

INSPECTION REPORT

Gateacre Community Comprehensive School

Gateacre, Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104700

Headteacher: Mr Peter Barnes

Lead inspector: Val Lynch

Dates of inspection: 13th - 17th October

Inspection number: 259347

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1763
School address:	Grange Lane Gateacre Liverpool
Postcode:	L25 4SD
Telephone number:	0151 4281569
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J D Brown
Date of previous inspection:	23/3/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a large school that has grown rapidly over the last three years as it accommodated students from a nearby closing school. A high proportion of students remain at the school to study after the age of 16 years. Attainment on entry to the school is below average with few higher attainers in all year groups. Attainment of the current Year 7 is average and higher than it has been in recent years. Students who took their GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2003 were a mixture of Gateacre students and about 60 students in each year who joined the school in Years 9 or 10 from the closing school nearby. Some of these students were hard to motivate and many did not attend school. The current Year 11 is the first Year 11 for three years that is made up of nearly all students who joined the school in Year 7.

The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average. This figure is high because the school has a 25-place unit for visually impaired students. An above-average proportion of students are eligible for free school meals, reflecting the socio-economic circumstances of the area that the school now serves. The school is fully committed to inclusion and has a good understanding of the needs of different groups of pupils in its care. The school is maintaining its popularity with parents and has managed the rapid growth in recent years well. There is a small proportion of students from other ethnic backgrounds but only one student is at an early stage of learning English. The school is part of a national initiative to raise standards called Excellence in Cities. It is accredited as an Investors in People organisation and in 2000 was awarded a Schools' Curriculum Award for its links with the community. This year it has received a Healthy Schools Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
12568	Christopher Morris	Team inspector	English
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30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science Physics
10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Design and technology
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17015	Lawrence Denholm	Team inspector	Information and communications technology
23499	Howard Seymour	Team inspector	Music
15971	Mick Pye	Team inspector	Physical education
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	Business education Community links
32672	Steven Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Art and design
15485	Roger Butler	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
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32878	Steven Goldsmith	Team inspector	
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Special educational needs The work of the SEN Unit

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Gateacre is a **good** school. Students do particularly well in Years 7 to 9 and the standards they achieve are **good**. Their progress in Years 10 and 11 is slower but is still **satisfactory**. Teaching is **good**. The school is **well led** by a very experienced and respected headteacher. There is an effective and committed senior team. Most heads of department and heads of year are effective leaders in their areas. The school provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Relationships between adults and pupils are good and contribute to a very positive atmosphere around school and in lessons.
- The provision for visually impaired pupils is excellent. These pupils benefit from learning alongside sighted pupils and everyone in the school has an opportunity to appreciate that disability is not a barrier to achievement.
- Although there is much good practice in terms of teaching and learning there is not enough sharing of the good practice, particularly in assessment, and consistency in the way things are done.
- Despite this being a large school pupils and students feel safe and secure, and vulnerable pupils are well cared for.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly and too many are late in a morning.
- The music department makes an exceptional contribution to the lives of the young people in the school and to the community of Liverpool.

The school is now a much bigger school than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Over the last three years 20 per cent of students in Years 10 and 11 have joined the school from a nearby school that was closing. Standards in the closing school were very low and attendance was a serious issue. This is reflected in the GCSE results, which have declined over the same period of time. On the other hand, results at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved. There has been considerable investment in resources for ICT and all pupils now follow a GNVQ course in the subject. A number of new buildings have improved the learning environment. Staff work hard to make the best of the dilapidated main school buildings. There were no health and safety issues identified during this inspection. A start has been made on monitoring teaching and learning but more could be done to share good practice across departments. The school still does not meet the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

GCSE results in 2003 are similar to those in 2002. The current Year 11 is the first year for three years where nearly all students have been in the school since Year 7. The school predicts much better results for this year, close to the national average, if not above. Work seen in Year 11 during the inspection confirms these expectations. In Years 10 and 11, standards are satisfactory in nearly all subjects. The exceptions being English, where standards are close to what is expected, and French. Standards in both of these subjects are improving. Standards are below average in Spanish but students have only been studying the language for three years so this is to be expected.

Students achieve particularly well in art, ICT, music, religious education and in Spanish. In Years 7, 8 and 9, standards are satisfactory in all subjects with the exception of French. This indicates good achievement overall as when students join the school their overall standards are below average. All pupils achieve particularly well in English, art, design technology, history and religious education.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**. The school is a very friendly place to be. Attendance overall and punctuality at the start of school are **unsatisfactory**. The school could do more to try and improve these aspects. Behaviour is **good**, so good that visually impaired pupils can fearlessly and safely move around a complex school site. Pupils show **good** attitudes to their learning, enjoy lessons and their time in school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching is **good**. In Years 7 to 11 there are many aspects of good practice in teaching that help students to make progress. There has not been enough sharing of this good practice to help departments to learn from each other's different strengths and so make teaching even better. A good example of this is in the way teachers assess students' work. The school is a very caring school with good procedures for ensuring that students develop both personally and academically. The school has very good sense of working with the local community but has not developed its partnership with parents to the same extent. Communications with parents are infrequent and so they are not well informed about the work of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The governing body has many strengths but overall their work is **unsatisfactory** because they do not meet some key statutory requirements. The school has come through a period of rapid growth and change. Knowledgeable and committed governors and a very experienced and principled headteacher have led these changes successfully. Because of these changes the pace of some other developments has slowed. However, over the last two years the senior management team has been strengthened. The school is now more settled and there is a commitment and a momentum building that will enable the school to catch up with some of these developments. The school runs exceptionally smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both parents and students are very happy with what the school provides. Most students think it is a good school where they are expected to work hard. Parents appreciate how the school helps their children settle in when they start in Year 7. Parents are rightly concerned about homework and neither they nor students know what is expected. Students know that there is some bullying in the school but they are very confident that the school deals with such situations well. They know that a few students misbehave but this does not usually affect the work of others.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality with students, staff and parents.
- Ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning, particularly in assessment, is shared and consistently implemented across the school

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide an annual report to parents and follow the new requirements in relation to the annual parents' meeting.
- Provide for a daily act of collective worship.
- Provide for citizenship education in line with national requirements.

THE SIXTH FORM AT GATEACRE SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form at Gateacre is **very good**. Students who follow a two-year advanced course do particularly well and reach **above average** standards. Their progress in Year 12 is slower but once students are on courses they wish to specialise in they achieve well. Teaching and learning are **very good**. The sixth form is **well led** by a new head of sixth form supported by a previous head of sixth form who is now an assistant headteacher. The provision in the sixth form provides **good** value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement by the end of Year 13 is very good in English, design and technology, music, religious education, sociology and ICT.
- Teachers and students work well together so that students always know what they have learnt and what they need to do to improve.
- During their time in the sixth form students become increasingly mature and responsible young citizens.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all students and includes both academic and vocational courses in liaison with other post 16 providers in the city.
- Too many students miss some lessons and are late for school in a morning.

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	English is a very popular subject in the sixth form. In 2002 A level results were very good and show a marked improvement in standards. Good teaching and support for students enables them to make a successful transition from GCSE to AS level courses. Throughout the two years students develop independence in their thinking and are able to formulate and justify their original opinions.
Mathematics	Mathematics results at A level and standards of current students' work are below average although students' have achieved as expected on the basis of their GCSE results. Students work hard in lessons but show little enthusiasm for the subject because until recently teaching has been satisfactory but not dynamic enough.
Science	Standards of attainment in A-level physics are average and student numbers are being sustained. Teaching is good overall, characterised by good subject knowledge and good working relationships with the students. Students enjoy the subject although they have few opportunities for independent learning and for using computers to support their learning
Information and communication technology	ICT is popular and students achieve well , many gaining the higher grades at A level. Teaching is consistently good and enables students to become effective independent learners. Innovative tasks and clear guidance help students to improve their work.
Humanities	Examination results in sociology 2002 were above average and improved further in 2003. Students' achievement is very good because teaching is very good . Teachers have high expectations and lessons are challenging. Teachers collaborate well to give students a rich and varied learning experience.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Results in A-level design and technology are excellent . Students display very positive attitudes and they respond very well to the very good teaching. Standards in drawing and presentation are very high.

Visual and performing arts and media Students achieve **well in art**. They have positive, and mature attitudes and good independent learning skills. Teaching is **good** and is enhanced by visits to art galleries. Computers are not used as extensively as they should be.

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

Teachers give very good support and guidance to students. Teachers regularly assess students' work and share the outcomes so that student and teacher plan together and secure future improvement. Tutors monitor students' overall progress carefully. Students feel part of the life and work of the school and recognise that the school values their views. Teachers and form tutors help students identify and prepare for their future careers so that the students feel excited and confident. Support for students proceeding to university is particularly strong. Students are proud of their school and pleased with their decision to enter the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is well led with a clear sense of direction provided by a senior manager. This means that staff and students share a common understanding of life in the sixth form and a determination to be successful. Students make a particularly strong contribution to the ethos of the school and the care of younger pupils. Peer mentoring and co-counselling are well established and supported by skilled training. Regular student reviews and improving procedures, such as in assessment, ensure that the sixth form results are impressive and above average. Students perform better than might be expected from their GCSE grades and become increasingly mature and confident young people.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students unanimously like the sixth form. They recognise particularly that their teachers teach very successful lessons. They appreciate the accessibility of teachers and value the help they get with their studies. They praise the respect shown to them by teachers. The criticisms expressed in questionnaires about careers advice were not upheld in discussions with students. Some say they do not have an adult who knows them well. Year 12 students are still in their infancy in the sixth form and Year 13 students miss their previous head of sixth. Tutors are sensitive to students' needs but have insufficient time with them to build meaningful relationships quickly.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good** in Years 7 –to 9 and standards overall are **average**. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is **satisfactory**. Although GCSE results up to now have been **below average**, the standard of work seen is better and is judged to be **average**. In the sixth form achievement is **good** and standards are **above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' test results are better than expected on the basis of their attainment when they joined the school.
- Standards in English are particularly good throughout the school.
- GCSE results are not good enough but the work seen in the current Year 11 suggest that next year's results will be a lot better.
- Students who join the sixth form have not always got the highest results in their GCSE examinations. Most work hard and achieve results that are better than expected.

