

INSPECTION REPORT

BISHOP HEBER HIGH SCHOOL

Malpas, Cheshire

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111424

Headteacher: Michael Carding

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th March 2004

Inspection number: 259355

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1,090

School address: Chester Road
Malpas
Cheshire
Postcode: SY14 8JD

Telephone number: 01948 860571
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Peter Tomlinson

Date of previous inspection: 23rd March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bishop Heber High School is situated in the town of Malpas and serves a large rural area of south-west Cheshire. It is a community comprehensive school, and specialist language college, for pupils and students aged 11 to 18 (Years 7 to 13). It is about the same size as most other secondary schools. There are 1,090 pupils on roll, including 171 sixth form students. The school's sixth form is average in size. The school is about the same size as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is currently over-subscribed. Most pupils live within the local area, and travel to school by bus or private transport. However, a fifth of the students come from homes outside the local County area. The attainment of pupils on entry to the main school is average, and above average on entry to the sixth form. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups is low. There are currently no pupils whose mother tongue is not, or is believed not to be, English. Employment rates in the area are above the national average. Unemployment is below average. At just over 5 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is below average. Ten per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average. At over 4 per cent, the proportion of pupils having Statements of Special Educational Need is above average in the main school, but at less than 1 per cent it is low in the sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English
23082	Graham Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics
3549	David Oakley	Team inspector	Science Physics
17156	Edward Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology
32173	Barbara Brown	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
21971	John Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education
20411	Stephen Bell	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design
19915	Peggy Hooton	Team inspector	History
3534	Ann Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education
27082	Geoff Henshall	Team inspector	Business education
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7222	Alan Watson	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bishop Heber High School is a **good** and **effective** school with significant strengths. It provides a **good** quality of education for its pupils and students, and gives **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The overall good quality of the teaching, which leads to good learning by pupils.
- Standards are above average in tests and examinations, and the pupils' achievement is good.
- Whilst feedback to pupils about their work in lessons is good overall, marking and the use of assessment to set targets for improvement are inconsistent between subjects.
- The heavy workload of the leadership group is adversely affecting its ability to monitor and evaluate successfully enough the work of the school.
- There are very good opportunities for curriculum enrichment for pupils, particularly as a result of the school's international links, which enhance very well their personal development.
- Most subjects do not fully meet their statutory requirement to contribute to the pupils' learning in ICT, and specialist provision for ICT in Years 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Boys' attainment, whilst above average, is not as high as that of girls.
- Very good, working relationships between teachers and pupils, support pupils' learning well.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been **satisfactory** overall. Development planning is more coherent, and objectives for improvement are well considered. However, until fairly recently, financial planning has not been linked clearly enough to resources for learning. There is now an improved, whole school approach to assessment. However, the school itself has identified the use of assessment and reporting as areas for further improvement. Pupils' independent learning skills are now good. Standards and resources in ICT require further improvement. However, the school's development as a languages college has significantly enhanced the pupils' education.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Standards of literacy and numeracy are **above average** throughout all year groups. Pupils with special educational needs make **good** progress. Those who are gifted or talented achieve well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Attendance is **good**. Pupils' personal development is **good**, and **very good** opportunities are provided through the international dimension of the school.

By Year 9, pupils' achievement is very good in art. It is good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, and physical education. It is satisfactory in music, and personal social and health education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT, religious education and citizenship. Attainment is below average in ICT, citizenship and religious education. It is average in music, and personal social and health education. It is above average in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, and physical education.

By Year 11, achievement is very good in history, and examination courses for physical education. It is good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, examination courses for religious education, and business studies. It is satisfactory in

music, core course physical education, citizenship, and personal, social and health education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT, and core course religious education. Attainment is below average in ICT, and core course religious education. It is average in music, core course physical education, citizenship, and personal, social and health education. Standards are above average in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, examination courses for religious education, and business studies. Attainment is well above average in English, history, and examination courses for physical education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The use of assessment is **satisfactory**. Whilst most aspects of the school's curriculum are good, it is **satisfactory** overall because requirements for the teaching of ICT and religious education are not met fully. However, there are **very good** opportunities offered by the school's curriculum enrichment programme. Some **very good** links with the community, and other schools and colleges, enhance well pupils' learning. The quality of support, advice and guidance for pupils is **satisfactory**. The school's partnership with parents is **satisfactory**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is **good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is **good**. The senior leadership group and governors provide **satisfactory** management of the school. Subject leadership and management are **good** overall and are very good in a number of departments. The governance of the whole school is **good**. Governors provide good support for the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is extremely popular with parents and is oversubscribed. Most parents are very pleased with the school. They particularly appreciate the high academic standards, the huge range of extra-curricular activities on offer and the international dimension connected with being a specialist language college. A minority of parents are not happy about the level of communication between home and school, with some justification. Pupils agree this is a good school and they like the range of activities and visits on offer. They also appreciate the new library and 'No Limits' ICT centre. There were some negative comments in many questionnaire responses concerning the presence of bullying and behaviour, and pupils not being listened to, consulted or fairly treated. Inspectors found no significant evidence for any major problems related to these issues. They concluded that a combination of reasons, including temporary behaviour measures introduced the previous term, may have adversely affected pupils' responses. The school is reviewing its pastoral system so it can provide better support for pupils. This is entirely appropriate.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- review the management structures within the school, not only in order to improve further the monitoring of learning and teaching but also to improve communications within the school and between teachers and parents;
- use assessment to set sharper targets for pupils to enable them to know better how to improve, and the monitoring of teachers' marking to improve consistency between subjects;
- develop further the resources and facilities for pupils and students throughout the school to enhance the quality of their learning through the use of ICT and in order that all subjects make their required contribution to national curriculum ICT;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- improve the school's provision for ICT and fully meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education;

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall cost-effectiveness of the sixth form is **good**. Attendance and punctuality by students are **good**. Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **good**. Standards of attainment are **above average** and students' achievement is **good**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students have very good attitudes, and commitment, to learning because their teachers' very good subject expertise motivates them very well.
- There are very good, collaborative, working relationships between teachers and students, and between the students themselves.
- Because of its focus on courses which are more academic, the opportunities for lower attaining pupils, or those with special educational needs, to continue into the sixth form are limited.
- Sixth form accommodation, particularly for social times and private study, is unsatisfactory.
- Whilst feedback to students about their work in lessons is good, marking and the use of assessment to set targets for improvement are inconsistent between subjects.
- Standards in examinations are above average, and the students' achievement is good.
- There are very good opportunities for curriculum enrichment for sixth form students, particularly as a result of the school's international links.
- Facilities for students to enhance the quality of their learning through the use of ICT have improved, but remain unsatisfactory overall.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English literature	Satisfactory. Standards in English literature are average in Years 12 and 13, but attainment varies from year to year. Achievement is satisfactory, but currently learning is adversely affected by irregular attendance. Students learn well when they are present because of good, well-structured teaching.
Modern languages: French	Good. Teachers have excellent command of the language, which they use extensively to challenge and motivate students to develop their own language to a high level. Teachers and students work in close collaboration to explore imaginative texts and promote discussion. Achievement is good.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Attainment is above average at A-level and average at AS level. The current groups of AS and A2 level students are making satisfactory progress. There is no provision for Key Skills. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish very good working relationships with students. Marking is unsatisfactory. The use of assessment data is inconsistent. There are limited opportunities for independent learning
Science: Physics	Good. High standards of attainment have been maintained since the previous inspection. Examination results in physics are well above average at AS and A-level. Most students make good progress as a result of good teaching, and achieve well.
Humanities: History	Good. Collaborative working relationships between strong subject specialists and students, plus good assessment, ensure students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good in both year groups.
Visual arts and media: Art	Excellent. The department has considerable expertise in advanced level

studies, and has used this to create an oasis of excellence for post-16 art. Teaching and learning are excellent. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well.

Business studies

Good. Teaching and learning are very good, as students receive very good support to improve the standard and quality of their work. Attainment is above average and students achieve very well.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive overall **good** support, advice and guidance. This is largely because working relationships with teachers are **very good**. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and feel well supported. Arrangements to ensure students' care and welfare are **satisfactory** overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and governance of the sixth form are **good**, and its management **satisfactory**. A new director of post-16 studies, fully supported by the governing body, has been appointed to develop a strategic and managerial overview of the sixth form and is working effectively alongside the current head of the sixth form to achieve this. Very good working relationships create a harmonious atmosphere in which the needs of students are paramount.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are generally happy with the arrangements in the sixth form. They have very good working relationships with their teachers, which they welcome. They particularly appreciate their improved access to computers through the 'No Limits' centre. Although the Ofsted questionnaire resulted in a high number of negative responses, in practice, during the many conversations with students, formally and informally, these were refuted. Students are not happy about their accommodation, particularly for social times and private study. These views are valid because the quality of sixth form accommodation is unsatisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement¹ in Years 7 to 13 is **good** overall and standards of attainment² are **above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, pupils and students make good progress as they move through the school.
- Higher attaining pupils and students, in particular, achieve well.
- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are too low.
- The use of assessment to help set whole school targets is improving, but not yet sharp enough.
- Standards of attainment in national tests and examinations are overall above average.

Commentary

1. The school's work in the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy³ is satisfactory overall. Standards of literacy and numeracy are good throughout the school. However, pupils' and students' competency in ICT is below average overall in all year groups. The development of standards in ICT in Years 10 and 11 was an issue at the previous inspection concerning which the school has made insufficient progress. Nevertheless, facilities for ICT have improved recently, particularly through the school's good joint provision with the community 'No Limits' programme. However, there are insufficient resources within departments to support learning fully and raise standards.
2. The school has set itself ambitious targets for success in national tests and examinations. However, the use of assessment to set realistic but challenging targets for pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is an area for continued development. In 2003, the school fell below its targets by Year 9 in all core subjects⁴, but targets for national curriculum tests in 2004 are more realistic. The school was successful in that it slightly exceeded its targets for the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C grades in 2003.
3. Standards of pupils with special educational needs on joining the school are well below the national average, as would be expected. The good achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11 result in improved standards seen across subjects. The school sets very high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and is effective in enabling pupils to reach these expectations.
4. Good review and induction procedures effectively contribute to the smooth transfer of pupils from primary education to the school's learning support unit. The pupils' special educational needs are clearly identified and they make satisfactory progress during their time in school. Teacher assessments, reading and spelling tests make an important and effective contribution to tracking the pupils and measuring their progress. In-class support and individual programmes of study, to suit the pupils' special needs, significantly contribute to their progress.
5. Provision for gifted, talented or gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall. The school has made good use of assessment information to identify these pupils and results have been shared with all the departments. However, there is no overall school policy and the majority of

¹ Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

² Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

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

⁴ The National Curriculum core subjects are English, mathematics and science. The foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

departments do not have a policy or plan in place to meet the needs of all these pupils. Nevertheless, the achievement of gifted or talented pupils is good because teachers know these pupils well and the quality of teaching is good.

Key Stage 3 (Pupils in Years 7 to 9)

6. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is average overall. Standards of attainment in the 2003 national tests for English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. When compared with the pupils' prior attainment⁵ at the end of Year 6, results were also above average. Consequently, pupils' progress through Years 7 to 9 is good overall. However, when compared with similar schools⁶ attainment was average. Whilst boys and girls perform equally well above average in English, boys attain above average standards in mathematics and science and girls well above average. Nonetheless, the school's trend for improvement, since the previous inspection, has been below that seen in other schools nationally. However, there was a significant rise to a high point in 2001, and results have subsequently dipped, particularly in English and mathematics, and then levelled off overall in the past two years.
7. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level⁷ 6 or above was above average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science, when compared with all schools and similar schools. When compared with their prior attainment in Year 6, higher attaining pupils attained above average performance in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Overall, higher attaining pupils achieve well and often make very good progress from Years 7 to 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.4 (34.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.5 (37.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.7 (35.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 183 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2002)

8. In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement was very good by Year 9 in art. It was good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, and in physical education. It was satisfactory in music, and in personal social and health education. Achievement was unsatisfactory in ICT, religious education and in citizenship. Standards of attainment are below average in ICT and citizenship. It is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Attainment is average in music and in personal social and health education. It is above average in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, and in physical education.

Key Stage 4 (Pupils in Years 10 and 11)

9. GCSE results overall in 2003 were well above average when compared with all schools nationally. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year when they were average. When compared with similar schools, results were again well above average. This

⁵ Prior attainment: this compares the standards reached by pupils at the end of a key stage in their education and involves an evaluation as to whether pupils attained better or worse than expected. Consequently, standards in tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 are compared with those in Year 6, the pupils' final year in primary school. Similarly, standards in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are compared with the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

⁶ Results are also compared with those obtained by pupils in similar schools; that is those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

⁷ The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

was a very significant improvement over 2002, when results were well below average. Taking into account the pupils' prior attainment, and the progress made from Years 9 to 11, results were average. Again, this was a significant improvement over 2002 when results, compared with pupils' prior attainment in Year 9, were in the lowest 5 per cent nationally. Overall, the school's 2002 results appear to represent a dip in its trend for improvement, particularly relating to the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to G passes that year. Since the previous inspection, the school's overall trend for improvement in GCSE examinations has been in line with that expected nationally. In 2003, the proportion of pupils gaining higher A* and A passes at GCSE was above average in nearly all subjects, except Italian and Chinese. As in Years 7 to 9, the school enables its higher attaining pupils to achieve well and make good progress.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	73 (61)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	42.3 (34.7)	37.9 (34.7)

There were 171 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2002).

- In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement is very good by Year 11 in history, and in examination courses for physical education. It is good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, in examination courses for religious education, and in business studies. It is satisfactory in music, core course physical education, citizenship, and in personal, social and health education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT, and in core course religious education. Standards of attainment are below average in ICT. They are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in core course religious education. Attainment is average in music, core course physical education, citizenship, and in personal, social and health education. Standards are above average in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, in examination courses for religious education, and in business studies. Attainment is well above average in English, history, and in examination courses for physical education.

