

INSPECTION REPORT

LADY HAWKINS HIGH SCHOOL

Kington

LEA area: Hereford

Unique reference number: 116940

Headteacher: Mr J F Barry

Lead inspector: Ms M L Glynne-Jones

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd January 2004

Inspection number: 259361

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	422
School address:	Park View Kington Herefordshire
Postcode:	HR5 3AR
Telephone number:	01544 230441
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D J Hill
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Lady Hawkins is smaller than most secondary schools, but growing, with broadly equal numbers of boys and girls.
- The small sixth form, with more female than male students, has grown considerably since the last inspection.
- Pupil mobility - those leaving or joining the school mid-course - is much the same as in other schools.
- When they join Year 7 pupils' standards are average overall, while showing a wide range.
- The school draws about half its pupils from Kington, others coming from surrounding villages, with an increasing number joining the school from outside the catchment area.
- Pupils come from areas in which the level of social advantage, while varying, is broadly average overall.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and none whose home language is not English.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average, while for those with statements the proportion is above average. Pupils' needs mainly relate to dyslexia and behavioural difficulties; a small number has visual impairment.
- In 2001 and 2002 Lady Hawkins received the *School Achievement Award*.
- The school is involved in the *DfES Breakthrough Collaborative on Boys' Achievement* and in the *Young Enterprise Scheme*.
- In 2002 Lady Hawkins was granted *Leader School Status* in the local consortium for teacher training.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2918	M L Glynne-Jones	Lead inspector	Music in Years 7 to 9
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English English in the sixth form
33009	G O'Connor	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics in the sixth form
3735	A Webb	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30518	M Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography History Geography in the sixth form
23569	D Nicholl	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Special educational needs
3435	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Personal, social and health education and citizenship
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school with a very good sixth form. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching, which is never less than good in the sixth form. Leadership is good and there is sound management. The strength of community involvement owes much to the commitment of the chair and governors' work in effecting improvements. Value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ The strong ethos of care for young people, a central tenet of the school's work, is supported by and contributes to the very good relationships between all members of its community.
- ❑ In relation to their prior attainment pupils' achievement at GCSE is very good.
- ❑ Teachers' thorough planning and high expectations, together with their expertise in teaching for examinations, lead to pupils' success.
- ❑ The school's evaluation and reporting of its own work lacks analysis and rigour and is not backed up by evidence from monitoring; consequently inconsistencies in provision which affect pupils' progress are not picked up.
- ❑ Arrangement for pupils with special needs have not been updated to take account of revised national arrangements although learning support assistants give good support in lessons.
- ❑ There is a lack of systems for managing the school's work to ensure that pupils and sixth-formers benefit equally well from the provision across subjects.
- ❑ Young people's personal development is strongly supported by the wide and imaginative range of enrichment activities both 'at home and away'.

Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Standards have improved at each stage and there is good improvement in teaching. However, there has not been enough improvement on the issues concerning monitoring and evaluation, still an issue for the school, and the use of the library to support learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

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

Achievement in the work seen is **good**: it is good by Year 9 and by Year 11 and in the sixth form. The 2003 Year 9 test results show above average standards and better achievement overall. Compared with similar schools, these Year 9 results are as good as those in the top 5 per cent. There are different standards in each subject by Year 9: well above average in English; above average in mathematics; and average in science. By Year 11 and Year 13 pupils' work shows above average standards, a higher standard in the sixth form than shown by the 2003 A-level examination results.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good** overall although opportunities are satisfactory for pupils' spiritual development. Across Years 7 to 11 pupils show good attitudes and behaviour. Sixth-formers' personal development and their attitudes are very good. There is good attendance and punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. There is **good** teaching and learning. The school's arrangements for the care of its young people, the guidance and support they receive and the partnerships with parents and other schools are all of good quality. The curriculum is satisfactory although the national Code of Practice for special needs is not fully implemented. opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are limited. A very good range of enrichment activities and very good links with the community contribute significantly to young people's personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Good leadership by the headteacher and other staff managers sets the tone for the ethos of care for individuals which is a strong thread in school life. Management is satisfactory: the school does not rigorously evaluate its own work although it is beginning to use data from results and assessments effectively. Governors give a good steer to school development and strong support to senior staff, although they have not ensured that they benefit sufficiently from the school's self-evaluation. Statutory requirements for daily worship and religious education in the sixth form are not fully met. Overall, therefore, governance has to be judged unsatisfactory because of these statutory breaches.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in high regard, particularly for its supportive atmosphere and the way their children are helped to settle in well. They are not so positive about the way the school seeks and takes account of their views and the information they receive about their child's progress; in both these areas inspectors find that there is scope for improvement. Across the year groups pupils appreciate teachers' readiness to help them and they have few concerns about the school. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 about half of the pupils have no concerns about bullying and racism.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ❑ implement formal procedures for rigorous school and departmental monitoring and self-evaluation to ensure that pupils benefit from consistently good provision in all areas of the school's work;
- ❑ implement revised arrangements for special needs taking full account of the revised Code of Practice;
- ❑ implement systems for managing the school and establishing its expectations of all staff managers in order to ensure effective consistency across the work of the whole school;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ❑ provide a daily act of worship for all pupils and sixth-formers and provide religious education in Year 13 as planned for implementation in September 2004.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good**, cost-effective sixth form which covers its own costs from income. It provides a good quality of education and teaching that is consistently good or better. Leadership and management are good, although the lack of daily worship and provision for religious education in Year 13 are both statutory breaches.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ Students develop into mature young adults able to take balanced views and manage themselves successfully.
- ❑ Very good advice and guidance enable students to make the best of their studies.
- ❑ There is an excellent programme of sixth-form induction.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English: very good : strong partnership between teachers and students leads to high standards. Students become very good independent learners and very detailed and helpful marking enables them to make very good progress. A Year 13 French lesson was sampled.
Mathematics	Good : teachers ensure that students are aware of what they need to do to improve and how they can achieve their targets.
Science	Biology: very good : relationships between students and staff maximise the learning opportunities in tutorial-style lessons. Lessons in chemistry and physics were sampled.
Information and communication technology	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A lesson was sampled in Year 12 and Year 13.
Humanities	Geography: very good : emphasis in the teaching on personal research and excellent examination preparation ensure that high standards are maintained. A Year 13 history lesson and Year 12 psychology lesson were sampled.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.
Visual and performing arts and media	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 13 lesson in art and design was sampled.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 12 sport studies lesson was sampled.
Business	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.
General education	A Year 12 lesson in general studies was sampled.

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

An excellent induction programme ensures that students are well prepared for the demands of sixth-form study. They benefit from good careers advice and personal support that are a strong feature of this small sixth form. The very good guidance they receive within small and friendly teaching groups is one of the factors helping them to achieve well. Students value the advice they receive from their subject teachers to help them improve their work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The school leads and manages its sixth form **well**. The clear direction for its development shows in the addition of new courses and the quality of new facilities while the school has ensured that sixth-form spending does not disadvantage pupils lower down the school. Students benefit very well from the school's active commitment to promoting individual success. Self-evaluation and monitoring are satisfactory for the sixth form as a whole, while in two of the subjects inspected in detail, English and biology, the practice is very good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views are very positive: they enjoy being in the sixth form. They appreciate the encouragement from staff to work independently and the way their work is marked to help them improve it. Although the questionnaire returns identified some feeling that there was not an adult in school to turn to if they had a personal problem, in discussion, students' views were somewhat different. They are confident that staff know them extremely well. They also value the support of their peers to whom many feel they would turn first if there were a difficulty. They particularly value the friendly atmosphere. Students have very few concerns about the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11 and in the four subjects inspected in the sixth form. Standards are above average by Year 9 and by Year 11, and above average by Year 13.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good achievement over Years 7 to 11, benefiting from highly effective approaches to teaching examination technique, reflects their achievement at GCSE in 2003.
- In all subjects inspected over Years 7 to 11 achievement is at least good with particular strengths in geography, history and ICT.
- In the four A-level subjects inspected in detail, achievement is very good in English and geography due to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The work seen shows that different groups of pupils mostly achieve equally well.

Commentary

1. Pupils did well overall in 2003 in Year 9 tests and at GCSE. Trends over time show Year 9 test results rising at a faster rate than the national results, while at GCSE results are rising at broadly the same rate as they are nationally. The value-added measure for GCSE shows above average gains compared with the gains made by all schools nationally. This measure is not available for Year 9.
2. In 2002, pupils did better at GCSE in English and ICT than they did in their other subjects which compares favourably with the national picture. In the previous year this applied to mathematics and ICT. This is a particularly positive comparison two years running for ICT because the proportion of pupils taking the examination was much higher than it was nationally. In both years pupils did less well in double award science, comparing unfavourably with the picture nationally; in mathematics this was true in 2003. Over time girls' results have improved and boys' results have fallen, one of the reasons for the school's involvement in the national project on boys' achievement.
3. Although staff have good knowledge of how well individuals do in tests and examinations, the school has not looked at its results to check that different groups are doing equally well in comparison with their previous attainment. This is true in relation to the results of boys and girls in Year 6 tests, the results of pupils from minority ethnic groups, those of pupils with special needs and those identified as having gifts and talents. Evidence from the inspection shows, for example, that the gap between boys' and girls' Year 9 results in mathematics has widened but its significance cannot be evaluated without data by gender from Year 6. In English boys' Year 9 results have improved relative to girls' performance.
4. The picture of achievement across the school is a good one, brought about by good teaching and good learning in the school's caring atmosphere where pupils' success is the aim. The exceptions are few. In Years 7 to 9 there is satisfactory achievement rather than good in art and design and unsatisfactory achievement in music. In art and design pupils' satisfactory achievement reflects the satisfactory teaching. Although they make steady progress in the specialist environment, their progress in lessons is not supported by sharing the learning objectives with them. Consequently they are not clear enough about what they should be aiming for. The expectations in Years 7 to 9 are not as high as they are of pupils in Years 10 and 11. In music the main contributory factor in pupils' underachievement is the revised arrangement for the curriculum in the current year. Each class observed in Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 had not been timetabled for music lessons during the preceding autumn term.

5. Pupils with special needs who are taught in subject lessons with others in their year group make similar progress to their peers: their achievement is almost always satisfactory and mostly good. This is because teachers are well aware of their needs and take account of their targets in the planning. Learning support assistants liaise well with subject teachers and provide very useful support for a range of pupils in the class, particularly through ensuring that they understand what to do and remain focused on the task. A small number of pupils spend part or most of the week in the special needs 'centre'. Some make slow but steady progress in reading and spelling. Analysis during the inspection showed that some have gained good examination results in relation to their attainment when they joined the school. However, insufficient focus on working to reintegrate pupils into subject lessons is restricting their achievement in areas of the National Curriculum, such as oral work in English and the enjoyment of literature, and their knowledge and understanding in other subjects.

