examples of very good teaching. Students consider that they are generally well taught and that most staff are readily available to help them with any problems. Most of the characteristics listed above, and subjects in which the best teaching occurred, are equally applicable to the sixth form. However, a significant number of students are also taught in the partnership schools and inspection of this work was very limited.
30. Assessment is good overall, but with marked variation between subjects. Teaching groups are relatively small at this stage, and much of the feedback to students on the quality of their work is delivered orally to individuals. Students usually have a clear target grade for their courses but, as in the main school, are not always clear about what they need to do to reach it. Feedback to biology students about some of their written work is innovative because it is delivered by e-mail; it is also very effective in improving students' understanding because they are expected to respond to it.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall with some strengths. Pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum and there have been good improvements in the range of courses offered' especially in modern foreign languages. There is a very good range of opportunities to enrich the curriculum. The overall quality of accommodation and resources has been improved since the last inspection, and is continuing. These changes are enhancing the school's capability to further improve pupils' and students' opportunities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Development of literacy and mathematics skills through the Key Stage 3 strategies.
- The number of GCSE courses available on the option programme.
- The improved provision for ICT and for Modern Foreign languages through the Language College Status.
- Vocational links with local colleges.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Good improvements to accommodation and resources, although there is still room for improvement.
- The lack of adequate monitoring of pupils' personal, social and health education.
- The breach of statutory requirements for citizenship and collective worship.

Commentary

31. Pupils in all years receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 covers all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Pupils in these year groups have benefited from the development of the Key Stage 3 strategy. The curriculum enables pupils to develop good literacy and mathematics skills but provision through the three years for pupils currently in Year 9 has undermined the development of their ICT skills. This provision is much better in Years 7 and 8. Because of resource issues, the provision for the technology aspects for music are unsatisfactory.
32. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good selection of option courses in addition to the statutory core. There has been good development of programmes, particularly with regard to vocational courses. There is a double option of work related learning for 15 pupils. They combine NVQ1 in hairdressing, beauty, engineering and motor vehicle maintenance at Brockenhurst College and Bournemouth and Poole College with ASDAN at the school. Some subjects offer a certificate of achievement in order to ensure that the needs of pupils are being met. These courses are having an impact on achievement made by pupils with special education needs. A few pupils in Year 11 are working towards AS units as part of the gifted and talented provision. The school

recognises the need to further develop these area of the curriculum, but overall, the curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education or career paths.

33. Extra-curricular activities are very good. Through the Specialist Language College status, a significant improvement has taken place in the provision for modern foreign languages. Four languages are now available, with further support included in the extra-curricular provision. Pupils appreciate the good opportunities for particular interests outside lessons. They enrich and extend their personal and sporting development through participation in a good range of activities in physical education, music, drama and art. The geography department provides a very good range of field trips both within the locality and through residential visits. Pupils receive good support for work outside the school day. At lunchtime and after school, most subjects offer revision or booster classes to pupils, particularly those in Year 11, as preparation for GCSE examinations. These have a positive impact on standards.
34. The curriculum provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. A number of pupils are disapplied or have special arrangements made for them. The policy of including all pupils with special educational needs into the mainstream curriculum requires faculties to take responsibility for these pupils within their area. The monitoring of learning support staff is good but improved evaluation of different ways of supporting pupils in class is needed to ensure maximum impact on pupil achievement. The school is in the process of planning how it can improve its provision to best meet the needs of pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented. There are examples of significant challenge for the highest attainers in mainstream lessons. Alongside a range of curriculum enrichment activities in science and the arts, a number of extension opportunities have also been available, including master classes in mathematics and French, and early entry to GCSE in geography and English. There is some variation in departmental approaches, leading to some inconsistency in classroom practice because whole-school policies have not been consistently monitored and are not coherently applied. These now need to be evaluated for both groups of pupils so that the planning of future developments is informed by judgements about which activities have the most impact.
35. The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is unsatisfactory. Satisfactory provision is made for sex and relationships education, and drugs and alcohol abuse. There is a planned programme of PSHE, through tutor groups and discrete lessons, but this provision is inconsistently used and not monitored rigorously to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement. Aspects of citizenship are included in these sessions but the planning is not comprehensive and overall statutory requirements are not met. A short course has been introduced in Year 10. Statutory requirements are not met for a daily act of collective worship.
36. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory, with a significant proportion of specialist teachers who use their skills very well. In general, they are appropriately qualified and experienced, and some staff have been recognised as Advanced Skills Teachers. The school works very hard to recruit and retain staff, providing good training where needed. Much progress has been made since the last inspection to improve the quality of accommodation through new building and refurbishment but even with the current building of a technology block, it remains unsatisfactory until this is completed. Indoor facilities for physical education are only satisfactory. The number of rooms available and the scattered nature of the provision means that they still restrict achievement for some pupils in some lessons. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory. Access to ICT has improved but relies on the forward planning of teachers to fully exploit the use of ICT to support teaching and learning. The library offers an enrichment opportunity but the resources available are now in need of updating and renewal. Where possible, display is very well used to enhance the learning environment, and the new entrance foyer establishes a very good image of the school.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The success of the Christchurch Sixth Form Partnership is a strength of the school.
- The sixth form offers a very wide range of 'A' level courses to its students.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education and collective worship.
- Insufficient use is made of registration time.

Commentary

37. The breadth of the curriculum has increased significantly through the development of the Christchurch Sixth Form Partnership, involving three schools with a total of over 400 students. The three schools share a common curriculum, timetable, prospectus and database. This has meant that Highcliffe School is able to offer nearly 50 'A' Level courses and Advanced Vocational courses. This is a very rich provision. Curriculum provision and liaison are effective within the partnerships as are arrangements for transport, reporting to parents and quality assurance. Both students and the heads of the other schools in the partnership speak highly of it, they appreciate the major contribution made by Highcliffe School to its success. Opportunities beyond GCSE courses for lower-attaining students and further exploration of appropriately accredited courses exist and the school recognises the need to ensure that the curriculum is more closely matched to individual needs and potential.
38. Extra-curricular opportunities are rich and varied. They include the chance to work with younger pupils in class, an excellent community sports leadership programme, overseas visits to France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Spain, and study days and visits in a wide range of subjects.
39. The statutory requirements with respect to religious education and a daily act of collective worship are not met. A religious studies course is offered in the main curriculum but there is insufficient overall provision for all students through core general studies activities. Although the logistics involved in travelling between sites make meeting requirements for worship difficult, insufficient procedures have been taken to address this matter. There is a daily 15-minute registration period which is under-used as result of non-attendance by sixth formers, partly because many are off site attending classes at partner schools. The main future curriculum development envisaged by the school is an increase in the number of Level 2 (GCSE equivalent courses) and vocational courses which will significantly broaden provision.
40. Staffing is good. The addition of a purpose-built sixth form area has enhanced the accommodation very well. It provides teaching and social units, allowing for a self-contained area. Otherwise, students are taught in the main school blocks. The overall provision of resources is satisfactory, with good additions for access to computers.

Care, guidance and support

The overall care is good. Pupils enjoy supporting each other and feel that they are well supported by their teachers. Monitoring procedures are good. Attention has been paid to improving health and safety issues through improved accommodation and maintenance, although issues still remain.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective induction procedures when pupils join the school.
- Good relationships and support from pastoral staff.
- Pupils are very supportive of each other through a range of listening structures.
- Overall guidance is good.
- Monitoring of health and safety needs to be more rigorous.

Commentary

41. Pupils are well known and cared for on a personal level. There are very effective procedures for induction into Year 7 because of the very good links to primary feeder schools. Pupils joining the school at other times are equally well supported for their induction. An effective system operates between older and younger pupils and pupils enjoy being 'Helping Hands'. They receive training in this role and pupils report that it is a very good system when they have problems. Pupils also report that they find teachers approachable and that they generally treat them fairly and deal with problems. All pupils felt that they could go to their form teacher or head of year for individual support and guidance. Equally they have access to a trained counsellor, who organises the Helping Hands. Listening to the pupils is good. They have clear opportunities through their school council to put forward their ideas, which they report are discussed openly with senior staff.
42. The pastoral staff have efficient and effective structures which include close monitoring of pupils' personal development. Good procedures exist for promoting behaviour. Sufficient data is gathered using electronic and paper-based systems to enable the rapid identification of absences that cause concern, which are then dealt with appropriately. The importance of full attendance is clearly explained in a range of documents. Academic progress is also well monitored and has the potential to be even more effective with further improvement in assessment and recording. The use of ICT for record-keeping and accessing information about pupils is excellent because teachers can access information from anywhere in the school and add information using their laptops. This allows them to look at attendance records and discuss with pupils their teacher assessment and identify the progress pupils have made. Included in the data is a picture of each child so they can correctly identify whose information they are seeking. The Highcliffe Challenge is included and so the whole of a student's personal and academic progress can be accessed and added to. Not only is the system of high quality, but a major strength and a feature that make the system workable the remarkably easy access by teachers who may not have high levels of technical competence. There are very effective rewards and sanctions in place which underpin the good expectations for pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils are proud of the various posts of responsibility that they can hold and willingly wear identification badges. Likewise, the system of rewards and sanctions is well understood. Pupils value the opportunity of being rewarded and proudly display their awards.
43. The overall quality of guidance for GCSE course choices and advice for pupils in Year 11 regarding their post-16 education is good. Year 10 pupils generally were very happy with the option choices. Comment has been made under the curriculum concerning the limitations in the personal, social and health education provision. Careers education is covered within this framework and through separate sessions; the provision is satisfactory overall, with good inputs from the Connexions organisation. Pupils feel that they are given good advice about the rich range of courses in the partnership for their post-16 education. For pupils with special educational needs, work with other agencies is improving, since they have been able to develop closer working relationships with a more consistent cohort of specialist staff who know their pupils well.
44. Procedures for child protection are good. There has been significant improvement in the accommodation which has helped to address a range of health and safety issues. Through an effective audit, significant improvements have been undertaken, such as the removal of the hygiene risks in food technology. Many fire doors are now improved by having fire self-closures and can be left open. Fire drills are carried out regularly. However, access for people who are physically disabled is limited, and whilst there is a chair lift on one staircase, there is no alternative exit for a person in a wheelchair if the fire was at that point. In science, new fire exits from laboratories do not have ramps. Pupils are generally taught safe practices in class and for extra-curricular activities. Risk assessments are done but are not always rigorous enough in monitoring, for example in physical education and design and technology. Outside there are series of trip hazards in different pathways. Appropriate arrangements exist for first aid.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good provision for support, advice and guidance.

Commentary

45. The good support, advice and guidance begins before students enter the sixth form with the informative and helpful advice in Year 11. There is a flexible approach to timetabling in order to accommodate students' option choices. The students appreciate the very effective organisation which enables them to take advantage of the partnership courses. The provision of regular bus links ensures that they are well looked after. Students readily accept the responsibility to register themselves using a swipe card system, but a minority do not always use it effectively.
46. There is a good programme for the monitoring of the academic and personal development of students through a regular programme of one-to-one meetings with tutors. Comprehensive written records of these meetings are kept, to which the students themselves contribute. There is a clear process of referrals for students who are causing concern. The school shows a sensitive response to the need felt by young adults for confidentiality and the right to take control of their lives and teachers work with them in a collaborative way. There is evidence that work done by the school with the young people in their care is held in high regard by local caring agencies and the students themselves speak approvingly of the level of care and consideration they receive.
47. There is effective guidance for students as they consider their future, either in education or career pathways. Students also consider that their opinions are listened to and appreciate the significant improvements to their accommodation. It provides very well for teaching and learning through effective study facilities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a very good partnership with parents. There are extensive and very effective links with schools and the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arrangements for parents to have electronic access to data about their children are excellent.
- Parents have a good opinion of most aspects of the school.
- Links with other schools are very effective and strongly welcomed by partner schools.
- Pupils benefit from the promotion of global perspectives.
- Sixth form partnership arrangements are very effective.