Sixth form (Students in Years 12 and 13)

- At the time of the inspection, no national data was available to compare Bishop Heber High School's performance against other schools nationally in advanced level examinations held in 2003. Inspectors therefore made comparisons with 2002, the latest year for which such information was available. However, subsequent to the inspection, some national data became available for 2003 and, where possible, this has been referred to in the report.
- Standards attained in the sixth form, on the basis of students' average points score⁸ in 2002, was well above average. In 2003 this was above average overall because the performance of male students fell from well above average in 2002 to average in 2003. Female students were above average in both years.

⁸ 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. Consequently, 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.

13. In A2-level examination results for Year 13 students in 2003, there was very high performance overall by students in physics. There was well above average performance in business studies and in English language. It was above average in chemistry, geography, history, and in mathematics. Performance was average in biology, English literature, French, design and technology, government and politics, and in Spanish. It was below the national average in art. In the Year 12 AS-level examinations in 2003, the performance of students based on their average points score was above average in biology, French, geography, and in history. It was average in chemistry, English literature, design and technology, mathematics, and in government and politics. It was well below the national average in art.
14. In the seven subjects inspected in depth during the inspection, achievement was very good in art and in business education. It was good in mathematics, physics, French, and in history. Achievement was satisfactory in English literature, and students' attainment is average. Attainment is above average in mathematics, physics, French, business education and in history. Standards are well above average in art.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the main school are **good**, and they are **very good** in the sixth form. Cultural and social development are **very good** in all year groups. Pupils' and students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is above average and **good** in the main school and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The inspirational way the school helps pupils' and students' personal development, through its very strong cultural and international influences.
- Pupils and students are enthusiastic learners and want to succeed. They behave well.
- Pupils and students' social development is very good because of the huge range of opportunities for them to take part in activities, visits and exchanges.
- Attendance is high and pupils and students especially enjoy coming to school to meet friends.
- Assemblies are motivational and cover a wide range of pertinent and interesting issues.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary: main school

15. Pupils enjoy their work and want to do well. They take their studies seriously, are keen to learn and try hard. They are very ready and willing to give their opinions about the school. The school is good at encouraging this kind of thinking and independence.
16. The pupils in the learning support unit have a good attitude to learning. They form good working relationships with teachers, learning support assistants and visiting specialists. Behaviour is consistently good and pupils collaborate effectively in small group activities. Educational and personal development is well supported in good quality plans for each pupil. Pupils with special educational needs are confident to participate across the full range of activities offered by the school and have good self-esteem.
17. The results of the Ofsted pupils' questionnaire showed a significant level of concern about behaviour and bullying. However, during the inspection, pupils refuted these views. The questionnaire was completed after a crack-down on behaviour last term, and the method employed had caused some concern to pupils and their parents. This may have influenced replies. Although some bullying exists, it is not a wide-scale problem. The school recognises that it needs to put some additional support systems in place to help pupils who are being bullied or need someone to talk to. This is starting to happen, as part of an overhaul of the pastoral system.
18. The way the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good overall. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Consequently, spiritual

development is satisfactory overall. However, opportunities for cultural and social development are very good and are school strengths. The international dimension is impressive and described in detail elsewhere in the report (see paragraph 99). The number of different opportunities with which it provides pupils, for visits abroad, international links with other schools, combined with many cultural and international events, is why this aspect is so strong. For example, during the inspection, a dance company worked very effectively with groups of pupils, in the public area of the school library, as part of the World Book Day celebrations. These chances particularly help pupils' understanding of our place in the wider world.

19. Assemblies are an important part of life at Bishop Heber, and contribute well to the good moral development the school provides for its pupils. The headteacher feels very strongly about their importance and tries to attend each one. During the inspection, an inspiring assembly on the theme of World Book Day showed the high quality of what the school offers. This involved music, pupils' especially created dance and the reciting of a new poem written for the occasion, by the head of English, entitled *Books are not like Biscuits!*. Pupils (and inspectors) were captivated.

Commentary: sixth form

20. Students are mature and have very good attitudes to their work. This is largely because working relationships with teachers are very good and teachers motivate and inspire them with their good levels of subject expertise. Students have high expectations of their own performance and a sensible attitude towards learning. These very good attitudes are reflected in their attendance rate which is good, overall. There are a few individual students in Year 13 whose attendance is a concern and the school is aware of this.
21. Sixth formers organise their own social and other facilities well. The successful production of 'Dirty Dancing', organised entirely by the sixth form last term, is a testimony to this. Proceeds were given to their chosen charity, World Vision. Their committee is established and working well. Students are good role models for younger pupils to which to aspire. However, they do not get very involved in helping and supporting younger pupils, because they are not actively encouraged to do so. In this way, they are an untapped resource.

Attendance

Pupils' and students' attendance is good and above the national average. This is largely because they enjoy school and meeting their friends. Parents value the importance of a good quality education and ensure their children do not miss many days of their schooling. The rate of unauthorised absence is slightly above the national average. The school has just appointed someone to follow up these absences and clarify why pupils have been away, because it realises absences need closer monitoring.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2002-03

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.2	School data:	1.5
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

22. Exclusions are rarely used and the rate is low. Nearly all those pupils involved have only been excluded once. The use of exclusions serves to remind pupils and students that the school sets strict boundaries for behaviour, over which they have stepped. Further transgressions are rare.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year (2002-03)

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1039	60	1
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	13		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	10		
Mixed – any other mixed background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Chinese	1		
No ethnic group recorded	20		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are good. The use of assessment is satisfactory. Whilst most aspects of the school's curriculum are good, it is satisfactory overall because requirements for the teaching of ICT and religious education are not met fully. However, there are very good opportunities offered by the school's curriculum enrichment programme. Some very good links with the community, and other schools and colleges, enhance pupils' and students' learning well.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall, throughout Years 7 to 13. Overall, assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of teachers have a very good personal, specialist knowledge and understanding of their subject.
- The pupils and students rise well to the good levels of challenge offered by the teaching.
- Whole school systems provide comprehensive data on pupils' prior attainment and generate reliable targets.
- Some teachers have an insufficient understanding of the requirements of the citizenship course.
- A few teachers lack the strategies to support fully pupils with lower levels of attainment or unsatisfactory attitudes towards a subject.
- Strategies for monitoring assessment and the use of marking in subjects across the school are weak.
- Good links are developing between some departments to share good practice in teaching and learning.

Commentary: main school

23. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are very good in history and in physical education. In art, teaching is very good and learning is good. They are good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, and in modern languages. They are satisfactory in ICT, music, and in personal, social and health education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in religious education and in citizenship.
24. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good in history, business education and in examination courses in physical education. They are good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, in core course physical education, and in examination course religious education. They are satisfactory in music, citizenship, and in personal, social and health education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in ICT, and in core course religious education.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (5%)	49 (32%)	49 (32%)	38 (25%)	9 (5%)	1 (1%)	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.

25. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching and learning was seen in citizenship, and in personal, social and health education. This is because some teachers have not yet come to terms with the requirements for the course, and guidance for the teaching of this relatively new National Curriculum subject. There is sometimes confusion between the teaching of citizenship and personal, social and health education. Consequently, the demands on pupils are insufficiently challenging.
26. There were a few further instances of unsatisfactory teaching and learning in mathematics, ICT, modern languages, and in religious education. In such lessons, teachers lacked the strategies necessary to properly challenge the pupils and consequently the work was undemanding. In a couple of lessons, the pupils disrupted their own learning because of unsatisfactory or poor attitudes to the subject.
27. Where teaching is satisfactory, there are, nevertheless, areas for further development by some teachers. Such strategies involve a more consistent approach in supporting the learning of all groups of pupils, particularly those of lower ability in a subject. Occasionally, there are lost opportunities to involve the pupils themselves in reviews of their own learning at the end of lessons.
28. In the best lessons, there are some important strengths across the range of subjects, which reflect good practice within the school. Principally, teachers show a very good understanding of their subjects, and communicate this well to the pupils. Consequently, in the great majority of lessons, pupils are challenged and encouraged well, and become involved well in their learning. Good use is made of time and resources to support learning. Pupils apply themselves well to their work and show a good capacity to work independently. In respect of the development of pupils as independent learners, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
29. The majority of teachers are well organised and enthusiastic. Lesson planning is thorough and objectives for lessons are made clear. There are expectations of high quality work. Lessons are well paced and involve lively questioning and discussions. Learning is well supported through the constructive feedback and support given by teachers to pupils. As a direct result of a variety of initiatives, departments are starting to share information about good practice through regular bulletins to all staff. Some departments have established good informal links for teachers to

observe each other's lessons, and learn well from each other. There is some very good practice involving the mathematics and science departments, and design and technology, history and geography. Such initiatives are well focused on improving pupils' learning and achievement.

30. Some excellent teaching and learning were seen in a Year 7 citizenship lesson, with a strong focus on Spanish culture, and in a Year 7 history lesson involving the study of the Crusades and Islamic culture. Excellence was also seen in an upper set Year 8 mathematics lesson on the enlargement of shapes, and a top set Year 11 English lesson on the use and purpose of descriptive writing.
31. Pupils in the learning support unit are fully integrated into each of the National Curriculum subjects and all aspects of lessons. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the unit is good. Teachers effectively match the challenges in lessons to the pupils' specific needs. Teaching is supported well by the effective deployment of learning support assistants. Teaching is planned well, enabling pupils to learn in small but challenging steps. Satisfactory planning, a variety of teaching styles and satisfactory resources effectively support pupils' learning. However, individual education plans are not reviewed often enough to respond to the pupils' progress. The implementation of these plans by teachers is not closely monitored. The marking and assessment of pupils' work are not being used to contribute to their individual and special needs. Teaching is most effective when different programmes of work are planned to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Teaching is least effective when lesson objectives are unclear and lessons are lacking in pace.
32. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes is good overall. Teachers set challenging objectives and plan well to enable pupils to reach these, resulting in good learning. Where planning is very good, it offers opportunities for pupils with different styles of learning and different abilities to participate fully and make good progress. Teaching assistants have good relationships with teachers and know the pupils very well. They are able to anticipate pupils' needs and suggest approaches to teachers which are acted upon. Teaching assistants have been proactive in developing resources such as word lists, and in monitoring pupils' progress as they use them. Where teaching is less than good, teachers have not received adequate information about pupils at school action or school action plus or have not been supported to develop the range of skills to plan for and teach pupils with significant learning difficulties.

Commentary: sixth form

33. In the seven sixth form subjects inspected in depth, teaching and learning are excellent in art. They are very good in business studies. They are good in English literature, mathematics, physics, French and in history.
34. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in the sixth form. Although this was designated as citizenship, it became, in fact, an extended form period. In contrast, an excellent citizenship lesson was seen where Year 12 and 13 students, involved in history and in the government and politics course, held a 'Mock Parliament'. Pupils from Year 11 were guests at the debate, which provided all concerned with an excellent introduction to the way parliamentary democracy works.
35. Other examples of excellence in teaching and learning were seen in a Year 12 biology lesson, where the teacher's excellent understanding of the subject highly motivated and interested the students. In a Year 12 art lesson, the pace and rigour displayed by teacher and students resulted in work of very high quality and excellent achievement.
36. Assessment overall is satisfactory in the sixth form. However, in science it is unsatisfactory because criteria are not used well enough and feed back to students is delayed. In mathematics, targets are not sufficiently subject-specific. Arrangements for assessing students with special educational needs in the sixth form are also unsatisfactory.

Commentary: Assessment

37. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall because better information about pupils' attainment is now produced for subjects which identifies targets for each pupil. Many departments now use this well in teachers' planning and the sharing of targets with pupils.
38. Nevertheless, although the head of English has provided in-service training in school on assessment, there are no firm networks for disseminating best practice across subjects. Monitoring of the quality of marking and the use of data vary because the link role between line manager and head of subject is often weak in this respect. Consequently, inconsistency is the principal characteristic of assessment provision and practice. Assessment is unsatisfactory in maths, religious education, ICT and in citizenship. Here, marking is unsatisfactory or inconsistent so pupils and their parents cannot check day-to-day progress.
39. The best practice occurs in English and history where pupils complete their own record of progress and are able to explain what their levels mean in terms of skills. In these subjects and modern languages, objectives and progress are discussed well in lessons alongside learning. The sharper use of assessment has contributed well to improving boys' achievement in history.
40. In most subjects pupils know what they do well and how to improve because teachers' marking is detailed and uses knowledge and skills criteria. In Years 10 and 11 this is reinforced when pupils assess each other's work. There is good individual support for Year 10 and 11 pupils with their business education assignments, promoting redrafting skills and encouraging responsibility.
41. The manager currently responsible for gifted or talented pupils has made good use of assessment information to identify these pupils and results have been satisfactorily shared with all the departments. Individual education plans for pupils with statements of special educational need are good. Different subjects set targets guided by the assessment and descriptions of pupils needs in the individual plans. These are very good for pupils with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and at least satisfactory for other pupils. The quality of targets set for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs, and the monitoring of pupils progress towards their subject targets, is inconsistent. Whilst assessment in departments is satisfactory, the specialist assessment and individual plans for pupils at school action and school action plus are unsatisfactory.

The curriculum

The curriculum in the main school and in the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities for pupils and students are **very good**. Resources for learning are **satisfactory** overall. Contingency planning for pupils with English as an additional language is not currently in place.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The statutory requirements in ICT in the main school and in religious education across the school are not met in full.
- There is unequal access to the sixth form for lower attaining students and those with special education needs.
- Provision for pupils wishing to take two modern languages is good.
- There is a good range of A-level courses in the sixth form.
- The college-linked vocational curriculum in Year 10 is good.
- Sixth form accommodation for socialising, administration, private study areas and tutorials is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation for geography, art and music is unsatisfactory and is hampering the range of teaching and learning styles pupils are offered.
- The new 'No Limits' ICT centre and community library are significant assets.

- There are not enough resources for ICT, art and for pupils with special educational needs.
- There are too few support staff for those pupils identified as having special educational needs at school action and school action plus.

