

# INSPECTION REPORT

## AYLESFORD SCHOOL

Aylesford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118882

Headteacher: Mr I. Carruthers

Lead inspector: Joan K. Arnold

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003

Inspection number: 259364

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	939
School address:	Teapot Lane Aylesford
Postcode:	ME20 7JU
Telephone number:	01622 717341
Fax number:	01622 790580
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P. Divall
Date of previous inspection:	2/3/1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Aylesford School is an average sized high school serving an area to the West of Maidstone. Locally, employment levels are good although the immediate area is one of above-average social deprivation for Kent. The school is well subscribed and has a small but expanding sixth form of 82 students. There are 939 pupils in total aged between 11 and 18, of whom 502 are boys and 437 are girls. Aylesford School operates within the Kent selection system, which means that generally the most able academic pupils are selected to attend the local grammar schools from the age of 11. The majority of pupils enter the school aged 11 with below average attainment. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupils need support for English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average and most pupils remain at the school for the whole of their school career. The school is in the process of bidding for specialist sports college status and is due for a substantial rebuild.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2408	Joan Arnold	Lead inspector	Art and design in the sixth form
10481	Kanti Patel	Lay inspector	
33170	Julie Winterman	Team inspector	English
15048	Peter Lacey	Team inspector	Mathematics
2411	Rob Liley	Team inspector	Science
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology
4426	Avril Phillips	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology English as an additional language
1565	Calvin Pike	Team inspector	Music
15971	Mick Pye	Team inspector	Physical education
10056	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design Business Education
2423	Susan Leyden	Team inspector	Special educational needs
33173	Malcolm Doolin	Team inspector	History
3162	Philip O'Neill	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education

102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire

GL53 7JX

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>11</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>14</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>43</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This school has some significant strengths. It also has some important weaknesses, but nevertheless provides an acceptable standard of education.** At the age of 14, pupils do very well in tests, well above pupils in similar schools both nationally and in Kent. GCSE passes for pupils aged 16 are in line with those of pupils in similar schools and close to the average for all schools. The sixth form is very effective and students achieve very well. Links with the community are very good. However, elements of leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the governors, headteacher and the senior team do not provide enough coherent or structured leadership and management. As a result, despite some good and very good teaching in a number of subjects, teaching is no more than satisfactory overall. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher has been diverted from the key function of improving teaching and learning and raising achievement.
- Pupils aged 14 achieve very well in the national tests and at 16 their overall performance is close to that of pupils in all schools nationally.
- Serious shortcomings in the school's accommodation undermine the effectiveness of teaching in some subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory but it is unsatisfactory in music and in French for 14 to 16 year olds.
- The overall management of assessment and of the curriculum is ineffective.
- ICT is not used sufficiently across all subjects to enhance pupils' learning.
- Provision is very good in business studies and art.
- The sixth form is good. It provides a good and increasing range of vocational courses.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and very strong links with the community make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- The school breaches statutory requirements for the provision of citizenship and a daily act of collective worship, and provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.

Since the last inspection the school has been very successful in improving provision for and the performance of post-16 students. Results for 14 year olds have improved dramatically. A vocational course has been established for 14 to 16 year olds and provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good. Nevertheless, because the governors and headteacher have concentrated their energies on planning for the much needed new buildings, some of the key issues raised in the last inspection in 1998 to do with the curriculum, strategic planning, assessment and improving teaching through self evaluation have not been resolved sufficiently.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

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

**Results in the national tests for 14 year olds are very good.** The latest results in English, mathematics and science for attainment at Level 5+ and for mathematics and science at Level 6+ have improved dramatically from those of 2002 and are well above national averages for similar schools. The **GCSE results**, although below the national average for high (A\*-C) grades, **are in line with the national average for A\*-G grades for similar schools and overall performance for all**

**schools.** Both sets of results are good and show added value, particularly so in Key Stage 3. Students in the sixth form achieve very well.

**In Years 7 to 9 standards seen in lessons are average.** Exceptions to this are in religious education, design and technology, French, music and ICT, where standards are below average. **In lessons in Years 10 and 11,** pupils' work is satisfactory. Stronger subjects are art and business studies, where standards are above average but in religious education, design and technology, French, music and geography, standards are below average. **Students in the sixth form** achieve above average standards in ICT, physical education, business and art courses and average standards in English.

From below-average attainment in Year 7, **pupils achieve very well in the national tests at age 14 and satisfactorily by the time they reach the age of 16** because of the very good revision work that they receive. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Sometimes, and particularly in Years 10 and 11, pupils' progress is limited by teaching that does not take enough account of their prior attainment or use assessment information sufficiently to plan ongoing work. The progress that pupils make across subjects is often limited by the level of ICT skills they have. Nevertheless, pupils' overall achievement is at least satisfactory and sometimes good.

Pupils' **attitudes and behaviour are good in the main school and very good in the sixth form.** Relationships overall are good and exclusions are rare. Despite the disparate and unattractive buildings, pupils remain committed to the school, to the staff and to their studies.

#### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory** with some that is good. However, it is not yet consistently good enough to help pupils tackle more difficult work. For example, the overall management of assessment is unsatisfactory which has led to weaknesses in the use of assessment to improve standards across most subjects. In many subjects, unsatisfactory accommodation adversely affects teaching and learning. **The curriculum is unsatisfactory** because of the limited provision for citizenship and ineffective provision for personal, social and health education. Nevertheless, the new vocational course for pupils aged 14 to 16 promises well and the school provides a **good range of additional activities.** These are well subscribed by the pupils. The links with local special schools are very beneficial. The school ensures pupils' health and safety well but is not good enough at checking how pupils are doing in lessons and setting them specific targets to improve their work.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership, management and governance are unsatisfactory overall. The school's improvement plan does not provide a coherent strategy for improving the quality of education that all pupils receive. Senior managers have not fulfilled their monitoring role or exercised their line management function effectively enough so middle managers have developed independently, with mixed success. Nevertheless, most senior and middle managers have the potential to build on the very good test results. The plans for new buildings have increased staff optimism and there is a very positive climate for improving teaching and learning and pupils' overall achievement.

#### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very positive about the school. In general they feel well advised and are satisfied with the education the school provides for their children. Pupils are loyal and committed to the school. Most of them are satisfied with their lessons.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- ensure that the headteacher takes a strong lead to develop the way in which the school is managed and establishes a rigorous strategy for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning so that pupils receive a consistently high level of provision from all subjects;
- improve the school's use of assessment data so that they are used to identify how pupils are doing and what needs to be planned to help them progress;
- improve the provision for music, modern foreign languages, citizenship and personal, social and health education and ICT across the curriculum;
- improve the accommodation;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure the provision of citizenship;
- provide a daily act of collective worship.



## THE SIXTH FORM AT AYLESFORD SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Provision in the sixth form is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. It provides good value for money.** Sixth form teaching is good. There is mutual respect between students and teachers who have together established a positive approach to study. The very good examination results in 2003 show that students achieve very well in relation to their capabilities at the start of their courses, making very good progress during their sixth form career.