Sixth form

6. An interpretation of AS- and A-level subject results in comparison with national results is available for 2002 but not yet for 2003. The comparisons are made where the number of entries is five or more. They show at A-level:
- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|
| in the highest band of performance | biology | chemistry, mathematics, physics |
| well above average | | |
| above average | | geography |
| average | | history, ICT |
7. In the four subjects inspected in detail, students' achievement in the work seen is very good in English and geography and good in biology and mathematics. Students with special needs in the sixth form, taught in classes with their peers, achieve well because teachers are aware of their needs and support them effectively.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.3 (34.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	36.6 (38.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.9 (35.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 78 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	63 (57)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.6 (34.7)	37.2 (34.7)

There were 68 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.0 (90.2)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	36.7 (38.0)	36.1(35.5)

Average point score per student	249.1 (253.2)	253.1 (254.5)
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There were 23 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, and their attitudes and behaviour are good. In the sixth form these are very good. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Very good relationships between pupils and with staff, particularly in the sixth form, have a positive effect on the quality of learning; pupils enjoy school and readily involve themselves in activities.
- ❑ Very effective use of the revised code of conduct sets high expectations and rewards pupils and students for good conduct and effort.
- ❑ Pupils and sixth-formers show respect for each other and their school and are thoughtful and courteous.
- ❑ Students' very mature attitudes to their work contribute significantly to their success.
- ❑ Sixth-formers are good role models for younger pupils and contribute well in lead positions in the house system and school council.

Commentary

8. Pupils like their school and rate highly both the helpfulness of teachers and the friendliness of other people. Pupils settle well in lessons and readily involve themselves in their work. They take responsibility for their own learning, recognising, for example, that homework is an integral part of their education. Many pupils involve themselves in the range of activities that are available outside the school day. They appreciate that good work is rewarded with merits and is often on display in classrooms and around the school. Such displays are universally cared for. The very good relationships among all members of the school community, whatever their level of attainment, age, gender or ethnicity, mean that pupils are courteous to one another and to adults, listen to each other, and are sensitive to others' needs. When given the opportunity to do so they are constructive in their evaluations of each other's work. Assemblies and tutor periods provide sound guidelines for pupils' social and moral development, but opportunities for spiritual reflection and development are insufficient.
9. Pupils' behaviour is almost always good. They generally travel about the site in a calm and orderly way keeping to the school's 'keep left' policy to facilitate ease of movement on narrow staircases. There are few incidents of bullying or boisterous behaviour and those occurring are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's high expectations for good attitudes and behaviour are clear from Year 7; pupils in Year 7 do not think that misbehaviour is 'cool'. In later years, house captains and older students who act as mentors provide mature, good role models for younger pupils. In almost all lessons pupils with behavioural difficulties are well integrated, accepted by their peers and behave well. On occasion, when there are instances of unsatisfactory behaviour, this is dealt with well by the teacher and the teaching assistant.

Sixth form

10. The very good relationships in the sixth form create a good climate for learning. Well motivated students approach their studies with maturity and interest. They collaborate effectively and show sensitivity to the needs of others in the group. Students respect each other's views and listen attentively as they discuss issues in a thoughtful, balanced way. Opportunities for students to explore their spiritual understanding in sixth-form assemblies are very good as individual students talk about their beliefs and faiths. Subjects make a strong contribution to moral and cultural issues, for example considering themes of racial prejudice in English and the impact of population growth in geography. Sixth-formers rate the school highly. In return they play an active part in promoting the school's ethos of care, for example by organising whole-school Christmas events, helping with sports activities and competitions and working with those pupils who need additional reading practice. Sixth-formers make a significant contribution to school life.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	0.1
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.

11. Attendance is good. Following a steady decline in the rate since the last inspection, the rate improved to above average in 2002-03. New procedures to monitor attendance and good support for families with attendance difficulties have contributed to the improvement. Much of the authorised absence is due to sickness. Sixth-form attendance is good.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	398	17	2
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	7	0	0

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

12. The number of fixed-term exclusions is below average for schools of similar size and there is an average number of permanent exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. This applies to teaching and learning, the school's care for its pupils and students and the links with parents and other schools. Assessment and the curriculum are satisfactory. Enrichment activities and community links are very good.

Teaching and learning

Across the school both teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In all the subjects inspected the quality of teaching is at least good and results in at least good learning; the exceptions are art and design and music in Years 7 to 9 where the quality of both is satisfactory.
- Teachers' subject expertise contributes significantly to the good quality and thorough planning and high expectations ensure that pupils and sixth-formers learn effectively.

- ❑ The particular strengths are in English and citizenship in Years 10 and 11, in religious education across Years 7 to 11 and, of the four sixth-form subjects inspected in detail, in English, biology and geography.
- ❑ Two stunning science lessons were observed in Year 7 and Year 13.
- ❑ Lower attainers and pupils with special needs benefit substantially from the contribution of the learning support assistants in subject lessons.
- ❑ Across all the subject departments/faculties there is scope for improvement where a small number of individual features of the teaching are no better than satisfactory: this applies particularly to homework arrangements in about half the subjects and in a smaller number to the way lesson time is used.

Commentary

13. Three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or better, an improvement on the two-thirds reported at the last inspection. The amount of good or better teaching increases over the stages: from two-thirds in Years 7 to 9, to three-quarters in Years 10 and 11 and to all lessons in the sixth form, whether in the four subjects inspected in detail or in lessons sampled in other subjects. Some of the features making the real difference to pupils' learning in very good teaching are:
 - the teacher's enthusiasm, combined with demanding activities presented skilfully and matched sensitively to individual needs, kept all pupils involved and very interested in a graphics lesson, knowing exactly what they had to do throughout (Years 7 to 9);
 - well planned, briskly conducted French teaching, with a challenging text and homework that followed on very well, extended pupils' use of the new language construction practised in the lesson; it provided very good opportunities for pupils to hear and understand French spoken at a good speed (Years 10 and 11);
 - very good use of a video camera and computer link in A-level sports studies, supplemented by materials prepared by the teacher, enabled students to record their evaluations successfully when considering the links between anatomical action and skills.

However, the lessons where very good teaching was observed are not evenly distributed across subjects. In a small number no very good teaching was seen. The school has no records from its own lesson observations to show the extent of this differential.
14. Teachers know pupils and their special needs well and adapt the planning to take good account of these. As a result, these pupils learn as well as others in the class. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants whose very valuable support in lessons makes a positive difference to pupils' learning. This is achieved, for example, through taking account of the information available to the class teacher, assessment details, targets and suggested strategies for support. In the special needs centre (room), teaching is often very narrowly focused on improving pupils' reading and spelling. This is done through individualised programmes based on worksheets and computer programs. At times there are pupils from different year groups studying different subjects which severely restricts the opportunities for group work. Consequently pupils are not learning to work collaboratively and neither is the range or style of the work preparing them for returning to their classes for lessons. Although gifted and talented pupils have been identified by the school, there was little evidence in the lessons seen in five subjects that planning had taken specific account of their individual needs and capabilities. Generally, like all pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, they benefited from effective planning that enabled them to learn well.
15. Assessment is used well in some subjects, for example English, science, geography, history and ICT, where marking is thorough, involves pupils' own input and leads to setting learning targets which are regularly reviewed. In several other subjects assessment does not result in target-setting, the marking is inconsistent and students do not always know how well they are doing. Teachers' use of assessment is better at GCSE level and in the sixth form than in Years 7 to 9. Although a considerable amount of data is available, limited use is made of it to track

individual progress and set targets for different groups. This varies in effectiveness between subjects.

16. The following examples show why some teaching seen was no better than satisfactory. This occurred more often in Years 7 to 9 than in the other stages.
- Despite pupils' good attitudes, a slow pace and rather mundane tasks, together with missed opportunities to explain a point to the whole class when needed, resulted in only satisfactory learning.
 - There was a dull and uninspiring approach, over-dependent on rather repetitive work-sheets and without the learning objectives being shared with pupils. This restricted the learning although the concluding plenary posed a thought-provoking exercise.
 - The teacher had higher expectations of higher attainers than of other pupils in the class so that not all were stretched by the work.
 - Work was not planned for the different attainment levels in the group.
17. The four unsatisfactory lessons seen were in Years 7 to 9. In two of these the main weakness was the lack of firm direction and management which resulted in unsatisfactory learning; in one of these pupils behaved badly throughout. In the third, inadequate planning and low expectations led to pupils underachieving. Insecure subject knowledge was the weakness restricting pupils' achievement in the fourth.
18. Two excellent lessons were observed in science, one in Year 7 and one in Year 13.

Thirty-one enthusiasts line up outside the lab until the teacher appears and the noise stops. Inside, they settle quickly, answering quick questions about previous lessons. They have to predict what will happen when the current is measured at different places round a simple circuit. Some sensible ideas, some laughable, but five minutes later they try to verify them by setting up their own circuits and beginning to measure. Questions establish sensible results by each pair, but there have been surprises. Next, pupils predict the effect of more cells and more lamps. Again – some logical suggestions and some fanciful ones, but it is the pupils who will find out by experiment – no spoon-feeding here. By the end, pupils can tell their teacher what the 'circuit rules' are. Some are surprised they have proved themselves wrong, but are now confident that they know the correct answers and the reasons why. Carefully stage-managed, pupils planned their own increasingly complicated mini-investigations, some even back-tracking and repeating when something unexpected happened – mostly unsupervised. No breakage or losses; behaviour and application were well beyond what Year 7s usually display! Excellent planning left the teacher totally free to monitor progress and safety and check understanding.

Sixth form

19. In the four subjects inspected in detail teaching and learning are very good in English, biology and geography and good in mathematics. Teachers take good account of prior attainment and individual needs in their planning and teaching and students with special needs learn as well as their peers as a result. Students work very productively in all four subjects and show independent studentship in English, biology and geography. They benefit from effective marking, a particularly strong feature in English.
20. Excellent teaching was seen in a Year 13 biology lesson.