Commentary: main school

42. The school has responded very well to the requirements placed upon it as a language college. However, the arrangements for the provision of a second foreign language across the school have had consequences for the whole curriculum. As a result, statutory requirements are not always met in full, and some courses have barely adequate time. There is currently no curriculum time for ICT to be taught as a specialist subject in Years 8 and 9. The arrangements for religious education, physical education and careers in Years 10 and 11 reduce the time for each of these subjects. In addition, within this rotation of subjects different groups of pupils have varying allocations of time. Because the school operates a two-week timetable, the scheduling of lessons in some subjects makes continuity of learning more difficult. For example, in music, modern languages and geography lessons are unevenly distributed in the two weeks with long gaps between lessons. However, the curriculum is satisfactory overall because pupils have basic access to all the required national curriculum subjects.
43. The school is keeping its curriculum under review. Developments are gathering pace and satisfactory progress is being made. The vocational courses, provided in co-operation with a local college, are successful and provide a vocational route for pupils of all abilities. Plans are well underway to increase time for ICT in Years 8 and 9.
44. The introduction of citizenship and the personal and social education programme provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils' personal development. Careers education and advice, together with work experience in Year 10, provide a satisfactory preparation for further study and the world of work.
45. There are currently no pupils in school who speak English as an additional language, but the school has no contingency plans should the need arise. The school realises this gap and is planning to involve members of staff, who have qualifications and experience in teaching English as an additional language, in its plans to remedy this situation.
46. Provision for pupils in the learning support unit in each year group is satisfactory. Pupils are included in all aspects of the curriculum. A varied menu of in-class support, small teaching groups and individual tuition enables the individual needs of pupils to be met effectively.
47. The curriculum provided for higher attaining pupils is inconsistent across the school. Most departments do not yet plan specifically for extension and enhancement work to support and develop fully gifted or talented pupils. There is not yet sufficiently effective monitoring by managers of the curriculum for the gifted or talented pupils throughout the school.
48. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory for Years 7 to 9 and good for Years 10 and 11. The introduction of two languages for pupils in Years 7 to 9 with learning difficulties has restricted the flexibility to provide specialist teaching and small group work. Work on progress units in literacy improves pupils' attainment in English. However, provision for pupils to catch up with work when they are withdrawn from personal, social and health education and citizenship is not sufficient. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a good range of qualifications and choice. The addition of the college course has increased the range of opportunities for pupils with special educational needs and has been very successful in motivating them.

Commentary: sixth form

49. A good range of A-Level courses meets the interests and aspirations of students. The courses allow for continuity of subjects started in the main school, together with a small range of new courses such as government and politics, and psychology. Arrangements for the personal development of students are good. A well-planned tutorial programme is supplemented through

the many opportunities to be involved in the community and the international programme. However, the afternoon of enrichment activities is currently limited to physical activities. There is a small range of vocational courses at advanced and intermediate level, but courses of study for lower attaining students or those with special education needs are limited.

50. There is unequal access to the sixth form for students in the special support unit in the main school. A major review of the sixth is well underway to tackle these issues. However, the co-ordination of provision made for students in the sixth form with special educational needs is currently unsatisfactory. Individual teachers and departments work hard to include students and progress overall is good, but some individuals' needs are not fully met because the regular monitoring and review of the progress of students at school action and school action plus are not in place.

Commentary: curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities

51. The programme of extra-curricular activities, open to all, is very rich and varied. It extends and enriches the curriculum very well. The opportunities for curriculum enrichment involving gifted or talented pupils are good. Pupils and parents value highly the contribution which extra-curricular activities make to pupils' personal development. Subjects provide very good support for pupils outside the school day. For example, there are study clubs for mathematics, ICT, art and science. Pupils' participation in music, arts and sporting activities is very high. The programme of international exchanges, organised through the languages college, is excellent. Fieldwork and visits in science, geography, history and English enrich the curriculum very well and visiting speakers enhance the citizenship and personal, health and social education courses. Activity week provides a very wide range of activities including foreign travel, sporting activities and visits. The governors consider carefully any visit longer than one day to ensure the activities are suitable. There is some curriculum enrichment in the sixth form, such as study for the European driving licence and the excellent 'Mock Parliament', but this aspect of the curriculum is currently underdeveloped and there are plans to introduce general studies to redress this.

Commentary: resources for learning

52. Staffing is satisfactory overall. There are good numbers of teachers with high levels of subject expertise. Staffing in the school is relatively stable. However, there are insufficient language teachers because of recruitment difficulties, and not enough teachers of religious education. The school's spending on special needs support staff is above average. However, current support staff are not always deployed effectively to support pupils with special educational needs who do not have a statement of special educational need.
53. The quality of accommodation is satisfactory overall and there are some areas of particular note. For example, the community library and 'No Limits' ICT centre, are having a significant benefit on pupils' learning. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory in geography, music, and in art. There is a lack of dedicated rooms in geography and many are either inappropriate or too small. The physical design of the music room makes the monitoring of pupils difficult. In art, teaching spaces are extremely cramped and storage facilities limited. This is hampering the range and quality of the curriculum offered in these subjects. Learning resources are adequate overall. There are shortages in ICT, because there are no interactive whiteboards, and a significant number of older, failing machines. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are limited.
54. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs, and within the learning support unit, is satisfactory. However, resources in the special needs department are inadequate. The range of written resources and software is very limited. Insufficient use is made of ICT to help pupils to access learning materials and record their work. The deployment of teaching assistants is not effectively managed, resulting in inconsistent support within subjects.

Commentary: resources for the sixth form

55. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in the sixth form. This is because the social area is far too small, administrative areas are unsuitable, and provision for study and tutorial rooms inadequate. The quality of accommodation, sited in mobiles, is unsatisfactory, although students decorate the common room each year and make the best of it. The inappropriateness of the accommodation is affecting recruitment in the sixth form, as a number of prospective students move to other providers with better permanent, specialised accommodation.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils and sixth form students receive **satisfactory** support, advice, and guidance. Arrangements to ensure pupils' and students' care and welfare are **satisfactory** overall throughout the school. The extent of the school's involvement of pupils in its work and development is **satisfactory** in the main school but **good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and safety procedures have recently improved with the appointment of new administrative staff.
- The new system where form tutors mentor pupils is not yet working well enough.
- There are insufficient systems in place to support those pupils who do not feel comfortable in approaching adults for help.
- Year forums, which meet with the headteacher to express their views, have made a promising start.
- Pupils are well involved in the self-assessment of their own work.
- Pupils, students and their parents are not happy about the smoking around school and are concerned that not enough is being done about it.

Commentary: main school

56. The pastoral system is currently being reviewed, and the inspection took place during a time of transition. There have already been improvements in health and safety procedures, related to the appointments of administrative staff who have a good level of expertise. As a result, health and safety procedures are good. However, one area involving improvements to the school's kiln room was brought to the attention of the school.

57. A new system where form tutors mentor pupils individually has been in place for just one term, but pupils have mixed views as to how useful it is. Monitoring of pupils' academic progress is carried out better by some form tutors than by others, and is satisfactory overall. Some tutors are not coping well with the demands of ensuring all pupils are constructively occupied, whilst they themselves are involved in talking to individual pupils. Some pupils are very aware of their grades and levels, whilst others have little understanding. This reflects the inconsistency of assessment systems throughout the school. The school makes good use of a system whereby pupils assess their own work and identify areas to improve, which forms a large part of their 'record of achievement'.

58. The quality of care and guidance is satisfactory. Most pupils agree their teachers are helpful and friendly, although a minority have reservations. Heads of year are experienced, know their pupils well and working relationships between pupils and staff are good. However, there are too few support systems in place for those who do not feel comfortable in seeking out an adult for help. The school is currently investigating how it can increase the quality of support for pupils. There are few opportunities for the pupils themselves to become involved supporting each other. However, the school has made a positive start by recently appointing an Inclusion Worker. She helps support younger pupils who have problems which prevent them from learning as well as they could. There are very good relationships with Connexions and the educational welfare officer. Staff are full of praise for the support these agencies provide for individual pupils.

59. In terms of pupils' health and welfare, smoking on the premises is an issue concerning the school, parents and pupils. Inspectors particularly noticed the smell of smoke at lunchtimes. The prevention of smoking and measures to support pupils, students and staff who are addicted are not of a sufficiently high profile.
60. The processes for consulting pupils have come and gone over the years and some school councils have been more successful than others. There has been a positive start this year through year forums, who are meeting regularly with the headteacher. Pupils are realistic in recognising that changing school practices does not necessarily happen overnight. Not all pupils believe the school consults with them as much as it should, and inspectors agree there is room for improvement. Current agendas for school councils are more pupil-led, requiring a response from the school, rather than being a two-way process of consultation on whole school initiatives.
61. The care and support for pupils in the learning support unit are good. There is detailed information and up-to-date records on each pupil. The care and well being of the pupils are effectively dealt with through regular meetings with parents. The pupils' progress is kept under review. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils well. The school has effective lines of communication through the links committee, with representatives from each department who meet with the learning support staff. However, there are few meetings of this group, which does not make for regular and good communications.
62. Induction of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils benefit from the good partnership with primary schools and the high level of contact with their secondary school. The school works well with the Connexions service and makes good use of transitional and annual reviews in guiding pupils, in partnership with their parents. Working relationships between pupils with special educational needs and specialist teaching and support staff are very good. Consequently, pupils are confident to approach staff for advice and help. Access to additional support from the Young Persons' Centre is planned sensitively.

Commentary: sixth form

63. Students feel well supported, largely because of the very good working relationships they have with their teachers. The quality of personal support and guidance is good. There is an interesting programme of activities to help students' personal development, including the community sports leaders award, a business challenge and certificated courses in first aid and in food hygiene.
64. The sixth form council is firmly established and provides good opportunities for students to express their views. They are pleased that some of their suggestions have been used, although they realise there are limitations, for example, in not being able to play music all day, because of disturbing others in nearby rooms. The fact that some council requests are refused may account for some negative returns in the Ofsted questionnaire about the degree to which the school responds to their views. Nearly all of the negative views in the Ofsted questionnaire were refuted in the many conversations and interviews inspectors had with members of the sixth form.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is **satisfactory** overall. There are some **very good** community links. Relationships with other schools are **very good**. The provision for community education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents provide a very good level of support for the school in a wide variety of ways.
- The school is not communicating well enough with parents.
- Links with the community are extensive and far-reaching.
- The school has forged some very productive two-way relationships with schools, both locally and abroad.

- Governors have made a positive start in consulting parents more about their views and responding to them.

Commentary

65. Parents are very supportive of the school and several travel some distance so their child can attend. Bishop Heber is popular and well respected, with a justifiably good reputation in the community. Parents particularly appreciate the international dimension of the school and the opportunities it provides for their children. They also recognise and appreciate the good standards of education provided.
66. Parents are involved in several ways and their help is making a significant difference to the quality of experiences their children are gaining. The very active parents' and teachers' association is a key player in this activity and raises considerable sums of money to help the school. It is also a forum for consultation and debate about school practices, although very few parents use it as such. Parents have particularly appreciated the governors' consultation exercise which took place last term. Governors intend to consult and involve parents more, because they now realise parents want this.
67. A significant minority of parents, who returned the Ofsted questionnaire, expressed concerns about different aspects of the schools' work. The concerns centre mainly on pupils' behaviour and the effectiveness of communication at all levels. Parents also expressed concerns about the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The evidence from inspection is that pupils with special educational needs make good progress, but the school does not provide individual education plans for pupils and students at school action and school action plus.
68. Nevertheless, the school works effectively with the parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Where a high level of contact is required to meet a pupil's needs, a key member of staff is identified to provide this. However, partnership with the parents of pupils at school action and school action plus is unsatisfactory. The school has limited contact with local education authority support services but has made progress in developing multi-disciplinary meetings to discuss pupils' needs. Partnerships with the local college and the community are strong.
69. In dealing with pupils' behaviour, the school has unintentionally alienated some parents with a series of incidents involving a clamp-down on misbehaviour, the organisation of which caused concern to some parents and pupils. Controversial press publicity, and the way the school has continually reinforced the view that behaviour is deteriorating, has led some parents to view the school in a negative light. Inspectors judged pupils' behaviour, in fact, to be good.
70. The inspection has found there are weaknesses in the way the school communicates with parents and this aspect of parental concern is especially valid. It particularly affects communications between teachers and parents. Some parents felt that the school was not as approachable as it should be. It was not possible to find firm evidence one way or the other about the degree to which staff are approachable. Certainly, the headteacher's robust and direct leadership style has not pleased some parents. It was found that some teachers do not return parents' telephone calls within a reasonable amount of time. The school is working satisfactorily to improve this situation. An additional administrative post, from Easter 2004, has been created to help liaison between teachers, parents and pupils.
71. The school planner is not used well enough. Current arrangements mean that form tutors only have one period per fortnight in which to check for, and reply to, any comments or questions from parents written in the planner. This can cause delays unless the pupils themselves bring their parents' notes to the teacher's attention. In contrast, the school's half-termly newsletter is a particularly good example of communication at its best. It includes a 'Sixth Sense' section for sixth form parents, which is good practice not often seen.

72. There are two points during the year at which parents receive information about progress. One is through parents' evening and the second through the annual 'record of achievement'. The 'record of achievement' contains a comprehensive amount of information pupils have written themselves. However, this presents an unbalanced view, as there is more detail from the pupil than from the teacher. Targets which pupils have chosen to help them improve their work are not always helpful, for example, 'improve my art' says very little. Comments from teachers are variable in quality as some point the way forward but others focus on the pupils' attitude to the subject rather than how they are progressing. The school recognises that its reporting systems require updating.
73. Relationships with other schools, both locally and abroad, are very good. There is a very strong relationship with primary schools. Through the school's work as a language college, pupils in ten primary schools are taught French and German. In addition, the school hosts a number of specific event days, for example, performances from French theatre groups. Consequently, the school has seen a big increase in primary pupils' confidence and ability in speaking foreign languages. Such initiatives contribute well to broadening the pupils' horizons. This productive partnership extends to the physical education department, which organises a range of sporting activities for primary schools, including the funding of sports coaching.
74. There are a very good variety of links and exchanges with a number of schools abroad, including Sweden and Bulgaria. There are also some imaginative two-way links with nearby secondary schools, involving sharing expertise, resources and new ideas, such as a joint research project on developing teaching and learning.

