

INSPECTION REPORT

CALDERSTONES SCHOOL

Liverpool, Merseyside

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104698

Headteacher: Mr B. Davies

Lead inspector: David Darwood

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th March 2004

Inspection number: 259346

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,486
School address:	Harthill Road Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L18 3HS
Telephone number:	0151 7242087
Fax number:	0151 7290093
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor A. Zack-Williams
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is larger than other secondary schools and educates students between the ages of 11 and 18. It is a popular school situated in the southern part of Liverpool and its intake includes students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Overall the attainment on entry to the school is average although there are fewer students from the higher and lower ability range than might be expected from a comprehensive school. There are 1,486 students on roll of whom 229 are in the sixth form. The school has recently become a specialist science college and is also involved with the *Excellence in Cities* programme. This is a project designed to promote collaboration between local schools in order to raise standards. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average, as is the number who come from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, the number of students for whom English is not their first language is less than average. The number of students on the special educational needs register is broadly in line with the average, although the number with statements is lower. Most of those on the register have speaking or moderate learning problems although many also have profound or multiple learning difficulties. Few students leave the school during the academic year and few join as the school is significantly over subscribed. The school is in the middle of a large rebuilding and refurbishment programme

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3552	David Darwood	Lead inspector	
32698	Steven Barker	Lay inspector	
3472	Kathy MacFarlane	Team inspector	Mathematics
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English
27050	Val Blackburn	Team inspector	Science
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Design and technology
2218	Phil Dahl	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Business education
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team inspector	Religious education Sociology
33131	Glen Hayes	Team inspector	Physical education
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Vocational Business education (post-16) Art and design (post-16)
19601	Steve Taylor	Team inspector	History
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship
5714	Frances Thornton	Team inspector	Biology
33030	Beverly Rickwood	Team inspector	Physics
25352	Geraldine Taujanskas	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Calderstones is a **good** school with many strengths. There is a strong commitment to ongoing improvement in the provision it offers its students. This is seen in the improvements in the quality of teaching, changes in leadership and management of subjects and improved accommodation. The school seeks to provide a secure and challenging working atmosphere for its students. The provision in the sixth form is **very good** and it is cost effective. The school provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, supported by a strong senior leadership team, provides a clear vision and direction for the school.
- The governing body and all staff associated with the school are strongly committed to improving opportunities for all students to achieve as well as possible.
- The good management of departments and year groups has created effective staff teams.
- The good teaching is a key factor in raising students' aspirations and overall achievement.
- The school's management of the 2001 Code of Practice for special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- The school curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a good range of subjects to meet students' needs.
- Unsatisfactory library provision reduces opportunities for students to undertake research and independent study.

The school has made **good** improvement since the previous inspection. Overall standards have risen in line with those nationally. There have been significant improvements in teaching and most of the issues identified in the previous report have been addressed. The refurbishment of the school has improved the environment in which students learn. However, there are still difficulties in some areas caused by the late completion of the building programme. These affect the overall provision for students' learning, particularly in design and technology and physical education

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall students' achievement is **good**. Standards are at the national average. Although the attainment of students when they begin Year 7 is average, a significant number have learning, behavioural and social difficulties. By the end of Year 9, overall standards in the core subjects are above the national average and above those of similar schools. The majority of students make good progress and achieve well. Results in GCSE examinations have shown a steady improvement since the previous inspection and are at the national average. In the majority of subjects students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. Staffing difficulties in some subjects and problems associated with the school's refurbishment have contributed to examination results being below similar schools. The school does, however, allow a greater number of students than most schools, from a wide range of abilities, to enter GCSE examinations. Improvements in teaching and the creation of a secure but challenging environment are leading to improved standards in lessons. In the sixth form standards are above the national average and students' achievement is very good.

Students' personal as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** because there is a good and caring ethos throughout the school. Students' attitudes to their work and general behaviour are good. There are clear and effective procedures to deal with instances of misbehaviour.

Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall and are very good or excellent in 25 per cent of lessons. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection and is a result of good staff development and the creation of strong supportive subject and pastoral teams. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their students and subjects and there are good relationships in classrooms. As a consequence, students generally have positive attitudes towards their learning. At times, however, over-directive teaching limits opportunities for students to show initiative and develop independent learning skills. The curriculum offers a good range of subjects and extra-curricular activities. Further improvements are already being developed to increase the number and choice of vocational courses. The level of care is good and the pastoral provision is very effective. Students feel safe and secure and generally enjoy their time in school. Accommodation in many areas is much improved, although the delays in completion the building work have meant lessons in some subjects have to be taught in unsatisfactory conditions

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He is supported by an effective senior and middle management team. They have successfully steered the school through a period of significant change. The overall co-ordination of subjects is good and pastoral provision is very good. Together, the different levels of management and the staff of the school have worked hard to minimise the difficulties created by the school's refurbishment. This has reduced the impact on students' learning. However, delays in completion of the work mean that there are still concerns about the accommodation in which some staff and students have to work. Despite the best efforts of all staff, this has limited the development of higher standards. Governance of the school is very good and governors play an active role in overseeing the work of the school. The roles of the special educational needs coordinator and key teachers are not sufficiently defined. This reduces the effectiveness of provision for special educational needs students

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Although the parents' response to the inspection questionnaire was low, their overall attitudes towards the school are positive. They recognise and value the welcoming atmosphere. The school has a high reputation in the community. Students also have positive views about the school, in particular the good relationships with staff in lessons and the support they receive. There are concerns about the level and quality of homework and behaviour. The inspection team found homework to be satisfactory overall, although there is some variation in its quality. Behaviour is good overall, particularly in view of the major building programme going on in the school and the resultant limitations on outside space available for students' recreation.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that the 2001 Code of Practice for special educational needs is fully implemented;
- improve provision in the library;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the annual report to parents and the school prospectus include reference to the school's special educational needs policy and its implementation. The annual report should also give information on the attainment targets for the end of Year 9 and Year 11;
- ensure that the arrangements for collective worship are applied across the school;
- provide religious education to all students in Years 10 and 11.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Calderstones School provides a **very good** sixth form education. Standards are higher than those achieved nationally. It is **cost effective**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students make very good progress and achieve high standards.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have a good understanding of students' needs, which leads to very good relationships, behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The school collaborates effectively with other sixth form providers.
- The school responds positively to the changing needs of students, particularly in its plans to extend the range of vocational courses.
- Opportunities for the sixth form to play a significant part in the life of the school are missed.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is very good . Teaching is very good and students achieve well. Modern languages provision is good as a result of good teaching and high achievement by students.
Mathematics	Provision is very good . The excellent level of subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject lead to very good achievement and standards above the national average.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Students' learning is good as result of good teaching and students' very good attitudes to their studies. Provision in biology is satisfactory . Standards are average and students make satisfactory progress given their attainment at GCSE.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is good . Thorough planning and skilled teaching enables students who often have little prior and systematic experience of ICT to achieve well.
Geography	Provision is very good . Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated and work hard. The leadership and management of the subject are very good.
Sociology	Provision is satisfactory . Standards are below average but achievement is good because of good teaching strategies which are linked to students' learning needs. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory whilst the subject awaits the appointment of a new head of department.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is good . Standards are rising and achievement is good because of very good departmental management and the high quality of teaching. Students' attitudes are very good.
Business	Provision in business education is good . Standards are rising because of very good teaching and the positive attitudes of the students.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Support and guidance are **very good**, a judgement confirmed by the students themselves. This guidance extends to option choices including careers and higher education opportunities, ongoing review of progress and personal advice. There is also very positive support and encouragement to students and families in identifying the advantages and financial implications of these opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management in the sixth form are **very good**. The head of the sixth form has a clear view of the diverse needs of students and provides very good support to both students and staff. He leads a strong team of committed tutors whose efforts assist students in their choice of courses and ensure they make good progress and achieve well. Improvement in the sixth form since the previous inspection is good. The school is making a significant contribution in building positive partnerships with other sixth form providers to extend and develop provision for students in the local area.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form have overwhelmingly positive views of their school and all that it provides for them. They believe they are increasingly treated as adults as they move through the school and comment positively on the very good relationships between students and staff. Students regard form tutors as making a significant contribution to their lives in the sixth form and are particularly appreciative of the support and encouragement that they receive in making decisions regarding the next steps in their lives.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards and achievement

Overall achievement is **good**. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 are **above the national average**. In Year 11 they are **at the national average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 9 and attain above average test results.
- The school enters a higher proportion of its students for GCSE examinations than schools nationally.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 are improving at a similar rate to those nationally
- In Years 10 and 11 standards in English, religious education, art, child care and information communication technology (ICT) are above the national average. In design technology they are below.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is around average, although a significant number of students have potentially challenging social, behavioural or learning difficulties. Overall achievement in the school is good. By the end of Year 9 standards are slightly above the national average and above those of similar schools. This represents good progress for the students. By the end of Year 11 standards are at the national average. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were slightly below those of similar schools. However, the school enters a higher percentage of its students than schools nationally – particularly those from the lower ability range. This policy gives more students opportunities to obtain a GCSE examination grade. In addition, there have been staffing and accommodation difficulties during the past few years which reduced the implementation of some of the school's strategies for raising standards in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, the school sets and achieves challenging targets.
2. By the end of Year 9 standards and achievement are above average in English, mathematics, science, history and in information and communication technology. They are average in all other subjects except design and technology where they are below. One of the key factors affecting standards in design and technology is the temporary accommodation which restricts the range of teaching and learning opportunities. Overall standards in the school have improved since the previous inspection. The main reasons for this are the improvements in the quality of teaching and a more coherent approach to the management and leadership of subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.4 (33.5)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.4 (34.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	35.6 (35.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 239 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average in English, art, information communication technology and child care. In other areas standards are broadly average. Despite the best efforts of the school, the delays in completing the school's building and refurbishment programme have created problems in many areas. This has prevented higher levels of attainment in some subjects because facilities and resources have not been available.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	49 (44)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (86)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	34.8 (33.5)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 247 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. There is little overall difference in the attainment of girls and boys. There are, however, increasingly more boys than girls entering the school in Year 7 and there is evidence in some subjects that a small number of girls are not achieving as well as they should.
5. Standards of literacy are above average and this supports learning across the curriculum. The provision for literacy, including especially the teaching of literacy, is good or better in all subjects except science where it is satisfactory.
6. Standards in mathematics across the curriculum are above average. Students use mathematical skills confidently in different subject areas. The mathematics department has led training sessions for staff and produced a useful guide to support the teaching of mathematical skills.
7. Standards in information communication technology (ICT) are good. However, opportunities to develop and use ICT skills in other subjects and contexts are unsatisfactory and lack co-ordination.
8. Students with special educational needs achieve well. They are well supported by teachers and make good progress towards their individual targets. Provision is not yet, however, consistent across all subjects. Those who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress, although in some subjects the nature of tasks limits students reaching higher levels of attainment. There are relatively few students for whom English is not their first language and those who do are well supported and achieve as well as other students.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 13, overall standards are well above average and students' achievement is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well overall because of the good teaching they receive.
- Examination results have risen significantly since the previous inspection report.
- Standards at A-level in 2003 were well above the national average in French, mathematics and physics. They were very high in history.
- Standards at A-level in 2003 were below the national average in business studies and economics and well below in art and information technology.

Commentary

9. Standards in 2003 for Year 13 students, based upon their average point scores, were very high. Overall achievement is good. Boys did slightly better than girls. In the subjects inspected in detail, students attain above average standards in modern foreign languages, mathematics, English, geography and physics. Standards are average in biology, art and business education and below in information technology and sociology. Achievement is satisfactory in biology, good

in mathematics, business education, modern foreign languages, information technology, sociology, English, physics and art. Achievement is very good in geography. The reasons for the good results are the high quality of teaching, high expectations and the very well structured support and guidance given to the students.