The main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision in art, physical education and business studies enables students to achieve very well.
- The good range of vocational courses is relevant and very suited to the needs of the young people.
- Senior managers do not have a planned programme for monitoring and evaluating provision.
- The school and community involvement programme involves sixth formers in valuable experience within and outside the school.
- The very good practice in art and business studies is not shared sufficiently with the rest of the school.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

The quality of education in the sixth form is good. It provides a good range of courses and other opportunities for learning, making very good use of what neighbouring institutions provide. Teachers are skilled and well qualified and have the right level of expertise to meet the demands of post-16 education. The programmes for personal, social and health education and for citizenship are not evaluated enough to ensure high quality provision.

### 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	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Very few students are following the GCE AS level course. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The best teaching is clearly linked to the requirements of the examination. However, some teaching lacks clear purpose and pace and does not challenge students enough.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve above average standards as a result of good teaching. They have a good attitude to ICT. The partnership between the school and local businesses for the website project is outstanding.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good.</b> The vocational art and design courses cater very well for the students' needs. Students achieve very well as a result of very good and sometimes inspirational teaching.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel * (PE Level 3 A2 and AVCE Leisure and recreation)	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve well in the various courses provided. All sixth formers have timetabled leisure opportunities. Teaching is consistently good.
Business	<b>Very good.</b> Results in 2002 and 2003 were very high compared with schools nationally. High quality teaching is provided within a stimulating and challenging business environment and learning flourishes.

Health and social care*	<b>Very good.</b> High quality, creative teaching and excellent relationships between teachers and students in the GNVQ course enable students to achieve very well.
General education	Good with a very positive programme of community involvement.

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*\* These courses were sampled but not inspected in detail. 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**

**Advice, guidance and support for students are satisfactory overall with some strengths and a few weaknesses.** Sixth form students are well supported. Teachers know them well. The very good relationships that exist are a real strength of the school. Staff have established a good balance between care and guidance and encouraging students to take responsibility for themselves and for others in the community. Students are provided with a safe and healthy environment. Their academic work is carefully assessed and their progress monitored satisfactorily. However, the targets set during the regular review sessions are often too vague to be helpful. Although students can access good careers' advice, they are not very clear about the arrangements for them to do so.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Governors have rightly concentrated on moving from an academic to a vocational curriculum and making strong links with other local post-16 providers to enhance opportunities for the students. Whilst senior managers know where they are going with the sixth form their vision has not been shared in a strategic plan. The school does not have a planned, systematic approach to observing, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning so opportunities for identifying and remedying weaknesses and for sharing the good practice that exists are missed.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They enjoy their studies and play an active part in the life of the school and the local community. They appreciate the quality of the teaching, the way they can approach staff and the facilities provided for them. They feel known and valued and this is the main reason for them remaining at school in preference to college.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Results at the end of **Year 9** in national tests are **close to the national average and well above the average for similar schools**. In **Years 10 and 11**, GCSE results are close to average and the standard of work seen is also average. Considering pupils' below-average attainment when they arrive at the school aged 11, **achievement is satisfactory**. The majority of pupils on the special educational needs register achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. More able pupils could achieve more.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils aged 14 progress and achieve well in the national tests but do not maintain the same good rate of progress between Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in lessons are not always as good as in tests and examinations.
- Pupils achieve well in art, business, science and geography but not in French and music.
- More able and talented pupils do not make sufficient progress
- Pupils with special needs make steady progress.

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.5 (32.4)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.3 (31.4)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	31.9 (31.0)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 166 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

1. The profile of standards of attainment at Aylesford school is complicated by the local grammar school system. The majority of pupils entering the school aged 11 have below-average attainment. Nevertheless the school has identified some of its more able pupils and is beginning to help teachers plan more challenging work for them. Against this context, most pupils achieve satisfactorily, particularly in tests and examinations because the school makes good arrangements for practice tests and revises work thoroughly.
2. Achievement is good between Years 7 and 9 in mathematics, science, geography, art and physical education, where teaching is at least satisfactory and mostly good. However, pupils do not make acceptable progress in French and music because teaching is unsatisfactory. Attainment in lessons is generally not as good as the test results suggest. Exceptions to this are in mathematics where attainment is above average.

## Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	29 (39)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best 8 subjects)	28.2 (34.7)	30.4 (34.7)

*There were 175 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- In **Key Stage 4**, the **GCSE results**, although below the national average for high (A\*-C) grades, **are close to the national average for A\*-G grades**. Taking into account the proportion of more able pupils that attend the local grammar schools, the negative comparison at five or more A\*-C grades is understandable. More telling is the comparison for pupils gaining five or more passes (A\*-G grades), which shows the school to be doing **equally well as similar schools** although **just below schools with pupils of the full range of ability**. At this level, art and business studies are the most successful subjects. Pupils achieve above average standards because of very good teaching which expects and demands the best of them. In French and music, where teaching is unsatisfactory, standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- In most lessons pupils work hard. Current Year 10 pupils are achieving well following their success in the tests they took when aged 14. However, pupils in Year 11 do not maintain the progress they made in earlier years because teachers do not take sufficient account of their prior attainment and do not use assessment information sufficiently to plan ongoing work. By the time they take GCSE, pupils' achievement is, therefore, only satisfactory. The progress that pupils make across most subjects generally is often limited by the level of ICT skills they have. This is partly because teachers do not plan to use ICT sufficiently in lessons and partly because, when they do, the ICT facilities are not available, sometimes because they are monopolised by sixth form students and sometimes because there are not enough computers.
- In the context of the school's low attaining intake, the procedures for identifying pupils who show some ability or talent in subjects and those who are potentially high achievers provide a good basis for planning suitable work with different levels of demand. However, this is a recent development and so far the majority of teachers or departments have not yet used the information to help them plan or to evaluate pupils' progress, but they are now well placed to do so. As a result, in some lessons the school's more able pupils do not always achieve the quality and standard of work of which they are capable.
- In Key Stage 3 pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties make satisfactory progress in lessons because work is usually well matched to their learning needs and they receive good support from teaching assistants. Similar pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress overall and achieve well because they follow courses that are designed to provide a variety of suitable learning experiences and to ensure the pupils achieve success in external examinations.
- The most recent examination results for **students aged 18** are very good although the number of entries is too small to make direct comparisons with national averages. However, when compared to students' prior attainment, their **achievement is significant**. This is a marked improvement on previous years when achievement was poor. Students attain particularly high standards in business studies and art. The few students with special educational needs in the sixth form make very good progress and achieve high standards in their chosen subjects because they are very well motivated and the quality of teaching and support is very good.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

**Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Attendance overall is satisfactory. Pupils' social and moral development are satisfactory but their spiritual and cultural development are unsatisfactory.**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Sixth form pupils display very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The spiritual and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils have good relationships with their peers and their teachers.