Commentary: community provision

75. The school has a good partnership with the community it serves and is an important part of life in the town. The school has engaged effectively with a wide range of community activities, which benefit both pupils' and students' learning and their welfare. Links with primary schools and local clubs, through rugby and other sports, have increased opportunities for the good development of coaching skills, and access to facilities for pupils from primary school upwards. This has resulted in achievement at national level for students talented in rugby.
76. Through excellent joint working between the parish council, the school and the Connexions service, a Young Person's Centre has been created which provides recreational and advice services to young people. The centre contributes well to pupils' and students' understanding of citizenship and offers meaningful opportunities for participation by pupils and students in Years 10 to 13 in consultation exercises on the use of the centre.
77. Good work with the local police has enhanced the school's drug education programme, whilst building good relationships between pupils and students and the police. The 'No Limits' community library and computer provision contribute well to the ethos of the school as a learning community. However, although pupils' and students' access to the provision is basically satisfactory, efforts to promote family learning are yet to be fruitful.
78. The individual planning of community projects is good, but strategic planning is not in place to ensure staff have the time to manage and implement fully the range of activities. Links with the main curriculum are not co-ordinated and the benefit of the different projects to pupils' and students' achievement is not effectively monitored.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership of the main school and the sixth form are **good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is **good**. The senior leadership group and governors provide **satisfactory** management of the school and its sixth form. Subject leadership and management are **good** overall and are very good in a number of departments. The governance of the whole school is **good** overall. Governors provide good support for the school and have a very good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision of the school's future and has energetically and successfully developed community and international links.
- The revitalised leadership group now contains a wide range of experience and expertise, which is combining to improve the school's effectiveness.
- The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is actively involved in all aspects of school life.
- Systems for monitoring standards and achievement within departments are not consistently applied.
- Lines of communication within the school and with parents are defined but not always used.
- Some middle managers provide very good leadership and are very good role models for staff and pupils through their expertise in the classroom.
- The newly appointed director of sixth form studies is working closely and effectively with existing staff towards a clear vision for the continued success of the sixth form.

Commentary: main school

79. The headteacher is widely respected throughout the school and the community for his efforts towards broadening pupils' experience and continuous improvement. He is approachable, open to debate and actively supports the very successful international theme which pervades the school as part of its language college status. As a consequence of his determined leadership, the school now incorporates a thriving public library and an adult ICT learning centre, to the mutual benefit of pupils and the local community.
80. Opportunities for restructuring the leadership group through staff retirement and change have been grasped vigorously. With the continued support and involvement of the governing body, recent successful senior appointments have already sharpened the leadership group's understanding of how to successfully move the school forward. Governors properly seek and take the professional advice of the staff and senior management in matters concerning the curriculum. Nevertheless, the school is not yet fully meeting statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT and religious education.
81. The governing body shows very good understanding of the challenges associated with the current transitional nature of the school's leadership and management. In response to the headteacher's retirement at the end of this year, it has canvassed the opinions of teachers, pupils and parents for their ideas on the qualities needed in his replacement. Governors are frequent visitors to the school, not only supporting the leadership group but also enjoying robust debate with them, for example during the governors' seminar day when they review the school development plan and agree targets for action.
82. The current workload of the leadership group is heavy and some departments do not always feel they are sufficiently well consulted, supported and directed by their line managers. The school's approach to self-evaluation, whilst satisfactory overall, is not yet sharp enough in some areas. The school is aware of this and a member of the leadership group has, for example, been working hard and successfully during the current academic year to help improve the rigour with which the school uses its performance data. Nevertheless, there remain some inconsistencies in the ways in which line managers monitor standards and achievement within departments and use the results to diagnose areas for improvement. For example, there are

variations in the thoroughness with which work samples and the quality of marking are checked. Systems for observing and monitoring the quality of teaching and facilitating the sharing of very good classroom practice around the school are not universally followed. A number of heads of department, as very good subject leaders and expert classroom practitioners, represent an invaluable resource to be exploited across the school.

83. Although the leadership and management of subject departments are good overall, they are unsatisfactory in ICT and religious education. In the special educational needs department there is insufficient planned support for lower attaining pupils and those with behavioural difficulties who do not have a statement of need.
84. Senior managers and the head of the resourced unit have a clear vision for the development of special educational needs provision. The learning support unit is well led and managed, and effectively supported by the governing body. However, both the leadership and management of special educational needs in the mainstream school are unsatisfactory. Time has not been allocated to the role of the special educational needs coordinator and action to cover the absence or resignation of teaching and support staff has not been taken. Pupils at school action or school action plus are identified and information is given to link teachers from different subjects, but the information is not detailed enough and regular reviews do not take place. The special educational needs co-ordinator is not able to fulfil her role in leading the development of good special needs practice through training and monitoring across different subjects. Much of the innovation taking place is at the instigation of teaching assistants and individual subject staff. This is not co-ordinated, and as a result some very good practice in the school is not shared effectively.

Commentary: sixth form

85. The current experienced director of post-16 studies will retire at the end of this school year. A new director of studies, fully supported by the governing body, has been appointed to develop a strategic and managerial overview of the sixth form and is working effectively alongside the current head of the sixth form this year. Very good working relationships, accommodating differences of philosophy and opinion, create a harmonious atmosphere in which the needs of students are paramount. There are new systems in place for restructuring tutor groups next year, to develop further the working partnership between students and teachers. More rigorous planning for the tracking of students' academic progress has now been developed, ready to be implemented next school year.

Financial information

86. The financial affairs of the school are now managed and controlled well by the school's new business manager, and they are being monitored well by governors. However, in the period since the previous inspection this has not always been the case. This is because the school's development and improvement planning, although sound and well considered, has not always been sufficiently well related to resourcing and the school's budget. This is being remedied through the effective work of the business manager, and chair and vice-chair of governors. The school currently has a financial deficit. There are satisfactory reasons for this, related to staffing and resourcing, which are properly recorded in the minutes of the governing body. The governors have taken very seriously their responsibility to balance the school's budget and minimise any effect upon the learning and achievement of the pupils. Consequently, satisfactory agreements are in place with the local authority to clear this deficit over a period of two years. The principles of best value are being applied well and resources are used satisfactorily to support the pupils' and students' learning. Overall, the sixth form is cost effective and the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,263,412
Total expenditure	3,291,996
Expenditure per pupil	3045

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	33,082
Balance carried forward to the next	(28,584)

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve high standards in writing.
- The good and often very good teaching generates an industrious working atmosphere in the classroom.
- Very good leadership and management have energised the department and created a very good team spirit.
- Not all lower attaining pupils make enough progress.

Commentary

87. The current pupils are achieving well, and their attainment is above average. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average and have been so consistently over recent years. Although the trend is dipping slightly, the improvement which pupils make from their levels of attainment on entry continues to be above average. In GCSE, results are well above average in English and English literature. Pupils have sustained high standards since the previous inspection. The proportion of the higher levels and grades is increasing at the end of Years 9 and 11, and this has been a major part of the department's action plan.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There is a significant proportion of very good and even excellent teaching.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching which harnessed Year 11 pupils' natural flair for writing.

The teacher planned the lesson very carefully, using a range of resources such as music and literary extracts to stimulate the pupils' senses with the intention of challenging them to write an imaginative description within a short time frame. The impetus was created from the first words of the lesson and pupils were fired with enthusiasm by the teacher's subtle use of contrasting examples to set them off. Working quickly and collaboratively. They devised a tableau of still images and produced superb descriptions of hidden locations in the school which were read with dramatic panache and gripped the audience until well after the bell had rung.

89. There are some weaknesses in pupils' spelling and in reading in lower attaining sets but their written work is imaginative and interesting. Frequent use of ICT with younger classes helps pupils to organise their ideas better. Higher attaining pupils write very well in a lively and engaging fashion. Encouraged by good teaching, they express ideas in an original and thought provoking way. They read fluently and show good understanding of what is read. Their progress in reading is accurately tracked over time. Pupils' oral skills are very good. They know how to frame questions to find out extra information as well as how to answer those posed by the teacher. Work on literature and the media shows a very good understanding of English language use and pupils have good skills in manipulating this in their own writing. Pupils are confident at working independently and this is an improvement from the previous inspection.
90. All teachers know their subject very well and this gives the pupils confidence and creates a very good working climate in lessons. Planning is very good and is based on agreed objectives in the department. High ability pupils respond very well to more challenging work. The teaching of lower ability pupils and those in classes of wider ability is more inconsistent. Strategies to match work to their individual needs is less well developed in some classes. However, resources such

as video and ICT are used well, encouraging pupils to develop their understanding of difficult ideas in the language.

91. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, the leadership and management of the subject are now very good. This is because the new head of department has made an instant impact by identifying areas for development and by taking decisive action. Assessment is now very good and the marking is regular and guides pupils towards a better understanding of their own levels and potential. Strategies to raise boys' attainment, such as an all-boy group in Year 11, and sitting boys and girls in pairs together, are having good results. Boys' achievement is generally higher than the national average.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

92. The use of literacy across the curriculum is good overall. Standards of literacy are generally high and pupils read and write well, especially in the top sets in all subjects. The very good oral skills contribute to this because pupils are prepared to ask questions, which furthers their understanding of how to express themselves. All subjects subscribe to the school's literacy policy in different degrees. Practice is very good in history and modern languages because teachers give pupils many chances to read aloud and to extend their writing in a variety of forms. There is a detailed focus on accuracy in the use of language. All other subjects reinforce pupils' knowledge of technical language and in the best classes teachers develop this further by emphasising the importance of spelling.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's excellent cultural and international links play a major part in the support of pupils' learning.
- The leadership of the department supports a strong climate for improvement.
- The dual role of Director of the Languages College and head of department is not conducive to raising standards.
- Teachers have excellent command of the languages, although sometimes do not use them sufficiently in lessons.
- There is a wide imbalance in the teaching and subsequent standards between the different languages.
- Staffing difficulties have a negative impact on pupil performance.

Commentary

93. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are average in French, German, Spanish and Italian, but below average in Russian and Chinese. Standards seen during inspection were above average, and achievement good in the first four languages, with average standards and satisfactory achievement in the second two. This improvement in western European languages is a result of more confident, settled staffing than the department has previously enjoyed, even though staffing is still unsatisfactory.
94. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were below average in French and German, average in Spanish and above average in Italian. During inspection, standards seen were above average in these languages and achievement was good. This occurs for the same reasons as in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Chinese are well below average at GCSE. Standards seen in both Chinese and Russian were well below average and achievement poor. Although teachers have excellent command of these languages, they have not developed the necessary teaching strategies to enable pupils to progress from the lower levels of learning. As a result, learners are not adequately prepared to undertake successfully GCSE examinations. The constraints of the Language College bid, with half of all pupils studying two languages in Years 10 and 11 have had a negative effect on the results of those pupils who could not cope with the demands of the double course or who were not ready for examination in Year 10. Now that the department has

been released from these criteria, it is planning to review entry policy, particularly for the Russian and Chinese courses.

95. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but the unbalanced timetable means lessons are spread irregularly and some pupils have two different language lessons immediately in tandem. This has a negative effect on their recall of structures and vocabulary.
96. A very clear strength is the teaching and learning in French, German, Spanish and Italian. Teachers have excellent command of their languages overall and most use this skill to challenge learners and develop well their listening and speaking skills. Teachers share lesson objectives effectively and make reference to National Curriculum levels and examination grade requirements so that pupils understand exactly what is required of them. This continuous feedback is good in lessons, but the quality of marking in exercise books is inconsistent. Teachers demonstrate a high level of expectation, insist on correct language and match tasks well to learners' needs. This means pupils make good progress and give of their best. In lessons where English is overused, pupils do not make as much progress as they should because they do not hear enough of the foreign language. Similarly, when the pace is too slow or the materials are unimaginative, pupils become bored and achieve less well. In Chinese and Russian lessons, pupils achieve satisfactorily in the early stages but this progress is not maintained. They have only a very basic knowledge of the different scripts, and find independent language production very difficult.
97. The school's arrangements for language teaching in local primary schools has a positive effect on pupils' attitude to language learning. Pupils are assessed against National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 6, but the monitoring of the progress they make in Year 7 is still being developed.
98. The department is very well led by a committed head of department, who demonstrates a clear focus on improvement. The fact that the head of languages is also the director of the Languages College, in addition to many other roles, means that adequate time is not available to sort out the issues needing attention. Nevertheless, management of the subject is satisfactory because the head of department manages the area well within the many constraints of the whole school situation. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Much previous good practice has been maintained and satisfactory progress made on resources and development planning.

Example of outstanding practice

European and Community languages: The school is an excellent example of an establishment which celebrates the cultural and international dimension of modern life.

Pupils have realistic contact with speakers of a wide range of languages both here and abroad and as a result have a well-developed sense of the multi-cultural perspective and a need for international communication. There are flourishing exchange programmes to Spain, France and Italy, plans to reinstate the German exchange and trips to China to stay with Chinese families. In school, pupils have regular contact with foreign language assistants from four countries, and mother tongue speaking teachers of several of the languages they learn. Visiting teachers and head teachers from schools around the world often support pupils very well in their language development. The European Citizens' Challenge in Education project is well supported and provides extensive opportunities for further contact and exploration of different cultures. There are well-established links with France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Bulgaria, Russia and China. Furthermore, an abundance of sport and music exchanges around the world are well supported. Additional links with America are planned, in co-operation with local primary schools. The school runs a successful project in local primary schools which celebrates French speaking nations in Africa. It has adopted an anti-land mine organisation in Cambodia as its charity as a result of direct contact with visitors from that country.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are secure and confident in their subject knowledge.
- There is a whole team commitment to the continued raising of standards.
- The head of department provides good vision and clarity of leadership.
- There is some unsatisfactory marking with minimal written feedback, and teachers' marking is not monitored satisfactorily.
- There is a lack and insufficient use of individual education plans for pupils with special needs.