Commentary

48. The school works very hard to encourage parents to play a part in their children's education. Parents are routinely consulted about their views and the school acts in the light of their responses. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, meeting and correspondence, most parents indicate satisfaction with the school's work and the way it is led and managed. This leads to it being over-heavily subscribed. They report that their children have a very effective introduction to the school and that the school expects them to work hard. Some parents would like better information about their children's progress but most are confident about approaching the school for further information or about other issues; the school has appropriate systems for handling such approaches. Parents have few concerns about misbehaviour or bullying. Inspection evidence supports most of parents' positive views of the school.

49. The quality of reports and other information published for parents has improved significantly since the last inspection. Prospectuses for the main school and the sixth form are very well presented. The regular newsletter, 'H₂U', is of high quality and, together with the governors' annual report, gives very detailed information about events and developments. Information provided for parents of pupils new to the school is comprehensive and provides strong encouragement for parents to understand and adopt the school's strategies. For example, it includes a home-school agreement and a form for parents to record their acceptance of the school's Internet access policy. The school is developing further its Internet-based system which allows parents outstanding access to comprehensive information about their children's work and other activities in school and facilitates their involvement, for example by validating activities for the Highcliffe Challenge. Parents have suitable opportunities for discussion with teachers and are generally well informed about their children's progress. Reports are mostly of good quality although specific guidance on what should be done to improve, which informs parents how they can help, is not provided at a consistently high level by all teachers. Attendance at meetings for pupils with special educational needs and for their annual reviews is very good. The learning support department uses a range of creative strategies to work with parents to support the needs of their children.
50. The importance of maintaining good relations with the wider community is recognised in many ways throughout the school, including by consultation, the provision of information and cooperative activities. Good relationships are maintained with the local education authority and other agencies. Advanced skills teachers work in other schools regularly, for example developing a dramatic production with year 5 pupils. Teachers from the school work in other schools regularly, for example developing a dramatic production with Year 5 pupils. Pupils benefit from the school's good relationships with primary schools, which leads to the effective communication of information and eases pupils' transfer to the next phase of their education. The school's expertise in information technology systems is shared with several other schools. School facilities are of direct use to the community as a venue for adult evening classes, and for courses such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese, where parents can learn alongside their children. Local partner schools, other schools with which the school has established relationships in several countries, and other organisations, are all effusive in their praise of links with the school, and welcome the benefits to all participants.
51. Sixth formers benefit from the school's very good relationships with the other schools in the partnership, which provide them with access to a good range of courses. There are useful links with Bournemouth University which have helped, for example, some students studying geography. Some sixth form students have completed work experience in France. Reports on the progress of sixth form students are maintained in a partner establishment; they include some useful comments but not enough to provide a clear picture of all subjects.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school is **good**, with examples of very good practice. It is a strength of the school. The headteacher has shown outstanding qualities in leadership since her appointment, initiating very good improvement, focusing on raising standards and improving the overall quality of education. The governors operate effectively and work well with staff to ensure best value.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and vision of the headteacher.
- The deployment and effectiveness of the senior management team in their roles as key leaders and managers.
- The examples of very good practice in leadership and management of other key staff in pastoral and subject posts.
- The language college status is very well led and managed.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but do not fulfil some of their statutory duties.
- Support staff make a very good contribution to the life of the school.
- The school gives very good value for money overall and the sixth form is cost-effective.

Commentary

52. The school has clearly stated aims and objectives, which are being well met. A student, illustrating how well they are involved in the overall management of the school, wrote its mission statement, displayed in the entrance foyer. The headteacher leads the school very effectively and delegates tasks very well to management, encouraging pupils and students to assume responsibility. Her vision for the school has been well translated through the very effective improvement, and there is a rigorous approach to continue in this vein, and to become a centre of excellence. It is well reflected in the positive morale and ethos of the school. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good and developing well. They are effectively linked to performance management.
53. Overall there has been very good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. The effective leadership and management has built very well on the significant changes in provision, especially through much better strategic planning. The introduction of the sixth form (1998) and the specialist language college status (2000) have been well implemented and added significantly to the overall quality of education. Examination results have been raised well, especially in narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' performance. The overall quality of teaching has been improved, as have the procedures for assessment, although further work is required to ensure that procedures are consistently used. The accommodation is being very effectively improved. Good improvement has occurred in developing ICT facilities, not least in the way that it is being used to support administration and development. Staff have ready access to all forms of school data and policies. Unsatisfactory progress has been made in relation to a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form.
54. The specialist language college status is being very well built on through the effective work of the senior staff and partnership links. The strong links with partner primary schools are helping to create positive attitudes towards language learning, and twin school links provide good opportunities to promote international understanding. A very clear vision for curriculum development has had a very positive impact, leading to an International Schools Award. The Christchurch Arts "One World" project, based on music and expressive arts, brought a very strong international dimension not only to Highcliffe but also to the large number of primary pupils who attended workshops run principally by Highcliffe pupils. The strength of the international work is being embedded in the school curriculum so that all pupils gain a broader cultural understanding of the wider world. Through the language college, the school is meeting the needs of the local community by providing a variety of family and adult language learning opportunities.
55. Leadership and management in subjects are generally good with examples of very good practice. Difficulties in recruitment lead to some subjects, such as performing arts and business studies, undermining the overall impact. Pastoral staff provide very good leadership and management. The learning support department is well managed and there is effective deployment of staff for administrative tasks. The department has a clear collective vision and high aspirations to enable students with learning difficulties to achieve their potential. There are very good procedures for staff induction and for professional development of teachers and learning support staff through a range of opportunities for specialist training and development, making them knowledgeable in their work. Very good links exist for the support of initial teacher training. The overall day-to-day life of the school is enhanced by the effective work of the administrative, financial, technical and caretaking staff.
56. The governors are very supportive of the school and work very hard to ensure that the best opportunities exist. The headteacher and chair of governors have a very good professional

relationship and governors operate well within their committee structures. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and both challenge and support the staff. However, governance is only satisfactory overall as the governing body does not fulfil its statutory duties. They do not ensure that the requirements for collective worship across the school and for religious education in the sixth form are met. National curriculum requirements are not fulfilled in music in Years 7 to 9 or for the teaching of citizenship.

57. The management of the school's finances is very good and financial controls are secure. Items listed in the last audit report are being resolved efficiently. Spending is very prudent. The financial staff manages the budget on a day-to-day basis most effectively providing the headteacher and governors with effective analysis. The financial information shows a significant deficit in the budget and this is due to historical factors. Agreements exist with the local education authority to manage this and progress is good.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,156,292
Total expenditure	3,319,812
Expenditure per pupil	2,626

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-101,407
Balance carried forward to the next	-264,927

58. Procedures ensure that the principles of best value are very well applied, not only in fair competitive tendering but also in relation to comparing the school's performance and seeking ways for improvement. National and local data are used very effectively. The school consults with staff, pupils, students, parents and its partners, leading to good challenge on how well it meets needs. Overall, based on the personal and academic standards achieved, the quality of teaching and learning and education and its management, the school gives very good value for money.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

59. The team is under the direction of the deputy headteacher who works in partnership with the head of sixth form. The sixth form leadership team has been successful in increasing the numbers of students entering the sixth form. This has been due to the positive vision for, and good management of, the three-school consortium sixth form, resulting in the wide range of courses and opportunities on offer to students. The ethos and profile of the sixth form are still developing but its value is being increasingly recognised by pupils in the main school.
60. The assistant heads of sixth form work well with their tutor teams to monitor student welfare and sixth form students speak positively of the support they receive. There are good systems for induction into the sixth form and the monitoring of student progress is very good. The sixth form is cost effective, and becoming more so, with the increase in the number of students choosing to remain in post-16 education.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching is good.
- Sometimes the level of challenge for lower-attaining pupils is too high.
- Procedures for assessment are very good.
- Leadership and management are good, with some notable strengths.

Commentary

61. Pupils join the school with broadly above average prior attainment. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above average at both the expected level and for the proportion attaining the higher levels. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys but the disparity is narrowing and is very similar to the national picture. Results were lower than those in mathematics and similar to those in science. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations in English and English Literature were well above the national average for both the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C and also A* and A. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys but the difference is very close to the national difference. Standards have been consistently high over the past three years.
62. Pupils enter the school with above-average standards and they achieve well to reach standards which are well above the national average by the end of Year 9. This reflects average test results over the last three years. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is also good. Pupils in Year 9 are making good progress and are securely on course to meet their predicted grades. They make good progress in planning and structuring their writing and they use increasing detail and description to make what they write vivid and interesting. All pupils develop a thoughtful approach to literature and make clear references to their texts in order to illustrate and justify their opinions.
63. Inspection evidence indicates clearly that pupils are reaching standards which are well above average by the end of Year 11. Their predicted grades are based on a full range of assessment information and pupils are clearly on course to meet these, whilst some are likely to exceed them. Pupils achieve well, building on the well-above-average attainment from Year 9. Those identified with special educational needs make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils make very good progress when they embark on their A/S studies in Year 11 and those who did this in 2003 achieved a high level of success. Pupils make particularly good progress in making notes in a variety of forms in order to provide a good basis for revision and in detailed planning and structuring of their written answers in order to meet examination requirements. They develop a sensitive and thoughtful response to literature. Pupils are confident and articulate, enabling them to make good progress through discussion and listening to the ideas of others.
64. The quality of teaching is good. This represents good progress since the previous inspection when a significant proportion of the teaching was judged to be satisfactory and teaching in Years 10 and 11 was judged to offer insufficient variety of activities and tasks. Teachers have clear lesson objectives which are well explained to pupils so that they know what to expect and what is expected of them. They plan a good variety of activities which generally meet the

identified needs of pupils and this maintains pupils' concentration and hard work. There are some occasions, however, when tasks given to lower-attaining pupils are too challenging for them. On these occasions, they are unable to start their work without receiving additional support from the teacher, which means that they have less opportunity to become independent learners. There are good opportunities for discussion and teachers make good use of questioning to challenge pupils' thinking. Appropriate use is made of ICT. A particular strength is the meticulous way in which teachers prepare pupils to understand and meet examination and test requirements and this leads to pupils' good progress in understanding how to plan and structure their answers.

65. The quality of leadership and management are good. There is a clear commitment to further raising standards. The reasons for the dip in attainment in the most recent Year 9 tests have been analysed and successfully addressed. The procedures for assessment are very good and are rigorously applied. Very good use is made of the information to track pupils' progress towards their predicted attainment levels and to identify possible under-achievement or strong potential. Pupils are successfully involved in assessing their own work and are given a clear picture of what they need to do to improve. Good additional support is given to identified pupils. The schemes of work have been recently modified to offer clear guidance to teachers in the comprehensive coverage of the National Literacy Strategy and there is clear evidence that these schemes were contributed to by all members of the department. These do not, however, identify activities where it would be appropriate to set different tasks for pupils at different levels of attainment. There is insufficient emphasis in the policies and schemes on the use of dictionaries or other methods of checking spelling and pupils do not place a high priority on this way of improving their work. The procedures for monitoring and supporting the work of teachers are satisfactory and plans are being considered to achieve a more formal basis and also ways which are less time-consuming but equally effective.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards are above average, and the use of literacy and language are good.
67. Standards of literacy are good. Pupils are articulate, explain their ideas clearly and make good use of opportunities for discussion. Most pupils read fluently and their reading is well up to subject demands. For example, in mathematics, they are able to understand the real-life contextual background to their practical investigations and in history, pupils confidently read some difficult and demanding primary sources. Pupils across the range of attainment make good use of writing to record their knowledge and understanding. In science, pupils use discursive writing to explore the issues surrounding cloning, with lower-attaining pupils using the writing guides known as "writing frames" to help them plan what they will write. In art, higher-attaining pupils write critical evaluations of the work of well-known artists. In all subjects, pupils have a good specialised vocabulary which they use confidently.
68. Teachers offer pupils good opportunities to develop and use a full range of literacy skills. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to discuss their understanding and to exchange their ideas with others. There is generally good emphasis on the importance of using and spelling "key words" accurately. A strength is the opportunities for extended writing which pupils are given across a wide range of subjects and the support which lower-attaining pupils are given in planning and structuring what they want to write.

