

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN COLET SCHOOL

Wendover, Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110491

Headteacher: Mrs Christine McLintock

Lead inspector: Liz Barthaud

Dates of inspection: 26th – 30th January 2004

Inspection number: 259353

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,027
School address:	Wharf Road Wendover Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP22 6HF
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Smith
Date of previous inspection:	23/03/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

John Colet is a mixed non-selective school for students aged 11-18 years in Wendover, Buckinghamshire. There are 1,027 students on roll of whom 135 attend the sixth form making it an average sized secondary school. The proportion of boys (520) and girls (507) is equal. John Colet School has been successful in gaining the Sportsmark Award (2000), the silver Artsmark Award (2003) and a Department for Education and Skills School Achievement award (2003). The school is currently the Aylesbury Vale Senior Sports School of the Year (2003). In 2003 it was one of only five Buckinghamshire secondary schools to receive the SWAN award for impressive student progress. In the same year, the school was recognised by Buckinghamshire as a model of good practice in training developing staff. Many students live within a three-mile radius of the school and come from homes that are economically and socially advantaged. However, a wide range of social backgrounds are reflected throughout the school. Employment in the area is average. About 3 per cent of students come from minority ethnic groups, a lower proportion than average, and all are fluent in the English language. There are two students from a traveler background. About 3 per cent of students receive free school meals, a proportion which is well below the national average. Students' attainment on entry, as measured by tests at the end of Year 6, is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of students with special educational needs, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, is well below the national average at 5.4 per cent. During the last school year 21 students joined the school and 10 left. In comparison with the national average this figure is very low. The headteacher has been in post since September 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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30317	Liz Barthaud	Lead inspector	Religious education
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English
32794	Stephen Box	Team inspector	Mathematics
30433	Christopher Corp	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form
12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology
12110	Roger Bailess	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
23137	Ron Fewtrell	Team inspector	History
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20425	Keith Rogers	Team inspector	Music
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Physical education
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	Citizenship Business education
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Physics in the sixth form
33015	Richard Winter	Team inspector	Geography
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs Health and social care in the sixth form

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

John Colet is a good and successful school which is a popular choice with parents and students. It is an **effective** school that provides good value for money. The very recently appointed headteacher provides good leadership and has the determination to strive for excellence in all aspects of school life. **Satisfactory** leadership and **good** management strategies ensure that standards are **satisfactory**. Student achievement is **good** as a result of **good teaching**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement of all students across the school is good.
- Very good relationships throughout the school lead to good attitudes to learning and very good attendance.
- The good leadership of the headteacher is having a very positive effect on the vision and values of the school.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation which is limiting the strategies the school can implement to support the personal, social and independent study skills of the students.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is weakened as the school does not have access to the services of an educational psychologist.
- The use made of assessment information is improving, but systems for assessing how well students learn are not sufficiently developed to improve standards.
- The very wide range of sporting, performing and learning opportunities is a real strength of the school.
- The school offers a broad range of curriculum opportunities to meet the needs of all students, but provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education in Years 9 to 11 and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- The governing body provides a clear direction for the school.

Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The school has reduced the percentage of unsatisfactory teaching and the management structure has been strengthened. Accommodation is still unsatisfactory as are arrangements for assessing student progress.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

When students join the school in Year 7 their attainment is variable but satisfactory overall based on results at the end of Year 6. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards in 2003 were average when compared with schools with similar intakes and above average compared with all schools nationally. There were inconsistencies between the results achieved in national tests between English, mathematics and science. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were above average when compared with all schools and average for similar schools. In 2003, boys achieved less well than girls in English language, science and modern foreign languages. They represent good achievement given students' attainment on arrival at the school. Standards in the sixth form are rising but results remain below the national average. This represents good achievement given the below average level of attainment on entry of many students into the sixth form.

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	B	B	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E	D	Not available	

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

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

Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are working in line with average standards and achieving well. Older students build well on previous study, work to a higher standard and continue to achieve well. Sixth-form students are achieving well, although standards within subjects are variable and are below average overall. Throughout the school, the achievement of students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented is good.

Students' personal development is **very good** because teachers place a high priority on promoting very good attitudes to all aspects of school life. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Behaviour in the main school is **good** and **very good** in the sixth form. Relationships, both among students and between students and teachers, are **very good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** both in the main school and the sixth form. There are examples of very good teaching in most departments. Teaching is best in the sixth form and is better for students in Years 10 and 11 than for younger students. Teachers know their students well and successfully meet the needs of all students. This is the main reason why learning in lessons is good and the achievement and progress of all students are good. Whilst teaching, learning and achievement are good, standards are satisfactory. One of the main reasons for this difference relates to the assessment procedures in place throughout the school. Until the beginning of this school year, individual teachers could not easily access prior performance data on each student. As a result, the process of setting improvement targets for individual students across and within subjects is inconsistent and assessment practice unsatisfactory.

The curriculum offered is satisfactory, both in the main school and the sixth form. It is enhanced by the very good enrichment programme, including a very wide range of extra-curricular activities which are popular with students. Other aspects of the overall educational provision are strengths within the school and these include the very good provision provided wholly by the school for students with special educational needs and the good flexible learning opportunities, including work placements, for students in Years 10, 11 and 12.

The headteacher and governors are determined to improve all aspects of the education the school provides and plans are in place to address the current breaches of statutory requirements. However, they are severely hindered by unsatisfactory accommodation.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school is **good**. A significant strength is the vision and clear sense of purpose demonstrated by the new headteacher. She has already introduced systems and procedures that will address many of the improvements required, including those identified by this inspection. Her very high aspirations, commitment and energy will ensure that changes made will raise standards. The effectiveness of management throughout the school is good. Governors are actively involved in shaping the vision and direction of the school and provide good levels of support and challenge to the management team. Financial management is good. Governance has many good features, but fails to meet all statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and provide very good support. The school's image and links with the local community are good. John Colet is a very popular choice with parents living both locally and many miles from the school. Parents and students hold positive views about the school, except for the accommodation. They believe the accommodation is inadequate to meet the needs of the ever increasing number of students attending the school and to support their personal and social development. Inspection evidence would support this view.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- enhance the quality and consistency of assessment to set students precise targets to achieve;
- enhance the accommodation to improve the overall educational provision provided by the school;
- improve the leadership and management of the personal, social and health education and citizenship programmes in Years 9 to 11;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students;
- deliver a fully co-ordinated programme in citizenship for all students;
- provide ICT opportunities for all students in Years 10 and 11.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

The majority of the 135 sixth form students attended the school in Years 7 to 11. At the end of Year 11 students who wish to continue with their studies have the option of applying for places at the grammar schools and Aylesbury College.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **satisfactory**. It is cost effective and provides good value for money. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students appreciate the good support they receive. Attainment on entry to the sixth form based on GCSE point scores is below average. Although examination results for 2003 (yet to be validated) and 2002 were below average and for 2001 well below, for most students this represents good achievement. Leadership is satisfactory and management good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching resulting in good learning and achievement.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and fails to meet the learning and personal development needs of students.
- Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure all students achieve their full potential.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of the students.
- The use made of assessment information to track students' progress is satisfactory. However, systems are not sufficiently developed in all subjects to set realistic targets for individual students.
- The very good provision of teaching assistants and other systems to support learning.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about overall 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	Provision is very good . Results are good at both AS and GCE Advanced level. Teaching is very good.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory . Results at GCE Advanced level are lower than the national average but with some students achieving higher levels. Teaching and learning are good.
Science	
Physics	Provision is satisfactory . Whilst results are below the national average, several students achieve the higher grades. The department has a 100 per cent pass rate at GCE Advanced level. Teaching and learning are good.
Biology	Provision is satisfactory . Results are well below the national average. Achievement of students is good. Teaching and learning are good.
Humanities	
History	Provision is good . Results are in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are good.
Physical education	Provision is good . Results are very high at AS level and in line with the national average at GCE Advanced level. Teaching and learning are very good.
Health and social care	Provision is very good . Results are well above the national average. Teaching is very good.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of support, advice and guidance is **satisfactory**. Students have good access to extra help and support from subject and form teachers. Relationships with staff are positive and friendly. The use of assessment information to set challenging targets for students on an individual basis is at an early stage of development. Opportunities for students to give their views and contribute to school life are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory and management good. There is a clear rationale for the range of courses offered in the sixth form which has been strengthened by the introduction of vocational courses. A review of the curriculum is currently taking place so that it better meets the needs of future students. The approach to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching lacks rigour and is under-developed.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive and supportive of the school. They say that their teachers know and support them well. They are unhappy about the absence of a sixth form area for both social and private study use and the lack of access to ICT. Inspection evidence would support the need for improved sixth form accommodation and greater access to ICT during the school day.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards throughout the school are **satisfactory**. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were variable between subjects but **good** overall as they were in previous years. Results in GCSE examinations were **satisfactory** when compared with schools with a similar intake and good when compared with schools nationally. Results in the sixth form are **below average**. The majority of students who join the school in Year 7 are performing in line with national expectations using the national curriculum test results at the end of Year 6 as a baseline. Pupils who attain the higher levels usually accept places in the grammar schools and, as a result, John Colet does not have students representing the full ability range. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 therefore represent good achievement. In 2003, girls achieved higher standards than boys in all core subjects. Examination results in the sixth form improved in 2002 but, as with the unvalidated 2003 results, remain **below average**. Throughout the school, the achievement of students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching results in good achievement for all students in Years 7 to 9.
- Special educational needs students make good progress.
- Throughout the school there are very good standards in design and technology, English and geography.
- There are below national average standards in Years 7 to 9 in art and design.
- Performance of girls in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 dropped below the national average in mathematics and science.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

The table below show the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9, based on average point scores¹ in National Curriculum tests.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.4 (35.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.4 (35.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.0 (34.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 174 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. In 2003, standards at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in English and science and close to the national average in mathematics. Achievement compared with prior

¹ The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school or the national average. By the end of Year 9, the level attained by each pupil, for example in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. Therefore, the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics at the end of the Year 9 national tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. GCSE grades are also awarded points, as are A-level grades, and these are calculated in the same way, although the number of points awarded for each grade is different, for example GCSE A* is worth 8 points, grade A 7 points, grade B 6 points and so on until grade G which is worth 1 point.

attainment, based on results in tests at the end of Year 6, was above average in English and well above the national average in mathematics and science. Girls did better than boys in English which is line with the national picture. The performance of boys against the national picture was above average. For the first time for several years the performance of girls in mathematics and science has fallen but remains close to the national average. Performance of boys and girls is close to the national average overall. Students' achievement in the first three years is good as a result of the good teaching they receive. In the work seen in all subjects the standards reached by students in Year 9 are in line with national expectations for their age apart from in science where they are above, in English, geography and design and technology where they are well above and in art and design where they are below the expected level. Students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well and make good progress in most subjects.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	57 (56)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	36.7 (34.7)	38.2 (34.7)

There were 184 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The 2003 GCSE examination results were above the national average, as was the case in 2002. Results in English were well above the national average, in science results were below and in mathematics well below. Results of both boys and girls were well above the national average in English, below in science and well below in mathematics. A number of long term absences of experienced staff due to ill health within the mathematics department over the last 18 months is the main contributory factor to the low standards.
- The work of students in the current Year 11 shows that attainment is average for their age except in design and technology, English and geography where it is above and in music where it is well above.
- Progress made by all students currently in Years 7 to 11 is good. This is due to the good level of support they are given in class by their teachers. Very good support is provided by learning support assistants for students with special educational needs both in class and in withdrawal groups. All staff work hard to ensure that the needs of all students are met. As a result, inclusion in the school is good.