Commentary

99. Overall, achievement is good. In 2003, standards attained in national tests at the end of Year 9 were not only above the national average but also above when compared with similar schools. Girls' attainment was better than that of boys. Results have been consistently above the national average although they have fallen over the past two years. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. Achievement is very good in the top ability sets in each year group.
100. The percentage of pupils obtaining a GCSE grade A* to C in 2003 was well above average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by end of Year 11 is above average and achievement is good when prior attainment levels are taken into account. Teachers are working well to raise pupils' expectations in the middle and lower ability sets, in order to improve further GCSE examination performance.
101. Teaching is good overall with some examples of very good or excellent practice. Learning is good in all year groups. The great majority of pupils are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and willingly contribute to class discussion and questioning. Working relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are built upon trust, respect and good humour. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and are quick to recognise any potential misconceptions which pupils may have. The welcome which teachers extend to pupils as they enter the classroom and the use of the numeracy strategy both help to create a good work ethos.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent learning resulting from inspirational teaching in a Year 8 mathematics lesson

Inspirational teaching which included a range of highly effective strategies motivated pupils in a Year 8 mathematics lesson on enlargement by scale factors. A visualisation exercise in which pupils had to picture moving lines, followed by directed questioning and discussion, resulted in excellent gains in understanding by all pupils. The teacher maintained an excellent pace and pupils were enthusiastic as they shared ideas with each other. Achievement was excellent.

102. In the most successful lessons, teachers are aware of prior attainment levels and set work which is suited to the abilities of the pupils in the group. Pupils in the top ability sets, across all year groups, achieve well. This is as a result of their teacher's high expectations and good classroom management skills, which lead to very good behaviour by pupils and their acquisition of new skills and knowledge. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT as part of the learning process. A further barrier to learning is the lack of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs other than those who have statements. Some unsatisfactory teaching occurs when there is a lack of challenge for the pupils and unsatisfactory behaviour goes unchallenged.
103. The department has developed a good assessment tracking system, and involves pupils in self-assessment exercises. Pupils' prior attainment is used as a basis for planning work, and its use as a tool for setting targets and monitoring progress is evident in some classes. Further

development is planned in order to include all teaching groups. However, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and there is insufficient use of written comments aimed at helping improve future performance. The relatively weak performance of boys is partially a reflection of poorly presented work which goes unchecked.

104. Leadership of the department is good because the head of department has a clear vision for improving standards. She has identified and prioritised the issues which require attention and has policies and plans in place to make things happen. She is a good role model for other teachers, has established a team commitment to raising standards and has high expectations of the pupils. Overall, management is satisfactory. Considerable efforts have been made to create a good working environment and the quality of display in the classrooms and on the corridor is very good. However, the monitoring of marking to ensure that pupils receive diagnostic assessment, and maintain an acceptable standard of presentation, is currently underdeveloped. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in mathematics provision since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

105. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is good. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection. The school has appointed a numeracy co-ordinator who has the enthusiasm and experience to make things happen successfully. Each department has a numeracy representative and regular meetings are scheduled throughout the year. Guidance, which is specific to each department, supplements a very helpful numeracy handbook. Informal and individual guidance is provided for colleagues as requested. The National Numeracy Strategy has been fully embraced within the teaching of mathematics and is beginning to raise standards of attainment at all levels.

106. Pupils are able to apply their numeracy skills well in most subject areas. In science, for example, pupils make good use of their mathematical skills as they analyse, represent and interpret data. In physical education, pupils successfully measure heartbeats, draw graphs and interpret data. In art, pupils show a good understanding of perspective and are able to work to scale. It is rarely the case that there is evidence of numeracy within English teaching yet here pupils were observed using Venn diagrams effectively to help them understand how similes create comparisons in poetry.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' results in the tests at the end of Year 9 are above average and at GCSE level are well above average.
- Good teaching and teachers' high expectations challenge pupils to do their best.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Marking is inconsistent.
- The use of ICT in the subject is underdeveloped.

Commentary

107. Standards of attainment are above average overall in science. Girls' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average and boys' above the average. Pupils make very good progress based on their previous performance in the national tests in Year 6. Results are well above those of similar schools. Pupils attain particularly well at the higher Level 6 and above, with results which are well above average.

108. GCSE results have risen from the already high standards at the time of the previous inspection and are well above the national average. Again, girls outperform boys. About a third of pupils gain the highest grades, A* and A.

109. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show good achievement. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average. Pupils of all abilities show increasingly good scientific knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate well the skills of prediction and interpretation of results in investigative practical work. Pupils' attainment by Year 11 is above average, and achievement is good. Pupils have made good progress in comparison with their attainment at the end of Year 9.
110. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11 and, as a result, pupils learn well in all year groups. This is an improvement on the overall quality of teaching and learning at the time of the previous inspection. A strong feature of the most effective lessons is the sharing of lesson objectives with the pupils at the start of the lesson and the reviewing at the end of the lesson of what they have learned. Where teaching and learning are very good, questioning is skilfully used to probe pupils' understanding. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject, and their high expectations of attainment and behaviour, result in the pupils being very well motivated to learn. Many activities involved challenging subject matter and require pupils to think for themselves, and as a result they made good progress. Whilst no unsatisfactory teaching was seen the pupils' attention, and engagement with tasks and explanations, was not captured as effectively in the lessons judged satisfactory overall.
111. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Tests are marked in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, which enables pupils' progress to be satisfactorily tracked. However, marking is inconsistent and does not help pupils sufficiently well to know how to improve their progress through the levels and grades. There are no strategies in place to improve boys' achievement.
112. Technical support is very efficient and supports teaching and learning well, but some accommodation is inadequate. Several laboratories are very small for the size of the groups using them and only the good behaviour of pupils enables practical work to take place in these rooms. Nevertheless, most laboratories are stimulating places in which to learn about science.
113. The leadership of the head of department is good. Effective measures to improve standards of teaching and learning have been introduced. Teachers observe each other teaching and check pupils' books in order to share good practice. Good management has ensured good progress has been made on departmental schemes of work, and the quality and frequency of homework have improved. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 now follow the National Curriculum for science. The science strand of the National Key Stage 3 strategy has been adopted and is improving teaching and learning. However, there is still very little evidence of use of ICT by pupils in science lessons. Nevertheless, overall improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in ICT are too low.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT are not fully in place.
- There is a lack of coherence and consistency in the management and teaching of ICT across all subjects.
- There is no specialist ICT provision in Years 8 to 11.

Commentary

114. Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average, and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Teacher assessment claims above average results but there is little evidence to support this and the lack of ICT lessons in Years 8 to 11 adversely affect pupils' development of

ICT skills. In Year 10, there is a very small vocational class whose standards are good but there are no ICT lessons for the majority beyond Year 7.

115. The school uses design and technology as the main focus for ICT teaching and here computer aided design is offered within some classes but not others, and too few have access to control technology. In other subjects, pupils use the Internet for research but there is little in-depth or advanced searching. Pupils collect data and images from the worldwide web and utilise them satisfactorily in their own work. However, lessons where pupils create original combinations of text, images and layout are rare. Within individual subjects such as history or geography, pupils' progress in the use of ICT is good in Years 10 and 11, but crucially in all the core subjects they do not progress as well.
116. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. However, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent and ranged from unsatisfactory to good in lessons seen during the inspection. In Years 10 and 11 teaching using ICT takes other subjects forward but does not enable pupils to make coherent progress in ICT skills. Consequently, teaching and learning in these years is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers focus well upon the newly introduced approaches to teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. They explore issues such as reliability and dependability when viewing websites, understanding the concept of information systems, and learning and using specialist vocabulary. Although pupils enjoy their work with computers, no extension work for the more able or support beyond additional teacher assistance for pupils with additional needs was seen, and this is unsatisfactory.
117. Leadership of ICT is unsatisfactory. The school responded to issues highlighted in the previous report by introducing ICT widely across the curriculum. However, the National Curriculum demands for ICT were strengthened in 2000 and the school has yet to make an adequate response to this. Nonetheless, there is now greater use of computers by pupils and the number of computers in the school has risen considerably and is now close to the expected levels. Nevertheless, the school's resources include a large number of older and less reliable machines and the new support systems which utilise the 'No Limits' centre are sometimes slow to respond to technical problems. Management of the cross-curricular teaching is poor because it fails to plan for the range of activities demanded by the National Curriculum in Years 8 to 11. For example, opportunities to experience and master control technologies, construct websites and the teaching of audio-visual elements are weak or non-existent for most pupils. Many elements of the National Curriculum requirements for ICT appear in subject classes across the school, but they focus upon basic skills and not the development of pupils' capability. Standards are too low and pupils' experience is disjointed and unequal. The school currently falls short of providing the full statutory requirements, but plans to resolve this by September 2004 are in place.
118. The acquisition of additional resources and facilities for all subjects in the school, through the 'No Limits' community centre, is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, although the school has introduced new approaches to teaching and learning in some lessons in Years 7 to 9, improvement overall is unsatisfactory.

Information and communication across the curriculum

119. The majority of subjects in the school utilise ICT satisfactorily to assist them in their teaching and pupils' learning. In the core subjects, there is good provision in English in Years 7 to 9 where pupils draft work and use the Internet for research. However, in Years 10 and 11 little development of these skills means that progress is unsatisfactory. Not enough is done to exploit pupils' interest in ICT to help them extend their reading and writing. In science there is some use of data-logging, and the department issues CD-ROMs of homework and past papers, but overall ICT is not woven into enough of the pupils' work to be satisfactory. In mathematics, the department is working towards meeting the ICT requirements of their framework but currently it is unsatisfactory. None of the core subjects yet make their full expected contribution to National Curriculum ICT.

120. Across the remaining subjects, the use of ICT is either satisfactory or good. Work in design and technology, history, geography and modern languages is better than average. Art and music have both recently expanded their resources for using computers in their work and satisfactory progress in introducing these tools to their subjects is still in the process of development. Despite these examples of improvement, the uneven provision, especially in the core subjects, means that the leadership and management of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Very good leadership supports teachers and helps pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers have expert subject knowledge.
- Fieldwork enriches pupils' experience in geography.
- Assessment and marking do not always show pupils how to improve their work.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

121. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average overall and well above for the most capable pupils. This represents good achievement, given the pupils' overall average levels of understanding in geography on entry to the school in Year 7. Pupils who find learning more difficult, and those with special educational needs, make good progress because their individual circumstances are fully understood by teachers who support them well in lessons. Practical skills such as drawing accurate climate graphs develop rapidly. In Year 9, very well organised local fieldwork provides challenge and interest, which stimulates independent work. This helps all pupils to achieve very well, particularly when the tasks are adapted to the needs of different groups.

122. In the GCSE examination in 2003, results were well above average. A large proportion of girls achieved the highest grade. Boys' performance was a significant improvement compared with the previous year and was much better than boys nationally. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were above average. Pupils achieve well because they can write fluently, for example about global climate change, and can discuss their views on topics such as urban conflicts. They have a clear understanding of examination techniques and they produce high quality fieldwork using ICT skills which boost their performance.

123. Teaching and learning are good overall in all year groups. Expertise and resources are shared generously and improve the quality of learning. However, there is only one specialist teaching room and lessons take place in widely scattered parts of the school. This restricts the quality and quantity of the resources which teachers have at their disposal. Teachers are experienced classroom managers and so learning is often good even in large classes containing pupils with wide ranging individual needs and where no extra learning support is available.

124. Very good lessons proceed at a rapid pace with opportunities for pupils to learn in many different ways so that interest and enthusiasm are maintained. When lessons are satisfactory rather than good, the teacher over-directs activities and pupils do not have many opportunities to share their learning with each other. Some teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, make it clear what standards have been reached, and set targets for improvement. However, not all teachers follow this very good practice consistently.

125. The shared leadership of the department is very good. Although the two leaders have different strengths, there is a common energetic desire for improvement by bringing new ideas into

teaching and learning. Day-to-day management and organisation of the department are good. Regular assessment tasks in Years 7 to 9 are now in place and are used as part of a good system for tracking pupils' progress from year to year. This system does not yet show pupils which national level they have reached and how to reach the next one. The development of ICT is well underway and includes the use of the department's own website so that pupils can explore wider aspects of their learning. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Intelligent leadership and management ensure a high level of consistency in teaching, learning and assessment leading to above average standards.
- Pupils' involvement in assessment contributes well to raising boys' achievement.
- Teaching creates successful learning because activities closely match targeted skills.
- Problems of access to ICT are frustrating pupils' development of higher-level skills.

Commentary

126. In 2003, standards of work in Year 9 based on teachers' assessments were above average and improving. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. Boys are improving faster than girls, against the national trend. This is attributed to the introduction of a pupils' record of progress, which they complete after each assignment. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average as was the number of pupils gaining A* grades and the performance of boys. Work seen during the inspection is also well above average, with equally impressive results predicted for 2004. This represents very good achievement.

127. Pupils' interpretation of visual and text sources is particularly well developed, allowing them to make deductions, speculate and formulate well-reasoned judgements. They compare sources to discriminate fact from fiction and know how to judge reliability. They place events in time and use specialist historical terms like 'propaganda', 'blitzkrieg' and 'censorship' with confidence. Pupils' literacy skills are above average so they write at length, often exploring human feelings behind events in a diary, a booklet or newspaper front page. Well-planned investigations based on local war memorials and the First World War battlefields, including a visit to the Somme, bring pupils close to their own heritage.

128. All pupils achieve well, given the low level of specific history skills on entry to the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs because teachers augment their individual education plans with history targets and ensure they have opportunities in lessons to practise them. It was clear during the inspection that pupils could explain the skills they were good at and knew what to do to improve. They check teachers' marking comments to see if they are on target. Learning objectives are shared well with pupils and checked regularly at various stages in lessons so pupils know how they are progressing.

129. In Year 11, history and literacy skills are well consolidated to produce a very full, accurate knowledge base recorded in a variety of graphical and diagrammatic forms, including annotated maps and cross-sections. Field investigations using the Quarry Bank Mill site at Styal are impressive for the pupils' sharp observations and knowledge of how historians build up convincing evidence. Higher attaining pupils seek out authentic detail from facsimile documents like inventories and maintenance manuals.