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	95.2 (89.4)	85.5 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.5 (28.9)	27.6 (33.8)
Average points score per candidate	318.3 (315.9)	258.2(263.3)

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is **satisfactory**. Punctuality is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes to all aspects of school life.
- Students behave well and relate well to teachers and to one another.
- A significant number of students regularly arrive late for lessons.
- Good teaching has a positive impact on personal development throughout the school

Commentary

10. The school works hard to instill positive attitudes in all students. There are very high expectations of students and their behaviour in lessons and this is enforced by the vigilance of the pastoral care teams. The school's new behaviour policy is widely acknowledged by students as being fair. They understand the clear rules and consequent rewards and sanctions, which are prominently displayed in all classrooms and detailed in each student's personal journal.
11. Student behaviour is good overall, which reflects well on the school and its clear policies. This is especially so in the difficult conditions during the extensive building and refurbishment programme, which have severely restricted the outside space available for recreation. A small number of students display unsatisfactory and sometimes poor behaviour around the school site and in a minority of lessons, but staff duty teams are vigilant in holding those responsible to account.
12. An unacceptable number of students regularly arrive late to lessons, which disrupts teaching and adversely affects their own and others' learning. The school allows five minutes transit time between lessons, but a number of students are nonetheless consistently late. Although teachers have high expectations with regard to behaviour, many students arriving late for lessons are unchallenged by teachers and often offer no apology for their lack of punctuality.
13. Most students benefit from the school's hard work to promote their personal development. In almost all lessons seen, in assemblies and in enrichment and extra-curricular activities, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly evident. Music makes a particularly significant contribution to students' overall personal development and physical education has good impact in supporting moral and social development.
14. There are good support systems in place to ensure that students with special educational needs make good progress, particularly where their targets involve improvements in behaviour.

15. Students' moral and social development is reflected throughout the daily life of the school and evident in the orderly and considerate way most students interact with each other and with adults in the school.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students relate very well to one another, their teachers and to form tutors, which creates a positive ethos for teaching and learning.
- Students demonstrate maturity and conduct themselves well in school..
- Too many students routinely arrive late for lessons.
- Too few students get involved in the life of the school.

Commentary

16. Strong relationships built on trust and mutual respect between students in the sixth form, their teachers and form tutors, create a culture of successful teaching and learning. The very positive attitudes of all students are a major strength of the sixth form. The large numbers who continue their studies at the school demonstrate a very strong commitment to learning. Students show increasing maturity in the sixth form and conduct themselves responsibly around the school. They are good role models to younger students.
17. Lack of punctuality is an issue in the sixth form as in the main school and for the most part goes unchallenged and unchecked. However, many sixth form students do offer apologies for their tardiness. Lack of punctuality is disruptive of lessons and adversely affects the learning of students. This is not a habit that equips students well for life in employment.
18. The school does not routinely involve sixth form students in the life of the main school. As a consequence, they are deprived of opportunities for personal development through assuming a greater degree of responsibility.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.8
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	2.2
National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

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

No of students on roll
1,129
9
30
46
1

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
4	1
1	1

Mixed – White and Asian	8		
Mixed – any other mixed background	36		1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	8		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	18		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	11		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	8		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	11		
Black or Black British – African	44		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	29		
Chinese	20		
Any other ethnic group	0		
No ethnic group recorded	78		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good knowledge of students allows teachers to tailor work accordingly.
- Questioning techniques are good and involve all students.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to clarify and illustrate different issues.
- Class management is usually effective and ensures students are well motivated.
- There are instances where students are not given sufficient opportunities for independent learning.

Commentary

19. The quality of teaching is good in all years with a slightly higher proportion of good and very good lessons in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Around two-thirds of all lessons are good or better and around one in four lessons is very good or better. There is virtually no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a very considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The strength of the teaching also rests on its consistency across departments. It is very good in art and good in all other subjects apart from science, design and technology and geography where it is satisfactory overall.
20. Teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students very accurately. This allows them to allocate their time and tailor their response to students' work accordingly. In a Year 8 English lesson where low attaining students were analysing persuasive writing, the teacher gave different levels of support so that they were all able to make good progress. In a lower ability Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher's good knowledge of the students was used to help build confidence and self-esteem. As a result, even the weakest students were keen to demonstrate their understanding. Teachers also have good subject knowledge so that they skilfully bring in a variety of further references and additional material in order to extend students' learning.
21. Good questioning techniques in lessons are a regular feature across most of the curriculum. In many lessons teachers use both open and targeted questions to ensure as many students as

possible are involved. As a result, they also evaluate regularly how much knowledge and understanding students have retained and whether the level of challenge is well judged.

22. In the best teaching the structure of the lessons ensures that the activities build systematically on each other and there is a good balance of whole class teaching, group or individual work and a period of reinforcement at the end. Where such teaching is carried out effectively, as in art, the clear progressive sequence of activities enables the students to be aware of their own progress. Where this balance and structure is not achieved and there is an over-reliance on textbooks and worksheets, students do not develop collaborative or independent learning skills sufficiently. Generally, where teaching is less effective in the school, it is because lessons are too teacher-directed. It is less effective in design and technology because problems with accommodation have limited the access to equipment and resources.
23. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall, but is inconsistent across subjects. Not all teachers pay sufficient attention to their needs as outlined in individual education plans. Individual education plans are satisfactory. In some cases targets are too general and do not provide sufficient advice to teachers about what strategies they can use to enable students to reach their targets. In addition, targets are insufficiently related to specific subjects.
24. Although the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been variable, there are many lessons which have benefited from the recommended approaches such as starter activities which engage the students' interest from the outset. There are particularly good examples in English and mathematics lessons.
25. The good teaching is possible because of generally good relationships between teachers and students and good classroom management strategies. In a Year 9 history lesson on how the government minimised the effects of bombing raids in the Second World War, effective organisation and management of students allowed a very good pace to be maintained whilst students used a variety of resources.
26. The marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection is an indication of the high priority given by the school to the professional development of teachers. As a result, the issues of lack of variety in lessons and lack of opportunities for discussion raised in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed in almost all subjects.
27. Overall the monitoring of students' academic performance is satisfactory. The use of performance information to support teaching and learning is developing well across the school. The majority of heads of departments use the data provided effectively to set subject targets and analyse overall performance. Departmental assessment procedures are satisfactory overall and there are examples of good practice. In some subjects students are now involved in the assessment of their own work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Marking is regular, but there is insufficient detail to help students understand how their work relates to national standards and what they need to do to improve. This results in students being unclear about how to improve their work to gain higher grades. One of the school's priorities has been to improve the monitoring of students' achievement and progress. To this end it has developed an effective and comprehensive computerised monitoring system which is currently in the process of being introduced across the school.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is **good**. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject.

- Relationships in sixth form lessons are very good and students feel confident to ask questions and give opinions.
- Teaching is very good in mathematics, English, art, geography, history and business education and good in modern foreign languages and physics

Commentary

28. In the subjects inspected in detail, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In four-fifths of lessons observed teaching was good or better and just under half was very good or excellent. In discussions with sixth form students, they recognise that teaching is good and appreciate the quality of support they receive.
29. The excellent subject knowledge of teachers enables them to teach very well and challenge the most able students. In a Year 13 English literature lesson, preparing students for the unseen poetry paper, the teacher used 'Dulce et Decolum Est' as exemplar material. He used excellent subject knowledge to give students many references to other relevant poetry, drama and even film. As a result, students developed a very good understanding of the context within which the poem should be approached.
30. Teachers also know their students' strengths and weaknesses and are therefore good at providing appropriate time and additional support to them. In the best lessons they use data about their students to ensure that the most able are challenged and encouraged to ask questions and give opinions. In addition, the very good relationships between students and their teachers encourage students to ask questions to clarify meaning and improve understanding.
31. Assessment procedures are very good. Individual subject assessments inform the 'Calderstones Optimum Grades Scheme'. This is an effective process through which sixth form tutors monitor individual students and regularly meet with them to review their work and progress. Tutors also get to know their students well through teaching general studies and this contact also contributes constructively to the guidance and support they receive.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 183 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (2.7%)	44 (24%)	73 (39.8%)	55 (30%)	5 (2.7%)	1 (0.5 %)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

Overall the curriculum is **good**. It is **good** in Years 7 to 9 and **satisfactory** in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The deputy head in charge of curriculum has a very good grasp of curriculum issues.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

32. A good range of courses is offered to students in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in religious education. Plans had been in place to remedy this in September 2003 but staffing difficulties have meant that they have had to be postponed until September 2004. A short GCSE course in religious education alongside one in information and communication technology will be introduced for all students from September 2004. Citizenship has been introduced, but its delivery through other subjects is not monitored to ensure that requirements are fully met.

33. The curriculum and timetable are skilfully designed by the deputy headteacher to meet the needs of the students very well. It is constantly reviewed, evaluated and amended in collaboration with departments. Very good arrangements are made for a small group of low attaining Year 7 students who are withdrawn for extra help. They do similar work as their peers but receive additional support and have access to more appropriate resources to meet their individual needs. However, they do spend more than a third of their time with their own class and their achievement is good. Overall students with special educational needs have access to all areas of the school's activities
34. At the end of Year 9, students make their requests for options in Year 10 and, as far as possible, the timetable is built around their choices. In a typical year 230 out of 250 students get their first choices. The remainder get their reserve choice. Students are able to take triple science which is an important part of the school's bid for Science College status. This arrangement currently does have some implications for science in terms of setting students in the subject. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 includes courses for students for whom an academic curriculum is not entirely suitable. Students can currently choose a child care course, but from next September further options such as applied GCSEs in art, engineering, science, leisure and tourism and business studies will be available. Some students currently spend three days in school and two at a local college, an option that is appropriate for the needs of a small group of Year 10 students who benefit from this more vocational approach to their courses. Overall students are prepared well for work or the next stage of their education
35. Provision for students' personal, health and social education is satisfactory overall. The programme includes all required units of work, including relationships, alcohol and drug misuse. Careers guidance is part of the personal, social and health education programme. Provision is satisfactory although insufficient use is made of outside speakers or industrial representatives. There is no satisfactory provision for a daily collective act of worship, although tutor time and assemblies offer a 'thought for the day' that allows some opportunities for reflection. This is not, however, consistently used by all tutors.
36. The provision for extra curricular opportunities in the main school is good overall and very good in physical education, music and drama. There is good student participation in a wide range of clubs, fixtures, musical ensembles, theatre trips and productions.
37. Extended building work on the school accommodation has affected some departments seriously. Subjects which are already benefiting from their new surroundings include English, mathematics, science and the humanities, where the quality of provision is enhancing the students' educational experience. Poor accommodation is still affecting standards and achievement in physical education, because some activities and options (including some examination requirements) have been severely restricted. Design and technology standards have been affected by depressing surroundings and difficulties in accessing equipment because many of the resources are still in crates. Even those departments which are already in the new and refurbished classrooms are experiencing teething problems which are hindering the delivery of their subjects. For instance, without blinds, technology cannot be used effectively in geography and the layout of one of the information technology suites is detrimental to teaching and learning. Although the sixth form library is satisfactory, the main school library and resource centre is unsatisfactory. There is no learning resource centre, or a room to meet with parents, to support students with special educational needs. Overall, however, the accommodation is a vast improvement on what was available before and governors expect that this will lead to an improvement in standards and achievement.
38. Resources are overall satisfactory and good in many subjects. Every student has a textbook for every subject. There are few books in the resource centre but money has been allocated for books and technology. Every classroom will have an interactive white board, data projector and television. Resources are good in the core subjects, humanities, music and physical education. At present, the full use of technology to support learning is significantly restricted, because the buildings out of school hours are not sufficiently secured against intruders.