Sixth form

- In 2002 and 2003 (results yet to be validated) standards in post-16 examinations are below average. Achievement in Years 12 and 13, when measured against GCSE performance at the end of Year 11, is good. There is a wide variation in subject examination results with English and communication studies performing above national averages.

Commentary

- The achievement of sixth form students within individual subjects has varied widely year on year, depending on the prior attainment of the students who chose to study a particular subject. The entry policy for the sixth form is an inclusive one, which is commendable. The range of courses available to students is reviewed each year to meet, where possible, the interests and career aspirations of the intake. Achievement is good overall. Using the average point scores

achieved by each student in 2002, girls significantly outperformed boys. The achievement of girls is in line with the national average but well below for boys. The gap is wider than that seen nationally.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision has led students' attitudes and relationships to be **very good**. Behaviour is **good**. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and behaviour is good.
- Relationships between staff and students and students' relationships with each other are very good.
- Opportunities for spiritual development through tutor time or in assemblies are limited.

Commentary

7. Students enjoy their work; they are keen to contribute in lessons, especially when they are asked for their views. This was typified in a geography lesson, where students worked together to set rules for living together as a society, imagining themselves marooned on a desert island. Activities like this work so well because relationships between all students and their teachers are very good and they respect each other's opinions. Behaviour is good because the school sets high standards and teachers consistently apply the behaviour management policy. There are good systems in place to support students who display more challenging behaviour. Exclusion is used as a last resort and incidents of exclusion are relatively low.
8. On the pre-inspection questionnaire completed by students, responses indicated there were a high number of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying within the school. In the interviews held with groups of students before and during the inspection week, students expressed very positive views about behaviour in lessons and around the school. They acknowledged that there were incidents of bullying but that these were effectively dealt with by staff. Inspection evidence revealed that the school has a number of very good support systems in place to support students who have experienced actions of bullying and that the views expressed by students on the questionnaire were not a true reflection of what was happening within the school.
9. The way the school promotes students' moral and social development, both within lessons and through the enrichment programme, is good. Cultural development is good. Opportunities for spiritual development are limited as insufficient time for reflection is provided in assemblies and through tutor time.

Attendance

10. Attendance is well above the national average. Students enjoy coming to school as a result of the very positive relationships they have with their teachers. Parents value the benefits that a good education can provide so ensure their children regularly attend. Punctuality is good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	93.8
National data:	91.7

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.6
National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

11. Exclusions are used in accordance with school policy and use is relatively low when compared with statistics produced by the local education authority. Very good support is provided by members of the learning support team who work with disaffected students both prior to and following a period of fixed-term exclusion.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of Students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	960	42	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	9	2	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	12	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	18	0	0

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

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities in the sixth form

The development of students' attitudes is **very good**. Sixth form students are very good role models for the younger students. Behaviour is very good. Attendance rates in the sixth form are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students demonstrate a very strong commitment to their studies.
- The important role the sixth form students have in helping those in the main school.
- The very high levels of attendance at school and in lessons.

Commentary

12. The very good attitudes of students is a major strength of the sixth form. Students demonstrate very positive attitudes to the school, their teachers and their lessons. They take their studies very seriously despite the lack of specialist accommodation available to them. These positive attitudes are reflected in their high levels of attendance and the number who stay on from Year 12 to 13.
13. Students in Years 12 and 13 are good role models for younger students. They play an important part in the life of the main school. They are members of the student support group, part of the school's pastoral system, and work very well as buddies and mentors to students who need support. They work very well alongside teachers in lessons to support the learning of the lower ability students.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Main school

The quality of education provided in the main school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment systems are unsatisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory with particular strengths in the provision of enrichment and extension activities. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. Overall, the match of teaching and support staff to ensure teaching and learning of the curriculum is good. Enrichment activities are very good. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is **good**. The overall quality of learning is **good**. The quality of the assessment of students' work is **unsatisfactory**. In Years 7 to 9 it is unsatisfactory but it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to present ideas interestingly.
- The use of assessment data is unsatisfactory.
- The good range of extra opportunities provided for students with special educational needs.
- Very good relationships between staff and students results in good behaviour in lessons.
- Lessons are usually carefully planned and well structured, but frequently the 45 minute duration does not give students sufficient opportunity for active participation or for consolidating their learning.
- There is insufficient use of ICT by teachers and students in some subjects in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching of students with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 150 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (0.66%)	34 (22.6%)	78 (52%)	36 (24%)	1 (0.66%)	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.

14. The majority of students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire consider they are well taught. Overall, inspectors judge the quality of teaching to be good.
15. Very good teaching is provided for special educational needs students in the mathematics withdrawal groups. Teaching is good in art and design, English, design and technology, history, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and special needs withdrawal groups. It is good in citizenship in Years 7 and 8, ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in physical education in Years 10 and 11. In other areas of the curriculum, teaching is satisfactory.
16. Teachers have good subject knowledge and convey conviction and passion for their subject. They are hard working and use resources well. They know their students well and on this basis provide effective motivation. Teachers' planning usually includes clear targets for lessons and good teaching ensures that students understand them. However, in some instances the relatively short duration of classes leads the teacher's approach to be somewhat rushed. This gives little time for reflection by students or consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson by teachers. In some cases the time taken to reach various parts of the campus reduces the time available for teaching still further. Overall, the positive effect of the good relations between staff and students is enhanced by the predominantly good behaviour of students.

17. Overall, assessment is unsatisfactory, although elements of it are very good. The marking policy has been introduced recently, following extensive involvement of departments, students and parents. As a result the system is followed and understood by all. In Years 7 to 9 there is inconsistent practice in the use of National Curriculum levels in marking work across departments to indicate to students their standards. Students therefore do not always know what standard they have reached and how they can reach the next level. There is very good practice in geography, where assessment contributes positively to students' progress. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is good overall. Students know their actual and predicted grades, and how to improve in relation to the distinct separate elements of each GCSE examination. The exception is in religious education where a GCSE course has only been offered this year. Although not yet fully operative, the school has compiled a database and is in the process of using this to evaluate achievement by students from the point of their entry to the school. Planning shows that the school will then use a recognised system as a way of predicting future student performance. This will enable all staff to monitor the achievement of individuals and groups of students. About 50 per cent of the students in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE course in ICT. There is no provision for the 50 per cent who do not and, as a result, there is no means of accurately informing those students of their attainment in ICT. Whilst the headteacher has isolated assessment as a key focus for the new school improvement plan, there has been little practical impact on assessment practices as yet.
18. Teachers generally take care in ensuring that work is planned at an appropriate level of challenge. In mixed ability classes, work is usually planned successfully to engage high, middle and low attaining students. The school has recently identified an assistant headteacher as co-ordinator for its gifted and talented students. Following training and a student audit, teachers are increasingly aware of the needs of the identified students to ensure that appropriate enrichment and challenge is offered, but this has yet to take widespread effect in practice.
19. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support learning of individual students with special educational needs. A positive learning environment within the classroom and in the individual learning unit is rapidly established which helps the students to develop their confidence. Teachers have a copy of the special educational needs register and have access to general information and advice. Teachers use this well and often refer to their own copies of students' individual educational plans. Where teaching assistants work with the classroom teacher the learning is particularly good.
20. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection 10 per cent of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory and this is one of the main reasons why standards are currently satisfactory. Unsatisfactory teaching is now less than 1 per cent and, as a result, achievement of all students is good. Planning of lessons is good; there have been some improvements in marking and in setting of homework. Whilst problems regarding the nature and use of assessment remain, this is a matter of priority for the headteacher. A culture for the sharing of good practice is now established in several areas and particularly in subject team leaders' meetings.

The curriculum

The school provides a **satisfactory** range of curricular opportunities. Enrichment of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, is **very good**. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Accommodation restricts the curriculum which can be offered in some areas.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements in respect of aspects of ICT in Years 10 and 11, citizenship, sex education and the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
- Vocational provision in Years 10 and 11 is good.

- There are very good opportunities for enrichment through a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, which enable students to broaden their interests and develop wider horizons.
- There is a good ratio of computers to students but problems in room allocation restrict usage other than in the ICT area.
- The humanities programme has some deficiencies, including long periods of time between the teaching of the separate subject elements in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

21. Shortages of specialist accommodation have a significant effect on restricting the curriculum in areas such as design and technology, where there is no provision for electronics. There remains insufficient timetabled availability of specialist accommodation for other subject areas to develop the students' skills in ICT. The lack of common space, particularly of a dining area, restricts the opportunity to develop personal study and social skills.
22. The school's planned teaching time meets requirements, except in history where the time allocated to teach the GCSE course is inadequate to deliver the course effectively. However, achievement is adversely affected by the considerable time lost each week owing to problems of movement on the school site as a result of unsatisfactory accommodation. The situation is further compounded by the relatively large number of teaching periods per week.
23. Statutory requirements are not met in several areas. There is a lack of planning to provide a coherent, whole school approach to the teaching of citizenship. In particular, there is no discernible provision for students in Year 9. For the 50 per cent of students who do not take GCSE ICT in Years 10 and 11, their progress is not co-ordinated or assessed and ICT National Curriculum requirements in this area are therefore not being fulfilled. Students in the current Year 11 have not received sex education lessons since Year 9. The school does not comply with the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for each student.
24. A key strength of the school is the rich variety of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities provided for all students. Participation rates are good and the activities offered make a significant contribution to improving confidence levels of students and developing their cultural appreciation. All departments organise lunch time or after school clubs offering a good selection of activities covering sports, the arts, languages and other activities such as chess, homework clubs and GCSE 'Bite Size' activities. Performance at local and national level in sports and drama is good. This wealth of provision helps to develop constructive relationships between staff and students. This is particularly so in activities such as language-based exchange visits to Europe and shared challenges such as staff and students walking the Dales Way together.
25. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 introduces some innovative approaches to meeting the needs of individual students, particularly for those who find the full range of GCSE courses too challenging. Vocational courses are offered by the local college. Students attending these courses may work towards NVQ or equivalent qualifications in catering, childcare, construction, hairdressing and motor vehicle maintenance.
26. The way in which the humanities course is planned has some weaknesses. In Year 7, the main elements of religious education, geography and history follow each other in succession. The long period of time before students recommence study in each area has a negative impact on recall and achievement. In Years 8 and 9 each group has two teachers. Whilst this arrangement enables individual subjects to be taught on a more regular basis the negative impact on recall and achievement remains. In Years 10 and 11 all students are required to take an integrated humanities GCSE course. Students can then choose to study geography, history or religious education as separate GCSE subjects. In the context of overall breadth and balance in Years 10 and 11, this provision could be considered duplication. The school is reviewing this provision within an overall framework of making changes to the curriculum from September 2005.

Sixth form

The overall quality of education in the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **good**. Curriculum provision is **satisfactory** with the opportunities for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, being **very good**. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the sixth form curriculum are **unsatisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **good**. The assessment of students' work and the extent to which assessment information is used is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good.
- Students' use of ICT to support their independent learning is limited.
- Monitoring of students' progress is largely subject-based and individual staff do not have access to a broader-based measure of their overall achievements.

Commentary

27. Students consider the teaching they receive is both supportive and challenging. In the subjects inspected, no unsatisfactory teaching or excellent teaching was observed. Teaching was judged to be good overall with some very good features. The main strength of the teaching is the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. The commitment and hard work of staff and their willingness to offer additional help outside lessons is a further important factor. They approach the subject content confidently. They develop questions which challenge students' thinking and plan lessons and schemes of work which successfully build on prior attainment in a positive and relevant way. Most teachers convey high and achievable expectations to students, which promotes a positive and mature approach to learning. This enthusiasm for learning has a good impact on the progress made by all students.
28. Students take care with the presentation of their work. Files and notes are well organised and can be used effectively for revision. In work undertaken independently of the teachers, students' skills in self-study and research are good. Their use of ICT is under-developed primarily as a result of restricted access to resources.
29. Assessment practice in the sixth form is satisfactory. Considerable emphasis is placed on knowledge of the students' abilities and potential acquired through the good personal relationships between staff and students. Teachers mark almost all the work of students according to the agreed criteria and marking schemes of examining bodies. Students who underachieve in relation to their targets are interviewed by pastoral staff and are given guidelines on how to improve the standard of their work. Detailed information on students' prior attainment at GCSE is provided to subject staff, but staff do not make use of other nationally recognised systems to predict AS and A-level targets.