Modern foreign languages

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

The focuses for the inspection were French, Spanish and German. Italian has recently been introduced and Latin is also taught within the Languages faculty. These two subjects were sampled and provision is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE examination results have been disappointing but standards are rising.
- Teaching is good but effective practice is not shared sufficiently.
- New technology is being exploited imaginatively and is helping to motivate pupils.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

69. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2003 showed a marked rise in standards compared to previous years and they were significantly above the national average. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, French results were above the national average overall. The gap between boys' and girls' results was much smaller than that seen nationally. In Spanish, the results were well below average, although they had been well above average the year before. German results in 2003 were also below average. In comparison with their results in other subjects, pupils did not do as well as expected in modern languages.
70. Standards by the end of Year 9 for the current cohort of pupils are above average and broadly match the previous teacher assessment levels. In all languages, there is appropriate coverage of the topics and grammar needed to reach the expected national curriculum levels, including past, present and future tenses. Overall, pupils are achieving well. The standard of presentation and organisation of pupils' work is of a consistently high standard. Vocabulary is noted accurately and new material is thoroughly practised in complete sentences. There are also some good examples of extended writing, but the approach to this is not consistent. In some classes, not enough of this sort of work is being done and in some cases, pupils could be expected to write more.
71. Standards by the end of Year 11 are higher than those suggested by recent examination results in all three languages. In German and Spanish, they are similar to the national average and in French they are above. In top sets, expectations are high and pupils are working appropriately and achieving well within the higher tier of GCSE. For example, in French, pupils are using the conditional tense to say what they would do and are using a variety of different ways to express opinions. In middle sets there is a less consistent picture. In some classes, there are good levels of expectation and tasks are set, which will help pupils towards getting a grade C. However, in some others, the tasks are not sufficiently challenging and pupils with the potential to achieve grade C are not doing enough work at the right level. Overall, however, standards are improving. Revised teaching group arrangements by capability, which have recently been introduced in Year 10, are helping teachers to match work more closely to the needs of pupils and therefore to raise standards.
72. Teaching is good. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach. The coverage of topics and grammar areas is very thorough and past tenses are introduced quite quickly. Pupils' exercise books are well presented, well organised and marked very regularly. Where laptops and data projectors are available, they are being used very effectively to focus pupils' attention, to act as a stimulus for oral work and to make rapid transitions from one activity to the next. For example, the past tense in Italian was introduced very clearly to a Year 8 class using a PowerPoint presentation. An impressive range of resources has been developed to use with the multi-media language laboratory and pupils enjoy their lessons here. Video-conferencing is being used imaginatively to bring language learning alive and motivate pupils, for example in a videoconference link with a German school. In many lessons, good use is made of a variety of resources, including flashcards, support sheets for oral work and tape recordings. At GCSE level, teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of exam requirements, for example in the Spanish coursework preparation sheets. Although pupils cover appropriate topics and vocabulary, not enough attention is paid to making sure that new material is thoroughly learned by heart. This undermines their active use of it later on to re-use it confidently in new situations. In many classes, teachers use a large amount of the appropriate foreign language and also make sure that pupils are active learners by using techniques such as rapid questioning, games and pair work. However, in about a quarter of

lessons seen, there was too much teaching in English and pupils were not sufficiently engaged in their learning or using the target language enough. Pupils respond well to teacher expectations, behaving very well and having positive attitudes in almost all lessons. They are attentive to explanations, are ready to answer questions and participate well in pair or group work.

73. Leadership and management are very good. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to lead the faculty and in the last 18 months, underachievement has been identified and vigorous action taken to raise standards. This includes a reorganisation of setting structures, the rewriting of schemes of work and the introduction of an express group in Year 9. Teachers make good use of national curriculum levels to assess the work of younger pupils and portfolios of work help to achieve consistency across the faculty. At present, however, younger pupils are not given sufficiently specific advice about how to improve their levels in the extended writing tasks which are built into the schemes of work. A programme of lesson monitoring and analysis of pupils' work has already had a visible impact on the quality of pupils' work. The subject leaders for individual languages act as good role-models in teaching and learning and are contributing significantly to the drive to raise standards. However, they are not sufficiently involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the many initiatives which have been taken. Standards are now rising and the foundations have been laid for further progress.
74. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, mainly because the overall provision has developed so much through specialist language college status. Four modern languages and Latin are now taught. All pupils now follow courses in two languages for the whole of Years 7 to 9. Sixth form courses have been developed and a high quality multi-media language laboratory has been installed. Standards of presentation of pupils' work have improved as have arrangements for assessment. Recent GCSE results, on the other hand, are below those recorded at the time of the last inspection, although a wider capability range is now entered for examinations.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good and improving**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and rising steadily, particularly by the end of Year 9.
- Teaching is good overall, with many strengths in the team of specialists.
- Assessment procedures are good, although marking is inconsistent.
- Work set does not always meet the differing needs of middle-capability pupils.
- Leadership and management are effective.

Commentary

75. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in relation to all schools, and above average in comparison with similar schools. They have improved at a faster rate than nationally over the last three years, and reflect rising attainment on entry to the school as well as the effect of implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was well above the national average, but below that of similar schools, although higher attaining pupils' work seen during inspection was very high. Girls achieved higher levels than boys in the last two years, a reverse of the previous trend. Results were better than in English and in science. Results in the GCSE examinations were well above national averages in 2002, but dropped in 2003 for the percentage of A*-C grades, partly due to difficulties with computer access for the data-handling coursework. The proportion of A* and A grades was equal to the national average in 2003, an improvement on the previous year. Girls achieved better results than boys, by greater than the national difference.

76. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average. Good links with primary schools, including mutual observation and sharing information, helps the successful induction of pupils into the mathematics faculty. In Years 7 to 9, where pupils are set for teaching groups by capability, standards are highest in Year 7. In the lowest Year 7 set, pupils verbally demonstrated knowledge and understanding about angles and rotational symmetry. Pupils in the top set of Year 7 were tackling solving equations at a fast pace, due to the well-structured lesson, building on previous experience. Higher-attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented mathematicians, are identified early and challenged to achieve very high standards. In one lesson, half of a Year 8 top set demonstrated their high standards by finding the 'nth term' of quadratic sequences. Year 9 pupils learnt in one lesson how to calculate percentage increase and decrease using multipliers, and the most capable in the group understood the inverse process.
77. Achievement is good overall, with standards by the end of Year 11 being above average. In Years 10 and 11 some pupils had problems with basic number bond recognition and simple multiplication facts. Attitudes of the older pupils tended to be less positive, often affected by previous staffing difficulties and recent changes. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in particular sometimes disrupted the learning of others, even with very good teaching strategies. Bottom sets are small and good learning support assistants helped teachers give individual attention to pupils with special educational needs, and they achieved well on the whole, though at a very low level. The decision to move to a modular course is helping many pupils cope well with the demands of GCSE.
78. Teaching is good. It was always at least satisfactory, with many very good lessons, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good relationships with their classes, and most pupils respond well, with interest and high motivation to achieve. Planning and the structure of lessons are strengths. Very good questioning techniques and clear explanations help pupils learn, with some excellent boardwork and preparation of quality worksheets. Starter activities were relevant and interesting, and developed mental calculation and recall of knowledge, but too often used written rather than verbal or visual responses. Learning activities were usually exercises from textbooks or worksheets, rarely involving group-work or structured discussion, although pupils informally discussed their work very well. The higher-attaining pupils in middle-capability sets were often not sufficiently challenged or presented with extension work to ensure that they develop their potential. Teachers made good use of their laptops and data projectors in some lessons, but overall there is insufficient use of and access to, ICT. The provision of a relevant textbook for all pupils, to use of, at home and at school, is a very good resource which is helping to raise standards. Homework was regularly set in all classes and completed well, but rarely matched the ability and aptitude of individual pupils. Although the faculty is moving towards more constructive comments and detailed corrections on pupils' work, marking is inconsistent. Many pupils are not sufficiently aware of how to improve and need greater guidance to raise their standards
79. Since the previous inspection, assessment procedures have improved significantly, as has the formal monitoring of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures and structures are good. The extensive database of attainment information helps teachers and pupils know past and target levels and grades. Work sampling and lesson observations take place regularly, and there is extensive training and development. Interaction with other institutions and frequent visits by the local authority consultant are appreciated, and there are very good links with parents. 'Catch-up' sessions are held each September for Year 7 pupils and their 'learning partners'. Booster classes for Year 9 are held, and Year 11 pupils are offered revision sessions after school and at lunchtime, and the time to improve course-work using computer facilities.
80. Leadership is good in this effective and improving department, with a shared sense of direction among the team of full-time specialists. Staffing difficulties over time have been managed well. Recent changes have led to many part-time teachers, all well qualified and experienced, but resulting in split classes and problems for the continuity of teaching. Curriculum changes have

been led and managed well, and schemes of work are being developed appropriately. However, citizenship is not yet sufficiently emphasised, and there are no policies or guidelines on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of mathematics. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. Numeracy standards are above average, but numeracy across the curriculum needs further development.
82. Competence in mathematics is good overall, but better in the lower years, due to the effect of the Key Stage 2 and 3 Strategies. Number skills are well taught by the specialist teachers in the mathematics department, and are well used in most subject areas. A good example of high numeracy levels was seen in an English lesson, discussing the casualties of Hiroshima compared with the number of dead in the war with Japan. Above-average numeracy was seen in science, manipulating formulae and drawing and interpreting graphs. Geography schemes of work are planned to use and develop above-average numeracy. The standards and skills with shape and space were good in art. Diagrammatic representation in design and technology was good, although linear measurement was neglected. Skills with weight and volume featured well in food technology. In all other subjects, there was little mention of numeracy in policies or schemes of work, showing inconsistency across the curriculum. Whole-staff training days and follow-up INSET sessions have been held, with help in planning from the LEA consultant. A new numeracy co-ordinator has been appointed, and a draft policy circulated. Each form in Years 7 to 9 has one tutor-time session per week on a numeracy programme called DEAN (Drop Everything and Numerate). The mathematics faculty recognises the need to intensify and co-ordinate development of numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average throughout and improving in Years 7 to 9.
- Overall, pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- A small number of higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- Assessment data is not used well enough.
- Leadership is very good and management is good.

Commentary

83. National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2003. They have improved steadily in line with the national average, apart from a dip in 2002. However, when compared with schools having similar prior attainment, results in 2003 were below average. When pupils enter the school, standards are average, but they achieve well and by Year 9, standards are above average, matching test results. Results were similar to those in English but below those in mathematics. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the overall proportion of pupils awarded grades A* to C was above the national average. Results have declined recently, partly as a result of staff illness adversely affecting pupils' progress and continuity. Compared with similar schools, the results were average. Lower-attaining pupils do well in examinations, with almost all pupils gaining a pass grade, but the proportion gaining the highest A* and A grades is below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, with standards remaining above average in Year 11. The overall picture matches GCSE results, with lower attaining pupils doing well, whilst a minority of higher attainers do less well than they should.