Sixth form

Overall the curriculum provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- The curriculum includes a good variety of courses.
- Some students have the opportunity to stay in the sixth form for three years, completing resit courses in Year 12 if appropriate.
- The school has good curriculum links with neighbouring schools as part of the South Liverpool Collaborative.

Commentary

39. A good range of courses is on offer in the sixth form and more vocational options are available than at the time of the previous inspection. The sixth form team ensures that courses chosen are appropriately matched to each student. The school has good procedures for monitoring the curriculum. When appropriate this leads to the introduction of new alternative courses, for example the introduction of the Travel and Tourism A-level course. Students wishing to resit some GCSEs can study a minimum of six subjects out of English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history, geography, business studies, sociology and ICT. This provision enables students to improve their GCSE grades and when appropriate embark on further study or training. The school has good links with other sixth form providers and this has enabled it to plan for greater collaboration in the development of new courses. Opportunities for sixth form students to play an active part in the life of the main school are, however, limited.
40. The provision for students' personal, health and social education is good. It takes place as part of the school's general studies programme and involves students in high quality discussions on a variety of current issues. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students were able to articulate the problems caused by joy riding and the dangers to both those involved and innocent bystanders. They also have opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. Religious education is delivered through the general studies programme, with an emphasis on the philosophy of religion and ethics. This course has only just begun and, whilst the provision is satisfactory, no evidence was available to make a judgement on standards and teaching.
41. Post 16 students are provided with several very good enrichment opportunities such as the Oxbridge preparation visit, the trip to the European Parliament, sporting, musical and theatre events and visiting speakers from local community.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision for support, advice and guidance for students is **good** as are the procedures to ensure students' care, welfare and safety. The steps taken to involve students in the work and development of the school are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very effective care structures and procedures in place.
- Staff know all students well and have their care as their main concern.
- Learning mentors provide very good care for the most vulnerable members of the school community.
- There is no formal forum for students' views to be heard and debated or for them to contribute to the work and development of the school.
- Induction procedures do not ensure that all staff are fully aware of all health and safety or child protection procedures.

Commentary

42. The pastoral care systems are a strength of the school. Most form tutors in each year group are now all from the same department, leading to stronger tutor teams. These staff, together with heads and assistant heads of year, know students very well and clearly demonstrate that the care of students is their main concern. The very good relationships between form tutors and students ensure that students who need help or support are quickly identified and that action is taken. The increasingly good quality and quantity of information available to the pastoral care teams ensures that students' academic and personal development is closely monitored.
43. Learning mentors provide very good care and support for a significant number of students who need academic support or who are, through disaffection with school, at risk of exclusion. Learning mentors have forged strong links with many external agencies that, through their intervention and counselling, enable students to overcome significant barriers to learning and personal development.
44. The school does not have a school council or any other mechanism that would enable students to express views and see them acted upon. The questionnaires completed by students, prior to the inspection, clearly demonstrate that whilst students have generally positive attitudes, there are aspects of life at school that they are not universally happy with. One of these is the opportunity to be more actively involved as stakeholders in their school.
45. Induction procedures for new staff do not routinely provide them with enough information on procedures for dealing with issues relating to child protection and health and safety.

Sixth form

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is **very good**. Their involvement in the work and development of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good pastoral support for students.
- Sixth form students receive good advice and guidance before taking their next steps after leaving school.
- Students do not benefit from formally expressing their views or seeing their opinions shape the school's work and development.
- Students are not routinely involved in the life of the main school.

Commentary

46. The pastoral care of students in the sixth form is uppermost in the minds of the sixth form leaders and management. Sixth form tutors and the role that they fulfil are highly valued by students. Tutors make a significant impact on the personal development of students through their effective delivery of tutor time, which includes personal, health and social education. In addition, they teach general studies and provide guidance and practical support for students' decisions on their next steps after leaving school.
47. The school takes great care to ensure that students and their families are made fully aware of the further and higher educational opportunities that exist. The school also goes to considerable lengths to support students and encourage them to recognise the advantages of continued education. In addition, students and their families are provided with extensive information on the financial implications of such choices.
48. Students in the sixth form are often asked informally for their views on a variety of issues. However, the absence of a sixth form student council means there is no formal process for enabling students to contribute to the work and development of their school. In questionnaires completed by many sixth form students, a number expressed the opinion that they would

welcome greater involvement in the school. They are in the main school for many of their lessons and their maturity and conduct make them excellent role models for younger students.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **satisfactory** partnership with parents. There are **very good** community links and **good** links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with community organisations make a significant contribution to the personal development of the most vulnerable students.
- Links and collaboration with other local schools and colleges have broadened curriculum opportunities.
- Very effective links exist with further education colleges and universities.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's work.
- Reports to parents do not consistently provide high quality information about their children's progress or what students need to do to improve their learning.

Commentary

49. The school has, through the work of its learning mentors, developed very impressive links with a wide range of community organisations. These partnerships contribute to the very good care given to the most vulnerable students in the school. Links with local community radio stations, charities such as Raleigh International, the local Connexions service, a nearby special school and local colleges ensure that all students, including those who may otherwise be at risk of exclusion, are able to develop life skills, advance their personal development and maintain an appropriate level of academic study.
50. Through its close links with other schools and colleges, the school ensures smooth transition both into the school and on to the next stage of students' lives. Students new to the school quickly settle and become part of the school community.
51. Links with other schools and colleges have enabled the school to offer a broader curriculum, which meets all students' needs more closely. An Increased Flexibility Programme enables some students in Year 10 to attend a local community college two days each week and pursue catering or engineering courses in addition to the GCSE's that they study at school.
52. The sixth form has established an impressive network of links with universities, colleges and employers. These links are instrumental in encouraging students to consider and take up places in higher education. Students are provided with every opportunity to explore all of the options open to them when they complete their studies at school and move on to the next stage of their lives. The school has used its community links to great effect in bringing university professors, college staff and senior managers from industry into school. They give interview practice to those students considering medical school or applying to university including Oxford and Cambridge.
53. Parents are generally very supportive of the school's work and all that it provides for their children. Reports to parents vary both between departments and between year groups. Some reports give parents good information concerning the progress that students have made, but this is not happening consistently throughout the school. Some reports do not inform parents or students as to the steps they must take next in order to improve their learning and make good progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall the leadership and management in the school are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for guiding the school forward and a deep commitment to the needs of the staff and students.
- Governors are knowledgeable and understand their roles and responsibilities. They are dedicated to the school and give effective support.
- Very efficient financial planning processes support school priorities very well.
- The head of the sixth form and year heads provide very good leadership. There is a strong sense of teamwork developing amongst staff who feel well supported by the management team.
- The school's management of the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs is unsatisfactory.
- The arrangements for performance management, induction and continuing professional development are very good.

Commentary

54. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. He is a powerful driving force in moving the school forward and has managed to steer the school through difficult periods. He has overseen and managed a massive refurbishment and building programme whilst maintaining a calm and supportive learning atmosphere. He is well supported by a strong and effective leadership team and together they have provided a clear vision of where the school is going. They are very visible around the school and are approachable to staff, students and parents. All the staff of the school are committed to an equitable school where every student has the opportunity to be successful. There is a strong team approach amongst all the senior and middle managers and a shared view of the challenges, priorities and possibilities facing the school and of the way forward. There are clear priorities for improvement and the recent very detailed school improvement plan relating to the school's bid for science status has been supplemented by a shorter plan indicating these new priorities.
55. Relationships throughout the school are good and characterised by mutual respect. The middle managers are seen as being crucial in the school's drive to further raise standards, both in terms of academic success and personal development. To that end, they are given a large degree of autonomy and the headteacher encourages and supports innovation.
56. Management of the school is good. It functions very effectively on a day-to-day basis as a calm and orderly community. Communications are very good overall. Staff have quick and easy access to messages, information and assessment data on students via direct links to members of the management team or through a new and innovative e-mail system. This allows any member of staff to quickly receive and send messages to other colleagues in the school. In so doing, issues such as attendance, very good work, lateness or poor behaviour can be tracked and acted upon. Performance management is well established and supported by a very good training programme. There are very good arrangements for the induction of staff and ideas generated through courses and training are evaluated and shared with colleagues. Where appropriate, they are then used to improve practice within the school. For example, a new training programme '*Moving Towards Excellence*' has been introduced to enhance the leadership and management skills of heads of departments and year heads.
57. The school has worked hard to deploy its workforce more effectively. For example, the leadership group has been extended to enable more formal links with departments. This allows on-going monitoring and discussion of students' progress and quickly identifies issues and concerns. Student support secretaries have been appointed to all year groups. They play a vital role in handling administration and records as well as providing day-to-day support to year heads, heads of department, tutors and, when appropriate, to students. All of these secretaries

have received training including accreditation as first aiders. Their work is invaluable to the school, freeing staff to focus on teaching, learning and providing personal guidance to students.

58. Governance of the school is very good. Governors share the vision of the headteacher and are committed to the school's development. They are fully involved in the school's development planning process and know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognise the difficulties facing the school, not least the pressures on staff and the headteacher caused by the delays in completing the refurbishment programme. They work hard to support the school and carefully monitor developments, both through analysis of data and through meetings with heads of departments. The finance committee is very knowledgeable about the principles of best value and ensures that they are applied so that the school provides good value for money. The latest audit report of the school was positive and the few areas for improvement identified have now been addressed.
59. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has very limited time available to develop her role as a manager or as an adviser to teachers in the classroom. This is an important factor in the inconsistencies in planning and teaching that are evident in some lessons. The role of 'key teachers' as outlined in the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs is underdeveloped.
60. The provision for gifted and talented students is satisfactory. Students are identified and their overall progress is monitored.

Leadership and management of the sixth form

61. Leadership and management in the sixth form are **very good**. The head of sixth form is a very good role model. He is approachable and supportive of both staff and students. He organises and coordinates the tutor team to ensure a consistent and coherent approach is taken with regard to monitoring and evaluating students' performance and progress. He has been actively involved in collaboration with other schools and sixth form providers to improve both the range and quality of courses on offer. The day-to-day organisation and the overall management of the sixth form are very good. The sixth form tutors know their students very well and give well targeted support. The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,924,320	Balance from previous year	389,149
Total expenditure	5,191,891	Balance carried forward to the next	270,057*
Expenditure per student	3,621		

*The balance carried forward contains £148,479 capital grant related to the school's rebuild programme.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by Year 9 demonstrate good achievement.
- Consistently good teaching utilises very good knowledge of students and questioning techniques.
- Good leadership and management of the department have created an enthusiastic team of teachers.
- The small numbers of girls in some classes are not always given adequate attention.
- Difficulty of access to ICT facilities prevents its full use within the subject.