### Commentary

8. Pupils are happy to attend school and they feel safe and secure in the school environment. They have good attitudes to their school work and exhibit good and disciplined behaviour in and around the school. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work. They work hard in their lessons and enjoy taking part in class discussions. Their behaviour is very good. They listen carefully to instructions, concentrate well and take a pride in their work. Throughout their time in the school they show increasing confidence in themselves as learners. Good behaviour is promoted through a system of rewards and sanctions. The rules are well known to the pupils and they value the merits and certificates they receive for their good work. Pupils have good relationships with their peers and adults in the school. Incidents of bullying or other undesirable behaviour are very few and the school deals with these appropriately.
9. **Students in the sixth form have particularly mature and responsible attitudes** towards their learning. They play an active role in the life of the school and make a contribution to the local community with charitable activities. Through the school community involvement programme, many students are involved in a range of voluntary and worthwhile tasks with local institutions such as a hospice, a church, primary schools and a care home.
10. Pupils generally behave well and show respect for others. They socialise well. However, the school does not offer pupils sufficient opportunities to show initiative and responsibility or to explore the rich and diverse cultures of the many different ethnic minorities living in Britain, either through the personal and social education programme or in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged to confront their views and beliefs. Consequently, some pupils are not fully aware of the world around them and are ill-prepared for a life in today's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Britain. Similarly, pupils' spiritual development is also unsatisfactory. In lessons and in assemblies very few opportunities are exploited to explore, debate and engage in discussing deeper questions of personal growth and spiritual awareness such as justice, values and beliefs.
11. Attendance levels are satisfactory overall. Despite many efforts by the school, a handful of pupils persistently refuse to attend school. These cases are currently being pursued by the education welfare officer. Levels of exclusions are very low.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2003) (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.0
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.9
National data:	1.1

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

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	894	29	1
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	6		
Mixed – White and Black African	2		
Mixed – any other mixed background	9		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded. The total of 30 exclusions applies to 21 pupils in all (19 boys and 2 girls).*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** with some very good practice in art and business studies. The **curriculum is unsatisfactory** because provision for citizenship does not meet statutory requirements and some timetabling is unhelpful. The poor condition of the **accommodation adversely affects the standards pupils are able to achieve.**

### Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning overall is **satisfactory but inconsistent across the school. Pupils learn and make progress satisfactorily but at different rates** depending on the subject. By the end of their school career, pupils **achieve satisfactorily** but they **do not all attain as well as they should.** This is mainly because teaching overall is largely little better than satisfactory and therefore does not provide pupils with sufficient stimulus; it is also because teachers make **insufficient use of assessment information and ICT. Teaching has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is too variable across the school because senior and middle managers have not been sufficiently focused on its monitoring and evaluation.
- Teaching is very good in business studies and art but unsatisfactory in French and music.
- Teaching in the sixth form is almost always good or very good.
- Teachers do not understand assessment information sufficiently or use it productively to help pupils know what they have to do to improve and give them a better chance of success as they move through the school.
- In most subjects, teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT to enrich pupils' learning.
- Some accommodation restricts teaching and learning.

## Commentary

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 137 lessons. Most lessons were observed in full. Teaching was only graded when the observation lasted for 30 minutes or more.**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (0.5%)	20 (15%)	47 (34 %)	56 (41 %)	12 (9%)	1 (0.5%)	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.*

12. **Teaching overall is satisfactory.** The picture of teaching and learning is complicated because it varies widely between subjects. Although there is good and very good teaching in a few subjects, in most teaching there is much that is commonplace and pedestrian. In two subjects teaching is unsatisfactory. A few significant weaknesses occur widely, preventing pupils from learning as effectively as they might. These weaknesses have not been accurately identified by the performance management systems that are in place, nor have senior or middle managers been sufficiently focused in their observations of lessons to diagnose and remedy what is going wrong.
13. **Teaching is at its best in art and business studies.** In both subjects teachers expect pupils to do well and use time very effectively. In art, teachers start lessons briskly and allow the pupils plenty of time to develop their work. During this time, teachers give pupils individual attention and ensure that they know what to do to improve their work. This gives pupils a sense of direction, pride and purpose. In business studies, lessons are businesslike and relevant. They are very well planned so pupils experience a wide range of helpful activities and no time is lost. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils. Consequently, pupils recognise that they are expected to do well and do so. They work well independently and use ICT effectively to improve the standard of their work.
14. **Teaching in the sixth form is almost always good, often very good and occasionally inspirational. It is a strength of the school.** A key feature of this good profile of teaching is the good relationships between teachers and students. This allows incisive marking and assessment and produces an atmosphere in which expectations are high and low standards are not tolerated by staff or students. Teachers know their subject and their students very well. Target setting challenges each student at their own level and so they learn rapidly and make good progress. The few students with special educational needs are well supported.

### EXCELLENT PRACTICE

In one Year 13 art lesson, the teacher challenged a student on his use of Barbie dolls placed higgledy-piggledy in a transparent box. "Why were they naked? Was the fact that they have blue eyes and long blond hair significant? What impression did they create? What would he think if there were naked men instead of women?" Then the teacher vividly described the artist's motives and the parents' response to the shocking painting of Myra Hindley created with prints of the murdered children's hands. The boy was visibly moved. By questioning his motives and offering contrary views she was able to help him understand that art can be interpreted in different ways. This gave him greater understanding of social stereotyping and the spiritual and moral aspects of presenting artworks to an audience. It was inspirational teaching.

15. **Teaching in French and music is unsatisfactory.** Teachers are not sufficiently aware of pupils' individual and different learning needs. Consequently, lesson plans are too general and make insufficient demands on more able pupils in particular. Work in lessons does not involve pupils sufficiently so they lose interest and concentration and do not make fast enough progress. Despite the teachers' efforts the accommodation is hampering pupils' progress. Space is cramped and walls are thin so learning is prevented by noise transference from adjoining rooms. Nevertheless, in both subjects, relationships between teachers and pupils are good because teachers are enthusiastic about their subject.

16. The school has been **slow to make use of assessment data** about the performance of its pupils. This is a fundamental weakness. Teachers do not use data coherently across the school because they have not been helped to do so by senior managers. The current inability of the school management to provide teachers with comprehensive performance information on all pupils, particularly when teaching groups are not registration groups, does not help teachers plan lessons effectively. A bank of pupils' performance information is being established centrally in the school but its dissemination to subject teachers is too slow and piecemeal. There is no coherent whole-school policy so practice, although good in some subjects, is patchy. Many teachers are unclear about pupils' achievement because they do not understand the baseline assessment data. In addition, teachers are not consistent in their use of National Curriculum levels and school sub-grades. The consequences are that most teachers do not plan appropriately challenging work to build on what pupils have already learnt and target setting is unspecific. Too frequently the marking of work does not explain what the pupils must do to improve. Many pupils are aware of their current performance in terms of the levels and grades achieved but do not have or know their predicted targets.
17. **Teaching does not always cater for pupils' different abilities.** In geography, art and physical education and occasionally in other subjects, pupils are provided with opportunities to work at different levels. Teachers encourage them to be creative and to find alternative solutions to problems. However, **in too many lessons, teachers' expectations are too low** and pupils are not given tasks that extend their ability to interpret, analyse, reason and speculate.
18. **In Key Stage 3 the teaching and learning of pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties are satisfactory.** In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form they are good or very good. In the majority of lessons in Key Stage 3, teachers plan the sequence and timing of activities to make sure that pupils' interest is sustained and work is well matched to pupils' individual needs and abilities. Teaching assistants provide skilled and sensitive support. This ensures that pupils are able to complete the tasks they are given and are helped to overcome any difficulties they may encounter. However, in some lessons, pupils all do the same work, additional support is not available and pupils' progress is not as satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, work is carefully planned, lessons are very well managed and provide a range of stimulating activities that engage the pupils' interest. Teachers know their pupils well and provide skilled support and guidance. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, insufficient use is made of targets in pupils' individual education plans for planning for individual needs. In many instances the targets themselves are not precise enough to enable teachers to analyse or evaluate progress.