Students working on two unrelated tasks. One tackling written questions, another talking through the detail of plant respiration and photosynthesis from memory – exam in two days! Occasionally the tutor asked a question to improve the explanation. Recall was impressive, with depth of detail showing the quality of the initial teaching and thoroughness of revision. A visitor would have been forgiven for assuming this was a technical discussion between two practising biologists, rather than an examination revision session. A CD ROM simulation presenting an increasingly detailed series of images of plant structure, set new challenges to explain what was happening inside the plant as the various processes took place. Daunting, but done successfully. Capitalising on the program's versatility, the tutor changed conditions, viewing finer detail and switching between processes at will – using the almost 3D quality diagrams, impossible to print in a text book or draw on a whiteboard. The ground covered, the detail with which it was done and the confidence it

gave to students - not floored by any of the demands - were impressive. This was sixth-form tutorial teaching at its best.

Across the school Years 7 to 13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 105 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (2%)	25 (24%)	54 (51%)	20 (19%)	4 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The breadth of opportunities is satisfactory: it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. There is a very good range of enrichment activities. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ An imaginative range of activities and visits enriches the curriculum throughout the school and participation in sport and the arts is good.
- ❑ Arrangements for personal, social and health education are good.
- ❑ A good range of subjects is offered in this small sixth form and collaboration with partner institutions has begun to broaden the range of courses.
- ❑ New arrangements for music in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory and lead to some underachievement.
- ❑ Insufficient care is taken to ensure that a small number of pupils with special needs receive their full curriculum entitlement under revised national requirements.
- ❑ Daily acts of worship are not held for all pupils and sixth-formers and religious education is not currently taught in Year 13 but will be in the next academic year.

Commentary

21. The curriculum broadly meets requirements for the teaching of National Curriculum subjects in Years 7 to 9. However, pupils are not reaching the expected standard in music because under the new arrangements timetabled lessons are lacking for some groups in some terms. While ICT is taught effectively as a separate subject, not all other subjects are contributing sufficiently to pupils' ICT skills as required. The range of GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 has been broadened in the current year to include drama. Satisfactory arrangements meet the needs of a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 for whom a work-related curriculum is more appropriate. These include a well-organised construction course provided in conjunction with a local college and a certificated course provided jointly with a local special school. All pupils benefit from the very well planned and coordinated programme for personal, social and health education and the well planned introduction of citizenship. Many subjects have visits and field trips that capture pupils' interest and extend their learning. History in particular has a very good range of unusual and motivating visits relating to studies of World War 2. While assemblies do not provide a daily act of worship for all pupils and students, they do contribute to the strong sense of community in the school.
22. Curricular provision for pupils with special needs is satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9 they are usually taught alongside their peers. Those for whom one-to-one or small group teaching is deemed necessary are withdrawn to the special needs centre. At times this is not well managed and causes disruption to their learning and progress. For example, because they are

withdrawn from the same subject lesson every week the consequence is some gaps in their knowledge of that subject. The provision in the centre is such that elements of the statutory programmes of study are not taught, for example in English. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils with special needs attend GCSE lessons in their subjects. Others work towards a limited alternative accreditation programme in English, mathematics and life-skills. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

23. There are sufficient specialist staff in all departments. Most subjects have adequate learning resources, although there are shortages of textbooks in English and physical education. Accommodation is generally adequate although sometimes rather cramped.
- Neither of the two teaching areas for ICT is large enough for whole-class teaching.
 - The use of the library for teaching ICT restricts access in English lessons.
 - Storage and preparation space in science is inadequate.
- The standard to which the buildings and surroundings are maintained is a credit to the school, and reflects the hard work of the maintenance staff.

Sixth form

24. The range of AS- and A-level courses meets the needs, capabilities and aspirations of most students. Students with special needs are appropriately included in AS- and A-level classes. A very small number of vocational subjects is offered each year but the numbers of students requesting these courses is insufficient to make them viable. All students follow a well taught general studies course in Year 12 that includes religious education, although this is not continued into Year 13. There is no daily act of collective worship for sixth-formers although a high quality assembly was observed which offered good opportunities for reflection. The school is successful in extending students' aspirations and experiences beyond school and supports this through the good programme for personal development. Students' personal development is enhanced through their links with younger pupils in the school and those with the community outside the school. Sixth-form accommodation supports students' study and social needs well.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Pupils receive good advice and guidance overall, which in the sixth form are very good. The school involves pupils well in its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very caring and encouraging ethos contributes well to building pupils' high self-esteem.
- Excellent induction into the sixth form enables students to be fully prepared for the two-year programme, a factor in the high standards achieved.
- Pupils contribute effectively to the school's work through the school council.
- Good new pastoral support systems, including the monitoring of attendance and health and safety, are not always carried out rigorously enough.

Commentary

25. As reported at the last inspection, a major strength is the caring ethos that permeates all areas of the school's work. Pupils and sixth-formers appreciate the individual support that is readily given: staff know them extremely well as individuals and provide good emotional support. In discussion, younger pupils emphasised the help and care given by administrative staff who play a key role in the school's pastoral work. Very good links with outside agencies such as the Traveller Support Service and the Educational Welfare Service back up the advice and guidance given by school staff; helpful arrangements offer professional counselling to pupils referred by the school. Pupils are appreciative of the drop-in clinics with the school nurse and Connexions service where they receive helpful and impartial advice. Staff regularly use a good system of 'round robins' when a particular pastoral issue is identified: all staff are invited to comment on the individuals concerned so that difficulties can be identified and quickly resolved. Arrangements for child protection are good. The previously reported shortcomings in

the school's health and safety systems have been rectified, although the good systems now in place for monitoring are not always carried out rigorously enough.

26. Procedures for induction into Year 7 and for pupils joining the school at other times are well established. Through a programme of meetings and visits both pupils and their parents quickly feel part of this caring community where all individuals are valued. Good careers advice at appropriate points in their school life, combined with good guidance about options at GCSE and A-level and a period of work experience, help young people to make appropriate choices for the future. Arrangements for tracking individual progress and assessing needs have recently been put in place and are already having a positive effect, for example on attendance. However, the school acknowledges the need to refine these systems to include a structured approach to tracking pupils' needs more closely and evaluating the effect of support on their achievements.
27. Regular meetings of the school council ensure that young people have their voice heard, for example on matters of policy such as the recent changes to the school uniform. Such consultation has led to improvements. For example, when an issue of bullying on the school buses was raised, pupils debated the problem and discussed options with staff. As a consequence, the role of bus monitors was created which successfully resolved the problem.

Sixth form

28. All students' questionnaire returns showed a very positive view of the support and guidance they receive. Subject teachers use their good knowledge of students and regular reviews to identify any underachievement and set targets for improvement. The high quality of individual guidance and the induction process itself contribute well to students' social and moral development. The excellent induction programme includes an opportunity for students to sample courses before they commit themselves and ensures that they are very well prepared for the demands of advanced study.

Joined by students from neighbouring schools, students participate in two weeks of stimulating induction activities. Week one involves individual interviews to ensure they know about the hard work ahead and the demands of A-levels. Their previous work records are scrutinised to confirm that their course choices are right for them. Sample lessons, talks on study skills, work on presentation skills and enrichment activities are interspersed with activities in the fitness suite and sports hall. They plan for week two's visit to Bristol University. Here they spend the week living in a student community, shopping on a budget, cooking for themselves and participating in team building, leadership and problem-solving exercises. A visit to British Aerospace for management training is followed by a presentation to the Prince's Trust. But it's not all hard work – an appropriate life-work balance is encouraged with trips to art galleries and exhibitions, ice-skating and retail therapy! The process forges friendships and a team spirit that is clearly evident among the students. It helps them to grow in maturity and take responsibility for themselves.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and with other schools and colleges are good; links with the community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ The high return of the parents' questionnaire itself indicates the extent of parents' positive views of the school.
- ❑ Links with the community extend pupils' learning well in many areas of the curriculum and broaden opportunities for their moral and social development.
- ❑ 'Seamless' transfer into Year 7 and the sixth form supports pupils well by enabling them to settle into routines quickly, particularly well in Year 12.
- ❑ Parents' views are sought on occasion but consultation is not routine or sufficiently wide-ranging.

- Information for parents about their child's progress is satisfactory overall, although the quality of pupils' reports varies between subjects and year groups.

Commentary

29. Parental support is readily given in a variety of ways, with good attendance at parents' evenings, shows and sports fixtures. Parents receive a satisfactory amount of helpful information through the website, attractive prospectus, regular newsletters and the governors' annual report. Although the school seeks the views of parents where required, such as over the recent changes to school uniform and school day, parents feel their views are not given due consideration. Inspectors find that parents' concerns about pupils' annual report are justified. Not all subjects clearly tell parents where their children's strengths and weaknesses lie, how they can improve or whether their progress is sufficient. However, some subject reports are very good in both the main school and the sixth form, for example in art and design, and clearly indicate exactly what needs to be done to improve.
30. The quality of the links with the local community and partner primary schools has been maintained since the last inspection. A good induction programme and liaison between schools ensures a smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7. The school is an integral part of community life in Kington. For example:
- history students have accompanied local war veterans to the war graves in France;
 - students studying for Junior Sports Leadership Awards coach pupils from local primary schools;
 - the further education college provides teaching staff for the successful construction course for which a local firm supplies the best quality wood;
 - joint use of the adjoining leisure centre provides additional specialist facilities both for the school and the community.

Lady Hawkins hosts many events involving schools in the area such as the weekly music tuition, the technology and music challenge days and sports events. Charities and local community projects are regularly supported: current students are involved in work to provide a skateboard ramp for use by all young people in the area. Music groups regularly perform at community events. These strong, wide-ranging links are of mutual benefit to the school and the community and contribute positively to pupils' learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Sixth form

31. Excellent induction arrangements support students' transfer into the sixth form and to further education, making use of higher education fairs and university open days. Students are kept informed of their progress through effective regular reviews. Sixth-formers are regularly involved in the community for work placements through staffing stands at local events, leading the school band and assisting primary pupils during outdoor pursuits week. The richness of students' experience in the community contributes significantly to their moral, social and cultural development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory: leadership is good and management satisfactory. The contribution of the governing body is good in terms of school development and satisfactory in terms of ensuring effective school self-evaluation. Governance has to be judged unsatisfactory, however, because statutory requirements are not met in full.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership by the headteacher sustains the ethos of care which is also reflected in the leadership by other key staff and is much valued by all members of the school community.
- There is a lack of whole-school policies and procedures to ensure that pupils benefit from equally effective provision across all areas of its work.
- The absence of routine monitoring and rigorous self-evaluation prevents staff and governors from knowing whether the school is doing as well as it could.
- Governors' contribution to shaping the vision for the school's future is good.
- The school's contribution to teacher training is very good.