84. Teaching and learning are good overall, but better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. About half the lessons seen during the inspection were good, and occasionally very good. Lessons are well planned to include a variety of activities that engage pupils' interest. For example, in Year 8 the teacher captured interest by demonstrating some familiar devices that can convert invisible waves into sound and visible light. Teachers usually ensure that learning objectives are clear to pupils and reinforce learning by referring back to them at the end of lessons. Learning support assistants are effective in helping lower-attaining pupils to think through problems for themselves, rather than providing direct answers to questions. In a few lessons, teachers give higher-attaining pupils too much information, discouraging them from thinking for themselves. Resources, including those for information and communication technology, are often used very effectively by teachers to increase the pace of pupils' learning. Almost all pupils behave well and engage fully with lesson content because presentation is varied and interesting. However, a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 sometimes show lack of urgency, losing concentration and chatting rather than extending their learning. Teachers do not always make full use of high-quality easily accessible assessment information in ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are fully stretched. The quality of marking is inconsistent. About half the teachers mark exercise books thoroughly, grading work using school marking codes and setting targets to help pupils improve, but others mark only superficially.
85. Leadership is very good. The head of department has been in post for about two years and has inspired teamwork in the department in working towards a vision that science should be relevant, interesting and fun. This is beginning to have an impact on standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. On the other hand, progress has been held back by continuing staff absence due to ill health. Management of the department is good. Inconsistencies, such as those in marking, result from limited opportunities for formal monitoring of the department's work.
86. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although examination results have fluctuated, teaching is beginning to improve and impact positively on results, particularly at the end of Year 9. Resources, including those for information and communication technology, have improved. Teachers benefit from very good technical support, allowing them to concentrate on planning interesting lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a generally good understanding of presenting information.
- Standards are rising but are not high enough in Year 9.
- The leadership and management are good.

Commentary

87. The 2003 teacher assessments of 14-year-old pupils show that standards were above the national average. These results are generous and not a true reflection of pupils' attainment. The results of the 2003 GCSE ICT short course examination show that 44 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-C grade. Although these results are slightly lower than those in 2002, there has been an upward trend in results in recent years. There are no national statistics available for comparison. A full course information and communication technology (ICT) GCSE was offered as a subject option in 2002 and pupils will be examined for the first time in 2004.
88. Standards in Years 7 to 9 vary, being higher in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9, where they are below average and achievement over time is unsatisfactory. This is because pupils in Year 9 did not receive regular separate ICT lessons, as do pupils presently in Years 7 and 8. The difference in capability and experience is easily seen in the standards. In Years 7 and 8, pupils

achieve well and standards are average. Plans are set to continue with discrete lessons in Year 9, and this has the potential to raise standards.

89. Pupils have good knowledge on presenting information. They use the word-processing program with confidence, and have a good understanding of multi-media presentations, producing slide shows with moving text and art images. Pupils understand data-handling and that a computer is used to store information, although they are vague about the advantages of its use and how to select specific information. Pupils know about the use of a spreadsheet entering, the data to calculate profit and loss. However, their overall knowledge of how to use formulae for mathematical calculations is insufficient to allow them to work independently and with understanding. Although pupils are developing a basic understanding of control technology, they have not had the opportunity to use more sophisticated programs, therefore this element is underdeveloped. The school is aware of this and plan to incorporate an 'on screen' control program in future schemes of work.
90. Standards in Years 10 and 11 in the full and short GCSE course are average. Taking prior learning into consideration, achievement is good. Pupils in Year 11 have an established understanding of data-handling and know how to select information using the query facility. They know how to enter the information into separate areas and have an appreciation of the need to test the data for its accuracy.
91. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory but good in Years 10 and 11. The national three-part lesson has been introduced into Years 7 and 8. Planning, however is in its infancy and teachers have yet to become fully confident with the strategy and learning occasionally lacks progression. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and use their good subject knowledge effectively to quickly engage interest and attention. Teachers manage pupils well, insisting on quiet when explaining new procedures, allowing lessons to move with pace. A strong feature of the teaching is the circulation of the teachers during lessons, advising pupils on how to develop their skills and improve, contributing positively to their understanding. Although lessons finish with sessions to ascertain learning, these are often too brief, with inadequate opportunities for pupils to present and talk about their own work. In better lessons, the planning is clear and progression clearly defined, with effective methods to promote learning. An example of this was when the teacher suggested a strategy to help pupils to monitor their testing procedures.
92. The leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision about the future development of the subject and the need to raise standards. The head of department is fully aware of the weaknesses and there are clearly-defined procedures in place to improve standards and entitlement. Assessment procedures have been revised and are well established in Years 7 and 8. These procedures, however, are not in place for Year 9. Here pupils are not aware of the levels they are achieving and are unsure how to improve their work. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good through the increase in resources and the implementation of discrete lessons in Years 7 and 8.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. At the time of the last inspection, the report stated that the use of ICT was varied and opportunities to support pupils' learning were lost. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There has been a concerted effort to improve teachers' confidence and competence by providing all teachers with laptops to use in conjunction with the digital projectors. The majority of subjects now have reference in their schemes of work and are using ICT techniques to support learning. Very good use was seen in modern foreign languages, using video-conferencing techniques to make contact with a school in Germany and interactive programs to support pupils' language development. Good use was also seen in geography, using spreadsheets to record local crime statistics and displaying them in graph form. Use in other subjects is generally satisfactory. Progress on occasions, however, is inhibited as access to the well-used computer suites is limited and not always available when

needed. This is presenting a problem for some departments that do not have the appropriate resources within their own areas, or do not plan sufficiently to access the resources. The monitoring and coordination have improved since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good, with a very positive learning environment.
- Very good use is made of fieldwork.
- The support and challenge for pupils across the capability range are inconsistent.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

94. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate the maintenance of well above average standards. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average, showing a small improvement over the previous year, with an overall positive trend since the last inspection. Both boys' and girls' attainment levels compare well against national results, including those at the higher grades, although girls still perform better at A*-C grades. However, the gap between boys' and girls' performance has closed slightly.
95. Standards by the end of both Year 9 and 11 are above average, reflecting previous test and examination results. Pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding relating to the human and physical themes, supported by the review of schemes of work since the last inspection. Achievement is good, reflecting positive efforts by most pupils. There is very good skills development which enhances levels of achievement in lessons and in homework. For instance, Year 8 pupils can construct and analyse pyramid graphs relating to population issues in China. Pupils understand and appreciate the principal factors of location, and grasp the human and physical concepts of their studies well. They often apply newly-acquired knowledge to specific case studies; for example, in work on weather and in discussions of global communities with contrasting economic standards. Good collaborative work is a feature of many lessons, and this supports pupils' personal development. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported, and gifted and talented pupils are challenged through extension work. However, this is not consistent, and practice does not ensure that all pupils achieve their potential.
96. Teaching and learning are at least good across all year groups, with many examples of very good practice. The positive learning environment is a major strength of the department. Teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge. They have a very positive style, exercised with a strong pupil-friendly rapport, thus bringing out good responses from a substantial majority of pupils. Literacy and numeracy applications are integral elements in most lessons, with the use of ICT and citizenship pervading all work. Fieldwork is very well used to enhance pupils' geographical knowledge in local and regional studies, and through residential courses.
97. Leadership is very good, being enthusiastic and positive through a strong team ethos, together with a clearly-defined vision for the future. Strong collaborative management is a key feature. There are well-structured policies and planning documents. The assessment and marking policies are well used to record and effectively monitor pupils' progress. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are effective. Since the last inspection, improvement has

been good. The recent introduction of an AS module for a fast-track group from Year 11 hopes to enhance GCSE results, as well as supporting recruitment into post-16 courses.

History

Overall provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- High standards occur in pupils' creative and factual writing.
- The quality of teaching is good, although work set does not always meet the differing needs of pupils.
- There are insufficient opportunities for independent learning, and not enough use is made of debating and presentations to improve oral skills.
- Assessment is well used.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

98. National Curriculum Teacher Assessments for 2003 indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 were above average. GCSE results for the last two years were above average both when measured by the percentage gaining at least a Grade C and by the average points score for each pupil. However, the percentage of pupils gaining the top two grades of A* and A has been below average for the last two years.
99. Inspection evidence shows that standards by the end of Year 9 reflect the teacher assessments. Pupils achieve well, making good progress in building historical skills such as enquiry, recognising bias and analysing historical evidence. For example, Year 8 pupils can analyse effectively the relative importance of different reasons why Britain became the first industrial nation. Similarly, standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. Pupils in the present Year 11 are achieving well and more pupils are likely to achieve the highest grades in the present Years 10 and 11 than in recent years. Pupils in Year 10 can explain difficult original sources like a speech by Khrushchev to the 1954 Communist Party Congress, whilst Year 11 pupils ask probing questions about the end of Communism in 1989. A particular strength of pupils' learning is their writing in which they take pride. Extended pieces on Elizabethan Theatre or the life of Cromwell are often excellent, whilst they respond well to shorter tasks such as writing the introduction to a speech by Stalin on collectivisation, or simply making accurate notes. Boys achieve well in the subject as do pupils with special educational needs.
100. Teaching is good, and because of this most pupils' attitudes are positive. They listen attentively and are courteous and helpful. Occasional inappropriate behaviour amongst younger pupils, such as calling out, is dealt with effectively by staff. The main strengths of the teaching are the meticulous planning, which ensures a variety of useful and interesting activities in lessons, and the encouragement of good writing. Brisk recapping of previous work gets lessons off to a good start, whilst teachers' use of visual learning is striking: they use photographs, video, drawings and cartoons to ensure new ideas and facts are understood and remembered. Pupils learn well; they answer challenging questions accurately and absorb new ideas and material. Opportunities offered for different styles of writing and an emphasis on modern history are factors in the relative success of boys. There is an effective partnership between learning support assistants who liaise well with class teachers to support pupils with special educational needs. However, work is not always well enough designed to meet the differing needs of pupils. This can be seen in the use of texts. Some opportunities for pupils to learn independently through research are offered through preparation for a historical "balloon debate", for example. However, these are limited and limiting the benefits to all pupils, especially in developing the potential of the highest attainers. Similarly, there are insufficient

opportunities for pupils to develop oral and social skills through extended speaking in debates, group discussions or presentations to the class.

101. The department contributes well to pupils' moral and social education through effective teaching on war, persecution, totalitarianism and democracy. The curriculum is enriched by numerous excursions to places of historical interest. The regular use of ICT by all pupils is not yet in place. It is being used for word-processing, accessing useful historical sites on the Internet and occasionally preparing PowerPoint presentations. A useful department website is under construction. Assessment of pupils' work is good. There is a helpful marking policy and written work is normally well marked, with helpful and constructive comments on how pupils can improve. At GCSE, the use of level descriptors to indicate what pupils can do and what they need to do reach the next level is particularly useful. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not understand the process of target-setting clearly enough.
102. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for improving standards, especially with regard to challenge and high expectations. She monitors the performance of staff effectively and provides good support to newly qualified teachers. She has good organisational skills and has created an effective team. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory, history rooms are located inconveniently in different areas which hinders staff collaboration. Resources are good, particularly in technology, with data projectors available to staff but there are insufficient textbooks. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, the start of lessons is brisker and the staff are making good use of technology.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and, with specialist teachers, generally very good.
- Pupils want to learn and lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Leadership is good with a clear vision for development.