## The curriculum

**Overall, the curriculum is unsatisfactory though it is good in the sixth form. The breadth of curricular opportunities is unsatisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sixth form provides a good range of courses.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirement for the provision of citizenship.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils as required by statute.
- The new vocational course in Year 10 is a good development.
- Pupils are supported well in pursuing their studies and interests beyond the school day.
- Provision for the personal, social and health education of the pupils is unsatisfactory.
- Overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory.



## Commentary

19. **The sixth form provides a good range of courses** and other opportunities for learning, making very good use of what neighbouring institutions provide. It is supported by teachers with the right level of expertise to meet the demands of post-16 education.
20. Though the school has the interests of the pupils at heart, it does not provide them with all that is required by statute and therefore pupils do not experience the full range of experiences that they should. This fact, together with too much rather dull teaching, means that pupils receive a diet of unexceptional subject experiences. Overall, therefore, the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Though many of the assemblies make some contribution to the spiritual lives of the pupils, few provide opportunities for prayer or reflection. The limited provision for citizenship is a significant weakness and does not yet meet statutory requirements. The school is well behind most other schools in the development of the subject.
21. Provision for **personal social and health education is unsatisfactory**. It is neither managed nor taught well. Consequently, pupils do not value what they experience and some see it as a waste of their time. Often teachers are not sufficiently qualified or experienced to deal with some of the more specialist areas of the subject.
22. A real strength of the school is the generosity with which teachers work beyond the call of duty in supporting the pupils in preparation for tests and examinations. To a considerable extent this accounts for how well the school performs in relation to similar schools. Additionally, there is a **good range of extra-curricular activities**, particularly in sport and games.
23. The school struggles to manage the **unsatisfactory and in some cases poor accommodation**, most of which is in need of radical refurbishment. Many of the teaching areas are poorly ventilated and noise transference between some rooms makes teaching and learning difficult. There is a reluctance to budget for significant short-term improvements as there are, rightly, ambitious long-term plans for the future development of the accommodation.
24. **Curriculum provision for pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties is satisfactory and much improved** since the last inspection. In Key Stage 3 additional help is given to pupils who have difficulty with reading and writing. In Key Stage 4, a pre-vocational course has been designed to support lower-achieving pupils. It aims to widen their knowledge and understanding of the world, engage them in projects which encourage independent learning skills and responsibility and improve their communication skills. It is proving very successful. The "Threshold" college-based course provides a valuable alternative option for the very small number of pupils needing a more work-orientated curriculum. As a result, pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties are better motivated and confident and their behaviour has improved.

## Care, guidance and support

**The school has satisfactory systems for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The provision of support and guidance through monitoring is unsatisfactory** in the school as a whole but good in the sixth form. The school seeks and acts upon the views of sixth form students but this aspect is unsatisfactory across the other years.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good child protection procedures are in place.
- There is a very good induction programme for Year 7.
- Procedures for the assessment, monitoring, recording and reporting of pupils' progress are unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

25. **The school is a safe and secure environment** and there is a well-established structure of pastoral care. The school follows the local authority agreed guidelines and ensures that all staff are fully aware of the important issues regarding child protection. **Procedures for tackling bullying and undesirable behaviour are generally effective.** However, there is evidence that isolated incidents of low-level bullying occur which go unreported and hence are not addressed. Generally, there are **satisfactory health and safety procedures** in place. However, the school site comprises many buildings and mobiles in need of repair and many of the areas between the mobiles are uneven, hazardous and prone to flooding after heavy rain.
26. **Good procedures for encouraging good behaviour** and ensuring positive attitudes to learning are in place. Pupils know the standard of behaviour that is expected of them and they respond positively to these expectations. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and generally they receive good support, advice and guidance from their teachers on pastoral matters. However, the procedures for ensuring all pupils are fully aware of their academic progress, their attainments and their targets are not effective. The lack of thorough monitoring of and support for their academic learning means that pupils do not always achieve their full potential. Though some pupil planners do contain targets, many of them are not very specific and pupils do not always know what their targets are.
27. The school does not consult pupils sufficiently in any planned way. Pupils are not afraid of expressing their views sensibly when asked but currently there is no pupil council in the main school or regular forum for doing so. In the sixth form, a council exists but the informal contact between students and their tutors is much more effective in responding to their views and acting on their suggestions. This aspect of the school's work is not yet satisfactory.
28. There are **very good arrangements for inducting the new intake into the school.** There is a gradual process of getting to know the pupils and ensuring that they settle in to school after a smooth transition. This is ensured by visits to the feeder schools, consultations with parents, induction days, team building activities and focused monitoring of the progress of each pupil during their first year.
29. **Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 receive good effective advice and guidance** on the choices they have to make in moving forward to either further studies or to career opportunities. The school works very closely with the Connexions Service. Pupils are guided to make an informed choice about their future through the effective use of careers library resources and a schedule of interviews with the Connections advisors. However, although there is much informal contact between sixth form students and their tutors, they are not clear what further career advice is available and how they can access it.
30. Pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties are well cared for and supported in their efforts to improve their work and their behaviour. A very detailed audit and special educational needs register provides useful information about pupils' individual difficulties and alerts teachers to where support might be needed. The school offers a range of flexible and sensitive support to help pupils with their work and in their relationships. However, targets in pupils' individual education plans are too general and the information does not provide an adequate basis for tracking and evaluating progress. The school has identified many pupils as gifted and talented, but there are very few activities aimed at nurturing their higher abilities; many opportunities are missed in supporting them to fully extend their potential.
31. **Sixth form students are well supported.** Teachers know them well. The very good relationships that exist are a real strength of the school. Staff have established a good balance between care and guidance and encouraging students to take responsibility for themselves and for others in the community. Students are provided with a safe and healthy environment. Their academic work is carefully assessed and their progress monitored satisfactorily. However, the targets set during the regular review sessions are often too vague to be helpful.

Although students can access good careers' advice, they are not very clear about the arrangements for them to do so.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

**The school's work with parents is satisfactory and its work with other local partners is one of its strengths.** Staff respond satisfactorily to parental concerns and the information the school provides to the parents is good. The sixth form has especially strong links with the community through the school's community involvement programme. Links with primary schools and with other secondary schools and colleges are strong. This is an outward looking school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are good links with other mainstream and special schools and colleges.
- There are some very good links with the community and the local businesses which are well utilised to support the curriculum, especially in sport and in the business curriculum.
- The parents do not show much interest in the day-to-day life of the school.

### **Commentary**

32. The school's business department maintains many **very good and some excellent links with the local business community.** These links are utilised to good effect to support the curriculum for work-experience placements and as a resource for business and computing coursework. Some links with the local employers also enable the school to offer extended work-experience for pupils unlikely to go on to further education courses. After completing their GCSE's, many pupils stay on to study mainly vocational courses offered at the school. The school also has many good links with local sixth forms in other local schools and with further education colleges which ensure an informed and controlled progression on to the next stage of pupils' education. These have been productively developed as part of the school's bid for sports college status. The sports co-ordinator has been heavily involved with sports development bodies, sports associations and local clubs. All of these contacts have had a beneficial effect on the provision offered to pupils.
33. Sound procedures are in place for communicating with parents of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties and for informing them about their children's progress. Links with other institutions and with services which provide support for the school are good. The inclusion project with Five Acre Wood Special school is a strength in the school, providing valuable practical opportunities for pupils to work with people with disabilities and to learn to appreciate and value individual needs and differences.
34. There are satisfactory procedures in place to ensure parents' views and concerns are addressed satisfactorily; some parents, however, still feel they are not consulted sufficiently. Low numbers of parents returned the parents' questionnaires and a very low number attended the parents' Ofsted meeting. There is a lack of involvement of parents in school. The contribution they make to pupils' learning in school is limited but satisfactory.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership, management and governance are all unsatisfactory.** Although there are many good intentions, the headteacher, governors and key managers have not moved the school on sufficiently since the last inspection as many of the same weaknesses still apply. Governors have not ensured that the statutory curriculum for citizenship is provided in full nor have they provided a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the headteacher has been diverted from the key function of improving teaching and learning and raising achievement.
- Governors do not have sufficient knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

- The school improvement plan is weak. It does not provide the school with a coherent strategy for improvement.
- Senior managers have not fulfilled their important monitoring role or exercised their line management function effectively enough.
- The management of the curriculum and of assessment is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership and governance of the sixth form are good.
- The school's approach to special educational needs is well led and well managed.
- Some senior and middle managers show good potential for the future development of the school.
- The school provides satisfactory value for money.