- There are no arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are met in full; the lack of religious education in Year 13 will be rectified in the next academic year.

Commentary

32. The leadership of the headteacher sets its stamp on the school in the profound concern for young people's individual well-being and achievement. Staff show unity in their commitment to these values from which pupils and sixth-formers benefit considerably – and are aware that they do. Adults in the school community provide good role models, particularly through their willingness to give generously of their time to young people when needed. These values steer the school firmly and are effective in promoting individual success. In this governors' support and contribution are strong.
33. Members of this small community rightly prize the quality of personal relationships established between staff, pupils and governors and the fact that young people are very well known by their teachers and form tutors. However, there are no school-wide systems for self-evaluation to check that in each aspect of its work the school is serving all individuals and all groups equally well or as well as it would wish. This is a weakness persisting from the last inspection which reported that there was '*no classroom observation, work sampling or monitoring of (the) implementation of assessment and marking policies*'. It is reflected in the school's self-evaluation required for the current inspection which lacks reference to evidence gained from monitoring and in the inconsistencies still evident in the quality of assessment across subjects. In subjects the quality of monitoring varies widely from very good to adequate in five subjects and unsatisfactory in one. The reports of monitoring seen vary in approach and content, and lack rigorous evaluation against criteria. Arrangements for professional development are satisfactory; however, they do not focus sufficiently on evaluating how effective the opportunities have been in bringing about improvements in teaching, learning and achievement. As a consequence, the headteacher and senior staff are not in a position to account to the governing body for the quality of provision across the school and the governors have not held them to account by requiring this information, for example in the headteacher's reports to their termly meetings. Nonetheless, due to the school's success in making recent appointments, not only to vacant posts of head of subject but also to newly created posts, in particular those of key stage coordinator, some needed changes are underway. For example, very good data on assessments and results are now readily available and beginning to be used effectively. Development work on the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is gaining ground, although not equally in all subjects. The substantial presence of teacher-training students through the year is a good feature.
34. The last audit found the school's financial management to be satisfactory. Daily systems are managed efficiently with good knowledge of current balances. Funding has been used strategically to upgrade the accommodation to good effect, for example for sports. However, there has been delay to the scheduled refurbishment of the kitchen, originally due in the current term, with the result that 'ear-marked' funding is being carried forward into the next financial year. Satisfactory attention to best value is achieved through:
 - good management of buildings and resources with the clear priority of promoting good learning;
 - good involvement of pupils in the school's work, a well-established 'habit', while satisfactory consultation with parents;
 - the use of comparative data now being satisfactorily established;
 - satisfactory self-evaluation.
35. Leadership and management of special needs are unsatisfactory. The very caring, supportive approach mirrors the school's ethos well. Learning support assistants are organised and trained well and deployed effectively. The school's investment in additional support staff is serving pupils well. However, the school has not ensured that the changes promoted by the

revised national Code of Practice have been put in place. There is insufficient liaison with subject staff and self-evaluation and monitoring of performance are unsatisfactory.

36. In about half the subjects the leadership has a very clear vision for the development of the subject and there is a strong sense of purpose in the way improvements are being tackled. There is notable strength in the teamwork in design and technology, humanities and physical education.

Sixth form

37. The school manages its sixth form well. With no detrimental effects on the provision for pupils in Years 7 to 11, there have been good developments:
- to the curriculum, in the range of advanced courses offered;
 - to the accommodation, for students' social and study areas;
 - to resources, in the specific provision of a computer room in the sixth-form base; and
 - in the investment in preparing students for advanced study and study in higher education through the excellent induction programme.

Students benefit equally from the school's active commitment to promoting individual success.

38. In the subjects inspected in detail leadership and management of sixth-form provision are at least good, and very good in English, biology and geography where there is very clear vision for subject development and strong curriculum leadership, especially in biology. The strengths in self-evaluation and the monitoring of performance in English and in science are maintained; in humanities this is true for the monitoring of performance. These are areas of good practice to be shared.

Financial information for the whole school

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1 540 206	Balance from previous year	45 389
Total expenditure	1 431 403	Balance carried forward to the next	108 803
Expenditure per student	3 424		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Very effective leadership, management and self-review have led to steadily improving attainment.
- ❑ Teachers' careful planning enables pupils to build well on existing skills and knowledge.
- ❑ High expectations and good relationships lead to good progress by nearly all pupils.
- ❑ Skilful management in lessons ensures that all pupils are involved and time is well spent.
- ❑ In a small number of lessons achievement is low because pupils lack sufficient direction and firm management.
- ❑ Marking is very helpful and enables pupils to improve.
- ❑ Lesson objectives are sometimes expressed as tasks for pupils to carry out rather than identifying what they are expected to learn; consequently pupils are not clear enough about their own progress.

Commentary

39. GCSE results in 2003 in English were above the national average, with girls significantly outperforming boys. In literature they were well above the national average, with a healthy increase in the proportion entered. Over time results in both subjects have steadily improved, particularly for boys. In the 2003 Year 9 tests results were well above the national average and very high compared with similar schools. Test scores have shown a steady improvement in recent years.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good overall and in Years 7 to 9</i>
	<i>very good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

40. When they join Year 7 pupils have average literacy skills with some weaknesses in written English, but by the end of Year 9 they attain above average standards. This shows good achievement. Most pupils clearly express their ideas orally, responding fully when questioned. They generally listen well to teachers and increasingly well to each other. Their responses to literature are thoughtful and imaginative. Pupils who initially find reading aloud difficult make good progress with frequent practice. Those with special needs make good progress because teachers know them well and provide appropriate tasks. Most pupils acquire the skill of writing for different purposes and readerships. When discussing or writing about serious issues such as animal experimentation they show increasing maturity and perception, confirming that English makes a valuable contribution to their personal development as young citizens. Good achievement is maintained in Years 10 and 11 and standards in Year 11 reflect recent performance in the GCSE examinations. Pupils explain their views clearly. They listen to reading aloud with understanding and appreciation and work effectively in pairs and groups. Their analysis of texts is well structured and they support their judgements well by references to the text. Pupils of lower prior attainment show good understanding of plot and character in novels such as 'Of Mice and Men'. Where the classes observed included pupils from minority ethnic groups these pupils progressed as well as others of similar attainment. Original writing is often improved through redrafting and pupils write delightful poetry. Attitudes are good in Years 7 to 9 except in a few lessons where tasks are not clear and too much chatter is allowed. In Years 10 and 11 nearly all pupils are keen to do well and pleased when they succeed.

40. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- careful planning and preparation of resources enable pupils to build on previous achievements;
 - relationships are positive, constantly encouraging pupils to aim high so that they make good progress;
 - most lessons are well managed: time is well spent and all pupils are fully included;
 - teachers and teaching assistants work well together in planning and managing the learning of pupils with special needs so that they make good progress;
 - marking gives very good advice, particularly during the GCSE course, and pupils respond well;
 - lesson objectives are often expressed as tasks to be done rather than things to be learned; consequently the review of learning is not fully effective;
 - in a small number of lessons in Years 7 to 9 a lack of clear expectations and firm direction leads to low involvement; this has a limiting effect on achievement.

Curriculum leadership

41. Teachers share a very strong commitment to high standards and effectively review their work and pupils' progress. As a result, boys' achievement has been very substantially raised and all pupils have improved their attainment. Data from assessment are very well used to plan the programme of work. This includes a rich and varied diet of literature, including poetry from different lands and cultures. Those who are particularly gifted in English are given appropriately challenging and rewarding tasks. Pupils' experience is also much enriched by poetry and drama events. All teachers are careful to ensure that every pupil is given access to the whole range of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is good: standards have risen in tests and examinations and ICT is now used well. The department will have a full permanent teaching staff in the next term; it is well placed through current developments to raise achievement further.

Drama

42. A course in GCSE drama was introduced in Year 10 in September 2003. Pupils respond well to the teacher's skill and enthusiasm. They are developing habits of self-criticism and co-operative working that are leading to above average standards in performance.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. In subjects other than English standards of literacy are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. On entry, students are generally more competent in the spoken than in the written language. The national strategy for English in Years 7 to 9 is supported by a focus on language in the planning in many other subjects. This ensures that the reading and writing requirements of GCSE are met in Years 10 and 11. There is good attention to lower attainers' oral skills in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics and very good oral contributions by pupils in geography, history and physical education lessons, although opportunities for extended oral contributions and writing are limited in music. In religious education pupils' literacy skills are encouraged well both in writing and discussion.

Modern foreign languages

All pupils study French from Year 7. Higher attainers also learn German in Years 8 and 9 and can choose to continue with one or both languages to GCSE. In Year 10, not all students continue learning a language. This is a breach of statutory requirements, but has occurred because of staffing difficulties and will be resolved in September 2004.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers' good planning of lessons to consolidate new vocabulary and language structures leads to good attainment and achievement.
- ❑ Pupils' attitudes are good because teachers use activities that gain and keep their interest.
- ❑ Many boys underachieve and their examination results are poor compared with girls' results.
- ❑ Pupils do not read for pleasure or use ICT systematically because these are not included in the teaching schemes.

Commentary

44. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average in French. Too few pupils took German to make valid comparisons with national results, but standards were very high. Boys' results were below those of girls by twice the national average. Results have improved each year since the previous inspection. In 2003 teachers' Year 9 assessments were around the national average. The above average standards seen during the inspection indicate that teachers are judging pupils' attainment by Year 9 too harshly. Girls did better than boys, again by a much greater margin than in other schools. Since the last inspection Year 9 results have generally been about average.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>

45. Pupils begin Year 7 with average levels of general attainment and the above average standards in the work seen show they have achieved well. Higher attainers achieve very well, as do many average attainers, although many higher attaining boys underachieve. Lower attainers and pupils with special needs enjoy their lessons because teaching is good and they achieve well. Since the school has not identified gifted and talented students it is not possible to comment on their achievement. There is insufficient evidence to judge the achievement of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Pupils do particularly well in speaking and listening to French because teachers ensure they practise the language regularly in lessons.
46. The key features of the teaching and learning which affect achievement are:
- effective planning of lessons ensures that pupils practise and learn new vocabulary and structures very thoroughly;
 - the brisk pace of lessons, with a variety of different activities practising different skills, gains pupils' interest, keeps their attention and motivates them to learn well;
 - the careful matching of tasks and teaching methods to the prior attainment of the group and the valuable contribution from teaching assistants ensures that all pupils, including those with special needs, can take part and succeed;
 - the generally good use of the foreign language maximises pupils' opportunities to hear it, although in some less successful lessons this is not consistently or effectively done.