Curriculum

Overall, curriculum provision in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of subjects offered to students.
- Overall, provision of general studies and a wide range of extra-curricular activities add value to programmes of study.
- Shortage of accommodation restricts opportunities for curriculum developments, private study and social activities.

Commentary

30. More than 20 AS courses are offered in the sixth form. There is considerable flexibility within this overall provision, resulting in a good degree of student choice at GCE Advanced and AS level. Within this pattern, three AVCE courses are offered. These are in health and social care, in travel and tourism and in ICT. With the inclusion of vocational programmes, this represents satisfactory progress in planning and implementing a 14-19 strategy for all students following either a more traditional pathway or a mainly vocational one.
31. As in the main school, students derive great benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular activities, which adds richness and depth to their overall experience. There are good links with local businesses and students on vocational and other courses benefit from work placements.
32. Accommodation for use by the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There are severe problems of access to rooms for independent study or for use of ICT equipment for students. Both this and a lack of common space substantially restrict students' social and academic development. Teachers make every effort to be available to students but the lack of accommodation for tutorials or confidential advice is similarly restricting.
33. All students in the sixth form follow a general studies AS course and key skills programme in addition to a personal, social and health programme. These courses enrich and considerably broaden their general educational experience.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety are **satisfactory**. The quality of advice, support and guidance is **satisfactory**. The school values students' views and the response given is at a **satisfactory** level.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and welfare arrangements are unsatisfactory at lunchtimes as a result of unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good, although weakened by the school's lack of access to an educational psychologist.
- Good pastoral care and support programmes are in place for all students.
- Academic monitoring of students' progress by tutors is inconsistent.
- Health and safety procedures are firmly established.
- Systems for consulting students and responding to their views are yet to be formalised.

Commentary

34. The welfare and health needs of students are not properly met at lunchtimes. Current arrangements encourage a 'fast food' approach to eating which is not in the best interests of students' welfare. The school does not have full kitchen facilities. Whilst the quality of food available to the students is good, students are not able to purchase a full meal and have to rely on fast food. This, coupled with the lack of any dining area, leads to students having to eat standing up or sitting in covered ways. Despite the very best efforts of the governors who have campaigned relentlessly on a local and wider level, the school is unable to offer students the acceptable social norms of a place to sit and eat lunch. Lunchtimes are not pleasant social occasions, they are episodes in the school day where students good naturedly queue for food and then search for somewhere to eat it.
35. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. The special needs register clearly identifies individual students' needs and very detailed Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are used by subject teachers when planning lessons. Parents and students are fully and properly involved in all aspects of identification of needs and subsequent planning and review of

support. For over a year the school has been unable to gain access to the input to these review meetings from the Educational Psychological service. As a result, the school has restricted access to outside resources.

36. The pastoral care system, particularly in Years 7 and 8, is good. Students are happy that there are staff they can turn to for help if needed. Good support is provided for students on an individual basis from a trained counsellor. Students in Years 12 and 13 also provide support, friendship and a listening ear for the younger students.
37. Systems for monitoring students' academic progress by tutors are underdeveloped. There is a lack of consistency in the way in which they are applied between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Whilst tutors in Years 7 to 9 have a broad overview of how well students are learning, this is not based upon reliable data resulting from assessments undertaken in individual subject areas. In Years 10 and 11 good use is made of predicted and target grades, but the use of data to check on individual progress is limited.
38. Health and safety procedures are firmly established. The school takes very swift action to address health and safety issues as they arise, particularly in relation to building work undertaken by external contractors. Problems relating to the health and safety of both students and staff moving along a temporary pathway, constructed as a result of a new building, were a high priority for the headteacher and governors. As a result, the pathway is now safe to use.
39. Systems for consulting students in Years 7 to 11 and acting on their views are satisfactory. Opportunities for formal consultation have been increased by the current headteacher through discussions with various groups of students. Students in Years 12 and 13 have been trained to establish a school council in Years 7 to 11 and this will improve the range of opportunities available for students to influence the direction of their school.

Sixth form

The quality of advice, support and guidance is **satisfactory**. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships between students and staff promote good achievement.
- The use of data to advise students on the progress they are making is at an early stage of development.
- Students have their own school council which enables them to express their views to senior managers in a formal and constructive way.

Commentary

40. Students feel well supported and the quality of guidance they are given as they work through their individual courses is satisfactory. Students have ready access to tutors which supports their overall development. Monitoring of students' academic progress by tutors and the use of data to help them improve are both at an early stage of development. Students do receive regular feedback on their performance against exam criteria. During interviews with the inspection team they said they are encouraged to fulfill their full potential.
41. The sixth form council is well established and views expressed by students are taken seriously by the leadership team. Complaints about the lack of social and study areas are justified and the students are kept fully informed of the action the governing body is taking to address their concerns.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents who are very pleased with the school and the level of information they receive about the progress their children make. The school has established **good** relationships with other secondary schools, higher and further education providers and the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is highly thought of and a popular choice for parents and students.
- Parents provide very good financial support to improve the facilities available within the school.
- The quality of information and the regular opportunities to meet with teachers enable parents to be fully involved in their child's learning.
- Links with primary schools to improve continuity of learning between Years 6 and 7 are limited.
- Strong partnership arrangements with local higher and further education providers benefit students, staff development and recruitment.
- The school buildings and swimming pool are well used and valued community facilities.

Commentary

42. John Colet is a popular choice for parents, both locally and further afield. So much so that there are more requests for admission than there are places. The parents' association, the Friends of Colet, raises thousands of pounds each year to improve facilities available for students.
43. Parents regularly get to know how their son or daughter is progressing through interim assessment sheets, the annual report and two organised parents' meetings. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents, some expressed dissatisfaction with the timing and organisation of the evening meetings. They did acknowledge that they could telephone the school or meet staff at other times if they had a particular concern or enquiry. The special needs co-ordinator and learning support staff make very good contact with primary schools and the available support agencies to determine students' needs and attainments. There is very good provision to ensure that each student has a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school. Parents are well informed of the progress their children make through regular reviews and at other times upon request.
44. Links between subject staff at John Colet and their local primary colleagues are limited. With the exception of physical education, there are few curricular links with the main primary schools and this does not promote continuity of learning between Years 6 and 7.
45. The school has developed strong links with a local further education college which has resulted in vocational courses being offered to students in Years 10 and 11. Good links with universities and other higher education providers are providing additional training opportunities for those intending to enter the profession and for John Colet staff. Over the course of each academic year the school is involved in training potential teachers. The training provided has been recognised by the local education authority as being of high quality. The school has recruited staff directly from these courses which has strengthened the range of teacher expertise.
46. Facilities at the school are used regularly by the local community. John Colet is a focal point for a range of activities, particularly swimming as the school pool is the only one available within the town.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Main school

Leadership and management of the school is **good**. Leadership of the school is satisfactory and management good. The leadership of the headteacher is **good** and that of her key staff **satisfactory**. The effectiveness of management is **good**. Whilst governance has many strong features, it is currently **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear direction and strong leadership are provided by the headteacher.
- Governors provide experienced and effective support and challenge to the school.
- The governing body is prominent in its shaping of the vision and values of the school, but does not fulfill its statutory duties in several key respects.
- The senior management team comprises individuals with a wide range of talents and proven managerial ability.
- Clear procedures for line management and the monitoring of teaching and learning have been established by the headteacher but have yet to take full effect.
- Best value procedures are well established.

Commentary

47. The headteacher is providing strong, focused and pro-active leadership. Since her arrival last September she has developed and articulated clear priorities for the next stage in the development of the school. The headteacher has high expectations of both staff and students and they have started to share her vision and work towards its realisation. Overall, the improvement planning process has been sharply focused by the headteacher and it provides a good framework for improving standards. Staff feel valued and recognise that their hard work is appreciated. Staff development needs are effectively managed and met.
48. The chair of governors has a very good working relationship with the principal. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and themselves well. Governors are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They are effectively involved in both strategic planning and monitoring. They have a good knowledge of the school, make regular visits during the school day and frequently take part in staff development programmes. The new governor for special educational needs has established close and effective links with the school and the co-ordinator.
49. Governors are provided with comprehensive performance and financial data by the school staff to enable them to make informed judgments and decisions. As a group they have worked with energy and commitment with the new headteacher towards redefining and agreeing the vision and values that will sustain the school in the future. Through their regular meetings and their frequent and helpful presence in the school, they are beginning to offer challenge to senior managers in a constructive and helpful way. Their robust and supportive approach is a major strength of the school. Set against this, they have not fulfilled several of their statutory duties, namely that of ensuring that the school has a daily act of collective worship, that the requirements for the teaching of sex education and citizenship education throughout Years 9-11 are met and that statutory requirements for providing ICT for all students in Years 10 and 11 are met.
50. Leadership at other levels is at least satisfactory. Most curriculum and pastoral team leaders provide effective leadership of their teams, working hard to improve standards and implement the school's strategic agenda. In some subjects such as science, physical education and English and in special educational needs, leadership has some very strong features. In other areas there is a less well-defined focus on raising standards. In humanities there is a lack of continuity and progression in collaborative teaching and learning. Citizenship in Years 9, 10 and 11 lacks planning to provide a coherent, whole school approach to the teaching of the subject.

The policy of appointing some younger teachers to the level of subject team leaders has broadened the range of talents within this group and encouraged a more open approach to the sharing of ideas and examples of good practice.

51. Management at all levels is good. Performance management has been introduced effectively with clear procedures and strategies for monitoring teaching and learning and linking outcomes to improving standards. However, these are recent procedures and the full impact and implications remain to be drawn together and related to a school-wide policy for teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning by curriculum team leaders is not informed by a whole-school teaching and learning policy and, as a result, it is difficult for them to make clear evaluations of what works and what is less effective. Despite this, there are various opportunities in place for staff to share best practice to improve standards.
52. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. The senior management team has been extended and since September, through the headteacher's lead, they are progressively working more as a team with a stronger practical focus on leadership. A new strategy of development planning is a strength, focusing primarily on teaching, learning and achievement. Despite the examples of non-compliance with statutory requirements, governors are a real strength of the school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,894,942	Balance from previous year	(49,063)
Total expenditure	2,995,573	Balance carried forward to the next	(51,588)
Expenditure per student	2,925		

53. The strategic use of resources is good. Specific grants, for example those for special educational needs or for staff training, are used appropriately. Despite the constraints on expenditure, the school is good at matching spending to educational priorities. The deficit carried forward from last year of £51,000 is largely due to urgent and necessary spending on accommodation. The chair of the finance and general purposes committee has worked very closely with the bursar to ensure the school follows the principles of providing 'best value'. In general, governors ensure that a proper balance is struck between providing a cost-effective staffing structure and the need to provide adequate learning resources. Financial administration is good and audit reports testify to this point.

Value for money

54. Taking into account:
- the amount of money spent per student in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form;
 - the good achievement of students throughout the school;
 - the good behaviour and very good attitudes of students;
 - the effectiveness of management, which is good;
 - the overall satisfactory leadership;
 - the overall good quality of teaching leading to effective learning;
 - the satisfactory curriculum with a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities;
- the school provides good value for money and the sixth form is cost effective.