## Commentary

35. **The leadership and management of the headteacher are unsatisfactory.** His strengths are his commitment to the improvement of the buildings and accommodation, his ability to motivate staff and, importantly, his awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, he has not been sufficiently focused on tackling the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Many of the same weaknesses still prevail. This is because although the headteacher has initiated numerous good improvement strategies, he has not seen them through to a conclusion. Nor has he established effective management structures to enable the school to evaluate how effective the improvement has been.
36. **The governing body** is willing and supportive but **lacks incisiveness**. Several governors are new in post and are still settling into their role but the more experienced governors have only a superficial knowledge of the quality of provision because they have not developed their monitoring and evaluation role in sufficient depth. So, for example, they are not aware of deficiencies in the curriculum provision such as the development of citizenship. Although some of the governors know that data for measuring achievement exist, few grasp their implication or use data to challenge senior managers. The governing body is well led and recognises the need to be more searching in its pursuit of higher standards. There are signs that it has the potential to do so.
37. **Planning for school improvement is weak.** Although the initial strategy to provide a central school improvement plan in diagrammatical form promised well, the request for departments to submit their own linked plans has not been followed through systematically. This has resulted in an incomplete set of plans of variable quality and usefulness that have not been drawn together into a cohesive and coherent shared plan. What is there is not structured helpfully. This means that departments have developed independently under their middle managers with mixed success. Strategic planning was an issue in the last inspection and remains so.
38. **Monitoring and evaluation are weak.** The line management structure is not providing the school with an effective tool for self-evaluation and improvement. Each senior manager is linked with one curriculum area or a group of subjects but there is no coherent central strategy for monitoring what is being taught and learnt so oversight is informal and unfocused. Therefore, some very good practice goes unseen and unshared and some unsatisfactory practice is missed or ignored.
39. **The curriculum lacks coherent management.** There are weaknesses in the way the curriculum is timetabled. This is one reason why the provision for citizenship as part of the personal, social and health education programme does not meet statutory requirements, as pupils do not have a regular timetabled slot throughout Key Stage 3. **The unsatisfactory management of assessment** is the key factor that explains why the quality of teaching has not improved since the last inspection. Although the school has a wealth of data about the performance of individual pupils, it is only just being shared with teachers. Aylesford School is lagging behind the vast majority of schools in this area. Most of its teachers have yet to become confident using the data to help them plan for the individual needs of their pupils. This means that teaching is not as effective as it could and should be. Similarly, the data has yet to

be used effectively to inform target setting. These two aspects represent important weaknesses in the senior management team.

40. **The leadership and governance of the sixth form are good.** This is a success story. Governors have acted upon the recommendations of the last report and have established a clear vision for the sixth form. The concentration on vocational pathways has provided an appropriate and popular curriculum for the young people of Aylesford. The management of the sixth form is satisfactory. However, senior managers do not have planned mechanisms to monitor provision or to evaluate effectiveness. Therefore, they are not able to share the excellent practice that exists across the school as a whole. Neither can they assess whether the joint arrangements for providing personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education, periodically, across the consortium are meeting statutory requirements and providing value for money.
41. **The Additional Education Needs department is well led and well managed.**<sup>1</sup> A team of experienced and committed teaching assistants are efficiently and effectively deployed to support pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties in their lessons. In the last two years, staff have been actively developing their knowledge and skills through attendance on local courses. However, as yet, insufficient use is made of available data to analyse the impact of the support arrangements on pupils' outcomes and achievements.
42. Within the senior management team and across several of the departments there is **good potential for future development**. An example is the preparation of the bid for sports college status. This reveals careful research and reflective but determined leadership. In high performing departments, the leadership and management of middle managers provide examples of good practice. These have not yet been shared across the school.
43. **The school provides satisfactory value for money.** The school works in a context of significant social deprivation. Pupils achieve well because, although the teaching they receive is satisfactory, the school provides very good revision and booster classes to prepare them for the tests and examinations. Although there are weaknesses in leadership and management and issues remain from the last inspection, the atmosphere in the school is very positive. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes towards the school and the teachers. The school provides an adequate standard of education overall.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,637,911
Total expenditure	2,662,499
Expenditure per pupil	2,887.74

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	118,548
Balance carried forward to the next	93,960

<sup>1</sup> The school has chosen the term 'additional educational needs' instead of special educational needs because it caters for the needs of pupils who are more able or talented as well as providing support for those with learning and behavioural difficulties.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards achieved by pupils in the tests at the end of Year 9 are very good.
- Teaching does not challenge more able pupils sufficiently.
- Standards of teaching within the department are inconsistent.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to help pupils learn.
- Pupils behave well in lessons because teachers create effective conditions for learning.
- Pupils produce vivid imaginative writing because teachers offer focused support in this area.

#### Commentary

44. By the end of Year 9 **results are in line with the national average for pupils attaining a Level 5 or above** in the National Curriculum tests. The percentage of pupils gaining a Level 5 or above is very high compared with results in similar schools. This very good achievement occurs because the school provides an extensive revision programme and clear guidance on obtaining good test results. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels, though, is well below national averages. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally. Throughout Years 7 to 9 the standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books was average for the majority of pupils.
45. In the 2003 GCSE examinations in English and in English literature results were well below national averages. Although well below national levels, the percentage of boys gaining a grade in the A\*-C range was similar to that of 2002 in both subjects. Girls' performance at this level was also well below national standards but their attainment represents a significant fall in standards when compared with the results of 2002. Nevertheless, measuring GCSE results against prior attainment and considering the standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' written assignments, pupils make progress at an acceptable rate. Therefore, **achievement is satisfactory, overall**.
46. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but sometimes teaching does not provide sufficient levels of challenge for more able pupils. This is particularly true of the teaching of literature. Standards of teaching across the department are inconsistent. Where teaching is good teachers have good subject knowledge and their lessons are well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen, materials were poorly matched to the ability levels of the groups and lessons lacked pace. The use of assessment is unsatisfactory overall because it is not used well enough to support learning. Individual teachers clearly link work to test and examination requirements and make reference to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. However this good practice is not widespread. When marking pupils' work some teachers make useful comments which identify weaknesses and how to solve them, but, in general, marking is cursory and does not help pupils improve their work.
47. Pupils behave well in lessons because teachers create effective conditions for learning. In particular, pupils work very well collaboratively. In lessons the group work seen was always productive and pupils were confident when they reported back to the whole class. Pupils produce very good imaginative writing because teachers have targeted this area for improvement.