Commentary

Main School

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.3 (35.7)	33.3 (33)
mathematics	32.1 (34.1)	34.7 (34.4)
science	33.1 (30.1)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 307 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Overall results in tests at the end of Year 9 were slightly above average in 2002 and well above results in similar schools. This reflects good achievement as when these students joined the school their attainment was below average. Over the last four years until 2002 results have steadily improved. Results in 2003 are not quite as good but reflect the lower attainment on entry to the school of that year compared to the previous year. Despite the fall in English results in 2003 students achieve well. In mathematics and science achievement is satisfactory. Boys do particularly well in English. Girls' results are better than boys in mathematics and science. In 2003, in English, mathematics, science and ICT the school exceeded its targets.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	32.2 (33.4)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	81.8 (83.3)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	88 (88.3)	96 (97)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.0 (31.4)	39.8 (39)

There were 286 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. GCSE results are well below average and have declined over the last three years. However, they are as good as results in similar schools. Over this period the school took approximately 400 students into Years 9, 10 and 11 from a closing school nearby. This school had a history of low achievement and poor attendance. Students who had been at Gateacre since Year 7 achieved as expected on the basis of their test results at the end of Year 9. Results in 2003 are similar to those in 2002 but are slightly below the school's target.
3. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are good in design technology. They are satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of French where standards are not yet high enough but are improving. Students achieve well in English, art, design technology, history and religious education. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects. This is a real strength of the school. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are good in design technology and ICT. They are satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of English, French and Spanish. In English and French standards are improving. In Spanish standards are below average because students have been studying Spanish for only three years. Students achieve well in art, design technology, ICT, Spanish, religious education, sociology and music. As in Years 7 to 9 there are no subjects where achievement is unsatisfactory. The work seen in Year 11 was better than was seen in Year 10, reflecting the differences in the standards achieved when they were in Year 9.
4. Boys and girls reach similar standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. This represents good achievement by boys as nationally girls do much better than boys. Students with special educational needs do well. They make good progress in lessons, in small groups and in individual sessions. Students who are visually impaired also achieve well. Their strengths and talents are recognised and built upon.
5. Students' standards in literacy are sufficient to support their learning in other subjects but they could be higher. The school has been slow to implement the national literacy strategy. Numeracy skills are satisfactory but no specific training has been given nor an audit completed to ensure that students reach the highest level of skill. Students' ICT skills are satisfactory and could be better used to support learning across the curriculum if more teachers made better use of computers in lessons other than ICT.

The sixth form

6. Examination results in 2002 were average and improved in 2003. These results reflect good achievement as school data indicates that attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. A-level results are better than AS level results because students seem to do well when they focus on the subjects in which they want to specialise. Results were particularly good in 2002 in English language, English literature, design and technology, chemistry and geography. Girls did better than boys in 2002 at both A2 and AS level and on the Vocational Certificate in Education course in IT. Standards of work seen are very good in art, design and technology and ICT and good in English, physics and sociology. The standards of work seen in mathematics are unsatisfactory. In nearly all these subjects inspected in detail, with the exception of mathematics, achievement is at least good and very good in design and technology and sociology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Most students have **good** attitudes to school and to learning in spite of attendance and punctuality being **unsatisfactory**. Behaviour is **good** as are relationships. Provision for students' personal development is consistently **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a very caring approach and is concerned for students' personal development as well as their academic achievements.
- The school works hard to eliminate anti-social and racist behaviour enabling the whole school community to learn in an harmonious and friendly environment.

- Students with special educational needs, particularly the visually impaired, are included in everything, with sensitivity and support.
- The mechanisms for monitoring attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and management of students in the main school do not promote enough independence and readiness to show initiative

Commentary

Main school

7. The school is a secure, caring community where students behave well both in lessons and around the school. There are relatively few exclusions and the school does all it can to make sure that students continue in education despite their difficulties.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1596	100	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	12	1	0
Chinese	11	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	113	6	0

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

8. Students are spontaneously pleasant and courteous. They respond positively in lessons, though independent learning and initiative could be more actively promoted. Caring and supportive relationships between staff and students and amongst the students themselves, are a distinctive feature of the school. This is strikingly evident in the way visually impaired students are embraced and enabled to work happily and successfully. Instances of bullying as they occur are dealt with effectively and appropriate agencies contribute to issues of welfare as required
9. The school's aim to foster spiritual values becomes a reality through thoughtful assemblies, enlightened religious education teaching and sensitive examples of creativity in art and music.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities including visits and educational exchanges, offer ample opportunities for cultural enrichment. This is much in evidence in the work of the music department, through performances in the city, Saturday workshops and joint projects with Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts.

10. Students develop a sense of social responsibility, underpinned by moral values. They engage in charity work and older students support younger ones as mentors. Students are considered and listened to and are inducted into democratic processes through the school council and year group committees. Year 7 students have been involved in clearing up the vicinity of the school.
11. Attendance is unsatisfactory and the school could do more to promote good attendance. Data is not used to promote attendance with particular groups or years and the first day contact officer has other work that takes her away from making such contacts. Punctuality at the start of the day is also unsatisfactory. Punctuality to lessons is better.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.4	School data :	2.8
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

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

Sixth form

12. Sixth form students are leading members of the school community. They have a strong sense of loyalty towards it and appreciate the high quality of education they receive. Attitudes to work and behaviour are very good in most instances. Students show an awareness of the needs of others through working for charity and supporting younger students by hearing them read or acting as mentors. Through sixth form committees they achieve a degree of independence in managing their own affairs and react responsibly to being treated as young adults. Attendance is an area of weakness as is punctuality in the morning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 167 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3(2%)	39 (23%)	71(43%)	45(27%)	8(5%)	1(0%)	0(0%)

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

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is **good** and students learn well. In the sixth form teaching is **very good** and students achieve very well. The assessment of students' work is **satisfactory** but is inconsistent across subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers relate well to most students and give them confidence to learn in an atmosphere of respect and trust.
- All elements of good teaching are represented in the school although none of these are consistent features across departments.

- Teaching in lessons and tasks set for homework do not consistently offer sufficient challenge for all students
- Learning support assistants and learning support teachers make a good contribution to students' learning.
- Assessment of students' work is inconsistent across subjects so students are not always clear about how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- In the sixth form teachers very effectively develop students ability to think for themselves and work independently.

Commentary

Main school

13. Working relationships between teachers and most students are good and create a positive classroom atmosphere in which effective learning can take place. Teachers know their students well and continually encourage and praise them so they have the confidence to answer questions and contribute to group discussions.
14. In most subjects teaching is good so students make good progress and achieve well. Each department has different teaching strengths. The monitoring of teaching in subjects is at an early stage of development and is not yet sufficiently consistent for good practice to be identified and shared so that learning can be improved further. A good example of this is in mathematics. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching yet within the department is some of the best practice. In the main school examples of the best practice are seen in sociology and in the vocational curriculum where teaching is very good.
15. In the best lessons, for example in English, questioning is very well targeted to extend and challenge all students and a good variety and balance of teaching methods ensure both boys and girls of all abilities learn effectively. However, in some subjects, where classes contain students with a wide range of ability, the same tasks are set for all students and do not present sufficient challenge to extend their knowledge and skills.
16. Homework does not always extend learning. Students find it hard to organise homework and parents do not know when to check it as the school does not have a homework timetable. When it is set, tasks set are not demanding enough. One of the reasons for this is that homework is not systematically planned into schemes of work.
17. Teaching of the visually impaired pupils is good. Support staff make a considerable contribution to students' learning, especially the Braille communicators. They work closely with teachers before and during lessons. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good both in lessons and in withdrawal groups. Individual education plans contain clear targets that are used well by support staff and some teachers. However, the practice is inconsistent. Because of considerable demands on the time of small number of support staff there is very little time for feedback to teachers or for joint planning of lessons.
18. The quality of assessment of students' work varies between subjects but there are examples of good practice in design technology, business education, English and sociology. For example, in design technology, assessment is systematic and detailed with students' progress being carefully tracked from Year 7 to Year 11. However, in other subjects students are not clear about how to improve their work because teachers give then insufficient feedback. The results of assessments are not yet used to plan future learning.

The sixth form

19. Overall the quality of teaching is very good. It is good or very good in all subjects except mathematics where it is satisfactory. Most students make very good progress and achieve very well. Teaching methods are varied and lessons are conducted at a good pace that leads

to a high level of interest from most students. Activities and demands are well matched to students' needs. Teachers relate very well to students and encourage them to think for themselves and work independently. In most subjects marking is thorough and diagnostic so students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

The curriculum

The school provides a **satisfactory** curriculum, which is enriched by a **good** programme of extra-curricular activities. The school is **well staffed** and has a **satisfactory** level of accommodation and resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is strongly committed to providing equal opportunities for all students.
- Provision for students with visual impairments is very good.
- The school meets statutory requirements in all subjects except citizenship.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.
- Good provision of extra-curricular activities enhances learning, especially in art, drama, music and physical education.

Commentary

20. The school places strong emphasis on meeting the needs of all students. This is shown by its good provision for students with special educational needs, and very good provision for the visually impaired. Spanish has been introduced this term for all students in Years 8 and 9, in addition to French. The national strategy for teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 is being implemented successfully. Citizenship has been introduced, but its delivery through other subjects is not monitored to ensure that requirements are met.
21. The governing body supports curriculum development and has responded well to issues raised at the previous inspection. The length of the school day has been extended, and the provision of dance and drama enriches students' experience. In Years 10 and 11, lower attaining students can follow an alternative course, combining core subjects with vocational opportunities provided outside of school. Vocational GCSE courses have been added, and all students take a GNVQ in ICT. Although this level of innovation suggests a good ongoing curriculum review, there is a weakness in that governors do not formally evaluate the effects.
22. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. The schemes of work cover requirements, and good resources are provided, including input from visiting speakers. However, insufficient time is allocated to teach the subject effectively. There is no monitoring to ensure the quality of delivery by form tutors, and some teaching is unsatisfactory. Careers guidance is part of the personal, social and health education programme but is not effectively monitored to ensure that every student has a high quality experience. External providers, such as the Connexions careers guidance service, contribute significantly through providing careers advice and mock interviews.
23. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. The school complies with the new code of practice, and all statements and reviews are up to date. In Years 10 and 11, some of these students benefit from the alternative vocational course. Students with visual impairments enjoy full access to all the opportunities available. The good number of support staff and the range of specialist resources ensure that they benefit from these opportunities.
24. The range of extra-curricular activities is good, especially in sport, where sponsorship enables the school to attract skilled coaches. Many subjects run clubs and revision classes, as well as a range of visits and exchanges. Participation levels are good. The music and drama departments produce a wide range of performances, which involve large numbers of students.