Commentary

103. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with those expected in the agreed syllabus, and achievement is satisfactory. From their knowledge of Christianity and of the other religions studied, pupils can explain the effect of religion on people's individual lives and its impact on society, for example how the teaching of Jesus influenced people such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Oscar Romero and about the motives and achievements of such inspirational figures. They make steady progress in deepening their understanding of religious belief and practice, gaining a good understanding of charities, why they exist, how they operate, and the relationship between charitable activities, religious beliefs, moral values and themselves. Pupils develop speaking and writing skills effectively, although they do not always write at sufficient length but are confident and competent in their use of specialist vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
104. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average and pupils achieve well. GCSE course requirements are met well. Pupils write fluently, showing detailed knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and Judaism. They have good understanding of religious teachings and show sensitivity about how they apply them to everyday life. They compare and contrast different points of view and evaluate them successfully. In recent years, results in the GCSE examination have been above, or well above, average but in 2003 they declined to below average. The present pupils in Year 11 are on the way to obtaining above, or well above,

average grades again. They make good progress in their study of Christian and Jewish teachings about peace and the management of conflict. They develop an understanding of the concept of sanctity of life and learn how to apply it to an issue such as abortion. They learn about observance of 'kashrut' and explore its underlying meanings and motives. They learn how differences of belief lead to different moral values and so to different conduct. At the end of the course, they improve further by revising and practising how to answer questions. On the GCSE full course, pupils show a strong commitment to learning and to success in the examination.

105. Teaching and learning are good, promoting pupils' good attitudes and their moral and social development. In all lessons, pupils learn respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs and in the best lessons, pupils develop skills of reasoning and reflection to a high level. Teachers show at least sufficient command of subject knowledge, although only specialist teachers have the clarity of insight necessary to develop fully pupils' reflective skills and spiritual awareness. Specialist teachers show detailed and in-depth understanding of religions and of the purpose of religious education. Planning of lessons is very effective and teachers engage the interests of pupils very well. Teachers make very good use of the time available and achieve high standards of behaviour. The level of challenge is always at least satisfactory and, in lessons taught by specialists, often very good or even excellent. Teachers use good methods and resources for learning and are good at promoting positive attitudes to the richness of religious diversity. Procedures for assessment already in place are satisfactory. The department is developing their use so that pupils will have better information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
106. Leadership is good. The head of department is a good role-model to other staff and to pupils. She has created an effective specialist team who share the same clarity of vision, strong sense of purpose and high aspirations. The curriculum is good, and whilst schemes of work are appropriate for a fully specialist department, they lack sufficient detail for non-specialist teachers. The development of assessment tasks has been innovative and laid the foundation for future progress. However, management is only satisfactory overall because without full implementation of assessment procedures, the department cannot do enough to measure and monitor its own performance. Self-evaluation, including the creation and use of data, is developing but it is not yet securely in place to inform both teachers and pupils accurately about attainment or progress. Staffing is satisfactory overall as the amount of non-specialist teaching is high. In one lesson in three, in Years 7 to 10, teachers are non-specialists.
107. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are now rising and the important initiatives being taken by the new head of department have the potential to bring about further improvement. However, resources are unsatisfactory. Although the department has a good collection of artefacts and videos, it lacks sufficient up-to-date textbooks. The use of ICT is underdeveloped.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The significantly better results at GCSE level than the national standards.
- The significantly better results that pupils have in design and technology than in the majority of their other subjects.
- The good quality of teaching and learning, with excellence in electronics.
- The weakness in accommodation and resources which currently undermines provision, although a new technology block is under construction.
- The very good leadership and management

Commentary

108. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were significantly better than the national picture, and showing improvement over previous years. The percentage of pupils entered for the examinations is far higher than the national average. Candidates do very well, and most pupils do significantly better in their design and technology examinations than in most of their other subjects. Although girls follow the national pattern and do better than boys, the difference in their performance is below the national difference. Performance in electronics is notable.
109. Pupils' attainment on entry is just above national expectation because they cover the national curriculum well in their primary school. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments last year showed that the standards attained were above national expectations and the anticipated improvements for this year are confirmed by a study of class work and project work. Standards improve year on year as the pupils move through the school. Girls do better than boys, less than the national difference. Lower-attaining pupils, and those who hold statements of special educational needs, make similar progress to the other pupils because they are often set work that is well matched to their needs. Achievement therefore is improving in all years, particularly as the pupils move through the school into their examination years. This is because of a commitment by the school and the departmental staff to raise standards. Current Year 11 pupils maintain these improved standards and their coursework and books show very high standards and many pupils are at above grade C levels. Courses are offered in electronic products, graphic products, resistant materials, food technology and in textile technology. Pupils show positive attitudes as they develop their knowledge, understanding and skills well across these courses.
110. Teaching and learning are good and often better but occasionally, unsatisfactory teaching occurs. Teaching and learning are particularly strong in electronics. In these lessons, the work excites pupils, making the lessons enjoyable and effective so that they learn very well. Overall, teachers are well organised and have developed good schemes of work that clearly identify what has to be done and match the tasks well with the needs of the pupils. Pupils learn well because they are motivated, work hard in lessons and listen well to their teachers. Lessons are very orderly and practical work is enjoyed, with pupils using the equipment effectively. In Years 10 and 11, the assessment criteria from the examination boards are used well to identify what has been achieved and what is needed to gain higher grades. This ratchets up standards.
111. Accommodation and resources do undermine standards. Subject rooms are dispersed across the site, impeding the movement of staff, day-to-day management and monitoring and evaluation. Currently, there is insufficient computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture, together with the full use of modern materials, particularly smart materials. Although there has been some improvement since the last inspection, the new technology block being built at the time of the inspection and which is due to open in September will be a significant improvement. When completed, it will leave the potential to address shortcomings in the quality and range of the curriculum.
112. Much has been achieved with the co-operation of all the staff to raise standards through the very good leadership and management of the head of faculty. There have been improvements since the last inspection, and health and safety and hygiene issues have been mainly resolved, but it will not be until the new facilities are fully established that the department can develop its potential.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Overall provision for art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly.
- Despite the difficulties of having no head of department and staff turbulence, teachers work very hard to ensure that pupils achieve well with minimum disturbance to the continuity and progression of their learning.
- Lower-attaining pupils achieve well, but some capable pupils, particularly girls, underachieve.
- Marking does not identify sufficiently clearly what pupils must do to improve their work.
- The absence of a subject leader is adversely affecting progress.

Commentary

113. GCSE A*-C results in the last two years were well above average. This represents a very good improvement in standards from the previous report. A much higher than average proportion of pupils entered the subject in 2003. Pupils generally did better in art than in their other subjects.
114. Pupils enter the school with average skills and knowledge, but these are underpinned by good literacy standards and strong spatial understanding. Despite many recent staffing problems, pupils make good progress between Years 7 and 9 and are above average in skills and competence by the age of 14. Research about the historical and cultural context of art develops particularly well and pupils can integrate what they find out effectively into their practical two- and three-dimensional work. Drawing is the pupils' weakest area and is average by Year 9. Pupils of all capabilities achieve well overall.
115. Standards are above average by Year 11. Teachers have identified drawing as an area for development and have provided extra focus on this in Year 10. The majority of pupils for GCSE are girls and GCSE standards are broadly average for girls and above average overall. Pupils' strengths remain in their capabilities to undertake and write about visual research, where attainment is often high. Lower attaining pupils in particular achieve better standards than expected in preparation and research. Higher-attaining pupils, often girls, do not always reach the highest standards. The A* quality work of which many are capable occurs only inconsistently. This is partly because observational drawing shows lower standards than those achieved in other aspects of pupils' work.
116. Teaching and learning are good. A long-running series of staffing difficulties is still ongoing, but current staff have worked commendably effectively to minimise potentially adverse effects of this on pupils' achievement. Lessons are well resourced and structured. Pupils experience well-informed varied introductions and demonstrations followed by a good length of time for development of practical work. Class management is good, with learning support assistants helping pupils with learning difficulties and efficiently assisting teachers to control the behaviour of disruptive pupils. Marking and assessment do not give pupils enough guidance about how to improve to reach higher standards. Timetabling is very unhelpful because half of Year 7-9 classes have more than one teacher for the subject. Given the non-suited accommodation and part-time staffing, liaison between teachers is very difficult. The success of the department is a tribute to the efforts of current staff. Single periods for GCSE classes do not allow pupils to get enough depth into their practical work. The newly-acquired computers are not yet used creatively in pupils' learning, so they do not regard ICT as a tool for other than research.
117. The prolonged absence of a head of department is the key weakness currently hindering progress in the department. The school is currently recruiting for this post. Management by

the head of the DT faculty has been effective as an interim measure, but the department needs a strong subject specialist to lead its future direction. Even so, the department has made a very good improvement since the previous report.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are well above national average.
- Numbers of pupils studying music are double the average group size.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Lack of resources for music technology restricts the development of skills in composing in Years 7 to 9.
- More practice rooms are needed for instrumental lessons and small-group work.

Commentary

118. Pupils' standards are broadly in line with the expected level when they start in Year 7 but, apart from those learning instruments, many have a limited musical experience. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 judged that standards were above average, and inspection evidence supports this judgement. The achievement for pupils of all levels of capability is good. More pupils attain the expected level than nationally and a significant minority attain above this level. Pupils have good listening skills and they can identify and describe musical elements in some detail. They show imagination when combining these elements in their own songs and can compose in various modern styles. Developing their work is restricted by lack of resources for music technology and pupils cannot manipulate, store or retrieve their compositions. This slows their progress in developing composing skills. A higher number of pupils than average learn instruments and performing skills are good for these pupils.
119. GCSE results have been well above the national average at A*-C grades since the last inspection. Standards for the current Year 11 pupils are well above average, reflecting this examination pattern. Performing skills are particularly good. Pupils play various instruments in a variety of styles and with some pupils producing outstanding performance. Less opportunity occurs for composition work. Most pupils compose only for the instrument which they play as there are insufficient music technology resources available to develop their ideas. This is preventing many pupils from attaining the higher grades. Pupils have a good knowledge of their chosen areas of study and can appraise their work in some detail, displaying various stylistic improvements to compositions. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Twice as many pupils as the national average study music; high standards have been maintained and, overall, pupils attain significantly higher standards in music than in most other subjects.
120. Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of very good and excellent lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan their lessons well and varied tasks sustain pupils' interest and increase their understanding. The teachers have good subject skills and explain tasks clearly to pupils, with good use of musical examples. Questioning is used well to check and consolidate knowledge and teachers ensure that all pupils are included. They have a good understanding of their pupils' needs and this helps to ensure that all make equally good progress. In a few lessons, some tasks are too long and pupils indulge in background chatter. In the best lessons, teaching is lively and interesting and pupils respond enthusiastically and enjoy their work. With short-term timed tasks a very good pace of learning is sustained. The tasks are challenging but pupils are well supported in their small-group and individual work and they are encouraged to develop independent learning skills.

121. Teaching in the instrumental lessons is good and pupils make good progress. Lessons are offered in woodwind, drums and guitar and pupils have opportunities in the extra-curricular programme to develop these skills further. Extra-curricular clubs and events are organised. Various styles of music are encouraged but rock bands are particularly popular, with over twenty bands rehearsing regularly. More groups are planned. The accommodation for class teaching is broadly satisfactory but more practice rooms are needed to develop the instrumental teaching programme and small-group work. Resources for music technology are inadequate and pupils in Years 7-9 do not have an opportunity to develop their skills in this aspect of their work. Some very old keyboards need replacing.
122. Since the last inspection, leadership and management has been very good and the new subject leader has a clear understanding of the needs and future direction for the department. A new scheme of work is being devised. Skills in performing, composing and listening are addressed coherently and world music studies are developed. The curriculum plan makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils but there is scope to include more music from different historical periods. Schemes of assessment are also being developed but the effectiveness of planning is hampered because there is no archive of recordings of practical work.
123. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall, with high standards, large numbers and good teaching sustained. The potential exists for even further improvement when issues relating to accommodation and resources are addressed.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

The subject includes dance, drama and music. In Years 7-9, the subjects are taught separately but in Years 10 and 11 they combine for an expressive arts GCSE course. There is also a separate music GCSE course.