48. **The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory.** The head of department is committed to improving provision and has established useful guidelines for work within the department. Planning is clear, although learning objectives are not sharply defined. The head of department has produced a policy for assessment within the department but practice is still inconsistent. The head of department creates good opportunities for team-work and for staff development. Self-evaluation, improvement planning, the effective use of performance data and monitoring of teaching and learning are under-developed within the department because of the lack of guidance from senior colleagues. Improvement since the time of the last report is satisfactory, overall, but issues of inconsistency in teaching and marking remain unresolved.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. **Standards of language and literacy across the curriculum are varied but satisfactory overall.** A useful policy clearly outlines methods of supporting pupils' progress. Staff have benefited from training in this area but there is no improvement plan to ensure coherent development of literacy across the school. There are inconsistencies in the way errors in writing are dealt with in different subjects which limit pupils' progress. Aspects of good practice such as providing guidance for writing in geography, structured evaluation sessions in physical education, the use of key words in science, mathematics and ICT and clear guidance on structure and style reap rewards but these are not widespread or consistent. Leadership of this area by the head of English is unsatisfactory because she has insufficient time to monitor standards and is not required to do so.

### Modern Foreign Languages

The focus of the modern foreign languages inspection was on French, the only modern foreign language offered by the school.

Provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Key Stage 3, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but in Key Stage 4 they are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall, despite some satisfactory teaching.
- Teachers do not have sufficient information about pupils' individual capabilities so teachers do not always plan a range of different activities to meet pupils' individual needs.
- All the teaching staff have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject and their pupils' learning.

### Commentary

50. **Standards reached by 14 year olds and 16 year olds are below nationally expected levels.** The results of the 2003 National Curriculum assessments for 14 year olds show that **attainment in French is below national average** and below the average performance in other subjects in the school. **GCSE results in 2003 also show that attainment is below the national average.** Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall, including pupils with special educational needs.
51. **Teaching is unsatisfactory overall.** Pupils learn well when teachers communicate the lesson's objectives clearly, use French effectively and set a variety of appropriately challenging tasks. However, more often, teachers are not sufficiently aware of pupils' learning needs, do not plan different tasks, teach "to the middle" and spend too long on one activity. As a result, pupils lose enthusiasm, their knowledge is not secure and they do not progress at a fast enough rate. Poor accommodation makes teaching difficult and impedes pupils' learning because there is often unhelpful noise transference between rooms. **Overall, therefore, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.**

52. **Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall**, in spite of the head of department's commitment to improving pupils' learning and providing professional development for the team. There are pockets of collaborative work within the team, but most members work individually and do not share resources. Leadership and management within the department are unsatisfactory because senior managers have not helped the department establish a system to track how pupils are doing, or established a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation to determine the quality of teaching and learning.
53. Since the last inspection performance has not improved. Issues raised in the previous report remain unresolved because teachers do not plan work at different levels to meet pupils' different learning needs.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Progress made by pupils through Key Stage 3 is good.
- Teachers' insistence on high standards of behaviour in mathematics lessons enables pupils to learn and make progress.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards their work create a good atmosphere in which to learn.
- The use of assessment to pitch lessons at the correct levels of challenge and build on pupils' prior learning is unsatisfactory.
- The use of resources, particularly ICT, to enrich the curriculum and enhance teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

54. **Standards are in line with national expectation overall for pupils aged 14 and 16.** There are no significant differences between the performance of girls and boys. Pupils' attainment is below average when they enter the school and only a few are high attainers. By the age of 14 the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected standard is in line with the national average though the proportion attaining higher levels remains below the national average. Compared with schools that have similar levels of prior attainment, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are very high. The improvement made between 2002 and 2003 is similar to that nationally and puts mathematics as the highest performing core subject in the school at the end of Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils attaining a GCSE mathematics qualification at any level is in line with that nationally, though the proportion attaining a GCSE grade between A\*-C remains well below. Compared with schools where pupils have similar attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of A\*-C grades is in line with expectation.
55. **Achievement is good overall at Key Stage 3. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall.** When teaching higher attaining pupils, teachers direct the learning too closely with the result that pupils have little opportunity to become actively involved as independent learners and do not make the progress of which they are capable. Throughout the school, the quality of pupils' learning and their consequent achievement mirror the degree to which teachers use assessment information to plan their teaching and help pupils set targets. One topic was observed being taught at the beginning and end of Key Stage 3 as well as in Key Stage 4. This illustrates the high proportion of teaching time spent on work already taught and learnt. Higher ability pupils have been identified but very few lessons provide them with specifically stretching work. Some good teaching, particularly in lower ability groups, encourages pupils to think for themselves and strive for high levels of personal achievement. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and achieve well in Key Stage 4 because they are supported well.



56. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In 12 of 14 lessons seen it was at least satisfactory and in half of all lessons it was good or better. Challenging and engaging lesson 'starters' coupled with very high standards of behaviour get pupils thinking and participating immediately. In the better lessons this pace and the pupils' interest are sustained because a good balance is struck between listening, responding to questions and working on related tasks and exercises. In the weaker lessons teachers do not plan effectively. They plan activities but do not make clear what will be learnt. Most lessons do not build on what pupils already know and can do.
57. The use of homework to consolidate or extend work in class is good but assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers' marking gives few comments on what pupils need to do to make further progress. Across all lessons teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT. Opportunities to link work in mathematics to other subject areas are missed. Work planned for Years 7 to 9 on data handling does not use data from real-life contexts that could contribute to pupils' social and cultural development.
58. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. Induction for temporary and new teachers is good. Performance is monitored by the head of department who is aware of strengths and areas in need of further improvement. However, not all members of the department subscribe to the need for further improvement so practice is inconsistent. The management of the department is good. The analysis of pupils' performance data is thorough and informs realistic yet challenging pupil-level targets that are reviewed annually. Some pupils are made aware of their targets through a sticker in the front of their exercise books. This promising practice is not yet fully implemented across all classes. The department's improvement plan identifies priorities and actions but it is insufficiently linked to measurable outcomes. Implementation of the numeracy strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive effect. The head of department has managed the difficulties of recruiting permanent staff to the department well.
59. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. Standards and progress have improved in Key Stage 3. The difference in standards between boys and girls is no longer significant; attitudes towards learning have improved. However, there has been a deterioration in the use of ICT that narrows the curriculum and puts higher achievement at risk. The use of mathematics remains under-developed and numeracy across the curriculum remains unplanned.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

60. The use that pupils make of their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects is satisfactory but could be improved.
61. In line with the Key Stage 3 National Strategy the school has undertaken training in numeracy across the curriculum and link teachers from each subject area have been identified. However, the planning of numeracy opportunities across all subjects has not been done, so achieving coherence and progression in numeracy across the curriculum remains unsatisfactory and it is, therefore, as it was in the last inspection, an area for development. The lack of links to other subjects in mathematics lessons exacerbates the lack of progress made.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement in both key stages is good.
- The overall quality of learning and teaching is good.
- Leadership of the subject is good.
- Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good.

- Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment data to plan for the high attainers and those with additional educational needs.
- Teachers make insufficient use of ICT.