130. Teaching and learning are very good overall. At times, they are excellent because teachers are passionate about the subject, and even more passionate about inspiring and challenging pupils to be budding historians. Questioning leads pupils to think further than the facts. Careful organisation of pupils into pairs and groups, and the use of role-play and presentations build confidence in speaking and enable pupils to appreciate their own influence. Pupils share Internet

research and other homework in lessons satisfactorily, developing responsibility for learning. Although computers in the history department are well used, recurring problems and delayed maintenance frustrate learning. Problems of software networking and regular access to newer ICT suites are limiting pupils' numeracy and their development of data logging and simulations. The latter two were, until recently, integral to pupils' learning. The strength of this talented team of teachers lies in their common beliefs about active learning and their sensitivity to resources. Consequently, pupils *feel* the degradation of, for example, slaves in transportation ships or the suffering of Jews and Muslims through prejudice founded on ignorance. Pupils respect the cultures of other societies, deliberately chosen by teachers to redress the deficit of a predominantly white school.

131. There is very good leadership and management of the department. This is because high standards, assessment, schemes of work, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs, and teaching have all continued to improve and evolve since the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11, not enough time is allocated to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus fully.
- Most pupils do not achieve satisfactorily because teachers do not insist on sufficiently high standards.
- Marking is poor and pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve.
- Pupils on the GCSE course achieve well and reach standards which are above average because of good teaching.

Commentary

132. In Years 7 to 9, pupils fail to reach the standards required by the locally agreed syllabus. Their achievement is unsatisfactory. Although higher attaining pupils produce work of a good standard, most pupils' understanding of the major world faiths is superficial. In Year 9, pupils show some knowledge of 'big questions' such as the creation of the world and are beginning to form their own opinions. However, their understanding is not deep enough. The time allocation for most pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not enough to cover adequately the locally agreed syllabus. In consequence, their approach to a religious viewpoint on social and moral issues is below the expected standard and their achievement is unsatisfactory. By contrast, the few pupils on the GCSE course are given enough time, achieve well and reach standards which are above average. However, the few pupils with lower ability on this course do not receive enough well directed support. This is the first GCSE group for some years.

133. At the time of the inspection, because of illness, there were no permanent members of the department present. Temporary teachers were carrying out all the work of the department. Although lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory, overall teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory. This is because pupils' books show that poor and unfinished work is too readily accepted. Many pupils clearly do not try hard enough and their work is often untidy. This is a consequence of unsatisfactory marking, which usually consists of ticks without comment on what is good or bad. Some work is not marked at all. Even so, some pupils continue to produce careful and good quality work. Although there is particular provision in the schemes of work for pupils with special educational needs, they are often expected to do work which is too difficult for them. Pupils take assessment tests, which are graded using a system of levels, but they do not know what they have to do in order to reach the next level.

134. Teaching and learning in the non-examination course in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory. Lessons consist mainly of discussion and the small amount of written work in pupils' folders is done very carelessly and is not marked. Pupils receive no feedback on how well they are doing

and consequently many do not take the course seriously. Nevertheless, teaching and learning on the GCSE course is good overall, and the one lesson seen was very good. Pupils' written work shows they receive good guidance from teachers as to how to develop well their answers. Typically, pupils examine a problem such as world poverty from the standpoint of Christianity and one or more other faiths. They then use what they have been taught or what they have researched independently to present persuasively their own views. Regular homework adds well to their learning in class. Work is marked conscientiously but teachers' comments are not sufficiently linked to GCSE grades.

135. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory, as is the improvement since the previous inspection. There is still not enough time allocated in Years 10 and 11. Although the schemes of work are of good quality, teaching and learning are not as good and there are no systems in place to improve them. Consequently, pupils' standards are too low.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good because of very good lesson planning.
- The very good leadership of the department leads to good teamwork.
- Standards are above average by Years 9 and 11, and pupils' achievement good in all year groups.
- The use of assessment is not consistent across Years 7 to 9 to provide pupils with clear guidance for improvement.
- The technological challenge in the work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is limited.
- The use of computer-aided design and manufacture is not embedded across the design and technology curriculum.

Commentary

136. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national averages for design and technology based on teacher assessments. In lessons, standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils gain a good breadth of experience, using a wide range of practical skills and materials in all the design areas of learning. There is a good focus on producing quality products. However, there is limited technological challenge in using mechanisms, structures and manufacturing processes using computer-aided design.

137. GCSE results in 2003 were above average for all the GCSE courses. In lessons, the overall standards are above average and achievement is good and sometimes very good. Folios are good and graphically well presented with many pupils making good use of ICT. However, computer aided design and manufacture is not yet used effectively enough to raise the standard of work, and enable the pupils to gain higher grades.

138. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good in all the year groups. Where lessons are good or better they are planned well, expectations are high and lesson objectives are shared with pupils. In lessons which are satisfactory, planning is adequate but there is little use of open questions to challenge pupils. Teachers have a good working relationship with pupils, which contribute to the good motivation of pupils and their progress in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and make good progress.

139. The leadership of the department is very good with a clear ethos of high expectations in work and behaviour. There is very good teamwork across the department. The management of the department is good and there are clear schemes of work in place. However, some cross-

curricular policies have not been established. Assessment practice is not consistent across Years 7 to 9 to provide pupils with a clear ongoing understanding of their attainment, progress and guidance for improvement. However, assessment data is collated well at the end of each year to monitor pupils' progress and to aid teachers in their planning. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is more thorough and provides more information to pupils including actions for improvement. There are good procedures for managers to monitor and evaluate the performance of the department with a good focus on improvement. Development planning is good with key issues identified to raise achievement. Good use is made of industrial links to extend the learning and experience of pupils.

140. The overall accommodation for design and technology is good, although that for graphics and textiles is unsatisfactory. The teaching rooms are well maintained and well organised. The resources for teaching and learning are good but there are insufficient facilities for computer aided design and manufacture. There is good support by the technicians but there is insufficient time provided for food technology. Display is of a good standard and effectively used as a resource for teaching through using examples of work produced by pupils to show high expectations of quality, content and presentation. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in development planning. However, a well-structured approach to assessment continues to be an issue in Years 7 to 9.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11.
- Boys do not attain well enough in GCSE examinations.
- Accommodation is poor and affects the quality of learning throughout the school.

Commentary

141. Standards in the teacher assessments for art for Year 9 pupils in 2003 were above average. Standards are above average for the current Year 9, and pupils' achievement is very good. Standards were above average in the 2003 GCSE examination. Girls performed particularly well with nearly all gaining an A* to C grade. However, boys' performance was below average overall. The department has identified boys' performance as an area for improvement, and the head of department is successfully targeting groups of boys this year. The number of pupils choosing to study art in Years 10 and 11 continues to grow although not all the most capable pupils from Year 9 choose to further their art studies.

142. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and ensure that pupils gain good experiences from working in both two and three-dimensions. Teachers' high expectations, the regular use of homework, and the good use of sketchbooks, are helping to improve standards. The pupils' critical and contextual studies are well based on the work of a wide range of major artists. Consequently, pupils make good or very good progress in their art lessons at all levels. Pupils display good attitudes towards their art studies, which they clearly enjoy. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the targeted support they receive. Working relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good. Pupils enjoy a curriculum that focuses them well upon art from other times and cultures. Observational studies feature strongly, providing a secure skills base for their work.

143. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Teamwork is very good and is well focused on the raising of standards. The head of department provides a strong lead over professional standards rooted in a concern for quality art education and maintains very good systems of meetings, discussions and policies to support the department's work. The department has introduced ICT to a number of classes but this valuable resource has not yet

become an established part of the art curriculum. Accommodation is poor and under the expected size for the groups taught. This affects the scale and variety of art which can be undertaken. Some health and safety matters were brought to the attention of the school regarding the kiln room. However, the department has utilised every vertical surface for display, creating a rich and varied environment. This excellent display continues into the school where examples of quality work enhance the corridors and reception areas. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory overall. The current team are establishing a good department in the face of considerable accommodation problems.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are weaknesses in marking and assessment procedures.
- Instrumental tuition is a strength of the department.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Extra-curricular music provision is good.

Commentary

144. Overall, GCSE results in 2003 were above average for pupils gaining an A* to C grade. However, few pupils achieve a higher A* or A pass. Attainment by the current Year 11 is average, and pupils' achievement satisfactory. In the 2003 teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils, standards were well above average. Work seen during the inspection shows above average levels of attainment and satisfactory achievement by the current Year 9. In the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations in 2003, from 30 entries, 16 students obtained a pass grade, nine obtained a merit grade and four a distinction across Years 7 to 13. Girls achieved better than boys. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The achievement of higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted or talented in music is well above average.

145. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers and visiting instrumentalists have a secure knowledge of the subject and are able performers. Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. A range of teaching styles effectively sustains their interest. Those with special educational needs are known well to the teacher and are fully integrated into all aspects of the lesson. However, there is an absence of different work to cater for the special needs of the least able and extension work to further challenge the most able. Lesson objectives are not clearly explained or displayed. However, pupils learn well as a class, in small groups and individually. For example, Year 8 pupils enjoy performing their Blues composition on keyboard, in pairs, to the class. Although the pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds, both the marking of the pupils' work and target setting are unsatisfactory. Teaching is best when pupils are given a wide range of activities related to listening, composing, performing and appraising. There is good pace when aspects of the lesson are taught within a time frame. Teaching is least effective when lessons lack substance and, consequently, a small minority of pupils make only a minimal contribution.

146. Participation in school bands, choirs and ensembles makes an important contribution to the students' performance skills. This, together with concerts in the community, significantly contributes to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Over 100 pupils benefit from high quality instrumental tuition, through the school's 'Music for Life' provision. Extra-curricular Jazz Heber, orchestra, choir and samba band effectively involve up to 100 pupils. This and school concerts effectively complement class teaching. No singing was observed during the inspection and opportunities for music in assemblies are being missed. Option arrangements at the end of Year 9 disadvantage music in Years 10 and 11. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because the tiered design of the music room makes the monitoring of pupils difficult. Practice rooms are cluttered. ICT is not used sufficiently well to

support learning. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management support high standards.
- In Year 10 and 11 general physical education lessons, the curriculum organisation limits standards and achievement.
- Year 9 pupils reach above average standards, and GCSE pupils well above average, through very good teaching.
- Pupils have very good attitudes, and their good behaviour contributes well to their learning.
- Assessment is used well to improve learning in lessons, but not sufficiently well to plan for individuals and groups of pupils.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good and supports high standards particularly for the most able.

Commentary

147. Teachers' assessments in 2003 showed above average standards for both boys and girls in Year 9. Pupils enter the school with average standards, but teachers ensure pupils quickly establish very positive attitudes towards the subject. Consequently, pupils achieve well. GCSE results were well above average in 2003. Girls achieved better than boys with a higher proportion of the highest grades. The inspection confirmed the above-average levels of knowledge, understanding and performance skills of these pupils. Those following the examination course achieve very well considering they have less time for the course than for the other GCSE subjects they study. Standards in the non-examination course in Years 10 and 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory.

148. Pupils make sound gains in the activities they started in earlier years and any new activities. However, more could be achieved. The organisation of the timetable means there is discontinuity between groupings across the two weeks of the timetable. This is because of the rotation with religious education and careers. This affects learning because the continuous development of skills is more difficult. Good teaching goes some way to redress this. This was an issue at the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive careful individual support. Talented pupils make very good progress through the very good programme of extra-curricular activities. The school achieves high standards in competitive games. Extra-curricular clubs and teams contribute to high standards.

149. Teaching and learning are good. They are very good in Years 7 to 9 and on the GCSE course. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan activities which carefully develop skill and understanding. They insist on good behaviour and have very good working relationships with pupils. In the best lessons, there is a high level of challenge both for practical involvement and to further pupils' knowledge and understanding. There is good attention to improving pupils' skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teachers support and encourage pupils well, and this motivates them to do their best. They know the individual needs of their pupils. Assessment is good and pupils know what they should achieve. However, teachers do not use assessment information to plan systematically for individuals or for groups of pupils. Tasks which develop pupils' independence, and their skills of working together, are a strong feature of lessons. Physical education makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development.

150. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is particularly effective in developing assessment and target setting and the inclusion of citizenship and literacy in schemes of work. Very good use is made of professional development. A strong team of committed teachers provides good role models for pupils. Since the previous inspection, high standards have been maintained. An examination course has been introduced. However, the

issue of the curriculum remains from the previous inspection. Therefore, improvement is satisfactory overall.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has a very good effect on pupils' personal development and learning, and pupils acquire a high level of personal skills.
- Standards at GCSE are above average.
- The department has a strong commitment to pupils' achieving their full potential.
- Elements such as citizenship, ICT, literacy and numeracy have not as yet been fully integrated into the schemes of work.

Commentary

151. In 2003 attainment at GCSE was above average for grades A* to C. This was less than the well above average attainment of 2002, but was still the fourth highest percentage gained over the last fifteen years. All candidates obtained grades in the range A* to G. Achievement and progress in Years 10 and 11 are good.

152. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 were above average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fulfilling the requirements of the course, and show very good understanding of key terms and business concepts. The level of literacy in major assignments and coursework is high, because teachers insist that the language must be of business report standard. The efficiency with which the majority of pupils take notes and manage their portfolios helps to develop their independent research and personal organisation skills, and enables good achievement. The standard of presentation is high, and although the work of lower-attaining pupils sometimes lacks detail, all pupils react well to advice from teachers on redrafting their work.

153. Teaching and learning are very good. Although the lessons seen concentrated on the completion of coursework, their main strength was in the individual feedback to pupils. Teachers set tight deadlines for staged completion of assignments. They carefully outline the level each pupil has achieved on the work so far, and discuss what is required in further detail, analysis, and evaluation to improve its quality. This enhances well the re-drafting process.