Provision in the expressive arts is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above national average.
- The subject is very popular, with pupil numbers well above national average, although many more girls than boys follow the course.
- Teaching and learning in the GCSE course are very good.
- The Global Rock work is very popular and effective.
- The department has just moved into new, purpose-built accommodation.

Commentary

124. Standards in drama in Years 7-9 are average. Pupils develop interesting ideas with some imaginative details and their attitudes to the subject are very good. With only one lesson per fortnight pupils do not have enough curriculum time to develop their drama skills fully and voice projection is of variable quality.
125. In Years 10 and 11, the department has sustained GCSE results well above national average since the last inspection. It has continued to attract large numbers of pupils to the course. Approximately half the year group currently follow exam courses in the expressive arts and discrete music. In the expressive arts course, pupils study dance, drama and music and choose to present their examination work in two of these media. In dance, choreography is imaginative and pupils' movements are convincing and well co-ordinated. They portray story lines clearly and make good use of props. In drama, pupils are able to devise good fast-moving scripts, both comic and serious. Speaking skills are good overall but a few pupils lack clarity. They perform with trust and confidence in each other. Good instrumental and vocal skills were

heard in musical presentations and pupils use improvisation in their work. Written evaluations of their work are clear and detailed, demonstrating a wide understanding of their chosen themes. Achievement is very good throughout the expressive arts course.

126. An experienced team of teachers cover the course and teaching is very good. Subject skills are good and explanations of tasks are very clear and accompanied by good examples. Relationships with pupils are very good. Pupils' efforts and suggestions are valued and this helps them to develop confidence and further skills. Lessons move forward at a good pace, with pupils constantly encouraged to focus fully on their work at all times. This good performance training results in very high standards of practical work in the examination. Pupils enjoy their lessons, work enthusiastically and take the opportunity at lunchtime to practise more. A learning support assistant makes an effective contribution to the department. Very good collaboration by the teachers leads to effective teaching and the teachers are well supported by their acting line manager. The scheme of work is well designed and pupils are encouraged to explore social, moral and cultural issues in their work. Assessment is clear and pupils know how to improve their work.
127. The department has just moved into a new performance hall prior to the inspection. Extra-curricular clubs meet regularly and groups take part in Rock Challenge – an annual global dance competition for schools. Last year Highcliffe was chosen to represent England in this competition. Two of the advanced skills teachers regularly work with the local junior schools where their input is much valued.
128. With very high standards and large numbers sustained and with the new accommodation, work in the extra-curriculum and outreach work in local primary schools, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results at GCSE.
- Some good teaching and learning, which is raising standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils enhance their skills through a good extra-curricular programme and representative honours.
- Teacher expectations of achievement in Years 10 and 11 core physical education are not high enough.

Commentary

129. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that standards were in line with national averages. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above national averages. In Years 7 to 9 and GCSE results, the standard of girls is better than that of boys.
130. When pupils enter the school, standards are below average. Standards for the current cohort of pupils are above average by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement. In work seen in Years 7 to 9, the effect of strategies recently introduced by the department to raise standards has been to produce good achievement. Pupils in basketball lessons are now able to explain different systems of defending, using appropriate terminology. They can then transfer this knowledge to the game, using zone and man to man marking systems. By the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE physical education represent very good achievement. This is due to high expectations by teachers, which results in pupils developing very good basic techniques and individual learning skills. Pupils use their very good knowledge of technique development when describing the quality of their own performance. In core physical education, standards are average, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is because teachers'

expectations in core physical education are not high enough. Also, pupils are not aware of the levels that they are working at and consequently do not have targets for improvement. Pupils with special needs generally achieve at the same rate as other pupils. The achievement of some pupils is restricted by unsatisfactory indoor facilities and inconsistency of teaching caused by regular changes in staffing for some lessons.

131. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9, pupils particularly benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Teachers target the work well to the standards pupils are at, with pupils often working with different equipment and on different tasks. Where learning is not as good teachers do not use assessment well enough, so that pupils do not know what they can do and how to improve through target-setting. In GCSE physical education lessons, pupils are engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities, which motivates them and keeps them on task. The pupils are developing good independent learning skills and can effectively work on tasks which require them to take responsibility for their own work. In Year 10 and 11 core physical education, pupils are not always focused on learning because teaching lacks challenge. A large number of pupils enhance their performance in sport through a good extra-curricular programme. These activities cover a wide range of sports and competitive fixtures which support pupils' personal development. Pupils represent the area and clubs in national competitions.
132. Leadership and management are good. The department is now developing a clearer vision for raising standards. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection, and are now more consistently better than satisfactory. There are good management systems, which support teachers. Assessment procedures ensure that teachers have a good knowledge of standards. Analysis of these data should now take place to further inform curricular development. However, the indoor accommodation is only satisfactory and limits opportunities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The current Year 11 pupils are studying on two different business-related courses. Neither group could be observed in lessons and the GCSE business/communication studies course was not inspected. There is one GCSE business studies course, whose work was part of the inspection, and two Year 10 classes doing the same course.

Business studies

Overall, provision for business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are broadly average but there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour sometimes hamper learning.
- Business studies lacks a subject identity in the school and has no base in which to create a subject ethos.

Commentary

133. Standards in GCSE in 2003 were average. In 2003, girls' standards were below average for girls nationally but they achieved as well as they did in their other subjects. Boys' attainment was above average for boys and they achieved well.
134. Attainment of the current Year 11 group matches the range of expectations for the course. Pupils in both years, especially boys, often have literacy and numeracy problems which make the expected standard hard to fulfil. This manifests itself particularly strongly when pupils undertake unsupported work such as examination papers, where teachers cannot intervene to

help with English or mathematical calculations. Many lower-attaining pupils take the subject and whilst their standards often fall well below an average grade, achievement is most often satisfactory. This is not always so however. One of the Year 10 classes shows standards which are above average, with good achievement evident in lessons and in pupils' work across time. In the other larger class, standards are significantly below average. Although a few pupils in this group are working well, with above-average attainment overall, too many pupils are under-achieving.

135. This links directly with weaker teaching. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching seen, unsatisfactory teaching has been identified. In the best lessons, pupils achieve well and are developing their knowledge and understanding of business theory and practice well. However, class management is not always effective. In some lessons, pupils' response takes the milder form of underlying restlessness and muttering while the teacher is talking, distracting others and disturbing learning. In unsatisfactory lessons, this behaviour is poor, with pupils being disobedient, rude and wilfully resisting learning. It is commendable that some in the class can concentrate despite this. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the senior staff are supporting the difficult Year 10 class.
136. The subject has no head of department but is satisfactorily managed by a teacher in charge of business studies within the ICT faculty. It has no subject base, with lessons happening in different subjects' rooms across the school, so no ethos or environment can be created. Monitoring has identified the current difficulties in Year 10, but these are not yet resolved. The low prior attainment levels of some pupils on this course are not always well matched to the level of curriculum provision. There was no business studies course at the last inspection so no judgements can be made as to improvement save that the introduction of the courses is a good addition to the overall curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Because of the way that citizenship is taught, and the very limited opportunity to observe discrete lessons, there is insufficient evidence to make separate judgments. Statutory requirements are not met and the following paragraphs cover the provision as it is currently structured.

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory overall**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's ethos contributes significantly to the understanding and development of citizenship.
- Statutory requirements for citizenship are not met.
- The content of the PSHE courses contributes well to pupils' understanding.
- Teaching is satisfactory.
- Leadership and management do not monitor provision effectively enough.

Commentary

137. Whilst the school ethos is very good and explicitly makes a significant contribution to developing pupils' awareness of rights and responsibilities, the formal teaching of the statutory curriculum for citizenship is not met. Pupils have opportunities in school to hear from representatives of the community such as the emergency services, and to go out of school to engage in community activities. The school council engenders in pupils a sense that they have a role to fulfil within the school and, through the school, into the wider community. Plans are set but as yet do not show a firm structure for future developments.
138. The teaching of PSHE and citizenship is broadly combined through an input in tutor registration sessions and discrete lessons. The former are not well used, either as preparation time for the school day, consideration of the 'Thought for the week' or for citizenship. The PSHE course

covers the full range of personal issues and the effect on health of smoking, drug abuse and alcohol abuse. It also covers aspects of relationships and decision-making as well as careers. Separate sessions are also used for career advice as well as inputs across subjects. In lessons, pupils work effectively in pairs and groups to develop their capacity for collaborative learning.

139. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of very good teaching in which pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. However, in other lessons, the work is not well presented and pupils underachieve. There is inadequate monitoring of this teaching and the school is aware that the leadership and management of this work needs to be improved so that these important issues can be resolved.

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. These results are for Highcliffe students only, and do not contain results for the sixth form partnership as a whole. Entry numbers are increasing as the sixth form develops.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Sports/PE studies	5	0.0	27.7	100	88.2	26.0	33.8
Biology	1	0	33.2	100	81.6	90.0	33.2
Chemistry	1	0	36.9	100	84.8	90.0	35.2
Art and design	1	0	42.7	100	90.0	40.0	41.0
Law	1	100	29.3	100	79.4	50.0	n/a
Psychology	3	0	30.6	66.7	82.7	20.0	n/a
English literature	1	100	37.9	100	94.4	50.0	38.9
Media studies	2	0	36.4	50	94.1	40.0	38.5

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	9	11.1	32.8	77.8	96.4	48.9	76.5
Communication studies	5	40.0	36.8	100	98.3	88.0	81.1
English/ English language	7	57.1	36.5	100	98.3	97.1	80.1
ICT	5	20.0	22.4	80.0	89.1	52.0	64.1
Other social studies	8	37.5	38.9	100.0	94.3	72.5	77.7
Religious studies	5	20.0	44.0	100	96.3	76.0	82.2
Sports/PE studies	8	0.0	29.5	100.0	95.4	57.5	73.2
Health and social care	3	0.0	16.3	66.7	90.1	30.0	62.5
Mathematics	4	50.0	34.3	50.0	74.2	60	31.3
Biology	4	0	36.3	100	91.6	55	74.1
Chemistry	3	33.3	45.9	66.7	94.0	66.7	71.1
Physics	2	50.0	42.8	100	92.8	100	78.6
Leisure and recreation	1	100	10	100	80.3	100	58.3
Art and design	1	100	48.7	100	96.1	100	85.1
Geography	3	33.3	40.5	100	97.1	80	80.9
History	4	25.0	41.0	100	97.1	75	81.2
Sociology	3	0	38.1	100	94.7	60	79.1
Performance studies	1	100	41.4	100	97.7	100	82.9
Media studies	4	25.0	36.2	100	97.9	105	n/a
French	1	0	46.1	100	96.2	80	83.0
Product design	2	50.0	35.5	100	95.3	90	76.5

In the subject reports that follow, there is no comment regarding improvement since the last inspection. This is because the sixth form has been established since that inspection. The improvement is in the opportunity to provide effective opportunities for students to remain in education after the age of 16.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

Provision for English literature and English literature/language is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, leading to rising standards and good achievement.
- A wide range of students are given the opportunity to study the subject.
- Students express great satisfaction with their choice of English for study in the sixth form.
- Leadership and management are good, although there is no comprehensive strategy for following up the erratic attendance of some students.