## Commentary

62. **Standards** attained in the 2003 test results at the end of Year 9 **are in line with national averages**. This represents a **significant achievement** because this group of pupils entered the school at least half a level below the national average. These latest results in science for attainment at Level 5+ and at Level 6+ have improved dramatically from those of 2002 and are well above national averages for similar schools **Standards attained in the GCSE examination in 2003 are broadly in line with national averages. These results also represent significant achievement** when compared to the starting point of this group of pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 4. Standards in lessons and from work seen in exercise books are in line with those expected of pupils in this age range. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. More able pupils achieve satisfactorily.
63. **The quality of teaching in science is good** because all teachers have a secure command of their subject and use it well to guide pupils. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject. Relationships are good because pupils are treated with respect and their contributions encouraged and valued. A wide range of teaching methods is used These generate pupils' interest and enjoyment. **Because of the good teaching pupils learn well.** Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and work-rate. A particularly strong feature is the use of challenging questions which probe pupils' understanding and knowledge across all levels of ability. Pupils are helped to crystallise their learning through effective use of discussion and response as a summary activity. However, individual pupils' performance data is not yet used productively to guide teachers' planning and, although pupils' work is marked, teachers do not make enough comments to help pupils improve their work. Whilst some ICT practice was observed the current scheme of work does not include enough planned opportunities for using ICT. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace and are frequently made more challenging by the use of interim timelines for sequenced activities. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and in over half the lessons teaching was good or very good.
64. **Leadership in the science department is good** with leaders providing good role models for all adults and pupils. The teaching and support staff and science technicians work well as a team and share the common purpose of improving pupils' understanding of science. **Management in science is satisfactory.** Routines in the subject are known and followed by pupils and adults. The department supports pupils, students and new teachers extremely well. The themes in the science improvement plan are relevant but are not backed up by details on how to achieve them. Nor are there indications of how to measure their effectiveness in terms of pupils' achievement. One theme is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, the current monitoring of teaching is insufficiently rigorous. Senior managers have not ensured regular observations with a focus on known weaknesses so that help and guidance can be provided to eliminate such weaknesses. Similarly, they have been slow to make available the comprehensive pupil information, currently available on Year 7 pupils so the department can meet the needs of high attainers and those with additional educational needs more securely. When comprehensive pupil information, currently available on Year 7 pupils, is extended by the school to pupils in all year groups, including the high attainers and those with special educational needs, pupils will have their individual needs met more securely. **Improvement since the last inspection is good.**

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below the national average.
- Pupils' understanding of how to make use of information technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- The management of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers' specialist subject knowledge is used effectively to guide pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils' good attitudes to the subject contribute to their progress.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to present information.

### Commentary

65. **Most pupils enter the school with below average knowledge of ICT. Although pupils' achievement is satisfactory they do not reach the expected level for their age by the time they are 14 years old. ICT GCSE was offered as a subject option in 2002 for the first time. Therefore 2004 will be the first occasion that pupils will be entered for the examination. The teacher assessments of 16-year-old pupils show that standards are below the national average. Pupils have good knowledge of how to present information using a variety of applications. They are confident users of the word-processing application and use desktop publishing techniques to add art images to improve their documents. They also have a good understanding of a multi-media presentation presenting slide shows.**
66. Although pupils are taught how to use spreadsheets in ICT lessons they do not have the opportunity to use them in other subjects to consolidate their learning. As a consequence, their skills level is low. A similar situation exists with data handling and control technology. **Pupils' understanding of how ICT could be used beyond the school is too narrow.** Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriate targets. In lessons observed, discussion with pupils and work seen during the inspection, standards of pupils studying the GCSE ICT are at the level expected at this point in the school year. Their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are developing a clear understanding of handling data. They know how to retrieve information quickly using the query facility and are confident to enter all the data in to the appropriate place. They also know the benefits of using ICT in a work situation, producing business cards and stationery.
67. **Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but have weaknesses.** Teachers have good relationships with pupils and use their good subject knowledge effectively to quickly engage interest and attention. However, learning on occasions is slowed when introductions to lessons are too lengthy so pupils become restless and lose interest. Teachers have good discipline insisting on quiet when demonstrating a procedure. This helps pupils learn. Teachers begin lessons by telling pupils what they will be learning but they are not given individual specific targets. As a consequence, these lessons lack focus and achievement is slowed. Teachers do not question pupils sufficiently before starting work to make sure they understand. The outcome of this is that pupils start the task without full understanding and time has to be spent visiting individuals to re-explain the task, slowing the pace of the lesson. Although lessons finish with sessions to ascertain how much pupils have learnt, these are often too brief and do not allow pupils to show what they know and understand.
68. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The head of department offers good support for colleagues and has a vision about the future development of the subject. Management, however, is unsatisfactory. The workload of the head of department is excessive and senior managers have not given the head of department sufficient time to carry out management tasks such as monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress. This means that weaknesses in planning and teaching have not been rectified. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. **The overall use of ICT in other subjects in the curriculum is unsatisfactory.** Although some subjects have made provision in their schemes of work, use is not consistent. This is partially due to difficulties of access to the ICT suites and the lack of resources within departments. There is, however, some effective use in science and pupils in the business studies group make very good use of technology using a range of programs with understanding and effectively using them in their individual projects.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

The overall quality of provision in geography is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are raising standards.
- Teaching and learning are good overall so pupils achieve well.
- Effective teaching promotes pupils' positive attitudes and their personal development.
- In Years 7 to 9, teachers do not focus their assessment sufficiently on how individual pupils can improve their work.
- Limited access to computer facilities restricts opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and therefore reduces the standards they achieve by Year 11.

#### Commentary

70. **Standards are improving because of very good departmental leadership and management.** Pupils start school with standards that are below expectations for their age and through good teaching in Years 7 to 9, pupils reach standards that are in line with nationally expected levels showing that their achievement is good. In Years 10 and 11 standards are below the national average because many of the pupils opting for the subject are from the middle and lower ends of the ability range. At GCSE consistently good teaching, sound departmental systems for assessment and close monitoring of coursework enable pupils to achieve well. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
71. The effectiveness of teaching and learning is a key factor behind the good achievement and progress made by pupils. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, set clear learning objectives and plan lessons to match the needs of the full ability range of pupils. Key geographical skills are well taught throughout the school. Teachers use praise and sensitive encouragement to enable all pupils and particularly those with special educational needs and other learning difficulties to play an active role in classroom learning. However, restricted access to the ICT suite limits opportunities to undertake the research enquiries that are planned in the excellent departmental scheme of work.
72. Assessment systems are good and regular testing allows teachers to track individual student progress. However, this tracking is more effective in Years 10 and 11 where it is more carefully targeted to individual pupils' needs. The department is aware of this and has recently implemented new procedures to ensure that pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from more focused teacher comments on how they can improve their work. Teachers have worked hard to improve literacy levels but further progress depends on a more effective implementation of a whole school approach to literacy.
73. **The subject is very well led and managed.** There is an effective team approach to raising standards and achievement in all areas of the department's work. Good self-evaluation procedures are in place to monitor classroom teaching and individual pupil progress. This has led to improvements in the teaching in the department and pupils' standards. Good progress

has been made since the last inspection. The good practice that exists in this department has not been shared across the school as a whole.

## History

The overall quality of provision in history is **satisfactory** but with important weaknesses.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
- Results are below national averages but improving.
- Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory but senior management support is very poor.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory and does not support teaching and learning.
- Timetabling disadvantages pupils.
- There is insufficient provision for ICT.
- Accommodation is very poor.