Curriculum leadership

47. The head of department has created an effective team of teachers who share a commitment to improve standards; there is generally good planning to move the department forward. However, improvement on the issues raised in the previous inspection report is unsatisfactory. Pupils use ICT in some lessons and have some opportunities to read for pleasure in the foreign language, but neither is a part of the teaching scheme for every group. Teachers still do not use the foreign language as much as possible with groups of lower attainers. Teaching and learning are adequately monitored, but there is insufficient use of data to analyse attainment, for example to pinpoint boys' underachievement and to take steps to deal with it. The French exchange allows pupils to experience life in France and improves their skills and confidence in speaking and understanding. Teachers' skilful use of ICT in preparing and presenting lessons greatly aids pupils' motivation and interest. Unfortunately the equipment is not yet available in

all rooms for all teachers and classes. The booklets the department produces to supplement the textbook are a very useful extra resource for homework and revision.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because staff are focused effectively on providing good teaching.
- All teachers have good subject knowledge which ensures that pupils grasp new ideas and that any difficulties are dealt with effectively.
- Learning is taken seriously in the subject and all pupils are aware of what is needed to achieve well.
- Teaching methods do not sufficiently encourage pupils' participation and discussion in lessons as highlighted in the national strategy for Years 7 to 9.
- Work is marked well with constructive comments to inform students of their progress and show them how to improve.
- Staff do not use the information from assessments and results to help planning or to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve equally well.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to enhance pupils' ICT skills and support their learning in mathematics.

Commentary

48. In 2003 GCSE results were above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C fell slightly showing satisfactory progress from the end of Year 9. In 2003 the proportion of Year 9 pupils gaining the expected standard dipped slightly but the trend over the last three years is above the national trend. In 2003 boys' Year 9 results were significantly lower than girls' results, by a greater margin than in 2002.

Achievement

Standards

Teaching and learning

Leadership and management

good in Years 7 to 11

above average by Year 9 and by Year 11

good in Years 7 to 11

both satisfactory

49. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment. Teachers ensure that they work to the best of their capability, are not distracted and take their work seriously. All pupils have a text book which is differentiated to match and stretch their attainment. Pupils with special needs achieve well because they are often taught in smaller groups. Teaching assistants provide good support, although not always allocated to classes where support is needed. However, in a lower attaining Year 9 group, pupils found the work difficult because of the lack of practical activities and resources to support their learning. All pupils are entered for GCSE; pupils with special needs take a certificate of achievement. Examination and revision materials are used extremely well to ensure that pupils know what is expected in order to achieve their target grades. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve equally well as their peers. The difference in boys' and girls' results was not evident in the standard of work seen during the inspection.
50. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- questioning is used well to find out what pupils know before going on to new work; this ensures that they can build on their previous knowledge;
 - all teachers have good subject expertise and demonstrate new ideas well; any difficulties are acknowledged and often anticipated and the teaching is adjusted to tackle them;
 - at GCSE, students particularly benefit from teachers' subject expertise and knowledge of examination requirements;
 - work is marked and assessed consistently well across the department so that pupils know how to improve;

- lessons are directed mainly by the teachers with little opportunity for pupils to initiate their own learning, with the result that they do not develop their researching skills and independence;
- there is little variety in teaching methods to support different ways of learning, a lack of investigative work and too few opportunities for working in groups and pairs to encourage pupils to discuss and review their methods;
- the aims of lessons are not shared with pupils so that they know what the lesson is about and can evaluate for themselves whether they have achieved the goals;
- there is a general lack of resources to support learning, particularly to help lower attainers;
- key words are emphasised well and displayed to help pupils with literacy difficulties in Year 7, although this is not done consistently across the department;
- teachers have good relationships with pupils, giving advice, support and encouragement where necessary to help individuals to progress.

Curriculum leadership

51. Staff have a wealth of experience and considerable knowledge of the school and the pupils. Close working relationships mostly ensure consistency of approach with helpful support for new staff. However, although there is an awareness of the developments needed to move the department forward, there is not a clear vision of how this can be achieved. There is little evidence of the implementation of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 to encourage discussions, interactive teaching and pupil involvement, and this is a weakness. There are no formal procedures for monitoring and for lesson observations in order that needs for training and professional development can be identified and provided for. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Results have improved well in Years 9 and 11 and good teaching has been maintained. However, there is still a lack of opportunities for pupils to take initiative for their own learning, for example through investigative, group and paired work, and ICT is not used to full effect to enhance learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. Pupils develop their mathematical skills satisfactorily in their work across most subjects. In ICT they use formulae well when working with spreadsheets and in science they draw accurate graphs. In art and design opportunities are taken to develop mathematical skills to enlarge shapes using a view finder. There has been an audit and some whole-school training on the use of mathematics in subjects, but there is scope for more effective co-ordination of this work so that pupils use and develop their mathematical skills on a regular basis.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Pupils achieve well through being taught by experienced, committed staff.
- ❑ There is a very clear vision for the development of the faculty.
- ❑ Examination results are steadily improving.
- ❑ Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the faculty and written comments about how to improve are lacking.
- ❑ Lessons are well planned and challenging, although the learning objectives are not always shared with pupils with the result that they cannot evaluate how well they are doing.

Commentary

53. Results in GCSE double award science in 2003 were above the national average, boys and girls doing equally well. Nearly all pupils gained a grade in the A* - G range and this success rate remains steady while the proportion of A* - C grades is improving year by year. Year 9 national test results are average and improving at the national rate. In these tests girls out-performed boys in 2003.

***Achievement
Standards***

***good
well above average by Year 9,
above average by Year 11***

Teaching and learning

both good

Leadership and management

both very good

54. Pupils join Year 7 with below average standards in science. There is little difference in quality between boys' and girls' work. Orally and practically pupils with special needs achieve the same standards and make the same progress as everyone else. Only when literacy difficulties intervene is there an adverse effect on their work. None of the classes observed included pupils from minority ethnic groups.
55. There are some very good features in the teaching. The main strengths and weaknesses are:
- well-planned lessons with clear objectives, although pupils cannot judge how successful the lesson has been nor measure their achievement against what was planned because the objectives are not always shared with them;
 - staff have high expectations of pupils in their recall of previous work, practical tasks and in demonstrating their understanding;
 - pupils' notebooks are often incomplete and so are unsatisfactory as revision references; they lack guidance on how to improve; different teachers have different requirements;
 - laboratory discipline is good as a result of staff insisting on safety rules being obeyed;
 - teachers' detailed knowledge of pupils' capabilities allows good levels of support to be given; teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement;
 - discussion and planning are done sensibly and productively with much mutual help;
 - every pupil has equal access to staff, apparatus and advice;
 - pupils are becoming used to automated collection of data, but this is infrequent and usually by demonstration;
 - courteous co-operation by pupils and the high quality of relationships are a feature of lessons.

Curriculum leadership

56. The head of faculty was appointed in September 2003. A very good analysis of past results and policies has enabled him to prioritise what is needed to improve further. Much has been achieved. A thorough audit of faculty achievement and analysis of potential improvement has led to a new and better focused development plan. The re-writing of schemes of work and centralised computer-based records of assessment and tracking data have begun. Staff have a commitment to raising standards and their knowledge of individual pupils ensures realistic targets and good progress. Good practice is shared and staff are flexible and innovative in their use of resources. The convenience of laboratories being grouped close together goes some way to overcome the problems of inadequate storage facilities and the inadequate preparation space. Nonetheless, there is first class technician support. Monitoring of teaching is not yet a regular feature to check that all pupils benefit from equally good lesson provision. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject management has successfully brought about very good improvement since the last inspection through the provision of better resources.
- The specialist ICT curriculum is well planned and meets the needs of pupils with differing capabilities so that achievement is very good.
- The approach to the management and coordination of ICT across the curriculum is not rigorous enough, making it difficult to monitor the application of ICT skills in other subjects.

Commentary

57. The GCSE results for 2003 were well above national averages. Teachers' Year 9 assessments show that pupils' attainment is similarly well above average.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>well above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

58. In Years 7 to 9 pupils show skills in a range of activities: word-processing helps them to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They use desktop publishing to a good level of competence combining text and images. Pupils have access to the Internet and download images and data for research. In the GCSE classes pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desktop publishing and use of database and spreadsheets to simulate business practice. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. Pupils discuss their work confidently, solve problems and are successful when given a task to complete. Their basic skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate for the needs of the courses being offered. Pupils develop and apply their skills further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects.
59. There is very little variation in the quality of teaching and learning, with good teaching in all lessons except one where the quality was satisfactory. In the best lessons:
- teachers' marking is frequent, enabling pupils to work continuously and individually in lessons;
 - the use of a data projector board in some lessons has a very positive effect on pupils' learning because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class;
 - younger pupils are sometimes excited by what they can do and this gives them confidence when given more challenging tasks;
 - in good teaching there is very good reference to marked coursework at the start of lessons which enables pupils to make improvements;
 - good whole-class discussions which conclude lessons widen pupils' knowledge through the sharing of ideas;
 - pupils are given challenging tasks which have a positive effect on their rate of learning;
 - good use is made of learning assistants: they are familiar with individual needs and they ensure that pupils with special needs progress as well as other pupils.
- Where teaching is satisfactory and there is scope for improvement:
- not all pupils are involved in the learning or able to contribute to the lesson.

Curriculum leadership

60. Specialist subject provision in ICT benefits from good leadership and management. The good improvement achieved since the last inspection has partly been brought about by the significant increase in the number of computers. Standards have risen because teaching has improved. The curriculum has improved significantly, meeting the needs of all pupils because

teachers' good subject knowledge has been used effectively in planning the schemes of work. Departmental aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, are reflected in its work. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. Very high standards are being maintained despite the current lack of curriculum time available in the new timetable and the limited accommodation. Good assessment systems are now in place. However, assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress are not used effectively to aid teachers' planning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. The school's arrangements for the management and coordination of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. There is very little tracking of the contribution of other subjects to developing pupils' ICT skills. The lack of a specific policy for ICT across the curriculum is holding development back, although there is some good quality work in design and technology, humanities, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. In other subjects there are opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and develop confidence in the use of computers. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network and the skills of individual teachers are used effectively to teach ICT. However, opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not always sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are not fully recognised or assessed. Technical support is good. The computer room and the library provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers outside lessons when they can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The subjects included in the humanities faculty are geography, history, psychology and religious education. All teachers, including those with responsibility for the various subjects, have been welded into a strong team by the head of faculty and overarching policy documents ensure that there are consistent approaches to the work across individual subjects, for example in assessment procedures and the use of ICT.