25. There is a good match of specialist teachers to the demands of the curriculum. Work is enhanced by the quality of support staff, although the number of learning support assistants is not sufficient for the large number of students with special educational needs. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, but only because of the tremendous efforts of the school to make the best of what it has. The large learning resources base, including a careers library, provides a good facility for students. There is a shortage of areas where whole classes can use computers, and the curriculum in physical education is limited by the lack of good quality indoor facilities.

Sixth form

26. The sixth form curriculum is good. A wide range of AS and A2 GCE courses is offered. Where groups are too small, links with Liverpool Community College provide access to further courses, for example in modern languages. Where possible, the school responds to students' needs and demands.
27. Work experience is compulsory in some courses, and is available on request to all students. Good quality accommodation and resources have a positive effect on students' learning. The sixth form block provides good social and academic facilities for sixth formers, with ample access to computers. In most subjects, sixth formers benefit from additional activities to enrich their educational experience. These opportunities include participation in Young Enterprise schemes, gallery visits in art, and visits in science and drama. However, the school's policy of one day out per subject limits what is possible.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is committed to doing all it can for all students. The good support and advice that students receive, particularly in the sixth form, help many of them achieve results much higher than could have been predicted from their prior attainment.
- The care offered to children with visual impairment or other particular difficulties is excellent, as is the level of consideration with which they are treated by fellow students.
- There are excellent child protection procedures and safe havens for the most vulnerable students.
- Induction arrangements for students joining Years 7 and 12 are very good and help students to settle quickly.
- There is inadequate time for students to spend with their tutors, nor is it well used.

Commentary

Main school

28. The school is a very safe and secure place. A very conscientious site manager ensures that the accommodation is safe and that the school's health and safety policy is implemented. There are good procedures for responding to day-to-day issues raised by staff. Proper risk assessments are carried out for all hazardous activities. Since the previous inspection, the security of the site has been substantially improved with gates, fences and access control. There are well-established child protection procedures and sensitive help for children in need.
29. There is poor access to many of the buildings, with stairways and corridors too narrow for the traffic they have to bear. This can cause problems of congestion but students' behaviour on the site is so good that no serious problems occur. Many parts of the school are inaccessible to pupils or carers using wheelchairs.

30. Good relationships at all levels reflect the school's caring ethos and individual problems are handled with sensitivity and care. The procedures for the care of pupils with visual impairment or other special educational needs are particularly good. The school's good partnerships with a range of outside agencies help the care arrangements to function well.
31. In most cases students have easy access to well-informed support, advice and guidance. Heads of year and form tutors remain with students throughout their five years in school. Not all pupils claim that they have an adult they can trust who is concerned about them. This may be linked to a shortage of time spent with tutors and its sometimes unsatisfactory use. There is no systematic monitoring of what happens in tutor time. Students are involved in setting and reviewing personal targets, in sessions with their form tutor. At its best, this system is very effective but not all form tutors are yet fully committed to the process.
32. Systematic procedures are being implemented which will ensure that teachers use assessment information to track their students' progress and personal development. Very good induction arrangements, both for Year 7 and Year 12 students are much appreciated by parents. Good links with other schools and colleges, and with the local higher education sector ensure that students receive clear and impartial advice on their options for further and higher education.
33. The school council is very active, and well supported by senior management. It enables pupils to feel valued as young people and the school has already taken up many of their suggestions and concerns. A small minority of teachers are authoritarian or even aggressive in dealing with students and do not give them the space for their views to be heard or even expressed. These occasions are rare but are significant for some students.

The sixth form

34. Students appreciate the very good induction arrangements for entry to the sixth form. Students feel well supported by both their teachers and tutors. Good links with the local higher education sector ensure that students receive clear and impartial advice on their options for higher education. The involvement of sixth form students in the school is very good and their views are respected.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with the local community and **good** links with other schools and colleges. It has an **unsatisfactory** partnership with its parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with feeder primary schools mean that students settle quickly and parents are therefore happy with the positive start in Year 7.
- The school is committed to working with parents and works very well with the parents of students who experience particular difficulties. Communication with other parents is not good enough.
- The school is very sensitive to its place in the neighbourhood and fosters very good community links.
- Good links with local schools and colleges support students' curriculum choices and career decisions.

Commentary

Main school

35. The school makes very good arrangements for students transferring from primary education. New students have, over a two-year period, visited the school many times, met and worked with staff and sampled some of the facilities and lessons. Students and their parents confidently approach secondary education and absorb the school's expectations quickly and

easily. Some subject staff, such as in music, work closely with their counterparts in primary schools but many subjects do not have sufficiently robust links. Students sometimes repeat work already covered in primary school.

36. Teachers offer very good encouragement and support to the parents of students who need extra help with their lessons or behaviour. They devote considerable time and energy to including these parents in their child's education. The school fails to promote the involvement of all parents as rigorously. Parents and students criticise the school's informal approach to homework and regret the absence of a homework timetable. Parents do not get sufficient information about the work of the school and the progress of their individual children. Some subject reports give good detail about individual performance and guidance for improvement. This is, however, not consistent enough to ensure that all parents know exactly how their children are getting on at school. Governors do not provide an annual report for parents or organise an annual parents' meeting.
37. The school has many well-established links with the community and other outside agencies. Many students benefit from these links. The school helps students improve their motivation and confidence by arranging community projects with a local theatre and football club. It ensures that neighbours are involved in consultation about site development and responds constructively to concerns expressed.
38. The school nurtures good links with local colleges so that students can study courses not available at the school. Year 10 and 11 students experiencing difficulty in school enjoy practical courses such as hairdressing. Students subsequently approach their working life with increased confidence and a greater sense of responsibility.

Sixth form

39. Sixth form students profit from particularly close links with the three universities in Liverpool and some students are therefore the first in their families to attend university.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Leadership is **good**, particularly from the headteacher and the senior team. Management is **good** and the school functions well on a day-to-day basis. Although the governing body has many strengths governance is **unsatisfactory** because a number of statutory requirements are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the school provided by the headteacher is very good and he is well supported by a strong senior management team.
- Management in the school is good at all levels, but there are inconsistencies of practice, particularly at the level of heads of year and heads of department, that need to be addressed.
- The governing body is supportive of the school and does hold it to account, particularly through its committees. However, the governing body fails to ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements.

Commentary

Main school

40. Governors have supported the headteacher and staff well during a difficult period. They are loyal and positive about the school and have developed their role. They are very effective in their financial oversight of the school and in their involvement with building works and contractual matters. The governing body has taken some brave but necessary decisions in recent times. However, governors have not ensured that the school fulfils all its statutory duties in relation to the annual report and meeting for parents. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Governors understand the principles of best value but

as yet do not fully use them to underpin their work. Budget decisions are made prudently after careful consideration but systematic evaluation of the impact of spending decisions is an area that is underdeveloped as is consultation with parents.

41. The headteacher provides very good leadership of the school community. He has a vision for the school that emphasises both raising students' achievement, and thereby their life chances, and also enhancing their personal qualities. The senior management team is relatively new. Its diverse strengths are already very evident. Some important recent initiatives are likely to produce significant beneficial effects on students' achievements in the future. However, although consultation is important, in some cases it slows down the speed with which these initiatives are implemented.
42. The school improvement plan identifies the right key areas for development but it is a one-year plan. It is not therefore clear how improvements will be carried out over a number of years. Success criteria are often related to completing a task rather than achieving improvement. Departmental development plans support whole school's priorities although they are not yet costed.
43. The quality of leadership and management in subject departments is generally good, particularly in business studies, religious education, and sociology. In some departments newly appointed subject leaders have made a promising start but have been in post for too little time for their effectiveness to be conclusively judged. Whilst they are strong leaders in their subjects some are reluctant to accept that a whole-school way of doing things and consistency are important.
44. The quality of management has improved over the last two years and is now good although there is much still to do. Performance management of staff is satisfactory but it has not yet ensured consistency of practice in important aspects of practice. The school collects much useful data but does not make the most of it to bring about school improvement. Heads of department have not all been inducted into the significance and use of data.
45. New staff undertake an effective induction programme at the school. The school has been successful in recruiting and retaining high quality staff at all levels. Support staff are deployed effectively to support students with special educational needs and the visually impaired students. Professional development was a casualty of the unexpected shortfall in budget this year but generally it is well organised and effective.

The Sixth form

46. The leadership of the sixth form is good. A newly appointed head of sixth form is very well supported by an assistant headteacher who was formerly the head of the sixth form. The headteacher has taken a lead, in collaboration with other local schools, to formulate an innovatory plan to enhance provision in this area of the city in the future.
47. The day-to-day organisation and the overall management of the sixth form are good. Arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the school's provision with a focus on improving standards and staying on rates. An assistant headteacher is particularly alert to opportunities to access external funds, and to work flexibly with partner institutions, both of which are benefiting students greatly and enhancing the educational opportunities of some.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	6,040,754
Total expenditure	6,229,346
Expenditure per pupil	3,558

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	418,968
Balance carried forward to the next	230,376

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The unit for visually impaired students.

The provision for visual impaired students is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well informed and dedicated leadership gives each student every opportunity to succeed.
- Standards are good and students are doing very well because of the way all members of the school community welcome and include them in all that happens.
- There is very good practice in assessing students and monitoring the progress of their schoolwork and personal development.
- Good teaching and very good support staff, especially the Braille communicators working with the educationally blind, make an excellent contribution to students' learning.
- Students are very keen and enthusiastic about learning and frequently relish new challenges.
- There are very good links with parents and lots of opportunities for them to be involved in their child's learning.
- Teachers sometimes do not use methods best suited to teaching students with visual impairment.