154. Leadership is good. The head of department leads a strongly committed team with the clear priority of ensuring that pupils reach their full potential through a high level of individual support. There are very good links with industry, both local and national, which enhance pupils' learning and practical experience. Pupils hear visiting speakers, visit the firms, and use them as case studies to illustrate business theory. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are well supported by members of the team observing each other and sharing good practice. Management of the department is satisfactory. Many of the developing strands, such as citizenship, are acknowledged and recorded, but the department does not identify where they can be incorporated into the schemes of work. ICT is well planned into the timetable, and pupils have good access to computers to enhance their learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment and monitoring procedures have not been implemented effectively.
- Innovative planning and building on community links encourage good participation from pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality and quantity of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

155. Attainment in citizenship is below the expectations of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, standards are in line with expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Nevertheless, citizenship is being successfully integrated into an existing personal, health and social education and pastoral course. Good modules of work have been planned for all years, but implementation is in its early stages and the focus has been on developing the course for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In these years, teaching is satisfactory and some final pieces of pupils' work are very good. However, there is little evidence of the research and weighing of ideas that led to this work. Pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is very inconsistent in quality. Where teaching is good, pupils' initial ideas on being a good citizen are extended through creative writing activities. However, work from other pupils across the year groups is incomplete, lacks depth and is unsatisfactory. Pupils carry out some self-assessment but there is no written assessment from teachers. As a result, pupils lack effective guidance on their progress, and achievement is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient evidence that all aspects of citizenship are being covered adequately.

156. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has a clear vision for the future of citizenship, which is communicated well in the department handbook and in the priorities for development planning. The role of the co-ordinator in leading the team of year heads and tutors, who teach the course, is not sufficiently developed. However, there is a good commitment to citizenship throughout the school, supported well by the wide range of community and out of school activities.

157. The curriculum for citizenship encourages good participation through modules of work which have tangible outcomes for pupils, such as the video and animated work on safe driving, some of which are used by the local police. While the planning and resourcing of the modules of work are good, and citizenship is identified in the planning of most other departments, there has been insufficient monitoring of the implementation of the course. An assessment framework has been designed but is not being used. Therefore, management of the department is unsatisfactory.

Personal, social and health education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment and monitoring procedures have not been implemented effectively.
- The course gives good coverage of the National Curriculum requirements, and is enhanced by good partnership with community services.

Commentary

158. Pupils' achievement in personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Planning is good and responsive to requests from pupils, for example for a first aid course, and to community services such as the police and health. As modules of work are being revised, there is a positive move away from worksheets to teaching

which encourages pupils' independent thinking. This establishes clear links with a pupil's experience and understanding and results in good participation and motivation. The use of self-evaluation in pupils' records of achievement, and at the end of pieces of work, is good, but this is not supported by any written assessment from teachers. Therefore, pupils are not given sufficient guidance on the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve.

159. Leadership is satisfactory. Whilst the energies of the subject co-ordinator have gone into developing citizenship, successful action has been taken to develop the drug, and sex and relationships modules. The course is well established and gives adequate coverage of the required areas of study. Detailed teaching materials provide a valuable resource to tutors and are enhanced by the wide range of out of school provision such as the Duke of Edinburgh award, sporting and community activities. The introduction of mentoring by tutors is successfully bringing together these different aspects of personal, social and health education. However, as the monitoring of the work of the wide range of staff teaching the course has not taken place sufficiently well, and assessment is not in place, management is unsatisfactory.

Careers education and guidance

Provision in careers education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation of careers lessons and advice is efficient within the time available.
- There is a good work experience programme for pupils.

Commentary

160. An efficient system of lessons and advice ensures all pupils have sound support and guidance as they make choices at important points in their school life. Towards the end of Year 9, pupils and their parents have sufficient information to make informed choices about examination courses pupils wish to follow. In Years 10 and 11 careers lessons are part of a timetable rotation with physical education and religious education. As a result of this arrangement, not all pupils receive the same amount of time for careers. However, the time available is basically adequate to allow pupils to make informed decisions about the next steps they will take. Consequently, the teaching of careers is satisfactory overall. Samples of work show pupils make satisfactory use of ICT when making careers choices. Sound additional information and advice are available through the careers library and the Connexions advice service. Pupils are well prepared for the world of work. There is a useful two-week programme of work experience for all pupils in Year 10.

OTHER SUBJECTS SAMPLED IN THE MAIN SCHOOL

Commentary: Drama

161. Provision is satisfactory. Results in drama were very high in 2003 and better than the average standards set in 2002. The current standards in the large classes in Years 10 and 11 are average. Boys try hard in lessons and are good at developing their ideas orally. There is a small number of more able girls and their performances in drama are very good. They have very good stage presence, and their written answers are fluent and perceptive. Skills in improvisation are good. However, a minority of pupils, more often girls, act in an immature manner in lessons. The irregular attendance of others adversely affects collaborative planning and rehearsals for performance work. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well organised to involve all pupils and the ideas for evaluating performance, where pupils act as directors for specific actors, are very good.

Commentary: Engineering

162. One Year 11 lesson in this vocational course was sampled. In this basic skills course pupils are achieving well in the development of their engineering skills. Teaching, learning and pupils' attitudes towards their work were all good. Standards were average. There were some missed opportunities in that the teachers were giving the pupils evaluations on their work, rather than encouraging pupils to analyse for themselves. Nevertheless, this was a good lesson overall because the teachers were motivating the pupils well through the very good help and advice being given.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons were available at the time of the inspection.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses: 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	18	94.4	90.0	38.9	42.7	37.8	39.0
Biology	44	88.6	81.6	43.2	33.2	38.6	33.2
Business studies	11	100.0	89.1	63.6	31.7	46.4	35.4
Chemistry	26	88.5	84.8	26.9	36.9	32.3	35.2
Design and technology	23	100.0	89.2	21.7	32.0	32.2	35.7
English Language	16	87.5	92.0	62.2	29.9	44.4	35.7
English Literature	21	95.2	94.4	28.6	37.9	36.7	38.9
Food technology	8	100.0	74.5	37.5	16.7	38.8	25.6
French	14	92.9	85.4	50.0	35.2	40.7	34.9
Geography	36	91.7	88.3	47.2	36.4	40.6	36.3
German	4	75.0	87.6	25.0	34.7	32.5	35.6
Government and politics	16	75.0	83.2	12.5	32.5	24.4	33.6
History	26	100.0	91.8	40.0	37.2	40.8	37.8
Italian (Other languages)	2	50.0	89.9	0.0	53.5	20.0	41.7
Mathematics	22	63.6	74.2	45.5	34.3	32.3	31.3
Music	6	100.0	93.6	16.7	39.4	31.7	39.0
Physics	10	80.0	82.0	50.0	36.2	36.0	34.3
Spanish	11	90.9	87.5	27.3	36.1	38.2	35.9
VCE Business	10	100.0	87.1	20.0	16.5	74.0	60.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses: 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100.0	96.1	100.0	48.7	108.6	85.1
Biology	18	100.0	91.6	61.1	36.3	91.1	74.1
Business studies	7	100.0	96.4	85.7	32.8	100.0	76.5
Chemistry	9	100.0	94.0	55.6	45.9	95.6	81.1
Design and technology	9	100.0	95.3	55.6	35.5	95.6	76.5
Drama (Theatre studies)	5	100.0	98.1	100.0	41.5	108.0	82.9
English language	12	100.0	98.3	58.3	36.5	91.7	80.1
English literature	14	100.0	98.5	28.6	43.7	74.3	84.3
French	7	100.0	96.2	57.1	46.1	97.1	83.0
Geography	11	100.0	97.1	81.8	40.5	109.1	80.9
German	3	100.0	96.3	100.0	44.3	113.3	82.1
Government and politics	9	100.0	94.3	44.4	38.9	77.8	77.7
History	18	100.0	97.1	77.8	41.0	100.0	81.2
Mathematics	20	100.0	93.3	75.0	52.2	100.0	84.7
Music	1	100.0	97.7	0.0	41.8	40.0	82.2
Physics	10	100.0	92.8	60.0	42.8	94.0	78.6
Spanish	3	100.0	96.2	33.3	47.3	66.7	83.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

English literature

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High ability students achieve very well.
- Good teaching helps students to develop a clearer understanding of literary criticism.
- A small number of students attend irregularly and this inhibits their progress.

Commentary

163. Results were above the national average in both AS level and A2 English literature in 2003, and better than those recorded in 2002. The current standards are average in Years 12 and 13, with a wide range of attainment among the students. The absence rate of a significant minority of students adversely affects their progress because they lack the practice in discussions and in written work which will help them to improve. However, the achievement of most students is satisfactory.

164. Students' attitudes are very good in class. When they attend they learn well and the good teaching encourages them to take responsibility for their own research. Teachers ask subtle, open-ended questions which help to increase the students' understanding of how writers manipulate ideas and images. Teachers are particularly good at encouraging students to draw on their previous reading of other texts to see the links which occur in specific genres. In Year 13, this means students see developing patterns in the writing of different periods of literary history such as Gothic literature. In Year 12, they can put the comedy of Chaucer into a more understandable context.

165. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Students' essay writing has improved over the course due to the clearly structured teaching and the preparation during lessons. The marking is sharply focused on where there is a need for students to develop their answers more fully. A small number of students are reluctant to participate in lessons and rely too much on the prompting of teachers. Higher attaining students are very fluent in expressing their ideas both orally in class and in their essay writing. They have the confidence to speculate and to piece together ideas in a coherent and rational argument. Leadership and management of the sixth form courses are good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

166. Standards of literacy are above average in the sixth form. The use of literacy in the sixth form is good. Students continue to develop good skills in reading and information retrieval. They argue a case logically in lessons and this helps them to plan their follow-up writing. This is exemplified in theatre studies as they adopt the techniques of Stanislavski to '*think their way into a character's role*'. As a result, essays are often fluent and accurate. In business education, teachers regularly check students' folders to ensure the standards of grammar and expression are apt, and in physical education students are articulate and express ideas in writing well. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent command of the language and use it extensively in lessons.
- The choice and use of resources stimulate and interest students.
- Strategies successfully encourage students to use the language for realistic communication.
- The reticence of some students in spoken tasks prevents more rapid progress.

Commentary

167. Standards in AS level French in 2002, and in 2003, were above the national average. At A-level in 2002 standards were well above average but attainment fell to average in 2003 because the proportion of students gaining higher A and B passes was below average. Standards seen during inspection in Years 12 and 13 were above average, and the achievement of students was good.
168. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have an excellent command of the language and use it extensively in lessons to challenge and motivate students. As a result, students develop their own language to a complex level and are able to express themselves well on a wide range of higher-level topics. Teachers and students work well together in close collaboration to explore texts and sustain discussion on a range of content, which is of genuine interest to all. However, in spite of the imaginative tasks, some students are rather reticent in oral work, and so do not fully exploit the opportunities offered. Clear feedback ensures students are aware of their target grades and how to achieve them.
169. The sixth form French course is very well led and well managed by a team leader who is experienced and committed to high standards. Students on the AS course attained the highest grades at GCSE level, and for A-level students, their AS level grades were similarly high. However, relatively low numbers in the groups mean that statistics are limited. It is acknowledged that student recruitment for the future is a priority. Students have excellent access to first tongue French speakers and appreciate the work undertaken with the French assistant. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment at A-level are above the national average.
- Teachers are confident and have very good subject knowledge.
- The marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not provide sufficient guidance for improvement.
- The use of performance data to set targets and monitor progress is not yet sharp enough.
- Good working relationships between students and teachers create a good work ethos.

Commentary

170. A-level results in 2002 were well above the national average. In 2003, they were above average. Whilst the proportion of students gaining higher A and B grade improved, not all students passed the examination. AS-level results in 2002 were polarised at the extremes, eight students obtained grade A and eight students were graded U. In 2003, results were above average, and well above average for higher A and B passes. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainment at AS-level is average, and their achievement satisfactory. The majority of students are making good progress but some lack confidence when tackling problems which are not straightforward. The achievement of Year 13 students is good, and their attainment above average. They are on target for above average grades at A-level and some are expected to achieve the highest grades.
171. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Year 12, but good in Year 13. Teachers are very secure in their own subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with clear objectives, which are conveyed well to students. However, some lessons, particularly in

Year 12, tend to be teacher dominated, and there are therefore limited opportunities for independent learning. The marking of students' work is unsatisfactory and there is a lack of written feedback in order to help improve future performance. Nevertheless, good working relationships exist between students and teachers, as a result of which students are comfortable and encouraged when approaching their teachers to request additional help and guidance.

172. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department provides a good role model and has established a team commitment to the raising of students' standards. However, management is satisfactory overall. Performance management systems have been implemented although there are aspects which are under-developed. Analysis of students' performance has been satisfactorily established, but there is insufficient use of subject-specific measures to set targets and measure progress. There is no regular monitoring of marking. However, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

173. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Most students on advanced level courses display good mathematical skills. In science and in geography there is good collection, analysis and display of data by students. In business studies, students analyse cash flows and prepare profit and loss accounts. However, there is unsatisfactory provision for students who enter the sixth form with weak skills in mathematics. There is inadequate provision of non-advanced level courses in mathematics. Students who have not obtained Grade C at GCSE level are given the opportunity to attend re-sit classes at lunchtime but there is no teaching of Key Skills in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- There has been good recruitment of students in 2003.
- Teachers' marking does not help students well enough in making progress towards their targets.
- ICT is not used sufficiently by students to aid their learning.

Commentary

174. High standards of attainment have been maintained since the previous inspection. Results in physics have been well above, or above, the national average for average points score at AS and A level since 1998. In 2003, A-level results were in the highest five per cent nationally. Most students achieve well and make good progress based on their performance at GCSE level. Retention rates are very high and students regularly take up university places in physical sciences.

175. Students' attainment and achievement in lessons are currently above average overall. Students of all abilities show increasingly good knowledge and understanding of physics. Until this academic year, very few female students have taken either AS or A-level. The current mixture of male and female students in Year 12 enables a greater range of views to be expressed in lessons.