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Good teaching and very good examination preparation lead to GCSE examination results that are well above average.
- ❑ Ongoing links with a school in Uganda and its community and the targeted use of fieldwork make excellent contributions to pupils' learning.
- ❑ Innovative approaches to teaching which use new technology very effectively engage pupils' interest so that they learn well.
- ❑ Well planned lessons meet the needs of the majority of pupils but there are not enough learning materials specifically suited to lower attainers.

Commentary

62. GCSE results in geography have risen each year reaching well above average standards in 2003. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 show average standards.

**Achievement
Standards**

**Teaching and learning
Leadership
Management**

**very good overall and by Year 11, good by Year 8
above average by Year 9
well above average by Year 11
good
very good
good**

63. The work seen shows high standards compared with what is expected of pupils by age 16. These high standards are reflected particularly well in pupils' longer assignments, for example on identifying the causes and effects of acid rain. All pupils achieve equally well, including those from minority ethnic groups. Cases are well argued in essays completed by higher attainers. Middle attainers have a good understanding of the topics studied. Lower attainers and pupils with special needs achieve well relative to their prior attainment.
64. Pupils respond well to their teachers and almost all work hard throughout their lessons. This is because:
- teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to plan effectively and to include a good variety of tasks which keep pupils interested and learning throughout the lessons;
 - resources are well chosen: new technology, photographs, videos, maps and diagrams are skilfully introduced, capturing pupils' interest and developing their understanding;
 - there is very good emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills in lessons and coursework so that pupils write well and are confident in their use of number;
 - homework is used very constructively: well-designed research tasks effectively extend pupils' learning and provide the opportunity for examination practice; coursework guidance is excellent;
 - 'real' information about life in Uganda, a less economically developed country, gives pupils a very good depth of knowledge which they apply successfully to other areas;
 - in Years 10 and 11, materials for the lowest attainers are well constructed and resourced; however, in all years, resources do not always meet the needs of lower attainers resulting in some disengagement in lessons and very slow working; this slows the pace of the lesson making it less effective for all pupils.
- The use of assessment is contributing very well to raising standards. Longer written exercises are assessed in relation to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and teachers' written comments relate directly to what pupils have done well and how improvements should be made. The very good system of review ensures that pupils are fully aware of their attainment and their improvement targets.

Curriculum leadership

65. In-depth and effective self-evaluation is characteristic of the leadership and management of the subject. For example, team analysis of the subject's GCSE performance in 2002 identified areas for development and the strategies to tackle these. Consequently results improved significantly in 2003. Teachers work as an effective team. The department is working towards achieving very good teaching in all lessons. Joint planning activities ensure that the leadership has a good knowledge of colleagues' work. However, there is not enough observation in lessons to identify areas which need development and to share the best teaching strategies. Very good progress since the last inspection has resulted in a strength in the use of ICT, previously identified as a weakness.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards are maintained by the leadership's enthusiasm for the subject and commitment to sustained improvement.
- An excellent programme of visits and activities stimulates pupils' interest and enhances their understanding.
- Very good examination preparation leads to very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils are helped to learn by the effective use of new technology to project many stimulating visual images which encapsulate a feeling of time and place.
- Well planned lessons meet the needs of the majority of pupils but there are not enough learning materials that are directly suited to lower attainers.

Commentary

66. GCSE results in 2003, which are representative of continuing high standards, were well above average. By Year 11 boys and girls reach equally high standards. Although the gap is narrowing boys' attainment is lower than that of girls by Year 9 where teachers' Year 9 assessments show above average standards overall.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>very good overall and by Year 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>good by Year 9</i>
	<i>above average by Year 9</i>
	<i>well above average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>good</i>

67. The above average standards in the work of higher and middle attainers show very good achievement from pupils' below average standards in the subject at the start of Year 7. In lessons all pupils show very good recall of facts and very good understanding of issues. For example lower attainers in Year 9 commented that the portrait of Elizabeth I aged 67 made her look much younger because she did not want to appear weak to her enemies. Higher attainers write well-compiled and reasoned arguments for their judgements. Pupils with special needs achieve well because they receive effective support from classroom assistants.

68. There is a very good working atmosphere in lessons. This is because:
- teachers' enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge enable lessons to be well planned with a good variety of activities to keep pupils learning throughout;
 - high quality school-produced worksheets and revision booklets encourage pupils' interest and augment published texts very well;
 - pupils are actively engaged in their learning through the use of simulations and challenging sorting exercises;
 - homework is very successfully used: well designed research tasks and opportunities for pupils to complete longer, more complex assignments contribute significantly to pupils' very good achievement;
 - skilful questioning makes pupils interrogate contemporary materials perceptively.

Within the context of good teaching there is an area for development: on occasion resources do not fully meet the needs of lower attainers so that they are not able to access tasks quickly enough. Very good assessment procedures improve achievement. Longer assignments are marked using National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and teachers' written comments are precise and helpful. Regular reviews ensure that pupils know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve further.

Curriculum leadership

69. Clear vision, dynamic leadership and good management skills have ensured the maintenance of high standards since the last inspection. Teachers work together very well, often collaborating to plan lessons and to evaluate the subject's performance. Consequently the leadership has a good knowledge of the work of colleagues, although there is not enough observation of teaching. While the use of ICT was an issue at the last inspection, the use of new technology is now a strength. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT are integral to the planning and teachers' use of data projectors is a very good aid for learning.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality teaching equips pupils to think for themselves and appreciate the relevance of religious ideas for their own lives.
- Excellent curriculum planning ensures that pupils acquire the right balance of knowledge about religions, with spiritual insights about what can be learned from different faiths.
- Boys and girls are equally positive in their attitudes towards the subject, contributing well to class discussions and producing above average standards of work in lessons.
- Boys are not doing as well as expected in examinations.

Commentary

70. All pupils follow the GCSE short course in religious education and results have been above average in four of the six years since candidates were first entered. In 2003 the results dropped to average, with nearly a third of the candidates narrowly missing grade C. Girls have consistently done better than boys by a bigger margin than expected.

Achievement
Standards
Teaching and learning

good
above average
very good overall and in Years 10 and 11
good in Years 7 to 9

Leadership
Management

very good
good

71. Religious education is popular and enjoyed by pupils in all years. Pupils enter the school with average attainment in the subject. Stimulating teaching that sets them thinking, plus a generous allocation of time for the subject in Years 7 to 9, results in all pupils achieving well. They research projects well and compare similarities and differences between religions over rites of passage. Higher attainers are reasoning well around moral questions and explaining religious symbolism in their study of Hindu gods. In class discussions and writing on aspects of Buddhism, Year 9 pupils show good understanding of key ideas and sensitive reflection on how they can be applied to life. Pupils with special needs receive individual attention in small groups but lower attainers in broader ability classes are not sufficiently catered for. In Years 10 and 11 pupils keep detailed notes of topics covered. Both boys and girls enjoy the intellectual stimulation of discussion in lessons and show commitment to achieving their target grades in the examination. In general, girls include more detail and a wider range of views in their answers to questions on moral issues. A thorough revision programme is planned but homework is not being used enough for developing pupils' technique in answering examination-type questions. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve equally well as other pupils of similar previous attainment.
72. The main features of the very good teaching in the subject are:
- expert subject knowledge and originality over lesson planning, exemplifying the best practice of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9;
 - excellent promotion of thinking skills through class discussion and enlightening communication of ideas;
 - great encouragement of pupils through creating an entertaining and enjoyable learning environment;
 - thorough marking and assessment of pupils' work with appropriate comments that help them improve.
- Enthusiasm for ideas sometimes leads to discussion going off at a tangent and reducing the time for planned activities. There is very effective use of question and answer to develop pupils' understanding but small group discussion is underused. Oral understanding is always

reinforced by written tasks, using textbook and other sources appropriately to maximise learning.

Curriculum leadership

73. The very good leadership is characterised by an innovative approach, employing philosophical techniques effectively to promote pupils' thinking and increase their spiritual and moral development. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The subject is well managed but development planning is too general to target specific improvements. Teaching is much improved and good progress has been made over assessment procedures for determining pupils' levels of attainment. The system has yet to produce sufficient data for monitoring purposes. The introduction of the GCSE short course has been a success overall and strategies are in place to tackle the issue of boys' relative underachievement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers' high-level skills encourage good learning, leading to pupils with focused application to their work.
- ❑ Pupils' very good achievement in Year 11 is a consequence of teachers' high expectations and challenging work.
- ❑ All pupils are included well in lesson activities and their positive attitudes to their work and very good behaviour contribute to their good learning.
- ❑ A very effective staff team is established in the department.
- ❑ Marking of work is not done consistently well by all staff so that not all pupils are clear about how to improve.

Commentary

74. GCSE results in 2002 for design and technology were significantly better than the national results. In 2003, there was further improvement. Results in 2003 for resistant materials were outstanding. There has been improvement in GCSE results in recent years. Both boys and girls results show examination performance above the national average. Teachers' Year 9 assessments in 2003 are confirmed by the average standards of work seen during the inspection.

**Achievement
Standards**

**good
average by Year 9
above average by Year 11**

**Teaching and learning
Leadership
Management**

**good
good, with some very good features
very good**

75. By the end of Year 9 pupils generate ideas by collecting information from a variety of different sources, including the Internet. They apply product analysis techniques to everyday items such as telephones. Both boys and girls use a variety of tools and equipment with accuracy and confidence in all materials areas. Higher attainers complete tasks independently and their research and design skills are good. Pupils with special needs achieve well; they are well known to teachers and very well supported by teaching assistants. No students from minority ethnic groups were observed in Years 7 to 11. Pupils' writing and ICT skills are good and enable them to convey their design ideas clearly. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is equally good in graphics, food and resistant materials because teachers plan work to match individual needs and support individual learning effectively in lessons. Pupils talk confidently

about their ideas using technical vocabulary accurately and they listen carefully. Higher attainers show creativity and flair, with good annotation of the design work in their individual projects.

76. The strengths and weaknesses in teaching are:
- pupils benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers who win their confidence, generating a high level of interest in the topics;
 - careful planning and very good preparation enable pupils to build on previous knowledge in a good variety of activities;
 - clear tasks and challenging time limits set a good pace for work;
 - pupils' individual needs are well known to the teachers who work in effective partnership with support staff to develop pupils' skills;
 - challenging work is presented to pupils who respond well and learn quickly, many with a good level of independence;
 - specifically planned activities for gifted and talented pupils are evident in only a very few lessons.