Commentary

48. The school is funded and staffed to provide a 25-place unit for students with visual impairment. Staff support students in a range of ways to make sure that they benefit very well from all the opportunities available at the school.
49. Standards are good for all students at all stages in their school career. In the sixth form they are very good. All students attached to the unit know they have the same opportunities as all other students. The considerable benefit these students have from learning alongside sighted students gives everyone in the school the opportunity to appreciate that disability is not a barrier to achievement. Students get very good support especially when considering career pathways. Older students have challenging but realistic aims for their continuing education and benefit from very good role models that have recently left the school for higher education.
50. Teaching is good. Each student's education plan sets realistic targets for learning and personal development. Targets are used very well to measure and monitor progress. Teachers are kept up to date about students' welfare and different ways that could be tried to help them learn. In art the use of tactile materials helps students develop an understanding of shape and form. In English a teacher's skill at reading poetry and the use of Braille text meant the student developed a very good understanding of the poem and makes very good progress. Occasionally teachers do not use the best techniques when using the projector and questioning can under value the contribution made by a visually impaired student. Support is very good and well managed especially when demand is at its highest. Teachers and support staff work very well together especially with Braille materials for students registered as blind.

51. Students respond very well to the high expectations set for their work and behaviour. They relate very well to adults and other students setting very good examples, of confidence and self-esteem, respected by their peers and the school as a whole. Through regular assessments, progress is carefully monitored. Key strengths are picked up and nurtured so the students have every opportunity to achieve well, in subjects and in the broader curriculum. This was breathtakingly demonstrated at the trampoline club. An educationally blind student, with a talent for gymnastics, independently performed a range of manoeuvres including a front drop.
52. The clear procedures for contacting parents keep them well informed about their child's progress. Visually impaired students feel very safe in the school and get around the site with little difficulty receiving care and consideration from other students.
53. Leadership is dedicated to providing each student with every chance to succeed well and to keeping all staff informed about students' needs and how they can be best met. The unit staff are involved in initial teacher training and the school's staff are given frequent opportunities to review their practice to meet the wide range of students' needs. The management of the provision is very good because of the commitment by the school and key staff in fulfilling the vision they have for these students. There has been a good improvement in the provision since the last inspection.

Example of outstanding practice
<i>Visually impaired students do amazingly well in a mainstream school because staff give them confidence and maximum opportunities to join in everything the school has to offer.</i>
<i>The infectious confidence these students have spreads to other students. Everyone knows disability is not a barrier to going forward and getting the best out of school. Support for them from staff and students' is tremendous. When the Braille communicators are working in lessons, nobody minds the noise. When a student wants to trampoline, nobody panics. When talents are spotted, they are encouraged, some to European level. A student, brilliant at music, is back, with his dog, helping others before he goes to university. Teachers are good at keeping the students learning and giving them the confidence to do very well. Sympathy and care are balanced against encouragement and guidance. Parents are part of the team and can't speak highly enough about the school and how well their children get on. It was a brilliant piece of foresight by the governors and the headteacher to agree to have this unit at the school. They continue to give every support to the brilliantly talented team leader.</i>

The school's work with the community

The provision for community links is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very sensitive to how its actions and the actions of students might affect the local community.
 - Teachers who work with the most vulnerable students make very good use of community based projects to add to what they themselves can provide.
 - The music department is recognised in the wider Liverpool community for its high standards of performance.
 - Although there are some well established links within subjects they could be developed further.
 - Adult classes in an evening are very popular but there are not enough opportunities for adults and student to learn together.
54. The school has experienced a period of rapid growth that has increased student numbers and extended its accommodation. During this period of expansion the school worked hard to inform and consult residents who live in the neighbourhood of the school. Many students walk to school past senior citizen's bungalows. Problems are very rare but if there are any the school responds immediately and at the highest level. Because of this approach the school and its community live easily alongside each other.

55. The school has recently extended its team of learning mentors through being part of "Excellence in Cities". These mentors provide very good support to students at risk of being excluded from school or who need additional help to maintain their motivation to attend. Members of the team have a wealth of experience and knowledge about facilities that are available in the community to support young people and make good use of these. Through their contacts students have access to adults with specific skills in counselling and working with young people so as to build their self-esteem and confidence. This work is already having an effect in reducing the numbers of pupils being excluded from school.
56. Many teachers take opportunities to involve students in activities that take them outside of school. The design and technology department has a very long-established link with a local car manufacturer. The ICT department has good links in order that students can fulfil the requirement to complete a real world project as part of their sixth form studies. The drama department uses the Valley Theatre, housed on the site of the school that closed. This provides good opportunities for the Netherley community to experience live theatre in their locality. In the main departmental links are underdeveloped.
57. The exception to underdeveloped departmental links is the music department. The school's orchestras and bands are recognised for their high quality of performance and have played in commercial and business settings by request. The jazz band has played in local halls, schools and stores. The choir has sung in local theatres and has been used in television programmes. Local music groups use the excellent new recording studio. In order to extend students' musical experiences the department has very good links with a local university and the Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts.
58. The school is a local authority neighbourhood learning centre and classes run two days a week and are very popular. Currently there are no students from the school participating in these classes although they are welcome to if they wish. There are also no adults taking advantage of GCSE and A level classes during the day. This is a pity as much can be gained from adults and students learning together.

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

- Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and standards are average. By Year 11 although standards have improved on previous years they are still below average.
- The consistently good quality of teaching throughout the department results in improved standards.
- Care is taken to provide equally for the needs of all students, and very good relationships between teachers and students are a feature of all lessons.
- Students do not structure and organise their extended writing well and so find it difficult to achieve higher grades in their GCSE examinations.
- Good leadership and management of the department have ensured good morale and a strong commitment to the subject.

Commentary

59. Overall attainment is satisfactory. In 2002 results in national tests at Year 9 were slightly above average and well above average when compared with similar schools. Both boys and girls did equally well. Unconfirmed results for 2003 are lower than in 2002. However, work seen during the inspection was better and close to the expected standard. This reflects good achievement by all pupils. In 2002, GCSE results for English language and literature were well below average. There was an improvement in language results in 2003 but they were still below average. Attainment was better for pupils who had been at the school since Year 7. Work seen during the inspection indicates a further improvement, although it is still below average. Achievement is satisfactory.
60. Achievement in speaking and listening is good for students of all abilities. Most students contribute confidently to discussions and listen well to the views of others. Nearly all students enjoy reading. In writing, at the start of Year 7 a higher than average proportion of students experience difficulty with spelling and punctuation but they make good progress in these areas by Year 9. Throughout the school students learn to write in a growing number of styles for a range of purposes, and by the end of Year 11 high attaining students have good control of tone and register. Many students experience difficulty in structuring and organising extended writing coherently which limits their achievement in their GCSE examinations.
61. The quality of the teaching of English is good throughout the school. Teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and put their knowledge to very good use in questioning and oral work. Careful targeting of questions and allocation of time allow the needs of students of very different abilities to be met and students therefore gain the confidence to attempt difficult work. Lessons are well structured with a very good range and balance of activities. There is a genuine attempt to engage and interest students. A very low attaining class reading 'Digging' by Seamus Heaney benefited greatly when the teacher used an actual spade to demonstrate the meaning of specific words. Homework is often set at the start of lessons so that students are alert to the relevance of particular lesson content. Occasionally there is a slackening of pace in the middle of lessons and some momentum is lost. All of the above positive features are made more effective because they occur in the context of very good relationships between teachers and students. This has also helped to

engender very good attitudes to English by students who are enthusiastic in lessons and work well together.

62. There is good leadership and management of the department. The head of English has strong views of the importance of English and its place in the curriculum. He has an enthusiastic team of teachers who bring a consistent approach to the teaching of the subject. They share a very noticeable commitment to all students that is reflected in the careful provision for visually impaired students. Since the last inspection, achievement in Years 7 to 9 has improved as has the attitudes of students to their work. There is now more effective provision for low attaining students and students with special educational needs.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Standards of literacy are sufficient to support learning across the curriculum. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory and there are instances of particularly good practice but they are not consistent across subjects. Key words are prominently displayed and effectively emphasised in many subjects and there is good use of writing frames in geography. Students write poetry to aid reflection in religious education. The provision for literacy was hindered by a slow start to the introduction of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy¹. There has been a real improvement since the appointment of a new literacy co-ordinator earlier this year. An audit of writing in all subjects has been carried out and appropriate priorities for future training have been identified.

Modern Foreign Languages

Provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results have declined since the previous inspection but are now beginning to improve.
- Some good and very good teaching enthuses students and ensures good progress in learning. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not always as good as this.
- The introduction of Spanish is improving students' attitudes. Students achieve well in Spanish in Years 10 and 11.
- New leadership of a committed team of teachers provides clear direction for raising standards.
- Assessment procedures for students in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

64. At the end of Year 9, standards in French are below expectations. Most students develop adequate listening, writing and reading skills. Oral exchanges tend to be brief. Teaching materials are well matched to group needs, which enables nearly all students, including those with special educational needs, to achieve as well as could be expected. Spanish has been introduced recently as the first language for half of Year 7, and for all students in Years 8 and 9 as a second language. Students are enjoying the subject and making satisfactory early progress.
65. GCSE results have declined in recent years, largely because of the impact of absorbing students from a closing school. There was a sharp improvement in 2003 in French, although standards remain below average. Inspection evidence shows that standards are below average but improving, in both French and Spanish. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in French and good in Spanish. Writing skills improve considerably, as students respond to examination requirements. Speaking remains the weakest skill, with little evidence of spontaneity or independent use of language. The low uptake for modern languages in Years 10 to 13 is a concern for the school, and indicates less positive attitudes than reported at the previous inspection.

¹ The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils on Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects.