Commentary

62. In 2003, results in Year 9 national tests were well above the nationally expected average and slightly above average for the higher levels. The average points score for students was above that gained by students in other schools with similar prior attainment. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, reflecting good achievement of students by Year 9. At GCSE in English Language and English Literature results were below the national average, but in both subjects the school enters a higher proportion of its students for the examinations than is typical. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection is of a standard slightly above the national average and represents satisfactory achievement. The attainment of boys is comparatively better than that of girls when compared with the respective national averages and reflects the importance given to raising boys' performance. Overall, achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, is good.
63. Good teaching throughout the department brings about this good achievement. Most lessons are good or very good, a very considerable improvement on the quality of teaching at the time of the previous report. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. In a Year 8 lesson on persuasive writing, the teacher used such knowledge to give focused individual advice and support to a number of students. Questioning is very good with a balance of open and more narrowly defined questions being used with both the whole class and specific students. As well as allowing teachers to gain good knowledge of students' performance, the questioning also provides different levels of challenge for different students in lessons. Teachers are also good at summing up important points at strategic stages in lessons which ensures good retention of learning. Overall, classroom management and control are good and as a result some potentially difficult students work well within the whole class. In lower attaining classes, girls are frequently in a small minority and there are occasions when they receive less explicit attention than boys. Teachers usually provide detailed comments on students' work and have good knowledge of the levels at which they are working but the quality of written guidance on how to improve is variable.
64. Students respond very well to the teaching they receive. They are enthusiastic and keen to participate. In a Year 7 lesson with 29 students, all but two clamoured to make their presentations in front of the class. They collaborate well and are good at asking questions of their teachers. Their response in lessons is indicative of the good relationships between teachers and students. In speaking and listening by Year 9, students participate well in discussion and argue persuasively. By Year 11, the higher attaining students adjust contributions according to the way in which discussions are developing whilst weaker students take less account of the overall context.

65. In reading by Year 9, most students enjoy reading fiction and identify the importance of significant events and features of main characters. By Year 11, higher attaining students have become adept at justifying opinions of texts with relevant references and pertinent quotations.
66. In writing by Year 9, students write confidently in a variety of forms for different purposes. The current Year 7 appears to be a weaker cohort than in the past and experiences greater difficulties with spelling and punctuation. By Year 11, the highest attaining students use their knowledge of a range of different types of writing well to shape and inform their own writing. There are particularly good examples of persuasive and argumentative writing.
67. English lessons contribute well to students' social and moral development with consideration given to a range of ethical issues, both within their reading and in discussions. There are also good investigations of the power of the media. A Year 11 class compared two different newspaper articles on mobile phones to ascertain how bias and editorial positions influence both content and language used. The use of ICT is not well developed and its use is hindered through difficulty of access to facilities. It is to the department's credit they have encouraged wider reading successfully when the school library is totally inadequate for this purpose.
68. Good leadership and management of the department have created an enthusiastic team of teachers who, whilst having individual strengths, bring the same ethos to the subject. The head of English is very supportive of his team and knows them well. There have been good improvements in most of the issues raised in the previous report. Teaching is considerably stronger, oral work is now good in lessons and assessment issues have been addressed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Standards of language and literacy are good and support learning across the curriculum. The provision for and the teaching of literacy are good or better in all subjects except science where they are satisfactory. In many subjects students are provided with a good range of texts and in English there is particularly good analysis of different types of text in order to help students develop their own writing skills. Key vocabulary and specialist terminology are regularly reinforced in most subjects and in design and technology students have useful glossaries in their work books. Oral work is well developed in mathematics and allows students to gain good understanding of the meaning of questions. In a Year 8 physical education lesson, the teacher rigorously insisted on the correct terminology when discussing football skills and tactics. In some subjects, however, there are few opportunities for group discussions. The initial school literacy training was on non-narrative writing and many departments now use prompt sheets and forms of writing frames to help students structure their written work. This has led to improvements in students' writing.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve well in French and German.
- Good teaching sets challenging expectations and positive relationships help students to achieve them.
- The school offers encouragement and opportunity for students to study two languages from Year 8.
- There are currently insufficient opportunities to use ICT and this restricts the development of students' independent learning.

Commentary

70. Standards for boys and girls by the end of Year 9 are above average. Standards of attainment in GCSE are satisfactory overall. Improvement from the recent dip in higher grades in 2003 is being actively addressed through changes in the schemes of work and improved teaching strategies. In all their work, students of all abilities achieve well, rising to well-matched challenges set by their teachers, particularly in responding to classroom use of the foreign language. Students with special needs are well supported to make good progress overall and achieve well. Most students build up strong knowledge to support both understanding and use of the language.
71. Teaching and learning are good. This is a key factor in students' good progress and achievement. Teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge and this helps students develop a strong foundation of words and phrases. Relationships are good and teachers provide a stimulating and challenging working environment. Students respond positively to this and rise to the challenge their teachers set them in both classwork and homework. They participate actively in lesson activities and ask questions or seek help. Teachers' marking and assessment are accurate and the information received used to inform planning. Currently however, there are insufficient opportunities for students to work independently and creatively with the language using ICT. Students in Years 7 to 9 are given general feedback on their work but not enough specific detail on how they might improve. .
72. A strong and professional team is very well led and managed to address the priorities for improvement. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and the department has successfully tackled a wide range of issues. Alternative opportunities for learning a foreign language in years 10 and 11 have been identified as a priority for development. Provision for the second language is good and is strongly and effectively promoted. There are good opportunities for extra learning and for active links with France and Germany.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is well supported by a hard working team.
- Teaching is good overall and students make good progress. Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is excellent and well used to enthuse and motivate students, including the most able.
- In many lessons too little time is left at the end of lessons to review what has been learned.
- The analysis of standards is good, resulting in appropriate strategies for improvement.

Commentary

73. Overall standards and achievement are good. In 2003, standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with national averages. Although they were very good when compared with schools in a similar context, they were below average when compared with students' attainment when they started in Year 7. In GCSE examinations results are around the national average. One of the outcomes of the good analysis of examination results is a strategy to increase the numbers of A* and A grades. In a more able Year 9 group a number of students were working at these higher levels. The numbers of students who have the opportunity to enter GCSE is higher than schools nationally. There is little difference between the results of boys and girls.
74. Students enter Year 7 with average standards in mathematics. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 were good, which represents good achievement. Overall achievement for students with special educational needs is good. Those for whom English is

not their first language achieve as well as their peers. Although the achievement of these students is good when they work in small groups, when they are in larger groups with no extra support, they do not always achieve as well.

75. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen were generally good, but the overall achievement of these students was satisfactory. The judgement that achievement is not good is often a consequence of the teaching strategies used which result in students listening to their teachers for lengthy parts of the lesson. As a consequence the students do not always have sufficient opportunity to develop and demonstrate their mathematical skills.
76. Teaching is good overall and three-quarters of lessons are good or very good. The overall good achievement of students in lessons is a result of hard working teachers, committed to the success and welfare of the students. The relationships between students and their teachers are a strength of the department. The majority of students are interested in their mathematics and behave well in lessons. However, in lessons where the number of boys exceeds the girls, teachers do not always ensure that the girls are not overshadowed by the boys. In Years 7, 8 and 9 teachers have incorporated the styles of the Key Stage 3 Strategy which ensure more variety of activities to motivate and develop understanding. This is not always so in Years 10 and 11 when achievement is satisfactory. Too little time is sometimes left at the end of the lesson to review the lesson objectives and assess progress. In less successful lessons teachers do not always ensure that activities match the needs of all the students. Mathematics teachers make a good contribution to students' literacy skills. They are good at ensuring that students understand and use mathematical terms correctly and understand the meaning of questions. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Marking is completed regularly but students are not always made aware of what they need to do to improve.
77. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The relatively new head of department has provided direction and enthusiasm. There is a very good action plan for development. The new scheme of work provides a good basis for the department to add ideas and resources. Standards and achievement are gradually improving. Opportunities for information and communication technology are limited and more development is needed to ensure that the current good work with graphic calculators is extended further, as soon as the equipment is available. Overall progress since the previous inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. The standard of mathematical competence overall is good and enables students to use their skills in other subjects. The department has completed mathematical training with all staff. They have also produced a very helpful school policy document indicating in which years students are taught some of the key mathematics and what methods will have been used. Although few examples of students using mathematics were seen during the week of the inspection, in a Year 10 physics lesson, students were challenged to create a mathematical link between voltages in a lesson on electricity.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are consistently above national averages.
- A large team of well qualified subject teachers is well led and managed.
- Newly refurbished laboratories and accommodation with attractive displays are now in use.
- The range of teaching styles used is limited and does not challenge all students sufficiently.
- Marking lacks consistency and does not always give students detail on how to improve.

Commentary

79. Standards overall are in line with national averages, but better in Years 7 to 9. For the last four years standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been above the national average. In 2003 results at the end of Year 9 were above all schools nationally and well above similar schools based on students' prior attainment at the end of Year 6. Almost half of students reached the higher levels and there was very little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
80. At GCSE overall the proportion attaining the higher grades is slightly above the national figure. In 2003 students in the two groups taking triple science all attained a pass grade, three quarters of these at the higher levels. Physics results were better than chemistry or biology. In biology boys' attainment in the higher grades was significantly below the national expectation.
81. In double science results have fallen for the last four years and in 2003 were significantly below other subjects. Boys attained better than girls. However, boys' results in science were significantly below those in other subjects and girls' results were below national expectations. The small number of students who took the single award science all attained a pass grade.
82. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9. Given students' attainment in science on entering the school, students make good progress up to the end of Year 9. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. They show enthusiasm and are generally attentive. Relationships between staff and students are good and most students take pride in their work. In addition, the double amount of teaching time in Year 9 allows staff to plan a comprehensive revision programme prior to the national tests.
83. Students achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 11, particularly those taking three science subjects at GCSE. In double science in the lower groups many individual students underachieve and this is due to a combination of factors. The current course followed does not give students short-term goals and, because of the arrangement of some science groups, setting is difficult. Students are taught by three different teachers in the week, making the rigour of checking and marking of work difficult. This is currently being reviewed by the school.
84. Teaching is satisfactory overall with no unsatisfactory teaching. Up to the end of Year 9 and at GCSE a third of the lessons were good which is a slight improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their students well. In the best lessons teachers keep all students interested and involved with activities such as interactive programs displayed on the electronic whiteboards. They also use 'traffic light' cards to check progress and group practical sessions followed by discussion such as in the lower school 'thinking skills' lessons. However, in many of the lessons teachers are over directive and this limits opportunities for individual investigative work. This is particularly evident where groups are dominated by the more vociferous boys and the girls sit quietly, taking little active part. Whilst some teachers share the aims of the lesson with students, this is not consistent across the department and reviewing of these aims is only very occasionally checked at the end.
85. Few opportunities exist for students to develop their skills of writing about science other than answering questions or for research to present their findings to the rest of the class. Marking is inconsistent across the department. The majority of staff mark regularly but detail is very varied. The best marking gives corrections and details how students can improve from one piece of work to the next. The number of groups each teacher takes in a week does not help with the rigour of collecting and checking homework set. Students' progress in tests is tracked up to the end of Year 9 using the 'Fischer Family Trust' assessment package with the targets set shared with students. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
86. Students with special needs are well catered for and make the same progress as other students. They learn particularly well in the special groups in each half year taught by a science specialist teacher with additional support. Careful, focused teaching, specific tasks and work sheets help the progress and understanding of students with special needs. In other groups without support, students lose interest quickly and misbehave and fail to complete the work set.

87. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a very clear vision of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and the way forward. He is a very good role model for other science specialists who work together as subject teams. The upheaval caused by the refurbishment and use of temporary accommodation was managed well and the department now enjoys using fifteen bright and modern laboratories with additional preparation and office areas – a marked improvement since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good planning leads to good teaching which conveys high expectations to students.
- Deficiencies in accommodation and resources have an adverse effect on learning.
- Effective leadership and teamwork have resulted in good curriculum opportunities for all students.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.
- The school does not provide adequate overall co-ordination of ICT developments and of standards attained across the curriculum.