Curriculum leadership

77. The leadership of design and technology inspires, motivates and influences department staff and pupils. There is clear vision for the direction of the department and a strong sense of purpose focusing on improving pupils' achievement. The strong team ethos and commitment to improvement, along with a very good approach to resource management, has led to a significant rise in examination results. Highly effective policies have been developed that ensure efficient and effective teaching and learning. Technical support is good and provides the level of support required in the workshops. The management of department staff overall is thorough and effective. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection: standards have improved, boys' results are now above the national average and ICT is well integrated into the work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus of the inspection was on art and design in Years 7 to 11 and music in Years 7 to 9. In the current Year 10 no pupils chose to take GCSE music; in Year 11 a group of ten pupils is taking the subject. No Year 11 pupils took GCSE music in 2003.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- ❑ Teachers are very supportive and use good questioning techniques to ensure the participation of all pupils.
- ❑ Lessons are well planned with clear objectives that consolidate pupils' learning of media skills, knowledge and understanding.
- ❑ There is clear direction for future development of courses and raising standards at GCSE.
- ❑ Sketch-books are used well in Years 10 and 11 for research and developing projects.
- ❑ Insufficient use of ICT and the lack of ceramics for three-dimensional study limit pupils' experience of different media in Years 7 to 9.
- ❑ A lack of rigorous assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 has a limiting effect on improving learning.

Commentary

78. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades in GCSE examinations in 2003 was average. In recent years good results have been maintained in GCSE examinations.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory in Years 7 to 9</i>
	<i>good in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average by Year 9</i>
	<i>above average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good in Years 10 and 11</i>
	<i>satisfactory in Years 7 to 9</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>very good</i>

79. Pupils' average standards by Year 9 represent satisfactory achievement from their standards when they started at the school in Year 7. This applies equally to pupils with special needs because they are supported well in lessons and apply themselves purposefully to their work. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. In relation to their previous attainment all pupils show sound knowledge and understanding and use line and tone effectively in their drawings. Pupils achieve better over Years 10 and 11 because work is better structured with clear targets. The work of middle and higher attainers shows some influences from important movements in art and design and of artists they have studied. Pupils use sketch books for research and development very effectively and their work is well annotated. They show their personal interests and ideas in their work as well as their response to different cultural traditions and movements. There are no significant variations in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special needs benefit from individual attention so that they achieve well.
80. The strengths and weaknesses in teaching are:
- teachers' very supportive, confident approach is reflected in pupils' attitudes to their work;
 - good questioning techniques ensure the participation of all pupils;
 - teachers have good knowledge of the capabilities of their pupils and meet their needs through good quality individual tuition;
 - good matching of tasks to capabilities ensures that higher attainers in Years 10 and 11 are sufficiently challenged;
 - pupils in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient knowledge of the learning objectives based on national expectations for the subject;
 - resources are inadequate for teaching and developing ICT effectively and the lack of ceramics for three-dimensional study limits the range of media possibilities.

Curriculum leadership

81. The subject leader's strong vision for art and design education has led to the well-established departmental approach: taught skills are enhanced by opportunities for pupils to make contact with artists and art works, both in and out of school. Pupils' art work enhances many areas of the school building, in particular the staircase gallery of past work. Schemes of work and departmental policies provide very good guidance for staff so that consistency is ensured throughout the department. The work of the department is adequately monitored through classroom observations and work sampling. The absence of technical support restricts the range of media activities taught and lack of accommodation for three-dimensional work remains unresolved. Although additional accommodation has been provided for the subject, this is not available to pupils in Years 7 to 9. Nonetheless, improvement since the last inspection is good, most notably in the use of sketch-books and assessment in Years 10 and 11.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Adverse effects on pupils' achievement resulting from the lack of curriculum time in the new timetable arrangements are already evident in the second term of operation.
- ❑ The school's management of music in the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- ❑ Work in the subject is organised efficiently and the range of activities both within school and those which go out into the community is very good.
- ❑ The feedback pupils receive on their practical work in performing does not give them sufficient help about how to make improvements or enough time to achieve them.

Commentary

82. The 2003 teacher assessments are much the same as those reported nationally.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>satisfactory overall</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>unsatisfactory</i>

83. Pupils' work in Year 7, following no music lessons in the previous (autumn) term, confirms the school's assessment of below average standards on entry. The work seen in Year 9 shows standards below those expected. Most pupils enjoy playing keyboards and some pitched percussion instruments, although their skill in controlling fingers and beaters is limited. Their control of a steady pulse is not always secure when performing as a class, even when being conducted, because they do not listen carefully enough to each other. In the lessons observed there were small numbers of pupils representing all the groups served by the school, including pupils with special needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with a talent developed through individual instrumental lessons. Many of the latter were boys who brought their instruments to the lesson. Pupils in these groups progressed as well as pupils of similar prior attainment; some pupils with special needs achieved well.

84. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:

- thorough planning and organisation so that lessons get off to a good start;
- effective use of a limited range of instrumental resources for class activities;
- good knowledge of pupils' individual needs and backgrounds in Years 8 and 9 despite the six month gap in teaching them; all are equally encouraged;
- a lack of firm management in unsatisfactory teaching so that pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour persist and their learning is unsatisfactory;
- an energetic vocal lead gets pupils singing with increasing confidence and accuracy;
- evaluations to the whole class or to pairs/groups are not sufficiently clear and analytic for pupils to understand the specific points that need attention and how to work at them; this restricts their progress.

Curriculum leadership

85. Although the school takes justified pride in its music successes in concerts and shows, including those going 'on the road', not enough thought has been given to its provision for all pupils in Years 7 to 9, including those wishing to study music at GCSE. The arrangements for the curriculum and the fact that music staff wear a number of hats, teaching several other subjects and taking a major responsibility for assessment across the school, are restricting pupils' achievement. Arrangements for professional development do not take full account of the need for staff in very small 'departments' to have opportunities for professional dialogue with specialist peers. Standards by Year 9 and the quality of provision for Years 7 to 9 have not been maintained since the previous inspection and improvement is therefore unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers are committed to raising standards and work well together to achieve this.
- ❑ Standards are rising and achievement is good because of good teaching.
- ❑ Pupils are enthusiastic and behave well; this contributes to rising standards.
- ❑ There are accurate systems of assessment but the resulting information is not used with pupils to help them improve or to gauge overall the progress the subject is making.
- ❑ Good use of ICT supports learning.

Commentary

86. GCSE results in 2003 were average for the small number of pupils taking the course; girls' results were above average and boys' below. This follows the pattern of recent years. Teachers' assessments in Year 9 show average standards overall but with average standards for girls and below average standards for boys. Standards for boys are rising quickly because of changes to the curriculum and the improved attitudes of pupils.

Achievement	good by Year 9
General PE	good by Year 11
GCSE PE	average
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership	very good
Management	good

87. Pupils in Year 7 enter with standards just below average; their experience of activities varies widely. In lessons both boys and girls reach average standards in Year 9 across a satisfactory range of activities. They make equally good progress in acquiring the skills of performance as well as those of planning and evaluating. In general lessons in Years 10 and 11 both boys and girls make good gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special needs achieve well because of the systematic teaching of skills and the purposeful atmosphere in lessons. No pupils from minority ethnic groups were observed. Numbers taking the examination course are rising. Pupils are responding positively to the recent changes in physical education. In the GCSE course in Year 11 girls are making better progress than boys because they apply themselves better to the work. In Year 10 both boys and girls have good attitudes to their work and are achieving well.
88. Teachers have worked well together to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The main strengths and weaknesses are:
- good lesson planning that carefully develops skills, knowledge and understanding; all lessons follow a similar pattern so pupils are beginning to take some responsibility for their own preparation for activity; equally, they review their work with the teacher at the end of the lesson and generally contribute well to these evaluations;
 - teachers are enthusiastic and establish very good relationships with pupils;
 - teachers promote high standards: the result is lessons in which pupils behave well and work hard; pupils are expected to change quickly and be ready to participate;
 - teachers use a range of methods to motivate pupils including the use of ICT, particularly for analysis of skills.
- A thorough system of assessment has started in the current year. However, pupils do not know their assessments and cannot use them to guide their improvement. Teachers do not use assessments to identify and plan for particular groups of pupils, for example the most capable.

Curriculum leadership

89. There is no overall curriculum leader for physical education. A committed team of teachers has a very clear vision for improving standards and raising the status of physical education. The very good action plan supports this improvement through careful selection of priorities, the first being to raise the profile of the subject and establish good attitudes in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Much has been achieved in a short time and physical education has a real presence in the school. Provision for extra-curricular activities and sport is much improved and well supported by pupils. This contributes to rising standards. A new curriculum, particularly for boys, is supported by new schemes of work. Assessment systems are well in place but as yet there is limited evaluation of data and results to check overall progress or that of particular groups of pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education together with citizenship is taught through specific lessons in humanities, including religious education. It is also taught across the curriculum in other subjects.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Very good leadership ensures that the curriculum offers good opportunities for personal development and is helping pupils to become responsible citizens.
- ❑ Planning is very good and based on a thorough review and knowledge of the taught curriculum as well as the opportunities outside lessons.
- ❑ Assessments are not sufficiently planned to encompass all opportunities and activities that can contribute to reporting pupils' progress. Most subjects highlight the citizenship aspects in their lessons very well.

Commentary

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good overall and in Years 7 to 9
	very good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership	very good
Management	good

90. Pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of society and of individual rights and responsibilities. They apply their skills of enquiry and communication in many lessons to express their ideas and opinions. Pupils of all capabilities work well together and those with special needs contribute well. No lessons were observed which included pupils from minority ethnic groups. Many pupils participate in and enjoy the good range of community activities in school. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to discuss topics of immediate concern as well as wider issues in the school. Pupils value the school community and the ethos of care and their support for one another. They are courteous to one another and to adults in the school. Relationships are very good. Pupils' attitudes to the school and their work are good.
91. A small sample of specific personal and social education and citizenship lessons showed:
- good attention to planning interesting and relevant activities;
 - the very good subject knowledge of the curriculum leader.
- In lessons in many other subjects activities and topics contribute well to pupils' personal development and citizenship. Examples include looking at bias towards immigrants in geography and considering environmental or genetic engineering issues in science.