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there is too much inconsistency. Very good teaching, especially in Spanish, features clear objectives, and pace in activities well planned to provide opportunities for students to manipulate language for themselves. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers use the foreign language less, have low expectations, and fail to manage some poor behaviour, so that too little learning takes place. Although students receive good feedback on their progress in lessons, most aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory. This includes consistency in the use of helpful comments in marking, and the quality of reports to parents. The range of homework tasks is limited, with opportunities lost to extend the most able.
67. The new head of department has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses, and provides clear direction on how the subject should be taught. An experienced team of teachers offers willing support, for example by providing lunchtime clubs for German, Greek and Italian. Schemes of work are being amended to respond to national strategies. Currently there are few opportunities for lesson observation, so that good practice is insufficiently shared. Slowness to act on weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, such as assessment and the use of ICT to assist learning, means that improvement has been unsatisfactory. However, there is strong evidence that current management is beginning to improve attitudes and standards.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 11 have improved and are now average.
- Year 9 students achieve consistently well.
- Teaching is often very good and occasionally outstanding, but too much teaching is not good enough.
- The best practice in teaching is not shared amongst teachers.
- Assessment, overall, including target setting, is not developed enough to track all students' potential and progress effectively.

Commentary

68. In 2002, results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were average. This was good achievement compared to their standards on entry in Year 7. Students did very well compared to students in similar schools. In 2003, test results were much the same. Students who are visually impaired achieved well. All students in the current Year 9 are also doing well. Students with special educational needs were very impressively working at only marginally below average standards on the topic of probability.
69. In 2002, GCSE results were below average. In 2003, results were broadly the same representing satisfactory achievement from below average standards on entry and the standards achieved in Year 9. Students in Year 11 are working at expected standards that promise well for future results. This shows satisfactory progress from Year 9, and slightly better progress from when they joined the school. The most able students in Year 11 have made good progress. They attained higher grades in GCSE at the end of Year 10 and are now achieving well in the early stages of advanced mathematics. Students who are visually impaired make good or very good progress.
70. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory. Often it is very imaginative and occasionally excellent. Teachers usually have good relationships with students. In one lesson with less able students in Year 8, relationships were excellent. The teacher gave students responsibility by genuinely asking if they were ready for an exercise on place value. They responded by proving they could work at a very challenging level. However, students are rarely involved in self-assessment. In the best lessons, teachers sharing share objectives with the class and aim

sharp questions at particular students. They ensure that all students are set tasks that allow them to work at a fast pace, in line with the ideals of the National Numeracy Strategy. Wisely, the leadership ensures that trainee teachers observe many of these excellent lessons.

71. In some lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. In one lesson with some of the most able students in Year 7, time was wasted because the teacher spent far too long criticising students for the quality and lack of care with homework. Some teachers do not work hard enough to plan activities with clear learning objectives for students or think about seating arrangements to help promote good behaviour and attitude. In such lessons, students lose interest and their learning and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Homework, overall, is rarely imaginative.
72. Leadership and management, overall, are broadly satisfactory. The head of department has ensured that the best teachers are matched with classes that can improve results in Year 9 and 11 significantly. However, the very good practice seen in many lessons is not shared amongst all teachers and there is too much inconsistency in teaching quality. Whilst teachers usually judge accurately whether to move students on in lessons, there is no overall assessment policy that tracks students throughout their school lives. This means that the weaker teachers do not set some students targets that are high enough. Line management has not ensured that weaker teaching is improved and that assessment is rigorous.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Standards of mathematics in other subjects ensure that students are not held back in their learning. The standards seen in science, geography, ICT, design and technology, physical education and music are broadly average, but there is little use of mathematics in other subjects. As yet, there has been no whole school training in mathematics and the school does not track the use of mathematics across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new head of department provides very good leadership, with a focus on raising standards.
- Teaching is well planned to ensure that good learning takes place, but there is still little variety in learning activities.
- There is good use of assessment to set targets that motivate students, but marking in books does not give enough help or guidance on how to improve.
- Practical investigations are used effectively to help students understand scientific principles.
- Good working relationships give pupils the confidence to ask and answer questions.
- ICT is not used widely enough to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

74. In 2002, results at the end of Year 9 were average. Although results declined in 2003, the many recent improvements instituted by the department have already taken effect and the standards of work seen are in line with expectations. In 2002, results in GCSE were significantly below average, but have now improved to close to average. Observations in class and analysis of students' work confirm these improving standards. More students are attaining the highest levels and grades. All students achieve well during Years 7 to 9, but the effect of the changes made here is only just beginning to affect Years 10 and 11. Consequently, achievement during Years 10 and 11 is only just reaching a satisfactory level.
75. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned so that learning takes place at a good pace with regular checks of understanding. The focus on learning coupled with more accurate assessment systems ensures that students are set more demanding work and challenging targets. Students are confident, respond well to their teachers and work diligently. However,

the range of learning activities is often limited and students have few opportunities to plan their own work. In the very good examples of teaching, there is a lively introduction, a variety of learning activities that fully engage the students in their own learning and a final in-depth check of understanding. In these classes, students respond well when given the opportunity to work independently. They enthusiastically contribute to discussions and learning games and clearly enjoy the excitement of learning science. A particular strength is the use of practical investigations to help students understand the principles of science. The use of ICT in experiments has improved but it is not used frequently enough to enhance teaching and learning.

76. The newly introduced system of regular tests and grading has made teachers' assessment and target setting much more accurate than before. Students know their levels and grades. They would benefit from being more involved in self-assessment so that they take more responsibility for their own learning. Books are regularly marked, but there is little additional help or guidance added. The assessed assignments for homework in Years 10 and 11 is a positive innovation that is providing additional challenges for students as well as identifying strengths and weaknesses.
77. The new head of department provides very good leadership in focussing the department on teaching and learning in order to improve standards. The department is making good efforts in this area, but does not at the moment monitor teaching and learning to ensure consistency and the spread of good practice. Displays of students work are of a high standard and are used effectively as additional learning aids. The department is well managed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are among the strongest in the school but test results at the end of Year 9 have been low over the last two years.
- The school is successfully implementing a GNVQ course in ICT for Years 10 and 11 but not enough time is given to the course on the timetable.
- There is very good management of ICT evident in clear policies and strong assessment procedures.
- Staff are now well qualified enthusiasts who give freely of time and energy.
- There is outstandingly good provision of ICT resources for children with visual impairment.

Commentary

78. Although there is now an upward trend, attainment at the end of Year 9 has been unsatisfactory. However the department is now fully staffed by well-qualified teachers. The course has been changed to link closely to the government's Key Stage 3 Strategy and the quality of work seen during the inspection was consistently good. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is now satisfactory. GCSE results have improved substantially over the previous two years and are now well above average. There was good work seen in Years 10 and 11. In both GCSE and vocational courses, there has been a consistent improvement in results against a background of greatly increased numbers. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11.
79. Students take a responsible attitude to expensive resources, and have responded positively to the new course in Years 10 and 11. Because there is not enough time on the timetable students have to study parts of the course in their own time. In all years, students have become effective independent learners in ICT.
80. Nearly all of the teaching seen in ICT was satisfactory or better, a substantial majority being good or very good. Teachers offer lunchtime and afternoon clubs and drop in sessions and

there are outstanding displays in classrooms. Teachers make good use of ICT in recording and tracking assessment. The grading and assessment of work seen were up to date, closely matched against grade descriptors in the syllabus. Comments and feedback from teachers are positive and helpful, and in the GNVQ course serve to help students not only understand what they are being graded against but how they can improve their work and grades. However, there are not enough materials to support students at the extremes of the ability range.

81. There is very good management of ICT and a strong departmental organisation, to which all members of the department contribute generously. Both formal and informal structures of communication focus on pupils' achievement and improvement to the curriculum, not simply on administration. High quality resources are prepared in the department and shared among its members. Since the time of the last inspection, there has been a massive improvement in resources. There is now a robust modern network, with very strong technical support. There are a number of excellent and flexible ICT rooms and interactive whiteboards and data projectors in a number of areas.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. Several departments make enthusiastic and skilled use of ICT in learning. Students can use computers competently for presentation, research, manipulation of sounds or data and analysis of information. The provision of ICT resources for students with visual impairment is outstandingly good, and makes a strong contribution to their success in the school. Similarly for students with special educational needs. Across the whole school, however, the picture is rather uneven. Not enough use is made of ICT in many areas of the curriculum. A number of departments do not yet have adequate access to computers, despite there being bookable ICT rooms.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are not yet good enough.
- Lessons in Years 7 to 9 are well planned and well paced.
- The range and quality of fieldwork opportunities offered to students are good.
- The use of assessment data to set targets for students and plan their future learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

83. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 and 2003 were below the national average. However, in work seen during the inspection standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are close to the national average and their achievement is satisfactory. This improvement is because teachers structure their lessons carefully and students move swiftly from one task to the next so no learning time is wasted. Students with special educational needs achieve well because they are given constructive individual help from teachers and classroom assistants.
84. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average and students did not do as well in geography as in many other subjects they took. School data for 2003 indicates that the percentage of students gaining the higher grades in the full and short course examinations has increased. In work seen during the inspection students' standards in Years 10 and 11 are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. This is because teaching is satisfactory and most students have mature attitudes to learning and want to succeed. Students are given good opportunities to complete fieldwork enquiries in order to produce well-structured

coursework for the GCSE examination. For example, they were enthusiastic about a recent fieldtrip to Ambleside, which had engaged their interest and enhanced their learning about tourism.

85. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The new subject leader has conducted a useful self-evaluation of the department and appropriate priorities have been identified for development. Teaching is monitored effectively and the introduction of better-planned and structured lessons is improving the pace and variety of teaching and learning. Although the department has assessment information it does not use this information to set targets with individual students nor to plan the curriculum. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, and the department has the commitment and capacity to improve further.

History

Overall the provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 but assessment is not well used to help them improve further.
- Teachers set imaginative and challenging tasks for students and students are given good opportunities to learn independently.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is not yet good enough.
- ICT is used effectively by teachers and students to support teaching and learning.
- Students have positive attitudes and behave well in lessons.