Commentary

88. Standards are above average. The teachers' assessment figures for the attainment of students in Years 7 to 9 are close to the national average. Work scrutiny indicates that attainment is higher than this, with a better than average proportion attaining at higher levels.
89. Results for the GCSE courses are broadly in line with national expectations. However, there are several factors which make this a significant achievement. A very high proportion of students take a GCSE course, which will be mandatory for all students from the next academic year onward. Owing to the previously unsatisfactory nature of ICT provision in the school, very few of these have had an adequate experience of ICT in Years 7 to 9. Further, students in Years 10 and 11 are working at levels above 2003 national averages.
90. A key element in the progress since the previous inspection has been the concurrent development of the Key Stage 3 ICT strategy and of the GCSE programme. As a result, there are clear and effective schemes of work for Years 7 to 11. This has occurred against a background of the recent introduction of separate specialist ICT lessons for the first time. Evidence for the success of this overall strategy comes from the high degree of consistency seen in teaching, learning and attainment throughout the department's courses. The progress shown within and between Years 7 to 9 is good.
91. Teaching overall is good. Teachers are skilled and at ease with the latest developments in ICT and plan into lessons the visible and effective use of modern ICT hardware and software. Lessons have good pace and provide a clear framework for students to follow. Good planning includes the compilation and use of well maintained assessment data on individuals and cohorts, which is used by teachers to set challenging and achievable objectives for groups and individuals. Their expertise is complemented by two skilled technicians who are fully involved in the process of departmental planning.
92. These factors encourage students to work well. Throughout Years 7 to 11, they are keen to learn and show positive attitudes toward the subject. Most students regularly and consistently produce work meeting the requirements of the expected national curriculum level and a larger than usual proportion attain above that level.
93. In Years 10 and 11 students are working well toward the requirements of course work for GCSE. For a larger than usual proportion of students this work is close to standards expected in the world of work. Their learning is significantly assisted by detailed and accurate marking.

Because of good planning for the diversity among students, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make progress at the same rate as others. Overall, and in view of students' attainment on entry to the school, this represents good achievement throughout the school.

94. Leadership and management of the department are good. The hard-working and enthusiastic leader is responsible for the teamwork developments within the department that have created major achievements in teaching and learning. Whilst he has no wider responsibility for cross-curricular ICT, he has encouraged his team to be forward looking and innovative in areas such as curriculum and assessment. Since the previous inspection this effective teamwork has created both vocational and academic 14-19 ICT pathways that will be fully operational for all students by September 2004. The teamwork also includes regular observation of teaching, from which many valuable developmental points emerge.
95. Whilst the accommodation and resources available to the department have been progressively upgraded, they have also had an adverse effect on learning. The majority of teaching rooms are very poorly ventilated and over-crowded. In most classes some students have to share computers owing to insufficient provision or problems of maintaining older machines. Most rooms have been laid out without consideration for the requirements of group work and in several it is very difficult for the teacher to see or be seen by the whole class.
96. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The school now meets the statutory requirements for ICT provision. Whilst the use of ICT across the curriculum has developed considerably and many teachers are enthusiastic users of some aspects of ICT, there is no clear overall system of co-ordination of this by the school. As a result, there is considerable variability in the availability and impact of ICT on students and teachers. Currently there is no systematic assessment by the school of students' attainment in ICT across subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are leading to rapidly rising standards.
- Changes to the curriculum have helped to raise standards.
- Good assessment procedures help teachers check students' progress.
- Students generally behave well in lessons.

Commentary

97. 2003 GCSE results were well below average. Results in geography were lower than for most other subjects in the school and have declined since the previous inspection. There has been a level of disaffection with geography among students that is now being overcome. Changes in the curriculum and schemes of work have been made to give more appropriate programmes of study and standards are now rising rapidly.
98. Standards are now average, both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Assessments indicate that students enter the school with below average attainment. Higher attaining students achieve well. Lower attaining students achieve satisfactorily. There are slight differences in the quality of teaching in some lessons that affect achievement for lower attaining students. Girls and boys achieve equally well. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students. The use of field courses and case studies to develop students' research and independent learning skills is an important factor in the rise in standards now taking place.

99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teaching is good in half the lessons. In a minority of lessons, usually with less able students, elements of class control are not sufficiently strong when students are restless and lack concentration. Consequently, the pace of the lesson drops and learning is less effective. Where teaching is good, lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students are challenged and are encouraged to think and investigate rather than simply learning basic geographical facts. Students are usually well behaved in lessons and show good attitudes to work. Assessment procedures are good and enable teachers to track students' attainment and progress and set targets.
100. Geography makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the enhancement of literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory because of restricted access to computer rooms. There are no blinds on classroom windows and this restricts the use of overhead projectors and television. A lack of security prevents the installation of up to date technology such as interactive whiteboards. The library is an unsatisfactory resource for learning. The department is very well led and managed. Clear priorities for improvement are in place and a strong team of teachers is developing. There are effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department and standards are rising. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership and management have improved the organisation of teaching and learning.
- Good teaching in both key stages is beginning to improve standards.
- Marking of students' work is insufficiently evaluative to show students how to improve.
- Students make good progress through Years 7 to 11.
- The over-dependence on work sheets in some lessons, despite their good quality, limits the potential of higher attaining students.
- Standards of presentation and organisation in written work are not high enough.
- Accommodation and resources are very good but access to ICT is still unsatisfactory.

Commentary

101. Overall standards are improving rapidly. Standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Standards in GCSE at the end of Year 11 are exactly in line with national averages but the proportion of grades A* and A is below national averages. Overall achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. Girls' achievement is better than boys', even in lower-ability sets in Years 7 to 9 where boys heavily outnumber girls. Students with English as an additional language and from different ethnic minority groups achieve satisfactorily. The achievement of able and of gifted and talented students is satisfactory. Students' historical knowledge, understanding and skills are below expectations when they start school, but they have caught up by the end of Year 9.
102. Teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. Good teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and preparation, together with varied teaching styles and approaches to match the different learning needs of students. Teachers use very good questioning and classroom management skills and have high expectations of their students. Teaching is stimulating, often with high quality ICT-based presentations. Where teaching is less effective, but nevertheless satisfactory, there is over-use of worksheets that are not always well matched to the needs of all students and marking of work is insufficiently helpful to students. In one or two classes where girls are in a minority, teachers do not take care to fully include girls into lessons and their learning becomes increasingly passive. Some lessons are over teacher-directed so that students' skills of independent learning and research

are under-developed, particularly amongst boys. A particular strength of teaching, however, is the range of educational visits, such as to the First World War battlefield sites in France in Year 10.

103. Overall learning is good because students have good attitudes and are keen to do well. History contributes well to the development of students' literacy skills and sense of citizenship. Where learning is good or better, students work independently, assess the validity of various source documents and evaluate the cause and effect of change with confidence. Where learning is less effective, students are not able to work at their own pace and more able students are sometimes constrained by the limitations set by worksheets. Students' presentation is not as good as it should be because teachers' expectations in some classes are too low and too much students' work is allowed to be left incomplete.
104. Leadership is good and the head of department has brought a drive for improvement since his arrival in 2002. The teachers now work much more as a team and have a shared understanding of how to improve standards. Subject management is good. The department runs efficiently and planning ensures that teaching and assessment methods are consistent. Analysis of performance data is thorough and leads to actions for improvement. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' very good subject knowledge supports learning.
- Teaching challenges and inspires students to make good intellectual effort.
- The provision in religious education for all students in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Some ineffective classroom management of behaviour is a barrier to learning.
- Marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not always help students to improve.
- The department makes a very good contribution to the spiritual development of the students.

Commentary

105. The achievement of all students by the end of Year 9 is good and very good by the end of Year 11. The students' prior attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. By the end of Year 9 the level of attainment is in line with local expectations. Standards in the recent past have been affected by staffing difficulties, but the situation has now stabilised and as a result levels of attainment are now rising. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they get extra support during the lessons.
106. Provision in Years 10 and 11 does not comply with statutory requirements, apart from a small group of higher attaining students in Year 10, who are taking the GCSE full course. Standards of attainment are well above average and achievement in this group is very good.
107. Overall teaching and learning are both satisfactory, with some very good and some unsatisfactory teaching observed. Where teaching is good, the students explore and express their own beliefs. The teachers' very good subject knowledge and clear explanations help the students to understand quite difficult religious concepts. In the Year 10 group, independent learning is encouraged by questioning, which challenges them to make real intellectual effort. For instance, several were excited by the philosophy of Plato and researched further on their own. On those few occasions where there is unsatisfactory learning, it is the result of poor behaviour, which disrupts lessons, and weak classroom management which cannot control the situation. Students who want to learn are not stretched and become frustrated. This is further compounded by the use of material, which is not always tailored to the lower attaining students' learning needs. These students often leave written work unfinished as a result. Students

generally work purposefully in lessons and produce some very thoughtful pieces of work. Students' progress is now well monitored and this is impacting on standards. However, the marking of written work is inconsistent in the department. Marking which only congratulates is not challenging, whereas fuller, diagnostic comments show the students how to improve and, as a result, the standard of work gets better over time.

108. The subject makes a very good contribution to the personal development of the students. They have the opportunity in lessons to reflect on moral issues and ethical decisions, as well as learning tolerance and appreciation of other faiths. The department organises assemblies, communion services, which are well attended, and has links with the interfaith communities in the city as well as with the local parish. Muslim students were affirmed by the school during Ramadan and the religious studies teachers proved to be excellent role models by keeping the fast with them.
109. Information technology is increasingly being used effectively to support independent learning and the department will shortly have its own web-site to encourage this aspect.
110. Leadership and management are good because there is a new vision and commitment to improvement, evident both in the development plan and the effective monitoring systems now in place. The profile of the department and its credibility in the eyes of the students are areas which have been identified. The students will have the opportunity to take short and full courses next year and to take the subject at A-level the following year.
111. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have risen in Years 7 to 9 and there are now specialist staff. There is still, however, non-compliance in Years 10 and 11.

Sample of sociology in Years 10 and 11

112. Sociology is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11 and is chosen mainly by students who decide not to take the more traditional subjects. Results at GCSE were below average but almost all students gained a pass. Students achieve well because lessons are matched to their abilities. Explanations are very clear and examples that they can relate to really help them to understand. The high expectations of the teacher are met by enthusiasm and intellectual effort. For example, in a Year 10 lesson pupils were able to discuss the tripartite education system, and the sociological implications of private and state education, with a good degree of confidence, using subject terminology with understanding. These skills in discussion and evaluation are gradually transferred to their written work, which improves because of very helpful marking and suggestions. The subject makes a good contribution to their personal development and at this stage is sound preparation for A-level.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

A contributory factor in this judgement is the unsuitable temporary accommodation as a result of delays in the building programme.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- Coverage of the curriculum is unsatisfactory because of the inadequate accommodation and resources.
- Achievement is below expectation because planning and assessment in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not effectively build on previous experiences.

- Committed and hardworking teachers reduce the impact of the poor accommodation and resources on standards.