Sixth form

Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory and management good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear and widely understood rationale for the sixth form and the curriculum offered.
- Staff initiatives in teaching and curriculum development are encouraged by the head of sixth form.
- There are well organised systems to monitor individual student performance.
- Structured opportunities for teachers to share best practice are limited.

Commentary

55. Since the time of the last inspection, the head of sixth form has further strengthened curricular opportunities through the development and introduction of vocational courses. Annual reviews of the curriculum are undertaken to match the needs of the students joining Year 12.
56. The head of sixth form concentrates on developing a close working relationship with colleagues so that developmental ideas may be encouraged. As a result of encouraging staff initiatives, sociology has been recently introduced and psychology is being considered as a further development. As a result of collaborative developmental working, courses in the areas of English and drama were recently revised to make them more appealing and relevant to students.
57. The head of sixth form brings a conscientious and committed approach to his management role. Systems are well organised and thorough, although procedures to monitor individual student performance against prior attainment at GCSE have only recently been introduced.
58. As in the main school, the monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching is part of the performance management policy. Whilst best practice is frequently discussed in departmental and subject leader meetings, the opportunities for teachers to share best practice at a specifically sixth form level are not provided on a regular basis.
59. The school has been successful in recent years in attracting a higher proportion of its Year 11 students to stay on into the sixth form, although the percentage is still lower than in similar schools. Good relationships with staff result in good student course completion and staying on rates.
60. Governors play an active role in contributing to the planning and monitoring processes in the sixth form and offer valuable opportunities to enrich the experience of students by practical involvement in the world of work programme.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Workplace learning

Provision for workplace learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vocational programme organised with the further education college is very effective in providing workplace opportunities for students of all abilities.
- Students are very satisfied with the work experience programme they follow in Year 10.
- Too few subjects build on the work completed by students as part of the work experience programme.
- Workplace learning is integrated successfully into the health and social care programme.

Commentary

61. Workplace learning opportunities in Years 10 to 13 are effectively led and managed. Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 are offered a good additional range of vocational courses in partnership with the local further education college. These provide well for students who wish to extend their work experience programme and integrate it with a course with qualifications linked to their career aspirations. The school has responded very positively to the opportunities created through the 14-19 flexible curriculum initiative. As a result, approximately 60 students are involved in the programme across Years 10 and 11. The school provides good information about the programme as part of its options programme in Year 9. An additional strength is that this programme is offered to all students irrespective of ability. External evaluation undertaken by the Department for Education and Skills stated that students are very positive about these courses, the related work experience and the opportunity they have to study at the college.
62. Students in Year 10 are provided with a work experience placement organised by the local Education Business Partnership. Students are well prepared for this programme by the school. The majority of evaluations completed by students at the end of the placement indicate high levels of satisfaction and clear educational benefit. Most placements are fully compatible with career aspirations. Students are well supported in learning from and reflecting on their work experience through the tutor programme. Several have won awards for the high quality of their work and their written accounts of the placement experience. However, most subject areas in the main school do not build into curriculum plans opportunities for students to use this work within the wider curriculum. As a result, students do not have the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained from their work placements to extend subject knowledge within the lessons.
63. The health and social care course in the sixth form is very popular. Vocational elements of the course are fully integrated with a week of work experience to broaden students' understanding of the vocational opportunities and pathways available to them. Effective links have been developed with local hospitals, often supported by parents who work there. It is recognised, however, that these opportunities are limited in the length of time students spend in the placement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Overall, provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Consistently good teaching throughout the department is leading to good achievement.
- As a result of new leadership improvements are being rapidly made.
- The enthusiasm of teachers ensures very good attitudes and motivation of all students.
- The 45 minute lesson structure is having a negative impact on the range of activities in lessons and this, coupled with the restricted access to ICT, is restricting the learning opportunities for students.

Commentary

64. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average. These very good standards apply to both boys and girls. Work seen during the inspection reflects this high attainment. At GCSE, results in 2003 were well above the national average for English language and above average for English literature. Girls performed extremely well in English language. Again, work seen during the inspection confirms such standards and also indicates good achievement by all students.
65. In speaking and listening, by Year 9, students listen well to each other and are keen to participate in discussions. By Year 11 there is increasing use of emphasis and intonation for effect and all but the weakest students are able to structure longer contributions well.
66. Teaching is good overall and very good in around a third of lessons. No teaching is less than good. This is a considerable improvement on the previous inspection. Lessons are very well planned and structured so that the very good range of activities builds effectively on previous work. A typical lesson moves from a clear explanation of objectives to lively class questioning, to independent or group work, followed by a summary of what has been learned. Within this overall structure, questioning is usually very productive with a good balance of open and targeted questions ensuring that a high proportion of students are actively involved. The good quality of questioning also allows teachers to evaluate students' retention of understanding from previous lessons.
67. The use made of assessment data in Years 7 to 9 is under-developed. As a result, teachers are not able at present to set individual improvement targets for students. In Years 10 and 11 assessment practices are satisfactory and students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve,
68. The relationships between teachers and students are very good and the resulting ethos in lessons encourages students both to attempt work they might find difficult and also ask questions themselves to aid understanding. There is a genuine enthusiasm and enjoyment displayed in lessons and the accompanying very good motivation is an important factor in students' achievement. The only weaknesses that occur in teaching are attributable to the length of the lessons. The department has adapted as fully as possible to the recommended three part lesson structure but, on occasions, this means that either the independent work or the final summary has to be rushed. The curriculum is very inclusive and ensures that all students of whatever ability receive the same range of experiences in the subject. Students'

use of ICT is hindered by difficulties of access to equipment which places a further limit on their learning opportunities in lessons.

69. Leadership and management of the English department are very good. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been rewritten to make them as suitable as possible for the school timetable. There is a real strength in the consistency of teaching in the department and the enthusiastic approach of teachers is indicative of good morale. A high proportion of teachers are relatively new to the school but the department works as a cohesive team. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement in the quality of teaching, standards of attainment and the quality of group work in lessons.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Students' language and literacy skills are good and support learning across the curriculum. They are able to read a range of texts at a suitable level and write in a variety of forms for different purposes. Skills in punctuation, spelling and grammar are generally good.
71. The provision for the development of students' literacy is good. The role of literacy co-ordinator is currently vacant, though good practices have been established throughout the school. There have been two whole-school training days on literacy and four other early evening training opportunities for all staff. There is a focus each half term on a particular aspect of literacy such as sentence structure.
72. Teaching of literacy is good in all subjects. There are many opportunities for extended writing and in mathematics these are well supported by the use of writing frames. In all subjects there is an emphasis on extending vocabulary and care is taken to define and discuss words that have a particular subject focus.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all abilities achieve well.
- GCSE results, particularly of boys, declined in 2003.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject.
- Students show positive attitudes in lessons.
- There is a need for more time and guidance for oral work.
- The teaching of languages is conscientiously managed by the head of department.

Commentary

73. In 2002 GCSE results were above average in French but a little below in German. The results for 2003 show a decline in relation to the previous year with German, in particular, well below the national average. A far wider ability range of students are entered for the examination in German than is the case in most other schools and this is one of the main reasons why standards overall are low. An additional influence on results in 2003 was the high turnover of staff. This situation has now improved. Girls significantly outperform boys, particularly in German. The department has invested a great deal of time and effort to improve boys' performance but further progress is needed. The standards of work seen during the inspection are similar to national averages. Students of all abilities currently achieve well as a result of effectively planned teaching.
74. By the age of 14 standards are in line with national averages. Students achieve well in developing their writing skills and using different tenses. Teachers have high expectations and use their fluent French and German regularly in class to provide good models of pronunciation. Lower ability students achieve particularly well in German as a result of carefully structured tasks that meet their needs.

75. Teaching and learning are usually good throughout the school. Lessons begin with clear objectives and use a variety of activities together with ICT to extend the range of practical activities. Praise, encouragement and support for individual students result in positive relationships and cooperative attitudes. Occasionally, however, there is too much emphasis on copying and writing resulting in limited opportunities for carefully structured practice in speaking the foreign language. Homework is regularly set and well marked.
76. Assessment practice is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and procedures to assess progress from year to year are being developed. Students are given feedback on how they can improve through the marking of their work and oral feedback. At present, only a small number of students have detailed written targets to help them identify specific areas for improvement.
77. The team of language staff is well led. Priorities are clearly set and the team is conscientiously managed. This is an efficiently organised department which is increasingly involving all staff in establishing a trend towards improved student levels of attainment.
78. At the time of the last inspection the subject was taught by a number of non-specialists. This would have had an impact on standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. All teachers are now subject specialists. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between teachers and students are very good, providing a positive learning environment in lessons.
- Students have a positive attitude to work so time in lessons is used effectively.
- Leadership provides a strong drive for improvement in standards.
- Teachers plan well to increase the level of challenge as lessons progress.
- The 45 minute lesson makes it difficult to successfully complete a starter activity, a main learning activity and an effective final session.
- The more able Year 7 students, taught in mixed ability groups, are not always sufficiently challenged.
- There is good communication between learning support assistants and teachers so students with special educational needs make good progress.

Commentary

79. Standards achieved in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are close to the national average. This performance represents satisfactory achievement for the students at the school. There has been a significant decline in GCSE results since 2001. Results in 2003 were well below the national average. The achievement of the students who took the examination in 2003 was unsatisfactory. The staffing problems that led to these results have now been resolved. At the time of the inspection standards and achievement were satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11.
80. Students with special educational needs make good progress whether they are taught in the Independent Learning Centre or within lessons. There is good communication between teachers and teaching assistants who are active in lessons, supporting the learning of students well. In mixed ability classes in Year 7 the most able students are sometimes not challenged sufficiently.
81. Teaching and learning are good, although achievement of students is currently satisfactory. Since January 2003 there have been a number of long term teacher absences with the result that classes have been taught by visiting staff. A strong characteristic of all lessons is the very good relationships between teachers and students. These provide a supportive environment

where students feel free to take risks in their thinking, knowing that if they make an error they will receive good support from their teacher. In the best lessons there is a very good pace to the activities. Teachers skilfully judge the right time to move the class on to the next stage of their learning. As a result, the concentration of students is maintained. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in most lessons they use this knowledge to plan sequences of activities that develop the understanding of students systematically, increasing the level of challenge as the lesson progresses. The interactive whiteboards are used to provide clear, visual images to help students learn. Practical activities are used well to extend the variety of learning opportunities in lessons.

82. Most lessons begin with a starter activity that successfully engages and involves all students in the class. The final part of a lesson is usually spent with a whole class session reviewing the learning that has taken place. The effectiveness of these final sessions is variable. The sessions are good when the learning objectives for the lesson have been specified clearly and when they are given sufficient time. It is difficult for teachers to include a good starter session, a substantial learning activity and an effective final session in a 45 minute lesson.
83. Assessment is satisfactory. Books are marked regularly and often contain feedback for students that help them make the next steps in their learning. Students are encouraged to make their own judgements about their progress and have recently been encouraged to set themselves targets for improvement. As students develop the skills to write specific action points then this introduction will prove very helpful to future learning.
84. Leadership and management are both good. The subject team leader has been in post a short time and has already made a significant impact. The rest of the department is keen to support her vision and enthusiasm to improve standards. The departmental improvement plan identifies priorities well. It is clearly written and sensibly costed. On the basis of the plan the department has been generously funded. The new equipment and materials have been efficiently catalogued and are being used well.
85. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are similar. The level of resourcing has improved. Accommodation has been greatly improved. The mixed ability teaching in Year 7 continues to fail to challenge the most able. Under the new subject team leader and with the commitment and talent of the other staff the department now has the capacity for rapid improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. The satisfactory level of mathematical ability displayed by all students allows them to apply their knowledge to a satisfactory level in other subjects. They can substitute numbers in formulae, plot and interpret graphs and handle data accurately. They can draw sensible conclusions from tables of numerical information and can use measuring skills confidently. Mental arithmetic skills are less well developed.