Commentary

86. Students enter the school with below average knowledge and understanding of history and many lack basic historical skills. By the end of Year 9 they have achieved well to reach standards close to average. GCSE results for 2002 were average, though the proportion of students achieving higher grades was below expectations. Unconfirmed results for 2003 for both full and short-course GCSE are lower than in 2002. However, inspection evidence indicates that the standards achieved by students currently in Years 10 and 11 are broadly average and that achievement overall is satisfactory.
87. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Students are active in tackling challenging but manageable tasks, independently or in groups. Teachers' explanations are clear and, where a PowerPoint presentation is used, have a good visual focus. Students show good ICT skills in presenting homework and projects. Working in groups allows all students to contribute ideas and understanding without excessive writing. Students with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants, but materials are not always closely matched to their needs. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11, where constructive marking and grading give students a clear idea of how well they are doing. In Years 7 to 9, however, students are not made sufficiently aware of what their targets mean and how they might achieve them. The National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9 are not reliable. Students show positive attitudes towards history: they work hard and behave well.
88. The subject is led and managed effectively by an acting head of department. He has started to implement an action plan that shows he is clearly aware of the priorities for improvement. Developments have been limited because of the uncertainty of his position pending a permanent appointment. The department works well, with much sharing of best practice through good working relationships. However, the procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching need to be extended to other aspects of the department's work. Key issues that have not yet been addressed adequately are curriculum links with primary schools and identifying the subject's contribution to citizenship.

89. The main improvement since the last inspection has been in access to ICT, which is now part of every student's learning. However, although there are some off-site visits as part of the history course, the local area remains underused as a resource.

Religious Education

The effectiveness of provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 and in examination work in Years 10 and 11 are good.
- Teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard.
- There is very good leadership and management of the subject.
- Many lessons make a considerable contribution to students' personal development.
- The department does not have enough contacts with faith communities.

Commentary

90. In Years 7 to 9 students make good progress and by the end of Year 9 most students meet the expectations of the local agreed syllabus and many exceed it. Standards achieved by most students are at least in line with the non-statutory national expectations in religious education. Students in Years 10 and 11 follow either a short or a full GCSE course. The most recent results at GCSE are good. Whilst girls' results are, overall, better than boys, the gap in this school is narrower than is the case nationally. Work seen in classes and in students' books during the inspection suggests that last year's results will be maintained. Students currently in Years 11 who are achieving well in terms of the expectations of the examination syllabus may exceed them.
91. Teaching and learning are consistently good with some very good features. Lessons are well planned to take account of the needs of all students in the classes, although lesson objectives are not tightly focused on what individual students will achieve in the lessons. Most lessons feature a number of different activities that provide variety for all students and allow the learning needs of different students to be met. There is a brisk pace to most lessons although teachers are alert to the need to involve all students in lessons and are sensitive to those students who need to take time to make their contributions. However, marking does not always tell students what they need to do to improve.
92. Teaching constantly encourages students to consider the personal relevance of their studies and gives them impressive opportunities for self-expression. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 class where students were set, as homework, the writing of a poem to express the feelings about euthanasia of a terminally ill person. The poems were impressive in their quality, as was the respect and interest shown by other students in the class. Students in this school have a very positive attitude towards religious education.
93. Leadership and management of religious education are very good. The head of department, although relatively new to her job, has a clear vision of how the subject can improve still further. Her organisation and administration of departmental affairs are exemplary and she is supported by a talented and committed team of colleagues. The department already knows that it needs to extend contacts with faith communities and has identified this within the department's development plan. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test results at the end of Year 9 are good.
- Students' progress is good and helped by their good behaviour in class.
- The quality of teaching is good and is planned to meet individual needs.
- Assessment procedures are very good and enable teachers and students to know how well they are doing.
- There are not enough alternative courses to improve the level of attainment in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

94. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average, an improvement on the previous year. This represents good achievement from below average levels of general attainment. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average. Results varied between different courses and have declined markedly in the last three years. The decline in results over this period reflects the difficulties in adjusting to the influx of students into years 10 and 11. The standard of work, currently in progress, represents satisfactory achievement with no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
95. Students respond well to the good quality teaching; they show interest and behave well in class. From entry to the school, they develop skills in the use of tools and equipment and a proper respect for correct workshop practice. This reflects the high level of teacher subject expertise. Students learn to organise their work in a step-by-step manner. The progress of their learning is evident in very good quality, well presented course folders. The standard of presentation is a strong feature of student work at all stages and stems from the concern for planning and organisation in the teaching. A major strength in the teaching is the quality of one-to-one tuition in lessons. This is sensitive to individual learning and underpins the good progress of students with special educational needs, together with those possessing special talent.
96. Assessment plays an important role in overseeing students' progress. Procedures are very well developed to relate to National Curriculum programmes of study and to GCSE assessment objectives. Students' progress is tracked throughout the school and targets are set to stimulate effort. Individual progress is monitored carefully.
97. The quality of leadership and management is good, with a high level of commitment to the development of the subject and a regard for good relationships within the department. Constructive thought is being given to the introduction of alternative courses in Years 10 and 11 as a means of motivating some students to continue to do the subject. Resources are adequate in the main but sparse for ICT.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very stimulating learning environment that celebrates students' achievements and includes exceptionally good pottery work.

- Teaching and learning promote students' independence as learners but not enough is done to extend the more talented students.
- Students show positive attitudes to learning and really enjoy their art.
- There is not a sufficiently wide enough range of media introduced for all students.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to develop research and image making skills.

Commentary

98. GCSE results in 2002 were just below average. Results in 2003 were overall not quite as good as the previous year, however students do achieve relatively better in art and design than in other subjects. Current standards in Year 9 are broadly average in two-dimensional work, indicating good achievement in this element of art and design. Students' achievement in pottery is very good because their designs are highly individual and well realised. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement is good. This is because students are well taught and apply and practise with developing confidence in a well-structured teaching and learning environment.
99. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Samples of work show that students are encouraged to develop original work. Students enjoy art and design and record their positive comments in their folders. Good relationships and a positive attitude to learning are strengths of the department. Teachers and the excellent technician have worked hard to provide a very simulating learning environment. Expectations of good attitudes and high standards are paramount and students respond to them positively.
100. The range of media used by all students is not broad enough and limits the students' opportunities to be creative in three as well as two dimensions. As they move through the school, students become more independent and become better at developing personal ideas and responses when appropriate. Provision for talented students is limited because there are not enough challenging tasks created for them. There is not enough emphasis on homework as a way of extending these most able students. Computers are not used sufficiently and this restricts the development of students' skills in design through using good quality graphic and photographic software. This was also an issue at the time of the previous inspection.
101. Overall the leadership and management of the subject are good. The major strength is the very good teamwork of the teachers and the technician. Students profit from the wide range expertise and interests of their teachers. Displays are well organised showing an overwhelming dedication to provide a visually stimulating environment full of very good examples of artwork. Each year the department celebrates the work of all years in its art exhibition. This is to be commended.

Drama

One Year 10 and one Year 11 drama lesson were observed. Attainment is satisfactory overall and good in performance and role-play. Teaching is good and takes account of the ability of all students. A variety of activities in lessons are well organised and managed. Extra-curricular provision is good and extends students understanding of drama. Students clearly enjoy the subject.

Music

Provision in music is **good** with outstanding features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very vibrant, inclusive atmosphere in the department, produced by a team of capable and highly committed teachers.
- High quality teaching is characterised by very good relationships between teachers and students
- There is an extensive range of opportunities for all students to make music both in school and in the community.

- Accommodation and resources have much improved and are having a very positive effect on the work of the department.
- Assessment is not as accurate as it should be and needs a more cohesive approach.
- The amount of instrumental teaching is inadequate to sustain the work of the department

Commentary

102. Music is very popular in the school with many students participating in music activities outside of lessons. Large numbers want and are encouraged to follow a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' assessments for Year 9 students show fluctuating standards. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students' attainment is in line with what is expected. They make satisfactory progress from the time they join the school. Although recent examination results are below average, they represent good achievement given the large numbers of students who take the course.
103. A very strong feature of the department is its commitment to ensuring that all students who want to participate in music can do so. Teachers provide many opportunities for students outside of lessons that students appreciate and enjoy. There is, however, very limited provision for instrumental teaching. Schemes of work have been revised but the use of ICT is, as yet, under developed. This is to some extent because of the inadequate size of the computer room. Assessment takes place, but mechanisms for judging students' attainment, sharing that information with colleagues and providing a secure basis for teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, are not well developed. This accounts for the fluctuating results.
104. The standard of teaching is good overall. Positive student/teacher relationships are a striking feature and contribute to the motivation and achievement of students. The best lessons have challenge and pace and provide well-structured learning experiences with a focus on creativity. Occasionally group work is not sufficiently well controlled and productive. The development of core musical skills – whether in performance or the handling of notation, is not as systematically well taught as other aspects and is necessary to equip students for later work. Examination course teaching is very effective and musical in its approach. In Year 10 and 11 lessons, students develop compositional skills using ICT and gain stylistic awareness in the context of working with sounds.
105. The department is well managed and has positive and committed leadership. The teamwork of the staff, their complementary strengths and the time they give to pupils beyond the formal curriculum, is outstanding. This results in a rich and enthusiastic corporate musical life that reaches out into the community in a very significant way. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in accommodation and resources. Very good display work provides a colourful and stimulating environment. Music is a successful and influential department with established traditions and a real sense of vision and forward momentum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement in Years 7 to 9 is the result of good teaching and good relationships between students and their teachers.
- Good leadership and management provide a vision for how the subject can improve.
- The department has not done enough work on using National Curriculum levels to help students see how they are doing and how they might improve.
- Very good extra-curricular activities and good community links benefit students' learning.

Commentary

106. Students achieve well and by Year 9 standards are in line with national expectations. Teachers make good use of student presentations to reinforce important learning points. By the end of Year 11 in core physical education students have made satisfactory progress and standards remain similar to those in other schools. In GCSE in 2002 results were below the national average, although 2003 results show standards slightly improving.
107. Students are given opportunities to evaluate performances although the depth of their self - evaluation is limited. Theory work in Years 10 and 11 is well covered by teachers, although many students find difficulty in recalling in sufficient detail work such as the names of the major muscle groups. There is not enough use of problem solving to reinforce students' learning.
108. Overall the quality of teaching is good. There are good relationships, often very good in the sixth form, and students get involved in lessons. Teachers have high expectations, and the majority of students respond by showing good attitudes to work. Good levels of subject knowledge are apparent in the written and spoken advice given to students. In sixth form written work there are some very supportive comments. The department has not got a standardised marking policy that includes guidance on how to use National Curriculum levels to help students improve their work.
109. Leadership and management are good. A shared vision exists, based upon improving standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Management copes well with problems resulting from overcrowding in indoor areas and overall poor indoor accommodation. All students' benefit from good community links that include visits from external coaches. Similarly the students including those with special educational needs, and visual impairment, have opportunities to, and do take part in the very strong programme of extra-curricular activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Two lessons were observed in vocational courses other than business. In one GNVQ Intermediate travel and tourism lesson there was good planning for different groups and as a result pupils achieved in line with their potential. In a GCSE health and social care lesson, although students make satisfactory progress, the pace of activity in class was not as good.