Commentary

113. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were well below average. However, there are variations between the different areas of technology. In resistant materials overall standards are average but standards in food are significantly below average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are in line with expectations. Standards seen during the inspection do not reflect this. Students enter Year 7 with variable skills, knowledge and understanding in design and technology. By the end of Year 9 students generate ideas, carry out basic research and use a range of tools and equipment competently. Currently the accommodation and access to a range of resources including ICT are unsatisfactory. This restricts coverage of the national curriculum requirements, hindering achievement and progress, which is below what is expected. In addition, the lack of effective planning and assessment linked to modules taught means that students are unable to build on learning effectively from one module to another. This results in weak design, research and evaluation skills and below average standards at the end of Year 9. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Students develop a better understanding of the design and make processes and acquire a greater depth of knowledge in most of the material areas they have chosen to study. Students' use of technical and extended language is underdeveloped and this affects the standard of the analytical and evaluative writing in coursework. Restricted access to ICT means students are unable to develop sufficiently the skills required in computer-aided design and manufacture needed to gain higher standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
114. Teaching is satisfactory with examples of good teaching. Where teaching is satisfactory individual lessons are effectively planned and in most lessons learning objectives are shared with students so they understand what is expected from them during the lesson. Teachers manage behaviour well, ensuring that practical lessons are safe. When teaching is good students are interested and apply themselves well because activities are challenging and there is a range of different tasks that engage students in their learning. However, concentration is unsatisfactory when the content of the lesson is inappropriate for the ability of the students. Teachers give good individual support to students, resulting in good progress for students with special educational needs.
115. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has been through a period of significant disruption in accommodation and staffing. The head of department has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses with priorities identified to secure improvements. Teachers are hardworking and committed to delivering an acceptable curriculum in difficult circumstances.
116. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Insufficient progress has been made to improve the quality of provision in order to raise standards and achievement. The disruptions experienced by the department have significantly contributed to this situation.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent leadership and very good management have had a major impact since September 2003.
- There is a broad and balanced curriculum which shares and celebrates the cultural heritage of students.
- Assessment is good and actively involves students.

- The very good teaching and learning in art encourage students to respond positively and actively encourage enthusiasm for the subject.
- There have been significant improvements in the development ICT.
- Some aspects of accommodation and access to resources are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

117. Standards are above average and achievement is good. GCSE results are well above average for both A*-C grades and average points score, and have been so over the last five years. Students' experience on entry is limited and the consequent learning curve is steep as Year 7 students develop their skills and accept the challenges of art in this school. By the end of Year 9 standards are at the national average and work seen in Year 11 is above it.
118. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Students with special needs achieve as well as their peers and often produce excellent work. There is no evidence that language issues limit access or achievement in art. There is clear evidence that students develop their work through the projects investigated and world art and examples from various professional artists resource this development. One exciting factor is the way in which the cultural background of students in the school, such as Oriental and Asian influences, is both celebrated and used. This was clearly seen in the Islamic design-based project with Year 8. Input from artists in residence is very well used to support both achievement and attainment.
119. Teaching and learning are very good at all levels. In the best lessons they are characterised by passion, enthusiasm and vitality, to which students respond exceedingly well. The art department is an exciting place to be in and the positive impact on student self-esteem is an important factor in their learning. There is both encouragement and challenge. Students' learning is developed through observation and analysis, skill development, teacher demonstration, research and development and, above all, through learning by doing and refining both skills and work in progress.
120. Leadership is excellent, rooted in a clear vision for the future. Management is very good. The impact of the new head of department since her appointment has been great. The lack of sketch books inhibits development work and their provision is on the departmental development plan. The problems with the new accommodation are gradually being resolved, but some aspects such as ceramics cannot yet be taught. The curriculum is broad and includes mainstream and world art; the technology resources are only just in place and this aspect of the curriculum is currently under intense development. There is a good assessment system which includes effective student self-assessment which clearly impacts on subsequent work. Attitudes and behaviour are almost always excellent, students being carried along with the excitement and flow of lessons. Display, which both celebrates and inspires, is very good and work is in progress involving an artist in residence with all years on large scale work to be mounted in the foyer outside the new refectory. Some gallery visits have taken place during the current year and a programme to involve all students is planned.
121. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, especially since September 2003.

Drama

122. One Year 10 drama lesson was observed which was a follow-up to the previous night's theatre visit to see 'The Mayor of Zalamea'. The teacher had a good rapport with the students but the discussion of the performance was marred by a small group of students who did not wait their turn before joining in. Teaching overall was satisfactory. The content was good in that it led students towards an understanding of how critical reviews are formulated without being asked. Achievement overall was satisfactory. Drama considerably enhances the cultural experiences of students by providing a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well from below average levels on entry.
- Above average standards are achieved by the small numbers of students who take GCSE and A-levels.
- Extensive instrumental tuition has a very positive impact on the high numbers of students who participate.
- Teachers' behaviour management skills are very good, so lessons run smoothly and students learn well.
- Enthusiastic leadership and good teamwork by staff form a positive basis for continued improvement.
- Assessment is not used effectively to ensure all students make good progress.
- Insufficient use is made of visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

123. Students enter school with varying experiences of music but standards are below average overall. The well-structured lessons enable all students to achieve well so, by the end of Year 9, they are achieving standards in line with those expected nationally. Students gain experience of composing on keyboards and enjoy writing musical scores in graphic styles. They learn about musical styles, such as rock and roll, listening to and naming some artists from the period, such as Elvis Presley. Students improve their performing skills through singing parts of the musical 'Grease'. Some students appear to lack confidence and experience of singing in a group, despite enthusiastic teaching and well-planned lessons. This limits their achievement in this aspect.
124. In 2003 students achieved standards above national averages in GCSE music. Increasing numbers now enrol for the course and the range of musical abilities is broadening. Some students, however, have difficulty reading music and cannot record their compositions in simple notation. This affects their achievements. The department actively promotes an inclusive policy, offering support for students of all abilities on the GCSE course.
125. Over 120 students learn to play an instrument in school. Governors have committed considerable finances to fund all students who wish to receive instrumental tuition. This is paying dividends. The brass band, orchestra and other groups such as percussion and woodwind are significantly enhancing the musical experiences of the numerous students who participate. All students learning an instrument participate in these activities on reaching the required level. Standards reached in these groups are high as a result of the good teaching they receive from visiting specialists.
126. Teaching is good. Teachers make good use of well-organised resources in lessons, so practical activities run smoothly. They praise students and support them in their efforts. Behaviour management is very good and positive relationships, helped by good humour, are evident in all lessons. This sets a positive mood in classes. In examination classes students' work is monitored carefully. Teachers know students well and use assessment effectively to help them to improve. However, little challenging work is provided for higher attaining students, who generally follow the same work as the rest of the class. This limits their chances to extend their learning effectively. Similarly, marking is used effectively in some classes to point out ways to improve but this is not yet consistent across the school.
127. Some use is made of visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum. However, the city and surrounding area has a rich musical tradition, which is not sufficiently utilised by the school to enhance students' learning. The department is aware of the need to make better use of this facility.

128. Leadership is good. The new head of department has carefully reviewed current systems and identified improvements. The department is well managed. Staff work well as a team and are focused on improvement. For example, assessment has improved to enable students to see what they need to do next to improve further. However, too little time is available for planned regular department meetings to help maintain a sharp focus on improvement.
129. Good resources enhance students' chances to learn. For example, keyboards are organised to share between two in classes and laptops are available for work by older exam class students. The improved ICT provision considerably enhances students' chances to learn, an improvement since the previous inspection. Accommodation has improved as the new building now allows music to be taught in a 'suite' of adjoining classes. Soundproofing is not good enough and classes are disturbed by practising instrumentalists. Other facilities have improved, such as practice rooms and partitions to allow flexible use of rooms for different groups, such as the orchestra.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and provides clear vision for the subject.
- Teachers use very good subject knowledge to plan challenging lessons.
- Very good student attitudes and teachers' high expectations lead to good learning and achievement.
- The prolonged temporary refurbishment of facilities is having a negative impact on achievement and standards.

Commentary

130. Standards in Years 7 to 11 are average overall and above average in GCSE, as demonstrated by the 2003 results. Achievement by all students is good. Boys and girls have sound games skills and tactical awareness. A few boys in Year 9 are well above average in football, as they consistently use advanced skills. Many students are now involved in leading warm ups and evaluating their own and others' work. The trend in GCSE has been upwards, although 2004 predicted results indicate a slight dip as a result of restricted practice time. More girls are opting for GCSE physical education, because single gender lessons are helping standards to rise. Most Year 11 personal exercise programmes support good literacy, numeracy and computer skills.
131. Improved consistency in teaching, brought about by sharing good practice and setting students in ability groups, has led to good achievement by boys and girls. Students' very positive attitudes and teachers' high expectations of standards of behaviour make effective use of time. Students work well in groups, displaying good sportsmanship. Progress to full-sided games is hindered as the larger facilities are temporarily out of use. Provision for students with special educational needs is good and students achieve well through individual attention and good use of support assistants
132. Most teaching is good or very good, with the best teaching in GCSE lessons where students are challenged with a variety of tasks, although a few lessons are still a little too teacher-led. The department uses ICT effectively. Constant references by teachers to clear learning objectives, examination questions or full game situations make the lessons relevant. Teachers' summaries and question and answer sessions are developing. There are many examples of good use of probing questions and student demonstrations to check and reinforce learning.
133. Leadership and management are good and have enabled the department to move forward in a short space of time. There is a clear vision of what the department can achieve and appropriate

priorities and plans to move the department forward. A real team spirit has also been developed. Clear, workable policies are now in place for most aspects, including new assessment arrangements. There is good self-evaluation taking place, but not all of these procedures are fully embedded.

134. The department runs a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. These are well attended, open to all and include recreational and team practices. The department has good links with local sports clubs, sharing facilities and coaching.
135. Since the previous inspection the department has made good progress in all areas of development. Standards and achievement have improved and evaluation and games skills are being taught. Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good. Teaching has improved, is consistently good and all lessons start with clear objectives. Extra-curricular activities are very good; the facilities are being refurbished and when finished, will be very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average but improving.
- Achievement is good because of the increase in specialist teaching.

Commentary

136. Standards in 2003 were well below average. The department has experienced staffing difficulties and this has had an impact on standards. Achievement and progress in many lessons, however, are good. Students are developing satisfactory, and in some cases good, knowledge and understanding of business organisations and how they work and apply a range of business concepts with increasing effectiveness. Students' ability to interpret and analyse information to make decisions and judgements is less well developed.
137. Teaching is satisfactory with examples of very good teaching. Lessons are well planned with learning objectives effectively shared with students so they are clear about what is expected of them. When teaching is very good, the knowledge of specialist teachers is shared effectively with students who then apply it well to a range of tasks. They develop a depth of knowledge and understanding that ensure good progress and achievement. In these lessons students are well supported and know how to improve their work and gain higher standards. In most lessons students' attitudes are good with a desire to do well in the subject.
138. Leadership and management are good with a clear vision for the development of the subject. The subject is well organised and teachers work well as a team to promote high standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for citizenship is well developed in the personal, social and health education programme, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Two members of the sixth form are elected by their peers as school governors.
- Citizenship is also taught within subject areas, but is not effectively monitored or co-ordinated.
- Assessment and reporting policies for citizenship are currently unsatisfactory.

Commentary

139. Key elements of the programme of study for citizenship are effectively covered in the personal, social and health education scheme of work and are taught by tutors. An audit has been done and the school recognises that opportunities for supporting, reinforcing and delivering aspects of the programme in other subjects are currently missed, although there are examples of good practice. Opportunities for students to become more actively involved in the life of the school are missed. There is, for example, no school council. Sixth form students do, however, elect two of their peers to sit on the school's governing body.
140. Teaching of citizenship within the personal, social and health education programme is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully so that the factual content as well as key areas relating to responsibility and working together within a community are thoroughly covered. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on 'Elections', a special educational needs dyslexic student was able to use factual information to produce a campaign speech. In a Year 11 lesson on 'Responsibilities', students were able to recognise that we have rights but also responsibilities within society. Attitudes are good and there is an emphasis on developing speaking, listening and discussion skills. Where citizenship is taught through other subjects, teaching is satisfactory overall. There is, however, a lack of effective cross-curricular monitoring of the subject. This means that good practice is not effectively disseminated. There are strengths in English and drama, geography, history, religious education and vocational education. A range of issues is addressed, including persuasive language in the media as well as social responsibility and negotiation. Moral and social issues regularly occur in geography and religious education although these are not always made explicit in terms of the citizenship programme of study. The assessment and reporting of students at the end of the current Year 9 is currently unsatisfactory. This is recognized by the school and plans are now in place to address this. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

[The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 for which national comparisons are available].