SCIENCE

Overall, provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and students share very good relationships.
- The team of teachers is very experienced with very good subject knowledge.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the achievement of individual students.
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are good.
- The achievement of some higher attaining students in Year 9 is restricted.
- Lessons are well planned following agreed set procedures.

Commentary

87. The attainment of students in national tests in 2003 at the end of Year 9 was close to the national average. The trend has been upwards, in general, since the last inspection. In GCSE examinations the number of students gaining grades A*-C was just below the national average. However, the trend has been upwards over the past few years. Girls attain higher grades than boys at GCSE.
88. Inspection findings are that standards are just above national expectations in Year 9 and close to national expectations in Year 11. The students enter the school at the national average and achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of some higher attaining students, especially in Year 9, is not as good as it could be. This is due to the lack, at times, of suitably extending and challenging topics in the mixed ability groups. Students with special educational needs are well supported by both teachers and teaching assistants and achieve well.
89. The teaching and learning are satisfactory. The lessons are well planned with teachers employing methods that ensure the lessons have good pace. In the most successful lessons the effective planning ensures that the students are fully engaged and challenged by setting suitable activities. The students' attitude to science is good and they are confident to ask and answer questions. The relationships between teachers and students are very good and this leads to a pleasant cooperative atmosphere where the teachers can concentrate on teaching. The teachers use a wide range of teaching and learning styles. The introduction of computer-linked projectors in all laboratories has enlivened the lessons by allowing the teachers to demonstrate high quality diagrams. However, there is a lack of whole class use of computers for activities such as research due to the difficulty of booking a suitable room. Some lessons are rather rushed, especially when students are asked to perform practical activities, and when this happens teachers are unable to gauge how well the students have learned. Some Year 10 groups are large and this makes the task of engaging all students difficult for teachers.
90. The management of the department is good. The very experienced head of department leads a team of very experienced specialist teachers with very good subject knowledge. The teachers are well supported by an efficient group of technicians who ensure all the required resources are available in lessons. The department has successfully introduced relevant and suitable courses throughout Years 7 to 11. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. There is a satisfactory vision of what can be improved further within the departmental development plan. The department needs to develop procedures to enable all staff to be able, amongst other things, to identify those students who are underachieving on an individual basis so that support can be more effectively targeted. Within the department there are many examples of good practice but it is inconsistent. There is a lack of formal monitoring in the use made of computers, marking and expectations. Accommodation in science is now good. Each teacher has his or her own laboratory and some of these rooms have been refurbished well.
91. The improvement since the last inspection is good. The standards are higher throughout, the progress made by students is better and there were no instances of poor behaviour seen.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above national average GCSE results were gained in 2003.
- Achievement is good overall; the majority of students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Cross-curricular ICT is insufficiently co-ordinated and assessed; not all students are guaranteed access to the full National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

- There has been good improvement since the last inspection, but recent staff changes and limited accommodation are currently constraining further progress.
- The results of assessments are not regularly shared with students and not adequately linked to National Curriculum levels and level descriptors in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

92. Overall standards in ICT follow a trend of steady improvement and are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. Recent GCSE results were well above the national average for all schools. Achievement is good overall and is largely satisfactory in Key Stage 3 with some very good achievement by individual students. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 4 are good. Very good achievement is evident in coursework folders, but achievement in some lessons is just satisfactory. The majority of students throughout the school are working up to their individual capabilities and continually increasing their skills in the subject. Most students in all years have good attitudes to learning and many make good use of home computers to extend their knowledge of office applications.
93. Advanced use of ICT is evident in all years. For example, Year 7 students quickly understood how to design input and output sequences in a lesson using flowchart software. Students are paired according to their skills and this aids inclusive learning which is important as students' capabilities cover a wide range. Most students in Year 9 followed the design process well when designing and printing leaflets to advertise a local hotel. The very best finished brochures had well chosen fonts, a good balance of text and pictures, and were thoughtfully colour coordinated. Years 10 and 11 examination course students have a good understanding of a range of computer applications, including word-processing, database, spreadsheet and publishing software. Students showed an above average understanding of operating systems when working on GCSE coursework and designing appropriate computer products for leisure clubs and local companies.
94. Teaching and learning are good overall, never less than satisfactory, and there is some very good teaching in Key Stage 3. Teachers plan and present the subject with enthusiasm. Very good use is made of new technology, for example interactive whiteboards. The GCSE courses are generally well planned and delivered, but very recent staff changes are resulting in some lack of continuity. Full-time teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements and assessment criteria and this contributes significantly to students' learning.
95. The ICT Key Stage 3 curriculum is taught in an interesting way, through varied teaching strategies and not entirely through practical computer work. There are discrete ICT lessons for all students up to the end of Year 9. The use of question and answer sessions is very good in the best lessons, but is underdeveloped in others. In some lessons evaluative lesson conclusions are insufficiently used to aid learning and promote progression. In the best lessons aims and objectives are clearly stated, there is good class management and high expectations of students' work and behaviour. In Key Stage 3 lessons there is insufficient ongoing assessment that is linked to National Curriculum levels and descriptors and shared with students. There is insufficient focus on whole class teaching and there are some weaknesses in classroom management in a minority of Key Stage 4 lessons.
96. Leadership and management of core ICT is currently satisfactory. Overall, progress has been good as standards, teaching, and schemes of work all show considerable improvement. Current department plans identify appropriate and clear priorities for further progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

97. Although the school is placing strong emphasis on developing meaningful ICT experiences for all students, including post-16 students in all subject areas, the quality of cross-curricular ICT is very variable, but satisfactory overall. Students use ICT effectively and achieve well in English, mathematics, science, music and business studies. However, in art and design, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history and geography the use of ICT is insufficiently developed. In these areas, inevitably, students' competence and potential achievement is

reduced. Although resources are improving, there are insufficient resources in most subject areas. Subject teachers find access to computer rooms difficult during the school day. The leadership and management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Since September 2003 the school has made every effort to recruit an ICT co-ordinator. This inability to recruit has resulted in a lack of co-ordination and the assessment of ICT in other subjects. Students who do not take examination courses have no guaranteed access to the full National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11. There are some extra-curricular opportunities and facilities in subject areas show continual improvement, but more resources are needed to fully meet requirements. Accommodation and access for cross-curricular ICT in Years 10 and 11 have not significantly improved since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

Nine teachers, led by a head of humanities, deliver the humanities course throughout the main school. All students take a GCSE integrated humanities examination at the end of Year 11. In 2003 53 per cent achieved grades A*-C. These results are significantly above the national average. Similar results were achieved in 2002. This course was not inspected as part of this inspection. In addition, students have the option of taking geography, history and religious education as GCSE subjects. The inspectors with responsibility for these subjects judge the leadership and management of humanities as **satisfactory**.

Geography

Overall provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative teaching leads to a high level of interest from students.
- Students work hard and have positive attitudes to the subject.
- The subject specialist for geography manages the subject very effectively.
- Standards seen are above average and achievement is good.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and management have improved since the previous inspection.

Commentary

98. Standards attained in the teacher-assessed unit at the end of Year 9 are well above average and students achieve well. They use maps and graphs well at an early stage and their competence increases so that by Year 9 they can explain, for example, the effects of farming on rainforest environments. By Year 10 students can, for example, analyse and evaluate well the causes and effects of flooding. By Year 11, standards are above average and achievement is good because students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding, for example in interpreting maps and photographs.
99. Teaching and learning are good because teachers employ a wide variety of interesting teaching styles and cater for a wide variety of learning styles. This means that students set about their work enthusiastically. In a Year 11 lesson, a challenging task was set for students to navigate across a map. This was well received due to the skilful approach of the teacher and the interesting and clear resources used. However, in a Year 9 lesson teaching and learning were not so effective as not all students were able to pay attention. This was because some were writing while others were listening and responding to the teacher. Teachers comment extensively and constructively on students' work so that they understand the marking and how best they can improve. They find their teachers willing to help if necessary outside lesson time.
100. Management of the subject by the geography co-ordinator is good as a student assessment portfolio which contains the full range of assessed pieces of work has been introduced. This is beginning to be used to help students understand better the level they are at, why they have achieved it and so how they can improve.

101. The department works well as a team despite the difficulties with unsatisfactory accommodation and problems this produces with access to resources and ICT.
102. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because teaching and learning have improved, there is more attention to geographical skills and geography is now an option at GCSE to be examined for the first time in 2004.

History

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good with examples of very good practice.
- Good relationships between students and teachers result in good achievement.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for the GCSE course.
- There is good management by the subject specialist.
- There has been insufficient development of the system for assessing and monitoring students' work.

Commentary

103. Students achieved high standards in teacher-assessed tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003. This represents good achievement in terms of the students' standards on entry to the school. High standards are also evident in work seen in lessons. Evidence from lessons observed and work scrutinised in Years 10 and 11 indicates standards are in line with national expectations and all students make good progress and achieve well.
104. In history, this success results from good, very well informed teaching, a good range of teaching styles and genuine interest and enthusiasm for the subject from students. However, standards in history are currently satisfactory as a result of the curriculum arrangements in Years 7 to 9. Teachers plan their lessons well, maintain a good pace and set appropriate levels of challenge, thus ensuring good learning. Although most students achieve well, insufficient notice is taken of the different needs of those students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented. Students' learning is also aided by their ability to work well in pairs and small groups. Relationships are positive between teachers and students, with teachers willingly giving time in and outside lessons in order to assist learning.
105. Teachers mark work thoroughly and constructively and this enables students to identify what they can do to improve. The management of the subject by the history co-ordinator is good. As a result, achievement is good and standards are rising. Teachers within this area work effectively as a team to provide students with a wide range of learning opportunities both within and outside lessons. Learning is extended as a result of the wide range of trips and visits planned for each year group.
106. Resources available for teachers and students to use are good. Unsatisfactory accommodation has for many years had a negative effect on morale and the management of resources and has resulted in insufficient space for large classes. It is anticipated that a new development, due to open in March 2004, will resolve these weaknesses. There have been many improvements since the last inspection, notably with regard to new schemes of work, resources, visits and access to information technology and curriculum opportunities in Years 10 and 11. The introduction of GCSE history has proved very popular but the time allocated is inadequate and restricts the effective delivery of the course, resulting in standards which are satisfactory.

Religious education

Overall provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching on the GCSE religious education course is good.
- Assessment practice for students in Years 7 to 9 is currently inadequate.
- The current arrangement for the teaching of religious education in Years 7 to 9 leads to an over-dependence on the use of worksheets in lessons.
- Positive relationships create a good working atmosphere.
- Planning of the new GCSE course is good.

Commentary

107. All students in Years 10 and 11 study for a GCSE in humanities which includes units specific to religious education. As a result, the school is meeting its statutory requirements in this subject. The first set of GCSE examination results for religious education will be published in the summer of 2005. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the national average in Year 10 and in line with national expectations in Year 9. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Year 10. Achievement is good in Year 10 because teaching is good. The positive relationships evident in every lesson contribute to good learning.
108. In Years 7 to 9 a team of humanities teachers, including the one religious education specialist, teach the religious education units of this course. Teaching of the specific religious education units is satisfactory. Teachers adopt a calm, supportive manner that helps to settle classes who have to travel across the school site to reach the humanities area. Lessons move along at a brisk pace with teachers using the learning resources available to them well. However, the organisation of the course, which involves non-specialists teaching this subject, leads to an over-dependence on worksheets which limits the students' opportunity to explore religious beliefs and values in any great depth. This, coupled with the lack of access to ICT in lessons, restricts students' opportunities to learn in different ways.
109. Leadership and management of this subject is satisfactory. The head of humanities is responsible for leading and managing this subject. He is not a subject specialist. In Year 7 students are taught religious education in all their humanities lessons for one term in each year. As a consequence, during the inspection some classes in each year group had not received their entitlement this academic year. Evidence from the scheme of work indicates that the school is meeting the requirements of the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. However, the teaching arrangements, particularly in Year 7, make it difficult for students to build on their previous knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result of this and the lack of formal and regular assessment opportunities, standards and achievement in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory.
110. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The time allocation for teaching religious education has improved and progress in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and, with very high expectations, students are motivated to succeed and they achieve very well.
- Leadership gives a clear direction to the subject and the team is strong.
- The use of National Curriculum levels is underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9, therefore not all students know how to improve.