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved are improving, as seen in GCSE results and in the quality of work seen.
- Good teaching draws substantially on the industrial experience of teachers and provides, challenge and support for all pupils, whatever their needs.
- Teachers produce very good resources that provide good models of business presentation which students are keen to emulate.
- Both leadership and management are very good and have a positive effect on teaching and learning.
- Very good accommodation provides a learning environment well-suited to the needs of the course.
- Assessment is thorough and is used to set appropriate and challenging targets for each individual.

Commentary

110. GCSE results for 2002 were well below average. In response to this situation the department implemented a vigorous action plan that has resulted in much improved results for 2003. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the improvement in standards is being maintained. The course attracts a large number of students from a wide ability range, including pupils who are visually impaired. Students are now performing at levels that are in line with their potential.
111. Almost all teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good or very good. Several consistent key strengths contribute positively to students' learning. Teachers prepare well. They produce linked series of high quality work sheets and specimen documents, which are models of good business practice. This ensures that students' assignments and reports are regularly produced using industry standard layout. Teachers develop literacy skills through the precise oral and written use of business language. Through the frequent use of exercises that ask for brief business reports, students are encouraged to respond in clear short sentences, both oral and written. The majority of the teaching team have substantial experience in industry and commerce and they effectively use their experience in their teaching.
112. Leadership is very good. The departmental head ensures that teachers work well together and they meet regularly to share their experiences and to improve teaching and the curriculum. The head of department regularly and systematically monitors the work of colleagues and inspires them further to develop their professional role and approach. Management is very good. Monitoring of student progress is thorough and data predicting student potential, is used by all teachers to set realistic and challenging targets. Comparative data from national and school sources is used to strengthen the analysis. This also leads to the provision of after-school and revision classes designed to improve the performance of specific groups.
113. Good quality accommodation has a positive effect on learning. The rooms used are well suited to group activity and there is good access to computers. Students' use of information technology is widespread and used particularly well to produce project work and assignments. Teachers pay consistent and regular attention to marking and to reviewing student files. The detailed marking contains clear suggestions to the individual as to how to improve performance. Teachers know their students well and use assessment and related data to assist students develop high and achievable targets for improvement. This helps students of all levels of ability to make good progress and to achieve their potential. They also have the opportunity to participate in schemes like 'Business Enterprise', and visiting speakers from industry further enhance the contact with the world of work. The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education lessons were observed and the quality of these lessons varied from some being unsatisfactory to some being good. Some tutors are teaching these lessons well. The subject is planned to contribute to the development of citizenship within the school. There is no formal monitoring of what happens in these lessons so neither heads of year nor the personal, social and health education co-ordinator know whether lessons are successful or not.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some of the material developed for use in personal, social and health education lessons is good and contributes to the development of citizenship.
- The school does not provide opportunities for all students to participate in all aspects of the teaching programme for citizenship.

- Teaching and learning in citizenship are unsatisfactory because the contributions to citizenship made by some subjects that are being relied upon to teach major parts of the programme are inadequate.
- The school is not in a position to assess students' work in citizenship and to be able to report students' achievement in the subject in annual reports to parents.

Commentary

114. A great deal of the teaching of citizenship is intended to take place in different subjects. However, many of these subjects have not adjusted their curriculum to provide lessons with a specific citizenship focus with citizenship objectives. Other teaching of citizenship material takes place in personal, social and health education lessons once a week, taught by form tutors. This work is neither monitored nor assessed.
115. There has been serious misunderstanding of the nature of the subject. The school believes that enquiry and problem-solving skills taught in the context of subjects like science and mathematics meet the requirements of the citizenship curriculum. The National Curriculum orders specify that citizenship skills need to be taught in context of citizenship. A further requirement is that all students are offered opportunities to negotiate decide and take part responsibly in school and community based activities. There are opportunities for students to participate in charitable work, community activities and the school council. However, although there are opportunities the school does not monitor the take up of these opportunities in order to know how successful it is in meeting this particular requirement.
116. The teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating citizenship lacks influence on what subject departments teach and on what form tutors do in teaching personal, social and health education. She is not given time to monitor the work of departments in this aspect. In some personal, social and health education lessons good materials and ideas generated by the coordinator do not have an optimum effect on all students because of the variation in the way they are used in different tutor groups.
117. Because the provision is not securely established the school is not in a position to be able to assess pupils in citizenship as is required at the end of 2004. It is also not possible for the inspection to comment on the standards that students achieve.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

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	20	50.0	90.0	5.0	42.7	14.5	39.0
English Language	7	71.4	92.0	28.6	29.9	30.0	35.7
General Studies	15	93.3	78.6	20.0	25.7	37.3	30.0
Geography	11	81.8	88.3	0.0	36.4	22.7	36.3
Mathematics	12	25.0	74.2	0.0	34.3	7.5	31.3
Other social studies	22	45.5	83.2	4.5	32.5	10.9	33.6
Sociology	5	60.0	83.7	0.0	27.7	18.0	33.8
Sports/PE Studies	7	38.6	88.2	0.0	27.7	19.6	34.8

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	16	100.0	96.1	31.3	48.7	72.5	85.1
Biology	7	100.0	91.6	14.3	36.3	60.0	74.1
Chemistry	5	100.0	94.0	40.0	45.9	84.0	81.1
Drama	9	100.0	98.1	11.1	41.5	62.2	82.9
English Language	18	100.0	98.3	55.6	36.5	93.3	80.1
English Literature	8	100.0	98.5	100.0	43.7	112.5	84.3
Design and technology	10	100.0	95.3	100.0	35.5	114.0	76.5
General Studies	14	100.0	90.1	21.4	29.1	78.6	69.3
Geography	11	100.0	97.1	27.3	40.5	83.6	80.9
Mathematics	11	90.9	93.3	45.4	52.2	80.0	84.7
Music	6	100.0	97.7	66.7	41.8	83.3	82.2
Other social studies	15	93.3	94.3	40.0	38.9	78.7	77.7
Physics	10	100.0	92.8	40.0	42.8	78.0	78.6
Sociology	10	100.0	95.4	30.0	39.6	80.0	79.1
Sports/PE studies	8	100.0	95.4	0.0	29.5	62.5	73.2
VCE Business	24	66.7	87.1	4.2	16.5	40.0	60.1
VCE Information Technology	23	62.6	84.3	26.1	24.5	61.7	64.3

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate business	15	73.3	N/a	40.0	N/a	0	N/a
Intermediate health and social care	14	57.1	N/a	7.1	N/a	0	N/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good A level results in 2002 demonstrate a marked improvement in standards.
- Effective teaching and support of students ensures a successful transition from GCSE to AS level courses.
- Students develop independence in thinking so that they are able to formulate original opinions.
- The large numbers opting for English indicates the popularity and success of the subject.
- Classes are too large to provide opportunities for all students to receive the individual attention that the course requires.

Commentary

118. A high number of students follow English language and literature courses in the sixth form. AS and A2 courses are offered in both these subjects. Retention rates are high. Standards attained are good. In 2002 examination results were above average in both 'A' level English language and English literature. Unconfirmed results for 2003 indicate the same above average attainment in English literature and average attainment in English language. Students achieve well against their standard on entry to the courses. Work observed during the inspection indicates further good achievement in both subjects and for both boys and girls.
119. In English language, students develop a good understanding of different language types and different uses to which language is put. By Year 13 they confidently use specialised terminology. Many students demonstrate originality and independence in carrying out investigations into the way in which different people and organisations use language. In English literature students analyse texts in increasing depth and argue and justify their views with enthusiasm. The most important progress over the course is the ability to write cohesive essays. Students also develop confidence and skill in their ability to compare different texts.
120. Teaching is good with many very good features. Teachers know students well and are able to give good guidance on how they are to address weaknesses in their work. Subject knowledge is very good and allows the work to be set in a wider context. Questioning is good and successfully addresses the wide ability range that is represented in classes. Students who at first find the transition from GCSE to AS level English difficult, feel that teachers give them very good support. There is good scope provided for students to develop independent research projects. Assessment of work is accurate and marking which is usually detailed, both identifies positive features and indicates how improvement might be made. All the above features have created a situation where students respond enthusiastically in lessons and clearly enjoy the extra demands of the A level courses.
121. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Close attention is paid to examiners reports and considered decisions made on what influence they should have on the teaching of the subject. The very large numbers of students opting to follow an English course is an indication of how well the subject is presented. The main difficulty is that class sizes are too large. This makes it difficult to give some the close attention and to discuss students' work that should be an important feature of such courses.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

122. Standards of English language and literacy in the sixth form are good. Students read difficult texts fluently and are able to synthesise and summarise content effectively. They show increasing ability to organise and develop ideas in extended writing. The way in which

teachers address language and literacy for those who experience difficulties is often good but is variable as there is not a consistent approach or policy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement has been consistently in line with their ability in recent years.
- Results at A level and standards of current students' work have yet to reach the national average.
- Whilst current students work hard in lessons, they show little enthusiasm for the subject.
- There are encouraging signs of more dynamic teaching developing.

Commentary

123. In 2002, results in GCE A level mathematics were below average. This was an improvement on previous years when results were well below. Overall, this is satisfactory achievement from below average GCSE entry standards in recent years. The numbers seeing the A-level course through in mathematics are disappointingly low. In 2003, results dipped when more than half of the students entered were ungraded. Current students in Years 12 and 13 are working at below average standards but in line with their ability. However, there are still not enough students taking mathematics.

124. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory. Whilst teachers have good subject knowledge and present students with notes, examples and suitable theoretical practice, lessons often lack variety and pace. Students show little enthusiasm and Year 13 students are often late to lessons. However, all students are attentive and work hard in lessons. In Year 12 statistics, lively teaching at a very good pace helped students learn how to look up probabilities in tables accurately. However, because the teacher neglected on this occasion to put the work in a real context, students had no real understanding of how to apply these processes.

125. Whilst teaching, overall, and management are sound, leadership has not recognised that mathematics is not appealing to students and as a result, students who could succeed are not choosing the courses. Dropout rates are higher than nationally. However, teachers new to A-level courses are more dynamic and are growing in confidence. They are aware of the need to engage students more actively in lessons and the head of department is now rightly recognising and encouraging this.

Mathematics across the curriculum

126. Standards of mathematics are average in most other subjects where they are used. There are no signs of a lack of mathematical competence holding students back. In English, students use graphs to good effect to compare language structures. In physics, where graphs and formulae are well used and understood, standards are good. In sociology, students interpret graphs effectively demonstrating good levels of competence.

SCIENCE

The focus was on physics, but biology and chemistry were also sampled. Results in 2002 were well below average in biology and above average in chemistry. One lesson of each subject was observed. The chemistry lesson was satisfactory and the biology lesson was good. These observations and the scrutiny of students work show satisfactory progress from their GCSE courses.

Physics

Provision in physics **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge.
- There is good pace, relevance and good use of simple demonstrations in teaching.
- Students and their teachers enjoy good working relationships.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Students do not have enough information from assessments about how they can improve.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to support and extend students learning.

Commentary

127. Standards in A level examinations since 2000 have improved and were average in 2002. However, numbers of students are small and vary from year to year making it difficult to identify any particular reason for this trend in achievement.
128. Teaching is good overall, characterised by good subject knowledge and well planned lessons. A brisk pace is maintained in lessons through a variety of activities, probing questions and a final plenary are used to check understanding. Good working relationships exist between students and their teacher based on mutual respect and good humour. Students enjoy practical activities and are interested because the teacher shows the relevance of the physics being taught. They respond positively to their teacher's expectations to work hard and understand new ideas. The teacher provides extensive and clear feedback to students on the accuracy of their work but does not give enough guidance on how students might improve. They are not clear how coursework contributes to their final A-level grade.
129. Scrutiny of previous work shows that students complete a good range of tasks although these involve strong teacher direction. Individual work is restricted to providing answers to homework questions. Students have few opportunities to develop the skills of sustaining arguments, speculating and researching. Whilst in a Year 12 lesson Internet access was provided for students to corroborate evidence from a series of flame tests, they do not use ICT routinely for the presentation of their work or to support their learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Growing numbers take up the subject in the sixth form and all gain a pass, with substantial numbers of very high grades.
- Students are effective and independent learners and achieve good standards in their work.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good and innovative tasks and clear guidance help students to monitor and improve their work.

Commentary

130. The only course available at present is the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in IT, introduced three years ago. During that time, there have been a growing number of students, and very good examination results. Achievement is higher than predicted from their previous attainment. This confirms the high quality of teaching and learning in the subject. In folders, exercise books and electronic records there is now outstandingly good work, reflecting not only the ability of the students but increasingly coherent schemes of study, in which they are presented with imaginative scenarios and real life exercises. To date, many students have proceeded to degrees in different aspects of computing.

131. Lessons observed were consistently good or better. Students respond keenly, and obviously take great delight both in their ICT skills and in the challenges presented by imaginative teaching. These include construction of web pages and the design of complex databases. For those exercises, students must find real clients, and prepare appropriate training and reference materials for them.
132. There are outstanding displays of students' work in the excellent ICT rooms. High quality resources are prepared and shared between teachers. This ensures consistency of approach and outcome even during periods of staff absence. Work is consistently marked, with positive feedback. This helps students to understand both the criteria against which they are being assessed and how they might improve their individual performance. The department has a well-understood and consistent marking policy.
133. The network is reliable and well managed and the network management team contribute strongly to training, support for teachers and the ongoing development of on-line and Intranet provision. The development plan rightly highlights the need for new vocational courses and strategies to address the current imbalance of boys and girls in the subject. It also includes a commitment to provide a wider range of courses, particularly for students who will have completed a GNVQ in ICT in Year 11 but may not find the current vocational course wholly suitable.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

134. Students in the sixth form make good use of their ICT skills in research and presentation. There are specialist ICT areas for them to use and they are able to use spare machines in other rooms. Non-specialist students are able to improve their skills at evening or twilight classes. Those courses are held on the school premises, and the school meets the cost of fees for full time students who wish to attend.

HUMANITIES

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results in 2002 were above the national average and improved further in 2003
- Students' achievement is very good, teachers have high expectations and lessons are challenging.
- The subject is very well led and managed and teachers collaborate well to give students a rich and varied learning experience

Commentary

135. Examination results in 2002 were above average and results improved further in 2003. At the end of Year 12 almost two thirds of students achieved a higher grade in the AS level examination. These results represent very good achievement for the students concerned. Students achieve very well because teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations of students and are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject.
136. In work seen standards are above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12 and achievement is very good. Students in Year 13 work very well both independently and collaboratively and have very mature attitudes to learning. They present clearly their very creative ideas for new religious movements whilst making good use of specialist terminology. In Year 12 students respond well to very clear explanations and probing questioning by the teacher which enables them to demonstrate their knowledge of sociological methods and

concepts. Students' work is assessed regularly and thoroughly so they know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. The department has put a range of very useful information on the school website and continues to develop its use of ICT to support learning.

137. The subject is very well led and managed and there is a clear vision for further improvement. Teachers in the department are highly organised and collaborate very effectively. Their contrasting teaching styles engage the interest of the students and allow them to learn in different ways. Teaching and learning are monitored very effectively and the department is developing an even wider range of teaching and learning methods. Sociology teachers are committed to further improvement and have the capacity to achieve this.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in A-level examinations are excellent; students have achieved the highest grades.
- Students display very positive attitudes and their response to the teaching is very good.
- Standards in drawing and presentation are very high.
- The quality of teaching is very good.

Commentary

138. In 2002, all students gained good results with grades A or B at A level. At AS level there was also success. These results are very high compared with other schools and represents excellent progress and achievement. A2 level results have improved over recent years and students have exceeded their predicted grades at both A2 and AS level. Analysis of performance shows that success in coursework is the major element in grades gained. This reflects the very good quality of student response to the teaching alongside the very good quality of the teaching itself.
139. The two main strengths in the teaching are very high subject expertise from a background of professional design experience, allied to very effective planning. The development of drawing, as a means of design analysis, is exceptionally good. This is complemented by very good layout in design portfolios. The result is excellent with clear presentation of ideas, illustrating the development of thinking and progress. The standard of drawing and presentation represents the culmination of a learning process which starts much earlier in the school; the drawing process is seen as a vital factor in learning.
140. At this stage, students are guided rather than taught and they show a capacity for mature independent working. Several teachers contribute to the teaching in the sixth form and share a high level of commitment to student success. There is an enthusiasm for course development, which is demonstrated by the A-level group in textiles. This reflects the interests of those teachers with a specialist background in this area and provides an important widening of the curriculum. A number of students have opted for this new course thus increasing take-up at AS level. All students in recent years have taken the opportunity to progress from AS to A2 level. Students express total satisfaction with their sixth form experience. They enjoy their work and appreciate the opportunities provided by the school.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Two lessons of music were sampled. Sixth form examination results are good overall. This represents a significant achievement as any student with an interest and commitment to music is welcome on the course. Teaching is very good and imaginative and encourages creativity in students. Students contribute to and benefit from a rich, corporate musical life in school

Example of outstanding practice

A group of A2 music students is being introduced to jazz – a new encounter for these hardened rock/pop enthusiasts.

The teacher catches students' imagination immediately by asking them to listen to a short, carefully chosen example of Art Tatum's stunning virtuosity. This extract is quickly set in context between Scott Joplin and the 60's scene. Some very skilful questioning that challenges students' listening skills draws out the key features that mark out the stylistic evolution of jazz. The over view is then fixed and the ensuing activity unpicks and explores elements at the level of the students' own skills. A colleague is brought in for a few minutes to play bass guitar. With great energy and pace and making use of his own high level of performance, the teacher takes students through features of jazz performance such as walking bass, stride bass, comping and swing, achieving with them a real jazz experience. The lesson flies and students become informed and inspired.

Two physical education lessons were sampled. Teaching was good and reinforced positive student attitudes. Results in 2002 at AS and A level were below average but reflect satisfactory achievement for this group of students.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good overall quality of teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Visits to art galleries are linked well to the course and enhance students' learning.
- Students have positive, and mature attitudes with good independent learning skills.
- ICT facilities are not as good as they should be.

Commentary

141. Two AS and A level courses have been successfully established. One specialises in three-dimensional work. Results in 2002 were average. Such results indicate good achievement with the majority of students gaining grades higher than predicted, based on their GCSE grades. Results for 2003 show similar good achievement.
142. The work of current students is above average. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students are achieving well. This is because of the good teaching they receive. Students have a very good understanding of artists and their work. They are very articulate about paintings due in most part to the staff encouraging visits to local and national galleries. Sketchbooks and designs are strongly individual yet draw on students' knowledge of the work and styles of past and present artists and movements.
143. Teaching and learning are good overall and in some lessons they were very good. Carefully prepared resources, clearly stated aims and objectives and well communicated subject knowledge result in effective learning. Challenging questions are asked in lessons. Expectations are high and students respond well to these challenges. A major strength is the positive, articulate and mature attitude of the students. Most are confident, independent learners. They have good study skills and many are dedicated to the subject. The departments ICT base is completely inadequate and needs considerable improvement. The department and subject are well led and managed. All teachers in the department teach on this course and students benefit from this wide range of expertise, opinion and interests.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One lesson was sampled in travel and tourism. The lesson that was seen had a good approach that set good standards for students to emulate.

BUSINESS

Lessons were sampled in business. Teaching is consistently good and makes good use of assessment data to provide programmes suited to students' needs and abilities. However, the number of visits to industry by students is very low and restricts the amount of first hand data used in coursework.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well pupils learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		5
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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