Commentary

140. Attainment in GCE A-level English Literature in 2003 was close to the national average overall. All candidates attained a grade in the range A-E which is better than the national picture, but fewer students than nationally attained grades A or B. There were too few students in previous years to make viable national comparisons but consistently, all students attain at least a grade E. There has been an overall improving picture in attainment in the literature/language course and in 2002 results were well above the national average. In 2003 results were similar but there are no national comparative results available. From inspection evidence, attainment is in line with the national average.
141. There is a flexible course entry policy and some students start the course with low prior attainment. Although the lower A-level grades are nearly always attained by these students, this represents good achievement on their part. The achievement of students who reach the higher grades is also good. Year 13 students are making good progress towards their predicted grades. They make particularly good progress in the development of an appropriate, balanced and formal essay style, something which some students, especially those with lower prior attainment, find difficult at the start of the course. Students develop familiarity with their texts which enables them to make well-chosen textual references and quotations and to carry out thorough textual analysis. They make good progress in understanding the contextual and critical background of the works they study and in evaluating the way in which this understanding shapes their response. Students are articulate, participate in lessons enthusiastically and make good progress through hearing the ideas of others.
142. The quality of teaching is good overall and some is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well to offer a good range of activities, many of them requiring practical participation. This builds the students' confidence in their ability to meet the demands of their tasks. Students respond to such opportunities with enthusiasm. Teachers make good use of discussion and questioning to probe and challenge students' thinking and they make good progress from having to defend and justify their ideas. They expect that students will act as independent learners and there is very little "spoon-feeding" of ideas. In consequence, most students work hard, quickly and come to lessons well prepared. There is a strong emphasis that students should understand thoroughly the criteria by which their essays will be marked and students make good progress in including relevant material and in-depth analysis in their written work. The marking of work is very thorough and informative and this is supplemented by one-to-one tutorials when significant pieces of work are being returned to them. As a result, students have very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.
143. The quality of the leadership and management is good. There is strong commitment to raising standards and to offering students a wide range of courses. The flexible course entry policy means it is more difficult to raise attainment levels in relation to national standards. However, a wide range of students have the opportunity to study the subject at a higher level and obtain a qualification. A number of students have irregular attendance which undermines their achievement, and the department has not developed a comprehensive strategy for following up the reasons for this. There is a programme of enrichment of the curriculum through visits out of school and although this is of necessity rather restricted in frequency, it offers high quality opportunities which have a significant impact on students. The number of students who study English in the sixth form is rising and the opportunities it offers are held in high regard by students. They speak warmly of the "dedication" of the teachers and the support offered by them. A significant proportion of the current Year 13 students have chosen to continue their study of English or related subjects at a higher level.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

144. Students have a wide range of skills. Those who have a good command of language can discuss and write their opinions fluently. They can argue their case well and use very good vocabulary. In other instances, students experience significant difficulty in both oral and written contexts. However, teachers work hard to develop skills by explaining words well and ensuring that students draft their work effectively.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The emphasis during the inspection was in **French**. German and Spanish were both sampled, and the provision is good. In German, examination results have risen over the last three years and are now above average. Vocabulary teaching is very thorough. Very good use is made of new technology to enhance teaching and learning, for example by the use of live news and current affairs programmes accessed via the Internet. Spanish has been introduced relatively recently. There have not been enough examination results to comment on. The current Year 12 class has seven students and standards seen here meet the national average. The curriculum and schemes of work are well organised and there is a very systematic approach to developing students' reading and writing skills. They are able to summarise short texts in their own words.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results over the last three years are above average.
- Thorough planning and very good teaching help students to achieve well.
- Work experience visits to France help to develop students' confidence.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, with a clear vision of how the subject needs to develop further.

Commentary

145. Numbers entered for AS and A-level French over the last few years have been relatively small, and it is not possible to make valid comparisons with national averages on a year-by-year basis. Taking the last three year together, however, examination results are above average.
146. From inspection evidence, standards are also above average. Year 13 students engage in discussions on demanding topics such as the core beliefs of different political parties and, after watching a video extract about the film maker Truffaut, they summarise key points using a good range of appropriate vocabulary. The best written work shows high levels of accuracy and a good command of style and structure, although not all students reach this high level. Year 12 students are preparing to put forward arguments for and against watching television and they are building up a stock of sophisticated phrases to support their discussion. Overall, the level of achievement is good.
147. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent command of French, use the language almost all the time and expect students to do the same. Students are introduced to an increasingly sophisticated range of vocabulary and expressions and encouraged to re-use them as much as possible. The schemes of work are thoroughly organised and individual units of work are well planned with very good resources. This helps teachers to plan lessons where students can work in pairs, drawing on useful reference material, preparing for discussion work. Weekly lessons with the foreign language assistant are also effective in developing oral skills. Homework is carefully integrated into the course, but opportunities for students' self-directed independent work are less well developed.

148. Leadership and management are very good. The A-level course has been firmly established, with thorough planning of schemes of work and resources. The course is enhanced by good opportunities to improve listening skills in the language laboratory, and also by a very good work experience programme in France. Recruitment onto the course is uneven and numbers at times are not cost-effective. The subject leader recognises the need to improve recruitment levels and strategies are being put in place to address this. Collaborative arrangements with other local schools are working well and serve to increase the range of opportunities for language learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good and improving**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is gaining in popularity and standards are rising.
- Students have very positive attitudes, and are willing to work hard.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management, and collaboration within the sixth form partnership, are effective.

Commentary

149. The mathematics faculty do not complete the AS course until the third module is taken in the November of Year 13, with results not available yet for the 2002-2003 Year 12. Comparison of A-level standards with national averages is invalid, as few took the complete course in past years. At present only one student is taking the A2 section of the A-level course, the remnant of a group studying AS modules through Year 12 who chose to concentrate on other A2 subjects. This student works very hard and is committed to continuing the course despite difficulties, and achieves well through an excellent attitude and the individual tuition and help of her teachers.
150. The Year 12 group of 13 students obtained good GCSE grades, and are tackling 'A-level work with enthusiasm and commitment, most indicating that they wish to continue to complete the A2 course. Standards at present are average, although no examination result is available for the decision mathematics module taken in January. Pure mathematics modules are now being studied, with the increased algebraic requirements creating pressure for some students. Although understanding about number is high, students resorted too readily to calculators when surds or fractions give more exact answers. In further mathematics, standards are above average in the mechanics modules being studied, and the work supports that in science subjects very well. Attitudes are very positive and students work well together. Group presentation skills, however, were poor, although preparation of answers to a sample examination paper was mostly accurate mathematically. Two lessons per week are also offered for students to re-sit GCSE. These do not always fit other options studied, so few attend both sessions. Attitudes of students in the lesson observed were good, going over practice papers with the teacher giving effective individual guidance. There is no alternative provision for students wishing to study mathematics further than GCSE but not at 'A-level, and no numeracy key skills course is provided.
151. Teaching is good overall, with some effective use of laptops with data projectors, particularly when using graphical software to explain the trapezium rule. Verbal explanations are clear and accurate, and board work is good, but teaching and learning methods are limited, usually relying on textbook or worksheet exercises. Group research and presentations have been tried, but students need greater guidance to develop such personal skills. Opportunities to develop initiative and independent study skills are few. The access to computers is limited and there is insufficient use of ICT by students, although teachers do recommend websites to help their studies. Assessment procedures are effective and these help students to improve their work.

152. Leadership is good, with encouragement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to consider taking mathematics in the sixth form, and a vision of how to promote and develop A-level study. Management is good, and the partnership arrangement works well between the schools involved, allowing greater choice of subjects with mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

153. Competence in mathematics is good overall. Number skills are well taught by the specialist teachers in the mathematics department. Students are generally most capable in meeting the demands of their subjects; students' graphical skills and use of statistical techniques are good. The vocational groups coped well with numeracy demands, helped and guided by their teachers. The GCSE re-sit classes had weakness in number bond recognition and rapid recall of multiplication facts, as well as difficulties with negative numbers. There is little mention of numeracy in policies or schemes of work, showing inconsistency across the curriculum. A new numeracy co-ordinator has been appointed, and a draft policy circulated. The mathematics faculty recognises the need to intensify and co-ordinate development of numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Biology was the focus of the inspection and physics and chemistry were sampled. The subjects are taught in conjunction with other schools in the partnership. No students have been entered for A-level chemistry examinations in recent years. The subject is now becoming popular, with ten students currently in Year 12. Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students achieve well. They quickly gain experience of handling measuring equipment carefully and accurately, understanding how to use graphical techniques to check the accuracy of their results. In recent years, the number of entries for A-level physics examinations has been very low. At AS level, one student was entered in 2003, gaining an E grade. As with chemistry, the subject is gaining significantly in popularity. There are currently 16 students studying physics in Year 12. Standards are above average. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well. They enjoy the subject and concentrate well. In one lesson seen, some students were prepared to speculate about how graphical techniques could be used to find the internal resistance of a battery. By the end of the lesson, all understood how to do this.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Students achieve very well because teachers are very enthusiastic about their subject and their teaching is very good.
- Very good relationships result in students wanting to do their best.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

154. In recent years the number of students entered for examinations has been low. In 2003, one student was entered at A2 level and gained a D grade. There were no entries at AS level. However, biology is now much more popular, with 15 students currently studying the subject.

155. Students enter the sixth form biology course with GCSE grades in science subjects that are wide-ranging but a little below average overall. They achieve well, leading to average standards in Year 12. By the end of a lesson, almost all could explain how and why plants are adapted to extreme conditions such as desert or immersion in water. In the smaller Year 13 group, achievement is very good and students are likely to gain well above average grades at A2.

Teachers expect very high standards. Students respond by concentrating very well, working to their full capacity throughout lessons and carrying their desire to learn beyond the laboratory. Several produced excellent studies resulting from their fieldwork at Kimmeridge Bay. In both years, teachers create good working relationships among students with differing previous experiences of science.

156. Teaching and learning are very good overall, with examples of excellent teaching. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have excellent subject knowledge. As a result, students are also enthusiastic about their work. 'Biology is great,' as one of them said. Students like the brisk pace of lessons and their interest is engaged by frequent references to applications, such as heart pacemakers and treatment of hypertension. Relationships in biology lessons are very good because teachers encourage two-way participation. Students learn very well because they are anxious to demonstrate their understanding for their teachers. Feedback to students on the quality of their work is often excellent, delivered to them by e-mail showing exactly how they could improve, and with an expectation that they will respond. A small number of Year 12 students sometimes drift off task; teachers do not always have appropriate strategies for dealing with this.
157. Leadership and management are very good. A strong sense of teamwork pervades the whole subject, with very good co-operative planning which includes teachers from the partnership. Plans to move the department forward include further exploitation of the links already developed with outside organisations such as Southampton University.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

158. ICT was sampled. Although standards overall are below average, students' achievement is good. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Students have a positive approach to the subject. The overall provision is good.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

159. Teachers are making an increasing use of ICT to support learning. As with the main school, there has been a concerted effort to improve teachers' confidence and competence by providing all teachers with laptops to use in conjunction with the digital projectors. Again, subjects are making reference in their schemes of work and are using ICT techniques to support learning, for example in modern foreign languages, geography and science. Students have good access to computer facilities during private study and use it well. Overall, their skills are average and improving.

HUMANITIES

160. The main foci for the inspection were history and psychology; geography, law and religious education were sampled. Provision in geography is good, with elements of very good provision. Teaching is challenging and inspirational, creating a rigorous learning environment in which students attain and achieve well. A well-structured field study programme supports and enhances learning. Law has only been taught as a distance-learning course at the school before this year, and provision is now good. In 2003, two students took the subject achieving Grade A and B respectively. It is well taught in a confident clear style with good subject knowledge supported by effective resources. Students attain and achieve well, and learning is assisted by reference to a range of relevant Internet sites, and enriched by visits to the Old Bailey and other courts. Provision in the religious studies examination course is very good. Standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are effective and enhanced by teachers' exceptionally good subject knowledge.

History

The provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and supported by excellent source materials.
- Students are enthusiastic and hardworking.
- Written work is better than oral work.
- Assessment is very good.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.