176. Teaching is good overall in Years 12 and 13 and students learn well as a result. Teaching during the inspection was characterised by brisk pace, very good subject knowledge, sharing of learning objectives and good working relationships. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is the encouragement of students to learn for themselves. They respond to challenge with relish. Students are well motivated and keen to learn. However, there are too few

opportunities for students to use ICT to aid learning, with the exception of an excellent CD containing homework questions, past papers and the subject specifications.

177. Marking is satisfactory. Comments helpfully reinforce examination criteria but do not give feedback about progress towards targets. Delay in discussing progress towards targets with students until a review meeting reduces the impact of feedback about their work.

178. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There was no head of physics at the time of the previous inspection and the holder of the new post has successfully led improvements in the quality and accessibility of resources, and in development planning. He has introduced constructive ways of analysing students' progress. The excellent expertise in the department is effectively shared through collaborative planning and joint teaching of groups. Teaching staff also observe each other teaching as a way of sharing good practice. Formal schemes of work for AS or A-level physics are being planned. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment supports students' achievement well, easing the transition from AS-level to A2.
- Students produce concise, well-structured writing because of strong specialist teaching and focus on literacy skills.
- Excellent working relationships support students' learning well.

Commentary

179. In 2002, A-level results were above average. Students consistently do at least as well as expected, which was the case in 2003, although results were below average for students gaining higher A and B passes. At AS-level in 2003, results were above average overall with an average proportion gaining higher A and B passes. However, these results represent overall good achievement for the students concerned and reflect the department's focus on raising male students' attainment. This is achieved through the involvement of all students in monitoring progress, through, for example, regular one-to-one discussions about assignments, and discussing learning objectives in lessons.

180. History is a popular subject so the numbers of students taking history are increasing. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average, reflecting good achievement. Students are skilled at organising complex historical knowledge. They construct well-reasoned and illustrated judgements about, for example, the effectiveness of the Chartist movement or why Britain was able to make a peaceful transition to democracy in the context of early 19th century Europe. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good support they receive from their teachers. Retention rates between Year 12 and 13 are very good.

181. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' particular subject strengths and teaching skills are well targeted towards literacy skills as well as historical specialisms. This makes for clarity in the teaching of ICT, personal projects, and essay writing. Excellent working relationships between these talented historians and the way they involve students makes teaching and learning consistently good. Teachers in all lessons use pair and group work well to build up students' confidence in talking about historical ideas, making comparisons with past events or tracing the progress of movements. In this way, teachers know immediately if misunderstandings or inaccuracies exist so learning is secure. Students come to enjoy the power of being articulate when interpreting concepts such as a loyal opposition, coalition government and rigid/flexible class systems. History comes alive because teachers use

contemporary analogies or colloquialisms to sharpen meaning. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students to take greater responsibility in learning through talk and discussion in order to increase the challenge, generate cross-class debate and sharpen the application of their knowledge.

182. Leadership is very good, because it recognises the strengths of colleagues and exemplifies how good history teaching inspires students. Good management has implemented better assessment involving students, keeping the department's performance under review and successfully reconciling AS and A2-level courses. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are above average and improving.
- Accommodation is poor and impacts upon the quality of learning.
- Excellent staff expertise supports very well the students' individual projects.

Commentary

183. In 2002, all students entered for A-level gained an A or B pass and results were well above average. In 2003, whilst all students gained a pass, results were below average overall because higher-grade passes were below average. At AS-level in 2002 results were below average overall. In 2003, AS results were above average overall with an average proportion gaining higher A and B passes. Recent results contrast very significantly with the standards seen during the inspection. The attainment of students currently in Years 12 and 13 is well above average and their achievement very good.

Example of outstanding practice

The use of studio facilities for sixth form art students.

The art department at the school has created a studio for the sixth form students in the face of considerable accommodation difficulties. This area of the department uses linked chipboard sheets and display boards to offer space to students which allows them time free of the distractions which working in large groups in an open classroom can often present. Students have responded by personalising these small studio environments with both favourite artworks and their own designs and visual ideas. They regularly spend a significant amount of their independent study time in their studio spaces. Their working style, supported by experienced staff, who had worked in further education, aspires to the best practice seen at specialised art colleges. The creation of this studio ethos has contributed considerably to the creation of deeply reflective and considered artwork by students seen in the current Year 13 during the inspection.

184. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and some bring excellent experience of teaching post 16 in further education. This is a key factor in the excellent provision. Teachers are very well focused on supporting students in their individual studies. Feedback is regularly offered in oral and formal written form, often beyond that demanded by the school's systems. Students are supported very well in their work, using a variety of media and developing individual approaches to their projects. Students develop well as artists in their own right between Years 11 and 13. They are encouraged both to become independent learners, exploring their own approaches to the subject and to identify links with contemporary and historical artworks. Imaginative and very successful projects have included painting classroom doors around the school using a variety of cultural and multicultural themes. Many school corridors are enlivened with such sixth form artworks.

185. Students enjoy their work here, demonstrating a rich and varied approach to their artwork, handling mixed media and collage with great sensitivity. Many utilise ICT resources well to assist them in their work and there is very good and sometimes excellent use of sketchbooks. Much of the learning reflects best practice seen in higher education.
186. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department gives a thoroughly professional lead to all the staff whilst creating the environment and facilities the AS and A-level students need. Consequently, the team works closely together to offer advice and guidance to all students.
187. At the previous inspection the sixth form art courses were identified as strength of the school. Despite a fall in examination results in recent years, this department is once more a recognisable strength of the school. Overall, provision at sixth form is excellent but the capacity to maintain and extend this is compromised by the accommodation issue.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of students gaining higher-grade passes is well above average overall.
- Many AVCE students are achieving distinction in their assignments.
- Teachers have a profound knowledge of their subject, and constantly challenge students.
- The department has a strong commitment to students' achieving their full potential.
- Elements such as ICT, literacy and numeracy are not integrated into the department's schemes of work.

Commentary

188. In 2002, standards at A2-level were well above average. In 2003, half of the students gained grades A or B at A2-level. In both years, all candidates gained a pass grade. At AS-level results were above average in 2002 and 2003. Results in AVCE were below average in 2002, but improved in 2003. Previously they have fluctuated between below and above average. Where there were gender differences, males performed better than females. Numbers are increasing, and retention rates are good. Value-added data shows that students are achieving above expectations.
189. The attainment of students in the current Years 12 AS and Year 13 A2 groups is above average, and their achievement is very good. Students match independent research skills with a thorough understanding of the different aspects of business. Any differences in attainment result from the individual progress made by students in acquiring analytical and evaluation skills, or the ability to illustrate key points with practical examples. Not all students yet completely grasp the techniques required in fully answering questions which carry high marks.
190. In the AVCE groups, many students are exceeding their original predicted grade by one or two grades, and most Year 12 students are making good progress in acquiring analytical and evaluation skills. The standard of literacy is high, in note taking and in assignments and coursework, and it is only in the work of some lower-attaining students that there is inaccuracy and a lack of cohesion. Higher and middle-attaining students are already satisfying distinction criteria.
191. Teaching and learning are very good. The lessons in the AS and A2 courses contain lively debate and challenge. Students are continually encouraged to express and develop their ideas through discussion. This reinforces their understanding of specialist key terms and concepts and has a good impact on their learning. Students also have every opportunity to work

independently, and there is good use of teamwork to develop personal skills. Feedback to individual students on major assignments, based on the detailed criteria of the course units, is the strongest aspect of the teaching. Students are always aware of their current level of attainment, and of what criteria to satisfy, in order to progress to a higher level. In this way, they develop well their re-drafting skills and raise their attainment.

192. Leadership is good. The head of department leads a strongly committed team with the clear priority of ensuring students receive a high level of individual support in order to achieve their full potential. There are very good links with industry, both local and national, which enhance students' learning and practical experience through visits, visiting speakers, and with case studies to illustrate business theory. Monitoring and evaluation of sixth form teaching are well supported by members of the team observing each other and sharing good practice. Management of the department is satisfactory. The criteria for each unit of the courses are very detailed, but the department has yet to identify where strands such as literacy and numeracy can be incorporated. Students have good access to computers to enhance their learning. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Personal, social, health and citizenship education

193. There are many good opportunities for personal, social and health education in the sixth form but they are not, as yet, fully co-ordinated or assessed. Personal, social and health education is very well presented in a way which allows students to develop their ideas. Consequently, they take good responsibility for planning their studies, managing sixth form facilities and for planning participation in the community. The students appreciate well the good range of opportunities made available to them and the style in which work is presented. Students are very well motivated. The quality of work, exemplified by an excellent mock parliamentary debate, is very high.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent development of students' understanding of citizenship and democracy.

About 70 students from Years 12 and 13 studying history, and government and politics, and Year 11 pupils studying citizenship, staged a mock parliament. They simulated Prime Minister's questions, and a debate on the abolition of the monarchy. Excellent planning and preparation by students and teachers meant that the roles of the key parliamentary figures were very well understood and clearly acted out. Formalities and voting procedures effectively created an authentic framework for debate, as did the layout of the 'parliament' complete with mace and order papers. Controlled cheering and jeering, based on sharp listening, gave the scene real atmosphere, and encouraged the speakers to be spontaneous, and passionate. The result was excellent witty, intelligent ripostes to unexpected proposals and claims as the drama gathered momentum. Formal speeches and questions reflected very well the students' knowledge of contemporary issue, including the different political stances on the issues debated. The tone of proceedings was authenticated by the use of appropriate terms and conventions, even during spontaneous exchanges. Comments were peppered with the correct use of parliamentary terminology. One of the gems indicated how excellent preparation brought out the best from students. Here, a student rounded off his short anti-monarchy speech with '*Let's create a democracy where responsible citizens have responsibility!*', adding impact by standing still and looking around as his words sank in, before sitting down. This was an excellent way of actively teaching a whole range of subject, literacy and social and citizenship skills, and the kind of experience which significantly influences students' understanding.

OTHER SUBJECTS SAMPLED IN THE SIXTH FORM

In addition to the seven subjects inspected in depth, eleven subjects were sampled in the sixth form. These included, biology, chemistry, design and technology, English language, geography, German, government and politics, music, physical education and sports studies, psychology, and theatre studies.

Commentary: Biology

194. Two lessons were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. In the Year 12 lesson, teaching and learning were excellent overall, and students' achievement was good. The teacher's very good command of the subject, together with a thoroughly rigorous and enthusiastic approach, led to excellent learning. There was a wide range of attainment amongst the students, but overall, standards of attainment were average. Students' mature and positive attitudes to work contributed well to the good progress they made. In the Year 13 lesson, teaching and learning were very good, standards above average and students' achievement good. This was a very good lesson overall because it was well planned and structured in order to enable successfully collaborative and independent work by the students.

Commentary: Chemistry

195. One Year 13 lesson was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Attainment was above average and students made good progress. This was a good lesson because practical work was well directed and techniques consolidated effectively for further investigation work.

Commentary: Design and technology

196. Three lessons were sampled, one each in Years 12 and Year 13 on product design, and a combined lesson in food technology. Teaching and learning were very good overall. Teacher expectations were high and the work was challenging. Achievement was good, and sometimes very good. At both AS and A2 level, students in food technology and product design experiment and explore innovative designs leading to creative outcomes. Design ideas are based on extensive research using a number of sources. Very good use was made of ICT in coursework folios for research and presentation.

Commentary: English language

197. One Year 12 lesson was sampled, and a discussion held concerning Year 13 teaching. Teaching and learning were good. Standards were average and students' achievement satisfactory. English language is a very popular option in the sixth form and results at both AS and A2-levels have been above average in recent years. Students in the lessons sampled were achieving very well because of the skills of very knowledgeable teachers who made lessons relevant and interesting.

Commentary: Geography

198. One Year 13 lesson was sampled. Standards were above average. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were all good. This was a very good lesson overall because students received very good help and encouragement from the teacher on how to effectively structure an A-level essay. Very good working relationships led to good discussions and concentrated work.

Commentary: German

199. One Year 13 German lesson was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were above average. The teaching style, resources and an extensive use of

the language were well matched to the students' needs. This enabled them to make good progress. The clear sharing of lesson objectives, and an explanation of examination requirements, added significantly to the students' understanding.

Commentary: Government and politics

200. One Year 13 lesson in government and politics was sampled. Teaching and learning were good. Students' achievement was satisfactory and their standards above average. Students made good progress because the teacher's subject knowledge enabled the good development of discussion work and the posing of relevant questions by the students. Students were well prepared for a mock parliamentary debate, in citizenship, concerning the abolition of the monarchy.

Commentary: Music

201. Two lessons were sampled, a combined Year 12 and 13 lesson and a Year 13 lesson. Overall, standards were above average and students' achievement was good. Teaching and learning were good. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled instrumentalists. A strong feature was the teachers' good encouragement of the students and a willingness to help with their coursework. Learning was good because the teachers provided challenges which were matched to each student's individual needs. Assessment of the students' work was good. However, limited ICT provision and music technology restricted the students' progress.

Commentary: Physical education and sports studies

202. Two Year 12 lessons were sampled. In the Community Sports Leader Award certificate course, teaching, learning and achievement were good. Standards were in line with expectations. This was a well-run session involving the students in a useful range of fitness, football and self-defence activities. This is a voluntary course and students' attitudes were very good. In the Year 12 sports studies lesson, teaching, learning and students' achievement were very good. Standards were above average. Students achieved highly because the teacher used a wider range of methods to develop their knowledge and understanding on historical and sociological aspects of sport. The teaching also supported students in developing their personal study skills. Sports studies is a new course this year which has proved popular with students.

Commentary: Psychology

203. One Year 12 lesson in psychology was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were average overall. This was a good lesson because the use of psychological experimentation extended students' learning well, and their understanding of concepts related to thinking and learning. Consequently, students were well challenged throughout the lesson. There was a good contribution to their social and cultural development through the experiment, which involved the re-telling of a North American Indian myth.

Commentary: Theatre studies

204. This subject is taught in Year 12 only and two lessons were observed. Students were very committed and had made good progress in the practical aspects of the course. Their standards were above average overall. The teaching was well planned and ensured that students developed good techniques in structured yet often experimental ways, learning from personal observations coupled with careful research of the texts being studied.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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