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	7	85.7	80.1	0	223.7	17.1	29.9
Biology	7	57.1	65.2	0	11.1	14.3	20.6
Business Studies	5	40.0	76.4	0	16.3	10	26.2
Chemistry	4	100	72.7	25	13.9	30	24.1
Drama	1	100	86.5	0	19.6	30	30.6
Economics	9	66.7	73.6	22.2	20.1	23.3	26.4
English Literature	8	87.5	85.9	0	19.1	25	30.2
General Studies	9	100	73.9	0	17.8	22.2	25.7
Geography	5	40	74.3	20	19.8	16	26.5
German	5	100	81.5	0	19.3	28	28.9
Information Technology	26	38.5	67	3.8	10.9	10	21.4
Mathematics	14	85.7	61.9	14.3	17.1	29.3	22.1
Music	1	100	86.5	100	21.4	50	30.7
Physics	6	83.3	68.6	33.3	14.4	31.7	22.7
Sociology	12	25	71.8	8.3	18.4	9.2	25.4
Sports/PE Studies	4	75	73.2	0	11.4	17.5	23.1

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	6	83.3	98.6	0	50.2	53.3	87.5
Biology	12	100	96.4	25	39.2	70	78.6
Business Studies	16	100	98.7	18.8	36.8	72.5	80.1
Chemistry	2	100	97.6	100	49	110	84.9
Drama	1	100	99.5	0	40.1	80	83.6
Economics	22	100	98.9	22.7	52	73.6	88.3
English Literature	22	100	99.5	40.9	46.5	85.5	85.5
French	5	100	98.8	60	51.5	96	87.6
General Studies	57	96.5	94.7	29.8	31	75.4	73.1
Geography	17	100	98.7	35.3	44.5	82.4	84
German	2	100	98.4	0	47.9	70	84.8
History	21	100	99	71.4	44.6	98.1	84.6
Information Technology	8	87.5	95.6	0	24.6	52.5	69.5
Mathematics	12	100	96.7	58.3	55.6	88.3	88.8
Music	3	100	98.8	0	38.9	66.7	81.1
Other Sciences	3	100	97.3	0	41.5	40	80.3
Physics	7	100	96.7	57.1	44.6	88.6	81.7
Sociology	25	100	98.2	36	44.3	79.2	83.6
Sports/PE Studies	4	100	98	25	30.9	80	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English but Theatre Studies was also sampled. A Year 13 theatre studies lesson was observed in which students discussed the staging of the end of Act 2 of *'Hedda Gabler'*. Very good preliminary consideration of an extract by Bertolt Brecht prepared the way for effective debate on the actual scene. Students read the script very well and the teacher ensured they retained the necessary focus on directorial decisions. Very good questioning continually brought the students back to the extract as a piece of theatre and its potential impact on an audience. The small group of students achieved well in the lesson.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results at A-level in 2003 represent good achievement by all students.
- Excellent subject knowledge by teachers is incorporated in very good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject have ensured that courses are very well prepared and structured.
- Some very large classes present difficulties on A-level courses.

Commentary

141. Seventy-two students follow English Literature courses in the sixth form.

142. Standards in English Literature A-level in 2002 were very good, with results well above the national average. Comparative results for 2003 indicate attainment above the national average. Work seen during the inspection again suggests attainment above the national average which indicates good achievement by the students.

143. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers exhibit excellent subject knowledge which is put to very good effect. In a Year 13 lesson preparing students for the unseen poetry paper, whilst encouraging discussion of *'Dulce et Decorum Est'*, the teacher invoked a whole range of other pertinent literary and cultural references that provided students with excellent source material for any work on war poetry. Teachers also take great care to ensure that students view literature in the context of the time in which it was written. In another Year 13 lesson where students were analysing the poem "Slavery" by Hannah Moore, they were provided with a range of history texts that ensured they were well aware of the political, social and religious climate of the time that accordingly further illuminated their understanding of the poem. Marking of essays is usually very good as it provides detailed and accurate guidance on both positive achievement and how to improve.

144. It is not surprising that students respond to such teaching by displaying enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject. By Year 13 most students have learned how to structure essays effectively so as to provide cogent, well argued essays that focus on the real issues suggested by the question. There is also a real growth in the ability to see novels and plays as complete texts and succinctly synthesise the elements or themes that are most relevant to the area of discussion. Higher attaining students achieve this level of focus in Year 12. Thus, in an essay on Chaucer's attitude to love, one girl wrote, "In *'The Miller's Tale'*, Chaucer has created themes which all relate to the word 'love'. He satirises courtly love, reveals how lust is just human nature and how jealousy can lead to adultery". Students' essays also demonstrate increasingly confident use of the language of literary criticism and the ability to introduce wider references where relevant. In discussions in lessons there is a clear enjoyment of putting forward arguments and counter arguments and attempting to validate them with individual readings of texts .

145. The very good leadership and management of English in the sixth form are reflected in the high standards. Courses are very well structured to ensure that requisite skills are developed and the range of essay titles provided for each text is outstanding in the way in which it ensures comprehensive coverage. Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Some of the classes are very large indeed, which places a heavy burden on staff in ensuring that all students receive close attention. It is to their credit that they respond so well to the situation.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

146. Language and literacy skills support learning in all subjects. There is good provision for the development of such skills, with teachers ensuring that students are given a range of supplementary texts that enhance their reading skills. Necessary subject vocabulary is emphasised and clarified at relevant stages in courses. In modern foreign languages students are encouraged to consider how register and syntax affect meaning. The teaching of literacy is good. In many lessons there are carefully structured discussions that enhance understanding by paying close attention to the precise language used. General studies lessons use group discussions to develop the ability to present well-balanced arguments. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson, particularly good levels of discussion clarified students' understanding of statistical distribution. In English Literature students are taught to scan and annotate texts in order to extract essential information and in a theatre studies lesson, a very precise focus on a background extract by Brecht was used to illuminate consideration of staging the play that was being studied. All the above had the effect of increasing students' ability to use language accurately and read for specific purposes.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has maintained high standards over the past few years.
- Good teaching leads to high expectations and good progress.
- Students' learning is very good. They respond very well to the demands of the subject and produce high quality and imaginative work.

Commentary

147. Standards of attainment at AS and A-level are **very good** in French and have been over recent years. Starting from a broad range of GCSE attainment, students are supported very well to make good progress and attain standards in line with or above national levels. Achievement over time is very good and there are many instances of outstanding work.

148. Students are strongly committed to their learning and respond very well to the challenging demands of both Year 12 and Year 13 courses and the high expectations of their teachers. Teaching and learning are good overall and students' application to their class and homework is very good. Teaching is particularly strong in building students' knowledge with a consistently high expectation on acquiring extensive vocabulary and a thorough grounding in the knowledge and application of the rules of the language. Students work hard to reach high standards by the end of the course. Several folders show sustained, extensive and imaginative work over the wide range of topics covered in the course. Several examples of outstanding work were seen.

149. Students are very well supported throughout their courses. Teachers' marking and attention to ways in which students can improve are very good. The school offers genuine and sustained opportunities for students to contact or visit either France or Germany as well as visits to inform them of advanced study opportunities after the sixth form. Calderstones sixth form foreign languages play a key role in the planned South Liverpool Collaborative Project, providing French for students from other schools and colleges. Leadership and management are good. There is

a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff and this has contributed to the good progress made since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in the sixth form meets the needs of the students.
- The excellent mathematical knowledge of the teachers leads to clear explanations of the concepts required for sixth form courses.
- Students recognise their difficulties, seek help and apply themselves well.

Commentary

150. The school offers GCSE re-take mathematics, AS and A-level and further mathematics. The work of all but the GCSE class was sampled during the inspection.

151. In 2003, A-level mathematics results were well above average and AS results were above average. The majority of students have a good understanding of mathematics and makes effective use of past work when introduced to a new topic. In a Year 12 class students were involved in a lively discussion on the Poisson Distribution in their statistics module. In a Year 13 group students were confident to ask questions using advanced calculus. Overall achievement in the sixth form was good.

152. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics and teaching was very good. They give good support to students to ensure understanding and are particularly mindful of some of the quieter girls in the groups. Students freely participate in discussion, the majority responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions. The most able engage in very interesting discussions with their teacher, demonstrating very good understanding of, and interest in, the subject. Lessons are well prepared with packs of solutions for students. These are much appreciated by them as they provide excellent revision notes

153. Leadership and management by the head of mathematics and the sixth form co-ordinator are very good. All sixth form teachers work well together. They also give good support by providing lunchtime tuition for further mathematics students.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Standards of mathematics are above average for the majority of students. They are able to make good use of their mathematics whenever needed. For example, physics students were able to do complex calculations when preparing for a practical exam.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and physics but chemistry was also sampled. In 2002 results in chemistry were well above all schools nationally with six out of ten students attaining a grade A or B. This was the same in 2003 with all four students attaining the high grades. Both Years 12 and 13 chemistry lessons were observed. Year 13 students learned well about electrochemistry and whether various reactions were possible, due to the good teaching.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well structured with different activities to help students learn.
- Very good relationships exist between students and teachers.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop as independent learners.

Commentary

154. The department's results at advanced level in 2002 were in line with the national average, which is similar to the previous year. All students passed the examination but less than half of these were at the high grades. Boys did better than girls but both did less well in biology than in other subjects. The 2003 results remained in line with national expectation with not all passing and only a quarter attaining higher grades. At AS level in 2002, one fifth of the girls, but fewer boys, attained the highest grade. These results were above national results. In 2003, almost three quarters of students attained a pass grade.
155. Biology is a popular subject, particularly in Year 12 where there are two groups, and several students study it as their only science. Students start the course with at least average grades in double science and in the current Year 13 group there are a few students who attained high grades in all three sciences. However, not all students complete either the first year or second year of the course. The progress students make is satisfactory given their different starting points at GCSE.
156. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The four subject specialists responsible for teaching the subject are well led and plan the lessons to include a variety of different activities such as practical sessions and examination questions to help students learn the theory covered.
157. During the summer term Year 12 develop experience of different methods of sampling animal and plant populations before using these methods on a field visit to Anglesey and submitting their analyses as coursework. However, the range of activities is limited with students making notes and answering written questions. This does not give sufficient opportunity for students to develop independence as learners such as researching topics, discussing ideas with one another or making presentations to the rest of the group. This is recognised by the department as an area for improvement.
158. All students demonstrate very good application to work and relationships are very good. Files are well kept and organised with completed work and notes made to extend classwork. Examination questions are marked thoroughly, with help on how to improve. Many students are very appreciative of the help they receive from their teachers both in and out of lessons. Leadership and management are good. Staff work well together and progress since the previous inspection has been good.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The standard of attainment is consistently above the national average.
- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge which allows them to provide challenging tasks.
- Teachers use questioning well to challenge students and support achievement.
- The relationship between staff and students is very good and teachers have a good understanding of students' strengths and areas for development.
- Students are given a limited range of activities with little opportunity for group work or individual research.
- The use of ICT within lessons is limited and needs further development.