Curriculum leadership

92. The introduction of citizenship has been planned very well. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision of how the subject should develop alongside personal and social education. The span of responsibility of the co-ordinator for religious education, personal and social education and citizenship is a significant factor in his effective realising of this vision. A detailed audit of the contributions made by subjects is linked to detailed planning of specific contributions from humanities subjects and personal and social education lessons. This ensures a wide range of experiences for pupils. Planning of assessment procedures has begun but does not yet enable the full range of possible student experiences to be captured. Most teaching is within the humanities department but there is no monitoring of the teaching team for this aspect of their work.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	66.7	74.2	0.0	34.3	15.0	31.3

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	100.0	91.6	80.0	36.3	100.0	74.1
Chemistry	6	100.0	96.4	66.7	32.8	100.0	76.5
English/English language	4	100.0	98.3	50.0	36.5	100.0	80.1
Geography	5	100.0	90.1	60.0	29.1	88.0	69.3
History	7	100.0	97.1	28.6	41.0	77.1	81.2
Information technology	10	100.0	89.1	0.0	22.4	64.0	64.1
Mathematics	8	100.0	93.3	87.5	52.2	100.0	84.7
Physics	7	100.0	92.8	57.1	42.8	91.4	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English. One lesson of A-level French was sampled. Teaching and learning were good because they were effectively focused on practising and improving performance in aspects of examination technique. Standards were well above average and students' achievement very good.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very strong sense of partnership between teachers and students leads to the achievement of high standards by all.
- Students become independent learners because they are strongly encouraged to think and research for themselves.
- Students have a very positive attitude towards the subject.
- Very detailed and helpful marking gives students very clear advice on how to improve.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge gives students confidence in them.

Commentary

93. The small number of Year 13 students who took the A-level examination in 2003 all succeeded in gaining a grade between A and C and attained a high points score. Since 2001 all A-level candidates have passed with grade C or higher and similar standards have been attained in the AS-level examinations.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>well above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both very good</i>

94. Students join the sixth form with GCSE grades that are average for A-level candidates, but by Year 13 they attain standards that are well above average, indicating very good achievement. They write detailed and perceptive commentaries on their set texts, showing very good awareness of their historical and social background. These are used to inform essays that are well structured and make close reference to the text, showing increasing understanding of the author's viewpoint and themes. They are capable of independent enquiry into unfamiliar texts but also gain much from discussion and co-operative research, for example in acting out a scene from 'Twelfth Night'. They show genuine respect for each other's ideas. All students have a high regard for English: they value the subject for its interest, usefulness and enjoyment. They consider that they are very well taught and they value the very detailed marking and feedback on every piece of written work.
95. The main strengths in the teaching are:
- teachers' very careful planning and preparation of resources provide students with a stimulating variety of learning activities;
 - students become independent learners because they are challenged to think for themselves and make their own judgements;
 - very good relationships create a very strong sense of partnership and common purpose;
 - students are strongly encouraged to read widely and to research the background to set texts, often using the Internet;
 - teachers know their subject very well, which gives the students confidence in them.

Curriculum leadership

96. The teachers of English in the sixth form are dedicated to high achievement and provide very good role models for students. There is very good use of the data from assessments to track

individual progress and set challenging targets each student. Self-evaluation is a strength of the department. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained at A-level and improved as AS-level.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

97. In the four subjects inspected in detail, students' work in science shows good independent note-making and very detailed notes. Written assignments in geography are well detailed and show good use of researched material. In mathematics students are not always forthcoming in discussion, while in English very good opportunities for discussions lead to very good contributions from students.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Achievement is good because teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that students grasp new ideas.
- ❑ Students are comfortable and confident about seeking help and advice to overcome any difficulties.
- ❑ Homework is marked well with extensive and detailed constructive comments to inform students of their progress and show them how to improve.
- ❑ There is little opportunity for independent learning to encourage students to investigate and explore.

Commentary

98. The results in 2003 fell from the well above average results in 2002 at both AS- and A-level. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average and predict above average results for 2004.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>

99. Students in Year 12 can find turning points of graphs and in Year 13 they can differentiate trigonometric functions from first principles. There is no difference in achievement between male and female students. Students are punctual to lessons and attendance is good. They are a little quiet but teachers have nurtured good relationships to make them both comfortable and confident to ask questions and join in discussions. Students are confident that teachers are available and approachable to sort out any difficulties they find. In Year 12 students with special needs are supported well and able to access the advanced supplementary curriculum.
100. The strengths and weaknesses in teaching are:
- good questioning is used to find out what students know before going on to new work and building on their knowledge;
 - all teachers have good knowledge of the subject and demonstrate new ideas well;
 - the lessons are directed mainly by the teacher and there is little opportunity for independent work by students to encourage research and thinking skills;
 - examination and revision materials are used to good effect to let students know what to expect and what is required to achieve their target grades;
 - marking is carried out consistently well with very constructive comments to inform students about how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum leadership

101. Staff have a wealth of experience and knowledge of the school and the students. There is an awareness of the developments needed to move the department forward, but a lack of clear vision and strategy about how this can be achieved. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Results have improved well in Year 13 and good teaching has been maintained. However, there is still a lack of opportunities for students to take initiative for their own learning, for example through investigations and independent research, and ICT is not used to enhance the subject or improve students' ICT skills.

Mathematics across the curriculum

102. Students' mathematical skills are average: they are adequate for the demands of their subjects and courses. In none of the four subjects inspected in detail does a lack of mathematical skills restrict students' achievement.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was biology. Lessons in chemistry and physics were also sampled. In both, teaching and learning were very good. Standards were above average and achievement good in physics and very good in chemistry. In all three subjects the 2003 results maintained the record of all students gaining grades in the A–E range, and at least half gaining A/B grades.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Staff have very good subject knowledge and explain complex concepts clearly.
- ❑ Results in both AS- and A-level examinations are very good.
- ❑ Very good relationships between students and staff maximise the learning opportunities in tutorial-style lessons.
- ❑ Good use of ICT resources counterbalances the shortcomings of some out-of-date apparatus.
- ❑ Assessment and monitoring keep students aware of how well they are doing.

Commentary

103. 2003 AS- and A-level results maintained the pattern of recent years in which all students gained a grade in the A-E range, and the majority achieved A or B. Students exceeded expectations in 2003 in relation to their prior attainment.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	very good
Leadership and management	both very good

104. Standards seen during the inspection reflect recent examination results. Students' recall is very good and they explain ideas and answer questions in detail using correct scientific vocabulary. Practical work is done accurately and carefully and data, apparatus and results are shared willingly. Students' high quality relationships with each other and with their teacher mean that information is exchanged freely; each student feels confident to ask for help or clarification. In this small group this ensures deeper understanding and a fast pace of working. Work is marked regularly with written comment on how to improve and students expressed confidence in the assessment and monitoring system that keeps them aware of progress.
105. Teaching overall is very good with some excellent features. Very good learning results because:
- students are expected to use their own good subject knowledge to suggest ideas and skilful further questioning refines these with the minimum of staff input;

- small group sizes facilitate a tutorial style of teaching in which information is shared in both directions and which enables greater depth of study; hence students quickly grow in confidence and maturity;
- within groups, less confident workers are quietly supported while faster workers are further extended;
- high expectations and plenty of challenge lead to thorough learning and research; students' files show an impressive depth of study;
- staff enthusiasm and commitment are good motivating factors and lively and interesting teaching leads to students becoming deeply involved;
- examination preparation is very effectively integrated into the course.

Curriculum leadership

106. The new head of faculty also heads the biology department and brings an innovative approach to managing the work about which Year 12 students commented positively. Deficiencies in resources are being tackled through a revised development plan and the use of newly published computer-based independent learning aids is already having a positive effect on teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. Lessons in computer studies in Year 12 and Year 13 were sampled. Teaching and learning were good and students achieved well, showing above average standards in their work.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

107. Students make good use of the computer facilities in the sixth-form accommodation for their individual study. In the four subjects inspected, there was good use in biology but no use in mathematics.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was geography. Lessons in Year 13 history and Year 12 psychology were sampled. Good teaching and learning in psychology led to good achievement; students' work showed average standards. In history, standards were above average, with very good teaching of source analysis resulting in very good learning. Impressive personal investigations produced by students show high standards of scholarship and are an excellent preparation for university studies.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good emphasis on personal research in the teaching and excellent examination preparation are instrumental in maintaining high standards.
- Very good working relationships between students and teachers create a very productive learning environment.
- The high quality of students' work is the result of their very good attitudes: they work conscientiously to acquire the necessary detailed knowledge and so develop a very good understanding of geography.

Commentary

108. The most recent national figures compiled in 2002 indicate that students' A-level results were very high compared with those expected of students of a similar age. In 2003, there were too few students for valid national comparisons; however, the attainment of individual students was very good with regard to their prior attainment.

Achievement	very good
Standards	well above average
Teaching and learning	very good
Leadership and management	very good

109. Students and teachers are equally focused on high standards. Students, guided by their teachers' high expectations, take their work seriously. They compile impressive folders of work, much of which is indicative of very good personal research as well as of high order skills in presenting arguments in essays and examination practice questions.

110. Good relationships ensure that the lessons are relaxed, enjoyable but purposeful. The main strengths are:

- teachers' excellent knowledge of the subject and of examination requirements which gives students the confidence to succeed;
- very well planned lessons in which activities are challenging and varied: they include excellent use of a wide range of resources to engage students' interest and aid their understanding;
- students' very good understanding of the topics studied is the result of the very pertinent individual support they receive both in and outside lessons;
- very effective use of homework and private study time with tasks which develop students' investigative skills and their ability to use information evaluatively in written responses;
- fieldwork which enhances the curriculum and helps students to acquire the investigative skills needed for their personal studies;
- procedures for assessment which are well designed and ongoing reviews which ensure that students know how they are progressing towards their targets and how they can improve further.

Curriculum leadership

111. Very strong commitment to maintaining high standards is a significant feature of the leadership and management. In order to achieve this, schemes of work are well prepared and provide a very good framework for individual lesson planning. The work of the department is carefully monitored through analysis of students' work and the end of course results. Students enjoy the course and are very well prepared for their examinations.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail; a lesson was sampled. Sports studies have been introduced in Year 12 in the current year. In the lesson observed teaching was very good. Students responded very well to challenging materials. The methods employed were well chosen to motivate pupils. Particularly good use was made of a video camera to support learning.

BUSINESS

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No courses offered in this curriculum area were inspected in detail. A Year 12 general studies lesson was sampled which made an excellent contribution to students' personal development. Good teaching led them to a stimulating exploration of cultural stereotypes.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