- The use of information and communication technology is not fully developed.
- There is no technician for food technology to support learning in lessons.
- Limited accommodation restricts the expansion of the subject into other GCSE and post-16 subjects and there is no provision of an accessible computer suite.
- The gifted and talented are not fully extended in the taught curriculum.

Commentary

111. The overall results in the 2003 GCSEs were high and have improved since the time of the last inspection. They were above national averages in every subject and were very high in food technology and textiles. The 2003 teacher assessments for Year 9 students showed that attainment was very high. Inspection findings confirm this positive picture and higher standards were seen in graphics than were obtained in the 2003 examinations. When students enter the school, they have an incomplete experience of the subject and therefore they achieve very well to gain those standards.
112. The quality of teaching is consistently good, underpinned by secure subject knowledge. All teachers have very high expectations, which contribute to the students' very good achievement. This is seen, for example, in Year 7 when students make enormous leaps in gaining skills and knowledge. In all subjects and in all years, each unit of work contains much that is new and the demands on students to gain understanding and to develop skills are extremely high. Students respond positively to the demands of teachers and apply themselves, determined to do well. Students who finish early have additional time that is used very well by the teacher to extend the students further. All lessons are conducted at a rapid pace, so that much is covered. Questioning is probing to make students think and therefore learn. Assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Good use is made of students' self-assessment, but teachers do not refer to National Curriculum levels so most students are unsure of their levels and how to improve. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11. It relates to GCSE requirements and students know how to improve.
113. The head of department has been in post for only two weeks, but he has a clear idea of how to move the department forward. The present accommodation is a limiting factor. There is not enough space to teach electronics and post-16 product design. Access to department computers is not centralised. At present, these facilities are planned with the release of adjacent rooms to the department. The food technology department has technician support for ten hours per week but this support is not available during lesson time. This results in an inefficient use of a qualified teacher's time, and a poorly planned working area. It is recognised that the use of computers is not developed well enough. The department works extremely well as a team and the consistent approach contributes to the high standards. The specific needs of the gifted and talented students are not incorporated in lesson plans and this, coupled with the lack of regularly planned visits throughout the course, limits the opportunities to extend students' understanding.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards over the past three years have been affected by staffing problems. In 2003 the examination results declined to well below average.
- The recent appointment of suitably qualified and experienced staff is leading to a rise in standards.
- Teaching is now good overall and students learn well.
- Students show very good attitudes to their work and behave very well in lessons.
- The department, although well resourced, has an unsatisfactory standard of accommodation.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is insufficiently used.

Commentary

114. After a long period of staffing difficulties the recent appointment of two well-qualified and experienced part-time art teachers to cover regular staff absences is starting to have a favourable effect on standards. Students enter the school at well below average levels of attainment. Inspection findings are that standards are below average by the end of Year 9. These students have suffered most from the staffing difficulties. Taught mainly by the one remaining full-time art teacher, by the end of Year 11 students' standards are average. GCSE examination results, over time, show deteriorating standards and by 2003 the results were well below average.
115. Students now have the benefit of being taught by teachers who are all qualified and experienced to teach the subject. Over the last three years many students have been taught by supply teachers who were not qualified for the subject. Teaching and learning are now good in Years 7 to 11 and teachers have very good subject expertise. Students are encouraged well and fully engaged in their work. There are satisfactory procedures both for assessing work and the use of assessment information for younger students. For older students the procedures and use of assessment are good. These students are well involved in the monitoring and evaluation of their progress. They have clear statements from their teachers of how to improve, arising from a thorough marking and evaluation of their work. This example of good practice is not yet applied with the younger students. The good quality of teaching, supported by the very good attitudes of the students, develops very good working relationships.
116. The department has a good range of resources, including a suitable range of ICT software. However, this software is insufficiently used by the students for image development with the result that their skills in this area are underdeveloped. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The department only has two small and cramped teaching rooms when it needs three larger rooms. When groups are large this has an adverse impact on the students' learning. The new build will not increase the number of teaching rooms available. There is no suitable room available for three-dimensional and clay work and this restricts the range of curriculum opportunities for students. Under her satisfactory leadership and management, the head of department has put into place good schemes of work. These, the much improved resources and the now improving standards and teaching and learning have brought about a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Music

The quality of provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership provides strong vision and high expectations for the department.
- Students achieve well, with particular strengths in performing and the development of a musical vocabulary.
- Well structured lessons provide students with clear learning objectives and engaging materials.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 do not have enough opportunities to develop their creativity and musical imagination.
- The department does not analyse and use assessment data methodically enough.
- The increasing provision of instrumental and vocal lessons is raising the profile of the department.

Commentary

117. In Years 10 and 11 the numbers of students studying music have been small. The lack of any examination group in 2003 makes it unrealistic to make comparisons with national standards. However, standards seen in lessons of the current Year 11 are above national expectations. Many students are good performers. This was seen in the good playing of a demanding flute concerto and a challenging jazz piece for trumpet in lessons.

118. At the end of Year 9, students are currently achieving in line with national expectations. In Years 7 and 8 students are currently working above national expectations. This represents an improvement on previous years and shows a rising trend in standards with newly appointed teachers. Students sing and perform well, benefiting from the extensive provision of additional instrumental and vocal teaching and the requirement to study an instrument as part of the curriculum. Composition skills are less good. Although students musically arrange material provided for them effectively, they do not create imaginative, stylistically coherent compositions.
119. In Years 7 to 11 students achieve well. During Years 10 and 11 students develop more sophisticated composition skills, showing greater understanding of musical structures, textures and styles. They continue to build on their performance skills, with clear improvement in technical capability and musical communication through constant practice. In Years 7 to 9 students are very well motivated by the range of music they study. The careful match of materials to students' abilities and the selection of popular pieces mean that students want to improve and make good progress. The constant reinforcement of musical vocabulary and the regular focus on performance skills ensures students do not forget previous learning and are always building on prior achievement.
120. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan carefully to provide clear learning objectives with high expectations. Students are helped to achieve these through a precise sequence of stimulating activities. The constant hard work by students contributes well to their overall achievement. However, teachers do not always give clear enough indications to students about how to improve their work and, as a result, they do not always achieve as well as they could. The department has effective systems in place for collating assessment information. However, the data is not yet analysed to track performance over time and to inform future planning. Although statutory requirements are met, the breadth of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is currently narrow. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop creative composition skills, restricting their achievement in this area of the subject.
121. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has good vision and has established very good foundations. High expectations of learning are reflected in good schemes of work and the establishment of good teaching strategies. Overall, provision of instrumental and vocal tuition has increased dramatically in 18 months. An effective team has been created which has been crucial in delivering the subject. Meticulous planning and teamwork have overcome the difficulties of the current accommodation to achieve current standards.
122. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and continue to improve. Differentiation is now an effective feature of teaching and learning and, as a result, the unsatisfactory teaching present at the time of the last inspection has been removed.

Drama

This subject was sampled during the inspection.

123. One Year 11 drama lesson was observed in which students were preparing examination performance pieces. Good teaching ensured students remained on task. The teacher's knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses enabled well focused support and guidance to be given throughout the lesson. Students' rehearsals during the lesson indicated good attainment and achievement. Drama also provides good opportunities for students to gain wider experience of the subject through a range of extra-curricular activities, including very well supported school productions.

Expressive arts

This subject was sampled during the inspection.

124. One Year 11 lesson was sampled in which students were working on individual projects. There was good organisation by the teacher so that students worked productively and at a good pace. They responded well to opportunities to show initiative and make choices. The teacher had high expectations and regularly used subject-specific vocabulary to ensure students were familiar with relevant terminology. The overall achievement of students was good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good and strategic planning reflects a clear vision for the future.
- Staff are highly committed and supportive of the initiatives for continual development, despite poor accommodation for physical education and sport.
- There is a rich and varied extra-curricular programme that is well supported by students throughout the school.
- The assessment systems for Years 7 to 9 need to be developed further to strengthen teachers' planning and target setting.

Commentary

125. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate standards to be in line with national expectations. GCSE results for 2003 were above the national average. By the end of Year 11 standards seen are above the national average. By the end of Year 9 students make good progress and, by the end of Year 11, in the compulsory physical education lessons, their progress is satisfactory.

126. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching and learning throughout Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Students' attitudes and behaviour in all lessons are very good and student-teacher relationships are warm and respectful. In a good Year 7 basketball lesson the teacher dealt with any behavioural issues sympathetically, ensuring minimal distractions for the rest of the group. Tasks set were well structured, allowing the lower ability students to progress with basic skills and the higher ability to improve on their technique.

127. In Year 11 the quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons achievement is very good because planning reflects an understanding of what needs to be taught across a wide range of abilities. The compulsory physical education lessons for students in Year 11 promote very good social development between boys and girls and across the year group. In a lesson seen, girls played football and badminton with boys and several of the higher attaining students coached their peers. The curriculum across all age groups provides a good range of choices and in Year 11 all students have the opportunity to gain Life Saver awards through the first aid course.

128. The system for assessing progress in Years 7 to 9 needs to be more rigorous so that the results of assessment activities can strengthen teachers' planning and enable them to set targets for improvement on an individual student basis

129. Leadership and management are very good. They are reflective and innovative and shape the direction of the department. Strategic planning is clear and reflects a realistic understanding of what is best for sport and physical education in the school. The accommodation for use by the department for both teaching and administration is poor. Indoor teaching takes place in the multi-purpose school hall which restricts the range of activities that can be offered at any one time. Despite this the department has achieved many awards both at a national and local level. The process of self-evaluation is well established and regular monitoring of teaching takes place.

130. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE have recently improved and are now in line with the national average.
- Good teaching and good student attitudes leads to good achievement.
- Leadership of the subject is good.
- Higher ability students are not always sufficiently challenged by the teaching.
- Assessment results are not used adequately to track the progress made by students and to help them improve.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching is undeveloped.

Commentary

131. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average and were an improvement on 2002 when standards were well below average. Girls perform significantly better than boys. Standards in work seen are in line with national expectations and students achieve well, particularly as they do not study this subject in Years 7 to 9.

132. All students develop good skills of research and recording, often using the Internet and computers to study and present their findings. Year 10 students gave a competent *PowerPoint* presentation on various brand images and Year 11 students produced good word processed coursework on the viability of new businesses. However, skills of critical analysis are undeveloped in some of the higher attaining students when they are inadequately challenged by the teachers' questions and tasks.

133. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good knowledge to plan lessons thoroughly with sharply timed and focused activities. All students are stimulated to learn through a wide range of tasks using good resources. In spite of this, when the teachers' expectations are not high enough, some of the higher ability students are not sufficiently challenged. All students are enthusiastic about the subject and are provided with opportunities to apply business theory to real school situations such as helping to organise the Year 7 disco. Teachers mark work thoroughly and this provides students with clear advice on how to improve. However, analysis of assessment results, the regular tracking of students' progress and target setting are undeveloped.