Commentary

159. In recent years students' attainment has been well above average, with girls performing slightly better than boys in relation to national averages. Attainment has been above average over the whole range of A-level grades. For example, in 2002, no student failed A-level physics and over half the students entered gained higher grades. This is well above the national average. Comparative data suggests that students who were entered for A-level physics tended to do better in physics than in many of their other A-level subjects.
160. Standards seen in lessons were above the national average. Students dealt with questions that required complex mathematical operations and questions that required written explanation with equal confidence and competence. Students are also able to apply their knowledge to new situations and transfer knowledge gained during their study of one module to work being done on a different module.
161. All students make good progress although they start A-level physics from a wide range of attainment.
162. Teaching is good and students learn well because teachers plan well, have a very secure subject knowledge and a good understanding of the needs of their students. This ensures that the work set challenges all students appropriately. Questioning is used skilfully, both in whole class discussion and individually, in order to draw out the best from each student. Analogies are used well to help students understand and apply knowledge to different contexts. Teachers also are careful to develop an appreciation of the implications of science for society. For example, during a lesson on nuclear safety, students discussed the effects of nuclear contamination on the farming industry following the Chernobyl disaster.
163. The range of tasks given to students is, however, limited. During the inspection students were involved in class discussions, tackled past exam questions individually and planned and carried out individual practical work. There was no evidence of group work or opportunities for research or presentations. The limited availability of ICT also reduces students' ability to use data logging or ICT research techniques.
164. Work is marked regularly and comments to guide improvement are routinely used. This enables students to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Self- and peer-assessment help students to develop a deeper understanding of the skills they need in order to succeed. Students, however, have little understanding of the standard of their responses in terms of GCE grades. Incorporating references to grades in formal or informal feedback would help students develop a better understanding of whether they are attaining their target grades.
165. Students are very well behaved, well motivated and thoroughly engaged in lessons. The positive atmosphere in lessons ensures that they feel secure enough to put forward their own ideas confidently. All the current Year 12 students plan to continue to A2 physics after completing AS.
166. Leadership and management of the physics department are good. Although one teacher currently delivers most of the post-16 physics teaching, there is a strategy in place to develop the expertise of other members of staff. Where a group is currently shared between two teachers, there is a clear division of responsibilities, a good level of support available and sharing of information on a regular basis.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good.
- Courses provided offer good choice for varying interests and abilities.

- Teaching is well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Accurate marking assists improvement.
- GCE A-level and AS results were well below the national average in 2003.
- Good leadership leads to effective programmes of study for all students.

Commentary

167. Standards in the 2003 GCE A examinations were well below the national average. Standards seen during the inspection, however, were at the national average. Overall students achieve well, particularly in view of the varied intake on entry into the sixth form. Students work well as individuals and in teams and they show positive attitudes toward the subject. In the vocational classes they show good awareness of the practical needs of business. In the advanced level course they are confident in their usage of terminology and give good support to each other in group tasks. They have good understanding of key concepts and apply them confidently to their own work. All students have good ICT skills of presentation and their assignment work is produced to levels close to standards expected in the world of work.
168. The main provision offered is the GCE advanced level and also GCE vocational advanced level courses. The latter is newly introduced and there is no significant national comparative data. However, standards attained are at least average. The availability of two broad pathways gives a good range of choice.
169. Teaching overall is good. Teachers plan well and have good knowledge of their students and their potential. This enables them to offer consistent and realistic encouragement to improve. Students' learning is significantly assisted by the detailed and accurate marking, which consistently uses examination body criteria.
170. Leadership and management of the department are good. Enthusiastic leadership creates good teamwork, which leads to well planned, consistent and effective teaching and learning. The head of department and staff are knowledgeable and hard-working and their teamwork includes regular observation of each other's teaching. Detailed assessment records of students and cohorts are used to plan clear programmes of study for all.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and sociology although history was also sampled. Here standards were well above average at A-level, with 90.4 per cent gaining GCE grades A -C compared with the national figure of 73.4 per cent. This continues the trend over the last three years. AS results were above average in 2003 following disappointing results in 2002. Teaching is very good and is based on very good subject knowledge and knowledge of the exam board requirements. It is combined with high quality relationships with students and very high expectations. Learning is also very good because students develop the necessary study and independent learning skills.

Geography

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Students show very good attitudes to work and achieve very well.
- Results at A/S are above average.
- Take-up for Year 12 and retention into Year 13 is good.

Commentary

171. In 2003 GCE A/S level results were above average, both at A/B grades and A to E grades. At A-level the results were above average for A-E grades. There were no significant differences in results between male and female students or across the different ethnic groups found in the school.
172. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above average at the end of Year 12 and Year 13. Students achieve very well in relation to their GCSE grades. Male and female students achieve equally well. There is good take up of the subject in Year 12 and a good proportion of students carry on with the subject in Year 13.
173. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They also have very good knowledge of how best to prepare students for examinations. Teachers' planning and preparation for lessons are thorough and detailed. Working relationships between teachers and students are very good and teachers give good extra support where needed. Students speak warmly of the support and help they receive. Students are kept informed about their likely grades and how they can improve their work further. Data from assessments provides good information for teachers and students about the progress students are making. Students show a high level of motivation and develop good independent learning skills. The previous report stated that students did not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. This has been corrected.
174. Good use of fieldwork enhances curriculum provision and contributes to raising standards. The subject is very well managed. Comprehensive systems are in place to improve standards and to check for potential weaknesses. The recently appointed head of department is showing very good leadership in identifying priorities for development and in her leadership of a strong team of teachers. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching which is tailored to students' learning needs results in good achievement.
- Very good rapport and high expectations create a positive learning response.
- There is no head of department to monitor progress or plan for future development.
- Basic resources do not encourage wider, more independent learning.

Commentary

175. The A-level results in 2002 were above the national average with 42 per cent of students gaining A-B grades. In 2003 results were in line with the national average. All students gained a pass.
176. The level of attainment on entry to the course varies but is generally below average, based on GCSE grades. Written work shows a steady improvement in essay writing and a growing confidence in the use of terminology, due to the teachers' insistence on correct usage from the start. Very helpful marking shows the student what to do to improve. In Year 13 the work of the higher attaining students is of a very good quality. Methodology is well understood and evaluation skills are well developed because they are constantly used in lesson discussions which encourage critical thinking. The work of lower attaining students contains less evidence and they have difficulty in marshalling facts and supporting arguments. They require, and receive, extra help and support in diagnostic marking which is closely tailored to their learning needs. Although some are not well matched to the course demands, their assessed work indicates that most students will achieve a pass. Given their prior attainment, and the difficulty of this 'new' subject, achievement is good. Assessment is effective because students know what targets to aim for and these are agreed on an individual basis with the teacher. Full and helpful marking makes a significant contribution to students' achievement over time.

177. Overall teaching and learning are both satisfactory with some very good features. Where teaching is good, there is a close relationship between teacher and students which is nevertheless challenging and students respond well to the teacher's high expectations. Clear explanations and relevant examples really help the students to understand. Students work purposefully in lessons but rely quite heavily on their teachers. Where teaching is unsatisfactory students are not challenged to think for themselves with an over-reliance on text and worksheet. The poor record of attendance in lessons which are covered by supply teachers is affecting both attainment and achievement.
178. The subject makes a good contribution to the personal development of students, particularly their understanding of human behaviour and their own roles in society. Currently, limited basic resources restrict teaching styles and there is insufficient use of information technology.
179. Leadership and management are only satisfactory, because there is no head of department in post to provide vision for the future, closely monitor students' progress or adapt teaching to raise standards. Currently the department is being managed by a member of the leadership team.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art but music was sampled. Only small numbers of students take A-level music but they do well, achieving standards in 2003 which were above national averages. Analysis of students' work indicates that standards in lessons are also above the national average. Teaching in the lessons observed was good.

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in the sixth form is improving due to the quality of teaching and the range of opportunities now being made available to the students.
- The teachers have high expectations and work as an effective team, offering complementary skills that bring benefits to the students.
- The attitude of the students and their professional relationships with their teachers provide an effective learning partnership in lessons.
- The new management of the subject is having a positive and impressive effect upon student achievement.
- Strategies need to be developed to influence achievement in the higher grades of external examinations.
- Currently there is insufficient opportunity for the use of computers in art.

Commentary

180. Standards are below average in the higher grades of GCE examinations. Work seen indicates that standards are improving dramatically. Research skills are improving and students are encouraged to solve their own problems. Students are improving their knowledge and understanding of art, developing thoughtful investigations and exploration of ideas. The majority of the students are becoming confident in the use of a variety of materials and resources. The students are articulate and are capable of discussing their work with confidence, demonstrating pride in their achievements. Progress is very good and achievement is good when consideration is given to the prior attainment of some students who did not study art to GCSE level.
181. Teaching was judged to be good during the previous inspection and is now very good. The lessons are challenging and very well planned, providing all students with opportunities to

progress. Classroom organisation and management are extremely effective. The professional relationships between the teachers and the students are often excellent, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons and a positive influence on learning. Project briefs are well designed: they include clear aims and objectives, well-defined assessment criteria and deadlines for completion. Consequently all students know what is expected of them and work hard. Assessment provides students with very good advice and guidance and is a very good influence on the future development of the department. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation. The use of visiting artists and outside visits is a regular occurrence. Students learn well as a direct result of very effective teaching and the promotion of independent learning skills. Students are very complimentary about the level of support given to them by their teachers.

182. The recent appointment of a head of department has made a significant impact upon the quality of leadership and management, which is now very good. There is clear vision and very effective planning which promotes high standards in lessons. The teachers work as a very effective team. Additional opportunities for students to use computers would enhance their research and design skills. Strategies need to be developed to increase the numbers of students achieving the higher grades in external examinations.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education and economics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving in both business studies and economics because of very good teaching.
- Lessons are well planned, expectations are high and therefore achievement is good for all students.
- The attitude of the students is very good.
- The quality of management of the subject is good providing a clear vision, high expectations and a good climate for learning.
- Knowledge and understanding are limited by a lack of newspapers and periodicals available in the department.
- Further development in the use of ICT in both Business Studies and Economics would enhance student knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

183. The GCE A-level examination results in economics and business studies over the past two years have been below average in the number of students attaining the higher grades. The majority of students entered for the examinations in 2003 gained a pass. Standards of work seen during the inspection were at the national average. Considering the prior attainment of the students in their GCSE examinations, achievement is good. Course work is well organised, providing evidence of good research skills and some analytical ability when dealing with hypothetical situations in business. In all lessons there is evidence of students engaged in discussions on a range of issues, which demonstrate reasonably well-developed skills in forming and defending opinions. Students in both years, but particularly in Years 13, are generally adept in planning their own work when researching and completing assignments.

184. The quality of teaching was judged to be good on the previous inspection and is now very good. This is the key reason for improving standards. The teachers have a very good level of knowledge and understanding of the subject, fostering interest and understanding in the students. Lessons are planned carefully, often incorporating real life connections with industries and organisations. Professional relationships between the teachers and students are excellent, promoting high levels of mutual respect, understanding and enjoyment. Expectations are high

and the work is challenging, allowing students to experience the complex nature of business and economics. Students are given effective advice, preparing them for their examinations. All students have attainment targets and they are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving their targets. A number of students interviewed also had career plans and were knowledgeable and articulate when discussing their work. They fully appreciated the quality of teaching, support and guidance given to them by their teachers.

185. The management of the department is good. There is a clear vision; promotion of high expectations and the teachers are knowledgeable about the present and future development of the subject. The teachers work as a very effective team, sharing best practice and supporting each other. Schemes of work are detailed and effective. The assessment of students' work is effective and used to influence the planning of lessons. Students have a clear understanding of their progress, attainment and future expectations. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.
186. There is a lack of periodicals and relevant newspapers within the department. This makes it difficult for students to research and develop a local, national and international context for their work.

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

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