Commentary

161. Before this year, numbers taking A-level history were low so that in 2003 the results, although very good, were not statistically significant. Three students took the exam, all passed, including one at Grade A and one at B. Inspection evidence shows that standards are average. However, many students are starting courses with GCSE Grade C and are now realistically targeting a D or above at A-level. This indicates the students are making good progress, confirmed in the inspection. Students have good literacy skills; they write well-structured coherent essays and use a variety of source materials effectively. Generally their files are well organised although this is not so in the case of a few boys. When offered the opportunity to debate historical questions, discussions show a real grasp of the issues, as when Year 12 students conduct a mock trial of those responsible for Hitler coming to power. They question intelligently, make accurate notes and their extended writing is particularly good. However, students do not present their arguments as effectively when speaking as when they write.
162. Teaching and learning are both very good, and students respond very well, displaying very good attitudes. They have friendly relationships with the staff, are hardworking and positive, with a significant number taking the AS courses intending to carry on to A2 and to university. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject, plan their lessons well and draw on a wide variety of sources, many original, to motivate and challenge students. A Year 13 class studying the 1867 Reform Act class teases out the fine detail of the Victorians' own view of social class whilst a group from Year 12 has an excellent appreciation of the part played by various German Chancellors in the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Primary sources used include Hansard, contemporary cartoons and political texts. Students also have access to excellent revision booklets produced by the department which cover key elements of the course and are an excellent aid to revision. Teachers present students with a variety of innovative tasks which maintain interest whilst ensuring vital ideas are absorbed. They ensure students have a clear understanding of key words such as 'residuum' and 'deference', effectively using mind-mapping to explore more difficult concepts. Assessment is very good. Students are clear about what they must do to improve and they have realistic target grades. They receive very good on-line support via e-mail from staff and through access to assessment information. The curriculum is appropriate and is enriched by attendance at study days on topics such as the Holocaust, visits and the opportunity to work with pupils in lower school history lessons.
163. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is clear about the way forward. The teachers work well together and there is good liaison with the other school which teaches history in the local partnership. Students from other schools taught at Highcliffe are appreciative of the teaching and support they receive. A particularly impressive feature of departmental leadership is the collation and production of source materials and revision booklets referred to earlier.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Rising trend in examination results.
- Thorough teaching results in good achievement by the end of the course.
- Student commitment and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Good leadership and management which underpins the continuing rise in standards.
- Advice given to students on how to improve written work is not specific enough.

Commentary

164. Psychology results in the 2002 examinations were below the national picture overall, as was the proportion gaining higher grades (AB). Nevertheless, they showed a rising trend from the previous year and this continued in the most recent results although no national comparisons are available. Standards have risen steadily since the subject was introduced.
165. Standards for the current cohort of students are average overall. At AS level, they are below the national profile. Higher-attaining students acquire a good knowledge of psychological concepts and relate them well to everyday life. They understand and evaluate concepts such as 'stress', 'abnormality' and 'phobia', demonstrating a secure knowledge of key authorities and grasp of relevant research methods. Boys' contributions to discussion are livelier than girls'. They articulate their understanding of research studies particularly well. At A2 level, standards are above the national average and students perform better than in their previous year's studies. Here, higher attainers apply and explore ideas with more imagination and curiosity than lower attainers, but all comprehend underlying issues securely.
166. The quality of teaching and learning is good and underpins rising standards. Teaching is methodical, well planned and informed by good subject knowledge, used persistently to make sure students understand topics thoroughly. They learn well because teachers engage their interest and relate academic knowledge to students' own experience and observations. Student attitudes are characterised by great commitment and enthusiasm for their work. Teachers are adept at challenging them to think for themselves, to understand and apply statistical measures accurately, and to appreciate the relevance of the subject to the world of work and to personal development. They use time in lessons well, knowing when to instruct students and when to give them time to think independently. Written assignments are marked conscientiously, although advice given to students on what they need to do in order to improve is not specific enough. Achievement is good overall. Students are extended and challenged particularly well in their A2 course, where teachers' high expectations extend fully their capacity to apply analytical approaches to topics which interest them.
167. Leadership and management are good. Lessons are planned meticulously so that good methods are shared between teachers. Student progress is checked fully and timely action taken to give extra teaching where it is needed. As a consequence, standards have risen and are continuing to rise steadily.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The main focus for the inspection was **electronics**. The new textiles technology and graphic products courses were sampled. These are well taught and pupils are engaged effectively. Project portfolios are developing at a satisfactory standard. Staff need more in-service education to make them fully secure of what and how they have to teach.

Electronics

The quality of provision in electronics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The computer controlled visual displays set the scene for a stimulating and exciting learning environment.
- Charismatic teaching that leads to very effective learning.
- Lessons that have a wide range of activities that encourage learning with a good balance of theory and practice.
- The very good enthusiastic leadership which manages the learning environment very effectively.

Commentary

168. The subject is relatively new, with candidates entered for A2 level only once although two groups of pupils entered for examinations at the end of Year 12. Only a few candidates 'cashed-in' their AS results so the published results are inconclusive. In the A2 level examination last year, five candidates entered and four passed, two with B grades. For a first year of an examination, the results were satisfactory and broadly in line with the national averages. Both young men and women follow this subject and their performance is similar.
169. A study of class work and project work showed that work is of high standard. Students attain well, at least in line with their prior achievement and at or above their forecasts.
170. Teaching and learning in lessons are most often excellent. Lessons move on at a cracking pace with a very good range of tasks and activities covering both theoretical and practical aspects. Computers are used as a tool of investigation and learning and simulations are extremely well integrated. Although the department is equipped with a suitable number of machines for the A2 level groups, the range of software is limited by the power of the machines. Students' gains in understanding are significant lesson on lesson. What is missing, however, is a systematic revision of prior learning. Although the students know and understand the work as they do it, it needs constant rehearsal and revision if they are to consolidate their learning and answer questions later in the examination. This will ratchet up standards further.
171. The subject teacher is leading the subject very well and is a real enthusiast. He spends hours producing resources and the teaching room has stimulating displays and active demonstrations. As you come to the department, there is a flashing light display reminiscent of Piccadilly Circus. Amongst others, there is a noise-sensitive device that triggers a dog bark, a computer-controlled visual display and a racetrack that records the lap-times of model cars. Students are encouraged to interact with these devices and use them as stimulus for their own developments. The management of resources, and of the students, is very good. The department recognises that there is a need for more detailed reflection and analysis of students' performance to ensure that standards are raised to their full effect and to bring all aspects of management from good to very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus for the inspection was performing arts. Art, media studies, film and photography were sampled, and the overall provision is good.

Performing arts

Provision in performing arts is **sound**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good music teaching which challenges pupils' understanding and technical control well.
- Good stimulation of independent and creative thinking in dance.
- Very good student attitudes and commitment to their work.
- Lack of a strong leadership vision for the future development of the subject.
- Drama teaching does not exploit lesson time vigorously enough.

Commentary

172. In 2002, numbers entered for performing arts were too small for valid national standards comparisons to be made. The latest results were at a satisfactory level. Standards of work seen match national average levels for the subject. In music, students understand well the dramatic context of musical theatre scenes and acquire good control over singing technique and vocal expression. In dance, students demonstrate good insight into distinctive performance styles. They apply these skilfully to their own performances and projects. In drama, students deploy a sound knowledge of dramatic styles and traditions, and apply them securely in original improvisations of their own, based on research and experimentation in groups. Achievement is satisfactory. Students make reasonable progress overall. Higher-attaining students achieve well in dance and music, because teachers give them the confidence to build on their own ideas, and help them identify where their strengths are and how to improve.
173. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with strengths in music and dance. Student attitudes and behaviour in lessons are always good and demonstrate high levels of commitment to their work. In music, teaching challenges pupils well to understand the dramatic and technical demands of musical theatre, because teachers make sure that pupils learn from their wide range of theoretical and practical subject knowledge. For example, a group working on a scene from 'Porgy and Bess' were challenged well through instruction and well-focused coaching to act out scenes and perform contrasting musical numbers. In the process, they learned to use well a variety of expression and technical control to convey the mood and atmosphere in the pieces. Dance teaching is based on good subject knowledge, used well, to stimulate students' creative and independent thinking. They are exposed to good examples of original professional performance, and use these thoughtfully to develop their own dance sequences, co-operating enthusiastically to develop ideas collaboratively and to reflect on what they have learned. Drama teaching deploys secure subject knowledge to draw out students to develop their own approaches, using a sound knowledge of historical and contemporary performance styles and techniques. Nevertheless, drama teaching does not exploit time vigorously enough to maximise learning. In consequence, student potential is not made the most of. It follows that there is a restricted focus on practical acting disciplines, and application of theoretical ideas to their dramatic performance.
174. The leadership and management are satisfactory during the absence of a permanent subject leader, while a new appointment is awaited. At present, the subject lacks a strong vision for its future development. At the same time, there is much good informal co-ordination between teachers. It ensures that students' work is checked and that teachers work together to find ways to help them improve.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

175. Physical education was sampled and the provision is very good. Standards are above national averages due to very good teaching and learning. When measured against standards on entry to the course, this represents very good achievement.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

176. No courses were inspected.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

177. The main focus for the inspection was the CACHE course and health and social care was sampled.

178. In the AVCE in health and social care, provision is satisfactory. Standards have been well below the national average but, from inspection evidence, there is an improvement in the quality, coverage and detail of work. Teaching is satisfactory and students are making sound progress. The opportunities offered for students to observe health and social care in the community are good and these include visits from care professionals, a series of days in care settings and visits by parents with children of various ages. Students enjoy these experiences which promote their learning and most have positive attitudes. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, teachers do not give sufficient guidance to students on how to improve their work and the assessment of work is inconsistent across the department.

CACHE

The CACHE one-year certificate and two-year diploma courses in child care and education require students to spend two or three days a week in a range of child care settings, along with taught sessions in one of the partnership schools.

The provision in CACHE childcare and education courses is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the Certificate in Child Care and Education (CCE) are very good.
- Teachers assess student assignments regularly and give detailed guidance on how to improve.
- The vision and commitment of the CACHE team has led to an increase in the number of qualifications and number of students.
- Very good subject knowledge of teachers leads to student enthusiasm for the subject.
- The monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently regular or rigorous.
- ICT is not incorporated into schemes of work.

Commentary

179. Standards in the CACHE certificate (CCE) are very high. Examination results in this course over the past two years show a pass rate of 100 per cent and, in 2002, two students were in the top ten students nationally. The CACHE Diploma (DCE) will be examined for the first time in 2004 and consequently no examination data is available for this. However, standards seen indicate that students' work is in line with expectations, and numbers of students choosing this course are rising.

180. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject and to their teachers and this contributes to good progress. Students on the Certificate course display good skills in classroom

discussions and they are able to discuss, with accuracy, the physical development of babies. The written work of students on both courses is well presented and well researched and students make very good use of their individual placements. Students on both courses have sufficiently well-developed literacy skills to enable them to succeed.

181. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and, by using a wide range of teaching strategies, they develop in students an enjoyment of and interest in the subject. However, the use of ICT is underdeveloped. The very good teacher-student relationships enable students to feel confident to contribute in lessons. Teachers offer very good support to students through high-quality marking and feedback on assignments. Students are offered the opportunity to upgrade their work to the next level and specific guidance is given on how to achieve this; as a result, many students rise to the challenge of converting a pass to a merit or a merit to a distinction grade.
182. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The vision of the CACHE team has led to the introduction of the popular Diploma course which offers progression for those students interested in child care careers. Courses are well planned and well managed to ensure that they meet the needs of a range of students. The quality and management of the placements for both courses are very good and they combine well with the knowledge gained by students from their days in school. There are very good systems for assessing student work and the progress of students is monitored closely. However, the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently regular and rigorous, particularly with the introduction of a new course. The teaching room is not conducive to the teaching of child care courses due to its poor heating, inappropriate layout and lack of stimulating displays.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

183. General studies was sampled and the overall provision is satisfactory. The statutory obligation to provide all students in the sixth form with a programme of religious education is not met.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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