134. The head of department provides a clear vision and strong direction for the subject. A critical evaluation of standards in Years 10 and 11 has prompted a positive response and standards have now risen back to the level at the time of the previous inspection. Strategies for tackling the difference in attainment between boys and girls are being positively implemented, although their impact on examination results has not yet been tested. Formal monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of teaching on learning across the subject are undeveloped. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The personal, social and health education and careers guidance programme is provided through discrete lessons in Years 7 and 8 and through a mixture of discrete lessons and specific inputs from visiting speakers in Years 9 to 11. The citizenship programme in Years 7 and 8 is taught in conjunction with the personal, social and health education programme. Citizenship in Years 9 to 11 is taught through the humanities subjects. The commentary section below applies to both programmes.

Overall, provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a lack of planning to provide a whole school, integrated approach to personal, social and health education and citizenship in Years 9 to 11.
- Good leadership and management in Years 7 and 8 have resulted in good provision.
- Statutory requirements are not met for students in Year 9.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the personal, social and health education programme are underdeveloped in Years 9 to 11.
- Teaching is good and is helping students to achieve well, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- There is no separate assessment of students' work in citizenship to track their progress.
- Opportunities for students to participate and take responsibility in community work are uneven across Years 7 to 11.

Commentary

135. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are above average in citizenship and achievement is good. Students in Years 7 and 8 have a good understanding of many aspects of citizenship such as friendship, decision-making and drugs awareness and health and safety issues. This is a result of good and enthusiastic teaching with well planned schemes of work supported by a range of positive contributions by outside agencies.
136. Standards of students in Year 9 are below national expectations and achievement is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but inconsistent across the classes. As there is no separate tutorial period for citizenship and personal, social and health education, students in Year 9 are not receiving their statutory entitlement in all aspects of the subject. For careers guidance, students are withdrawn for individual and group work. This aspect of the course is taught well and students receive good advice on future subject and career options.
137. Teaching is good as all students follow the GCSE integrated humanities course, which is well taught. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with national standards for this course. Students gain a sound knowledge of such topics as the world of work, government and voting and environmental issues. Skills of enquiry and communication are developed very well through group work and good relationships with teachers.
138. The results of work completed by students throughout the school are not being identified or recorded separately under the heading of citizenship, as required in order to assess work. Students are therefore not aware of the topics that make up the citizenship course. There is an unevenness of opportunity for encouraging skills of participation and responsible action throughout the community, one of the three strands of citizenship. Opportunities are good in Years 7 and 8 where students keenly engage in fund raising for charity and residential activities, but limited elsewhere. Year and school councils have yet to be established.
139. There are serious weaknesses in some aspects of the organisation of citizenship. There is no whole school policy, nor policies in all subjects, despite a whole school audit being taken to identify contributions to citizenship. This lack of strategic planning means there is not a broad, coherent and progressive curriculum. Not all teachers are aware of the contribution they can make to citizenship through their subject with the result that some aspects are taught incidentally rather than in a planned way.
140. Good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the whole personal, social, health education and citizenship programme are in place in Years 7 and 8. Such procedures are lacking in other years and, as a result, leadership and management is unsatisfactory. Arrangements to assess students' work in preparation for the first statutory assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2004 are inadequate.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, seven subjects and courses were inspected and 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
Business studies	7	71.4	89.1	0	31.6	18.6	24.1
Communication studies	10	90	94.2	20	36.1	30	30.5
English literature	9	100	94.3	33.3	37.9	40	28.4
Geography	5	80	88.3	0	36.5	24	24.2
Mathematics	6	0	74.2	0	34.3	0	18.7
Sociology	12	100	83.7	33.3	33.5	39.2	24.1
Sports/PE studies	8	100	88.2	25	27.7	32.5	22.4

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	5	100	96	40	48.7	84	89.3
Business studies	18	100	96.5	5.6	32.6	64.4	79
Biology	13	61.5	91.6	0	36.3	33.8	78.9
Communication studies	17	100	98.3	88.3	36.8	90.3	72.9
Drama	16	100	98.1	56.3	41.6	86.3	85.1
English literature	14	100	98.4	64.3	43.8	98.6	82.1
Geography	6	100	97	0	40.4	76.7	83.5
Mathematics	7	100	93.3	0	52.1	57.1	87.1
Sociology	15	100	95.4	33.4	39.6	74.7	82.7
Sports/PE studies	14	100	95.4	50	29.5	78.6	78.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The focus of the inspection was on English but work in film studies and communication studies was also sampled.

Overall, provision for English in the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is good at AS and A-level.
- Very good leadership and management have ensured a consistent and focused approach to the subject.
- Students undertake their work with enthusiasm and confidence.
- There is not enough monitoring of the degree of challenge for the highest attaining students.

Commentary

141. The results in 2002 in both AS and A-level examinations in English literature were well above national averages. In addition, all students entered gained pass grades. The small number of boys entered prevents valid comparisons with national results for boys but results for girls were well above the respective national results. These results represent a marked improvement on the previous two years. Unvalidated results for 2003 indicate good attainment and this standard is reflected in work seen during the inspection. The achievement of students in English is good.
142. By Year 12 students have developed the skills of looking closely at passages from the texts they are studying and relating these to important themes and issues in the whole texts. They are also able to relate the literature they are reading to the time in which it was written and to other works and authors. They are particularly adept at commenting on the significance and impact of short quotations. One student writing about one of Hamlet's comments on Claudius observed, "The language used is brutal and foul in order to reinforce the idea that Claudius will never live up to his father and that his mother has made the wrong choice in marrying him".
143. Students also demonstrate a growing ability to incorporate the views of critics in their essays. They are generally able to organise and structure extended writing in order to present coherent arguments. Evidence gained from work sampling indicates that, during their time in the sixth form, there is a noticeable improvement in their ability to remain focused on the question.
144. Teaching is very good. The very good subject knowledge of teachers is put to good use in lessons. They are able to provide comprehensive answers to questions from students, to refer to other relevant literature and provide wide-ranging examples to clarify meaning. They encourage discussions which are very well managed to ensure wide participation by all students. Marking of work is detailed and provides pertinent comments on weaknesses and how to improve, as well as giving an accurate guide to the strengths demonstrated. Relationships with students are very good and are an important factor in creating confidence when students undertake new aspects of the course. The ability range of students entering the sixth form is quite wide but, in their planning, teachers do not ensure the most gifted are fully challenged. As a result, students are not given the range of work required to enable them to achieve the highest possible grades.
145. Students respond well in lessons and clearly enjoy the subject. They listen carefully to each other and to their teachers and are keen to participate in discussions. They are more than willing to formulate opinions and offer critical comments on difficult material. There is a sense of mutual exploration of literature.
146. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The courses are very well organised and provide very good preparation for the examinations. The number of students staying on is

good. Results demonstrate a very good improvement in standards since the previous inspection.

Literacy across the curriculum in the sixth form

147. Students' language and literacy skills are good in the sixth form and support learning in all subjects well, Students demonstrate good knowledge of relevant vocabulary and incorporate this successfully in their writing. Overall, provision for and teaching of literacy is good. In English and physical education there are very good opportunities for extended discussions where students develop their ability to marshal arguments and articulate opinions. Teachers provide good support via discussion when students encounter difficult reading material.

Film studies

148. One Year 13 lesson was observed. Students were involved in analysing the ways in which films provoke a shock reaction. Good questioning by the teacher ensured they considered films in the context of the era in which they were made. She also effectively conveyed the importance of trying to assess the impact they would make on the students if they knew nothing about them. Further good questioning emphasised the importance of lighting, camera angles and positioning of actors so when students viewed extracts they were able to discuss them knowledgeably. Overall, achievement in the lesson was good.

Communication studies

149. In 2002 and 2003 examination results were very high in this subject when compared with those achieved nationally. These excellent standards and the very good progress made by students result from carefully planned and effective teaching. The quality of written support and guidance is exemplary.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- Standards at A-level in 2002 were well below average.
- Leadership to improve the quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students in Year 13 work very well collaboratively.

Commentary

150. GCE A and AS level results in 2002 were well below the national average. The unconfirmed results for 2003 indicate a similar picture. The school has a policy of taking onto the course students with a lower level of qualification than in many schools. Standards seen in lessons are below national averages. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Achievement is good for current Year 13 students in pure mathematics and satisfactory in statistics and mechanics. The variation between subjects has been caused partly by staff illness. There have now been changes in the teaching programme to provide a consistent quality of teaching.

151. Teaching is good overall and is sometimes very good. Teachers know the students and their subject well. The pace of lessons and the type of activity are well matched to the learning needs of the students. Lessons are well planned. Time is used efficiently and students retain their interest. Teachers show good questioning skills, following up initial answers from students with probing questions to help them to develop their own thinking. Explanations are very clear. The interactive whiteboard was used well in a statistics lesson to demonstrate a complex feature. As a result of this, students were able to understand the link between the numerical and the visual description of correlation.

152. Relationships between students are good, enabling effective collaborative work to take place. Students were observed helping each other to understand some difficult integration techniques, working within the framework of an imaginative task which the teacher had designed. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. A lot of care is taken by teachers, both inside and outside lessons, to ensure that work is properly understood.
153. Assessment of the work of students is good. Work is marked regularly and teachers adjust their teaching in the light of what they learn from looking at students' books. Self-assessment by students is encouraged. The use of value-added data to measure the performance of students is underdeveloped. This makes it difficult to monitor examination results and to determine realistic, yet challenging, ambitions for students.
154. Leadership and management are good. There is a drive for improvement. Teachers work together well and support each other. The success of teaching is monitored well and teaching programmes are reviewed. Initiative is encouraged.
155. Since the previous inspection there have been substantial improvements in the quality of resourcing and accommodation. However, standards of attainment are now lower and consequently the level of improvement is unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

The focus was on biology and physics and chemistry was sampled. In chemistry, teachers and students share very good relationships which contributed to the good lesson seen. The pace and pitch of the Year 12 lesson were appropriate to the students' abilities. Students are well supported in the practical work undertaken. As a result, they make good progress and their learning and achievement is good.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships between teachers and students result in good learning for all students.
- The quality of teaching is good as lessons are planned to ensure that previous knowledge gained is consolidated and extended.
- Examination results are well below the national average.
- Achievement of all students is good as a result of the good support they receive from teachers in lessons.
- There is a lack of rigour in the use of assessment data to monitor students' progress and achievement and to evaluate the work of the department.

Commentary

156. The 2002 A-level results were very low in comparison with national averages. The prior attainment of this group of students, based on their GCSE grades, was very wide and the results at A-level reflect this. The 2003 results indicate a much improved picture with only one student failing to gain a pass in the C to E range. This represents good achievement. The results at AS level for both 2002 and 2003 indicate a gradual improvement in the number of students gaining a pass grade. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files was closer to the national average. Students are making good progress overall from their GCSE courses.

157. Students are allowed to study biology to A-level with lower GCSE grades than would be found in other schools. Students therefore find the course more difficult and need a high level of support from their teachers. The achievement of students in biology is good overall. This is due to a

variety of factors. Firstly, teaching and learning are good, with some very good features observed. Secondly, the students have very good attitudes to learning and are very keen to succeed. Thirdly, the small group size enables teachers to give good one-to-one support.

158. Teachers are well qualified and have very good subject knowledge. They share very good relationships with the students and, as a result, students enjoy the subject and their achievement is good. In a practical lesson observed, the teacher gave clear instructions to the group but gave responsibility for the organisation and completion of the biology practical to the students. All students carried out the practical investigation focusing on chlorophyll chromatography in a very safe and mature way.
159. Discussions with students in Year 13 confirm the very good working relationships in the department. They state they made the right decision to take the subject and find it interesting but not easy. They feel very well supported by their teachers.
160. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. Standards of attainment are improving and results from 2002 to 2003 show a 30 per cent improvement in the pass rate. The 2003 results are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The subject leader has a clear vision of how the subject can improve further. Evaluation of the work of the department is satisfactory. The monitoring of both teaching and learning must be extended. Available data on student progress must be more rigorously analysed and used to raise standards on an individual student basis. Overall the progress since the last report has been satisfactory.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of physics teaching is good as lessons are well planned and include clear learning objectives.
- The very experienced team of teachers liaises well and is effective in supporting the students' learning.
- Examination results are below the national average.
- There is a lack of rigour in the use of assessment data to monitor the students' progress and achievements and to evaluate the work of the department.
- The good relationships between teachers and students, which contributes to the successful teaching and learning.

Commentary

161. The 2002 A-level results were below the national average, though the small number of students was successful. In 2003, a larger group of students all obtained passes in the C to E range, representing good student achievement. At AS level, there are now more students studying physics than in the past and results from both 2002 and 2003 indicate a gradual improvement in the quality of grades obtained. However, the fact that almost a third of the students fail to pass the course indicates that these students underachieved, based on their earlier GCSE grades. Overall, the students' physics results represent satisfactory achievement and are in line with those obtained by other departments throughout the school.
162. Standards of work seen in Year 13 indicate that students are making satisfactory progress and demonstrate good achievement based on their previous grades. These students are well motivated, take a good interest in the topics taught and are willing participants in the lessons. They are also willing to answer questions, though some answers indicated their inability to recall basic prior knowledge correctly. Inspection of student files from Year 12 and Year 13 indicated a variable quality, both in terms of organisation and presentation of notes, limiting their use for future revision. However, presentation of calculations was good, showing a clear progression in the use of physics concepts, although for some students this is still a difficult

area. These calculations were constructively marked and graded to inform students of their progress. Overall, the work seen indicates satisfactory levels of achievement when compared with their attainment at the end of Year 11.

163. Well planned and confident delivery of the subject material forms the basis of the good teaching observed. Students are well supported and challenged by the team of knowledgeable and experienced teachers who use questioning well to enhance the students' learning and to provide feedback. Lessons have an appropriate pace and the varied content, coupled with clear, careful exposition of the various physics concepts, enable the students to make good progress in their learning. Homework is used to consolidate individual learning and links made with web research activities provide further opportunities for independent learning. Notes taken in lessons cover the main teaching points, though it is left to the students to supplement these with material from the course text, together with teacher-produced handouts. This helps to develop independent learning skills.
164. Discussions with students from both year groups indicate the presence of good working relations in the department. Students appreciate the good teaching provided by the team of three teachers involved in the GCE Advanced and AS level courses and find the complementary teaching styles enhance their learning. The high staying on rate for students completing their AS or GCE Advanced level course is close to 100 per cent and shows that the students have confidence in the teaching provided. The fact that several students intend to study either physics or engineering at university is evidence of their interest in physics generated by the enthusiastic subject teachers.
165. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The subject coordinator leads a close knit team of teachers who have many years of experience in the school. She is a good role model to others and constantly updates her own knowledge of developments in the subject. Standards of attainment have recovered from the low base of 2001 and results from 2002 and 2003 are at least equal to those of the last report and are therefore below the national average. Student numbers are now greater than previously and include girls as well as boys. Standards of teaching continue to be good. Evaluation of the work undertaken by teachers within this department is underdeveloped. Available data is not collected by the department or rigorously analysed to monitor the progress of the students and to identify learning needs. This is contributing to the below average standards achieved at the end of Year 13. The department is fortunate in having digital projectors linked to the school network, these being used well to enhance the quality of teaching. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This subject was not inspected in depth. Work in ICT was sampled.

166. Sixth form AVCE and key skills ICT computing was sampled; two very good lessons were observed. The courses are well planned and presented and students' achievement is very good. High grades are achieved in the AVCE ICT course and overall satisfactory grades are achieved in key skills Levels 1 and 2.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history but work in geography and sociology was sampled.

Geography

167. Standards seen during the inspection were good and students are achieving well. Standards in 2003 are in line when compared with those achieved nationally. Students show good subject knowledge and understanding as a result of very good teaching and learning. Teachers have a very good command of their subject area and plan lessons effectively using high quality

resources. Teachers challenge and encourage and have high expectations of students. Provision in geography is very good.

Sociology

168. Standards at GCE Advanced level in 2002 were below the national average. AS results for 2002 were above the national average. Unconfirmed 2003 examination results indicate a similar picture. In the lesson observed standards were in line with national expectations. The standards achieved are a result of satisfactory teaching.

History

Overall provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching, learning and achievement in lessons.
- Good relationships between students and teachers.
- Good student attitudes towards their work and ability to work collaboratively.
- Insufficient clarity regarding the roles of the head of humanities and the subject specialist.
- Insufficient use of value-added analysis and development of target setting and monitoring.

Commentary

169. Standards achieved at A-level in 2003 were in line with national standards. All students passed the examination but no A grades were achieved. Results in the AS examination were higher in terms of the average grade and three students from an entry of 15 achieved an A grade. This represents at least satisfactory achievement, given the students' standards when entering the sixth form. Achievement in lessons observed and work scrutinised is good.

170. Students have good analytical skills, a good understanding of key concepts and write coherently and at length. Teaching and learning are consistently good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and are deployed effectively, making best use of their strengths and specialist knowledge. This ensures that all lessons are well planned, proceed at a good pace and contain appropriate challenges for the students. In particular students make the transition from GCSE standards to AS level work very well. Relationships between teachers and students are good and, as a result, students show a positive attitude towards their studies. Those students interviewed spoke about the subject with genuine interest and were appreciative of the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers.

171. Marking is consistent and constructive and all students are given predicted and target grades after the first term of Year 12. Monitoring of progress and setting targets for individual students lack rigour. There is a lack of any meaningful value-added analysis in measuring the achievement of each student with the result that students are not currently attaining a grade A at the end of Year 13 in this subject. Students work well independently and in small groups. Their level of co-operation with one another is often impressive and contributes significantly to their learning experience. Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. Whilst the teachers work well together, there is a lack of clarity regarding the specific management responsibilities of the head of humanities and the subject specialist. In practice much depends on the deployment of the staff in a particular year and responsibility is therefore uncertain. Unsatisfactory accommodation has been the norm for several years but the adverse effects of this on the learning environment should be overcome by the opening of a new humanities block in March 2004. Since the last inspection history has become firmly established as a sixth form subject and this should be enhanced by the recent introduction of GCSE history to the main school curriculum. Resources are much improved and opportunities outside the classroom have expanded.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No subjects were inspected in depth but the work in art, drama and music was sampled.

Art

172. Overall, provision is satisfactory. Due to staffing problems and the sixth form having no suitable accommodation, standards fluctuate from year to year and between the AS and A-level courses. In the 2003 examinations the seven students studying at A-level attained above average standards. The four students studying the course at the AS level attained well below average standards. In lessons seen and from samples of students' work and discussion with them, the students studying the AS level course this year are progressing to achieve above average standards when examined. Students achieve and learn well as a result of stimulating teaching, the use of good resources and their very positive attitudes to the subject.

Drama

173. One Year 12 lesson was observed in which students looked at characterisation in *Blood Brothers*. Good teaching gave ample opportunities for students to develop understanding in rôle. The teacher's questioning provided a clear focus on important issues in the play. The students performed very well and, as a result, there was good achievement.

Music

174. The sample of music in the sixth form indicated that the small numbers of students taking the subject achieve good standards. This is a result of effective teaching and the musical skills of the students themselves. All sixth form students are Grade 8 performers with a good breadth of musical experiences to support their learning.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education/sports studies. Work in travel and tourism was sampled.

Travel and tourism

175. Work was sampled in travel and tourism. In this subject provision is good. This is because the course is carefully planned to meet the needs of its students. Standards in 2002 were well below average, but results in 2003, which have yet to be confirmed, significantly improved to above average. In the lesson observed, the standard of teaching was good and students consequently achieved well.

Physical education

Overall, provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and this enables students to achieve well and often beyond their expectations.
- There is very good support for teams and extra-curricular activities and students make a significant contribution to the physical education and sport in school.
- The opportunities for recreational physical education are good, but the extent and quality of students' learning experiences are restricted by poor accommodation.

Commentary

176. In 2002, the AS results were very high and the GCE Advanced level results were in line with national expectations. However, the number of higher grades at GCE Advanced level was well above the national average. Although yet to be confirmed, a similar pattern of results was achieved in 2003.
177. Students make good progress across both year groups.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In both examination groups students show a good understanding of course concepts such as attribution theory and this is evident through the examples of extended writing seen. Work is marked constructively and clearly guides students towards improvement.
179. There is very good support throughout the sixth form for teams and extra-curricular activities and talented students have plenty of opportunities to reach the highest levels in sport. A student in Year 13 has recently been selected for the junior English basketball squad. There is a timetabled lesson for recreational physical education and this is well supported, but cramped, poor accommodation restricts the quality and extent of students' learning experiences.
180. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The reinstatement of recreational physical education is part of a continued focus on extending opportunities for all students and the introduction of the community sports leadership award is planned for next year. Staff rigorously assess students' progress in the examination groups and monitor this closely against results at national level.

Example of outstanding practice in a physical education lesson,
In an excellent Year 13 lesson, students' achievement was high, because of the quality of planning and the range of teaching methods used.
In the course of the lesson students worked independently, in teams and in different rôles whilst answering examination questions on Newton's Laws, vectors and a synoptic exercise. They used the Internet to research technical information and, in doing so, discovered two new, useful web sites. The structure of the lesson encouraged students continually to exchange ideas and this promoted understanding of the topics covered. Towards the end of the lesson the teams split up and gave informal presentations of their answers to one another. These highly effective teaching methods, along with a short, informative video on the more difficult topic of vectors, resulted in students making progress beyond their expectations.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

The focus was on health and social care. The work in business studies was sampled.

Business studies

181. Standards have been well below average for the last two years but, in the one lesson seen, standards were average. This is a result of very good teaching and strongly motivated students, who are achieving very well.

Health and social care

Overall, provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in 2003 were well above the national average.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan work effectively.
- Students derive great practical benefit from the subject.
- Leadership is very effective.

- Students make good progress in terms of increasing the range and depth of work.
- The subject has no single base within the school.

Commentary

182. Inspection findings are that standards of work are above average. Students' capacity to recall and explain what they have learnt is very good and shows their abilities are being realistically tested by very good teaching. Achievement is very good because students gain valuable experience in a variety of settings which develops their skills and improves their confidence.
183. Teaching is very good. Staff are deployed effectively because they teach their own specialism skilfully and enthusiastically.
184. Students gain very good practical experience because they can take up placements in activities outside school such as children's nurseries and old people's homes, which they enjoy.
185. Students' social and personal development is enhanced because they are encouraged to think about moral and social issues in depth. In a Year 13 lesson on ethical dilemmas, students were able to empathise with those involved in the cot death scandal. They responded to the task with sensitivity and awareness.
186. Leadership and management of the subject is good because there is a well co-ordinated and committed teaching team. They are developing the course very well including, for example, increasing links with a variety of other local institutions. Access to equipment for students to use easily in lessons is difficult because there is no single area dedicated to the subject.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

187. The work in general studies and key skills was sampled. These subjects form the basis of the personal development and general programme in the sixth form.
188. Overall, provision in general studies is good. This is a result of good course planning and teaching to meet the needs of the students. Valuable contributions are made to this programme by a range of external speakers.
189. Overall, provision in key skills is satisfactory. Year 12 students who have not gained a grade C at GCSE in English and mathematics are entered for the examination again in the sixth form as part of the key skills programme. The teaching on the course is responsive to the variety of needs of the students, some of whom have to miss a whole term of teaching because of other curriculum priorities. In key skills numeracy, teaching is good and achievement is satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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