### Commentary

74. Results in Years 9 and 11 are below national averages but good progress is being made and standards are improving. **Pupils achieve satisfactorily** considering that they start their school career with below average attainment. History is very popular at GCSE.
75. **Teaching is satisfactory but variable.** In most lessons teachers plan thoroughly and have high aspirations for pupils. Pupils are challenged, respond positively to teachers and take responsibility for their learning. The best lessons have clear aims and a review of learning. However, this structure is not always present. When this is so, expectations are too low, not all pupils are on task and individual needs are not met. Strategies to combat low literacy levels are used, including an emphasis on key words and structured essays, but not consistently. Oral work is used constructively. Homework is set and builds on the learning in lessons. **Assessment is unsatisfactory.** Marking is inconsistent with little written to help pupils improve. Year 7 to 9 pupils know their levels and GCSE pupils know their expected grade. The use of data to set targets and improve teaching and learning is under-developed as the school has not provided appropriate training. Materials and tasks for pupils with special educational needs and for those that are more able have not yet been developed sufficiently.
76. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and management and is keen to raise achievement but has not had sufficient support from senior management to do so. For example, there has not been sufficient training on the use of performance data. Monitoring by middle and senior managers is inconsistent. The school's support for the newly qualified teacher is unsatisfactory. Timetabling is unsatisfactory. For example, the head of department, a national examination marker, cannot teach Year 11 as she teaches drama at that time. Also, pupils cannot access the ICT facilities during their history lessons. Although pupils are encouraged to use ICT at home and produce good work, not all pupils have this resource.
77. Accommodation is very poor with all of the teaching in huts or outside rooms. Displays are satisfactory but rooms are in poor repair, need redecoration and are not conducive to good learning. Their small size means teachers cannot create flexible teaching opportunities such as using drama. Resources are unsatisfactory.
78. Some progress has been made since the previous inspection. However, despite the head of department's work, the department has **not been able to make sufficient progress** since the last report because of lack of support from senior managers

## Religious education

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils have a real interest in the subject.
- The more able pupils are given work that is too easy.
- There are some missed opportunities for encouraging pupils to think more deeply about religious ideas and practices.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- There is a significant proportion of good teaching.

### Commentary

79. **Pupils' attainment, at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, is below average**. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to their earlier attainment, which was well below average. Achievement is held back from being good in many cases by low levels of literacy. Some higher attaining pupils achieve well in discussions.
80. The most striking feature of the pupils' experience of religious education is the quality of the relationships between the teachers and the pupils. As a consequence, the pupils enjoy their work and see the implications for their own lives of much of what they learn. The department does much to support the spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils. The pupils' achievement, however, does not always match their enthusiasm as there are many missed opportunities to extend their understanding beyond the factual recall of information about religions. Some higher attaining pupils, however, often explain in some depth what it is to be a Christian, a Muslim, a Sikh or a Hindu. All pupils begin to form their own views about different patterns of belief and about their own beliefs and share these confidently with their peers.
81. Though teaching is satisfactory overall, there is a significant measure of good teaching. A key strength, in the better lessons, is the teachers' knowledge of the subject. This supports deeper exploration of religious ideas and helps the pupils to see the relevance for them of the deeply held beliefs of others. This was a marked feature of a lesson on Sikhism in Year 8 when pupils were given a good opportunity to clarify and justify their ideas. Lessons are weakened occasionally when the pupils' ideas are not challenged enough so that many settle for judgements that are not well supported by reasons. In a few lessons, higher attainers are given work that is too easy, with the consequence that they settle for a modest pace and do not achieve as well as they could.
82. **The department is well led** and supported by a good level of helpful documentation. The head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject but is held back in her efforts by the limited range of expertise in the department. Non-specialist teachers are supported well by very helpful schemes of work and this ensures satisfactory and often good teaching which motivates the pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory but modest and there is still some way to go.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results for grades A\*-G are in line with the national average as they have been for several years even though A\*-C results are below average.
- Pupils make steady progress because lessons are effectively organised.

- Pupils are not aware of how well they are doing in relation to expected national levels.
- The use of the computer is underdeveloped and therefore unsatisfactory for computer aided design and manufacture.

## Commentary

83. At the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments show pupils' **standards to be low in comparison to the expected national levels**. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. Considering pupils enter the school with low attainment and a very variable experience in designing and making, their **achievement is satisfactory**. They do as well as pupils in similar schools.
84. **GCSE results in 2003 were well below the average for grades between A\*-C but in line with the average for A\*-G grades**. The standards seen during the inspection mirror these results. Achievement is satisfactory because pupils achieve as well as pupils of similar capabilities in similar schools. A good feature is that standards in food and textiles are very close to the average expectation for a significant proportion of pupils. Literacy, presentation and graphical communication skills are good in the work of the higher attaining pupils but generally weak in that of average and lower attaining pupils. Pupils are helped by teachers' clear constructive comments that inform them of what they need to do to improve. Pupils are, however, unclear as to what their predicted target grades are and how well they are doing in pursuit of such grades.
85. **Teaching is satisfactory**. Most lessons are effectively organised and teachers make it clear what work is expected of pupils. However, in Years 7 to 9 pupils do not always fully know and understand what National Curriculum levels they have achieved or are working towards. Extension work to stretch the most able is not always a feature. Pupils with additional educational needs achieve as well as the other pupils especially when supported in lessons by support staff.
86. **The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory** and have enabled **satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection**. In Years 7 to 9 new assessment procedures and practice have been introduced but are not yet fully understood by pupils. Insufficient use is made of target grade predictions to monitor pupils' progress against their predicted scores. A good opportunity to work in a broad range of materials is provided. Since the previous inspection the use of computers has improved considerably but a lack of resources limits work in computer-aided design and manufacture.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well.
- GCSE results have been well above average.
- Attainment is much higher than that in similar schools.
- Lower attaining pupils do particularly well and there is little low attainment.
- Two-dimensional work, especially observational drawing, is strong.
- The budget is too low for the department to operate properly.
- The department does not have good enough information from management to enable them to track pupils' achievement and progress.

## Commentary

87. **GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 were well above average.** They were excellent compared with similar schools. Very few pupils achieved below D grades. All pupils, but boys in particular, did much better in art than in their other subjects.
88. **Achievement overall is very good because teaching is very strong.** Although the skills of pupils in the current Year 7 are nearer average, pupils' standards are generally below average on entry to the school. They make good progress to Year 9, where standards match the range expected nationally. Lower attaining pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve particularly good results. Pupils learn skills effectively, particularly drawing and painting. They use two-dimensional media well in observational and imaginative work. Three-dimensional work is average. This has improved since the last report. Pupils can also write satisfactorily about their responses to artists' work, although spelling is often weak. Pupils in the current Year 11 are on target to achieve very well again this year. Although work is currently average, pupils achieve their potential through additional efforts made later in Year 11. This is helped by attendance at extra-curricular sessions. A small minority of pupils display negative attitudes, are often absent from school and are currently doing less well.
89. **Teaching and learning are very good.** The team of experienced teachers, most of whom are part time, has very good subject knowledge. The arrangement works unusually well. Teachers' strengths lie in their very good use of time. Lessons start with brisk introductions, followed by plenty of opportunity for pupils to develop ideas through activity. Very good one-to-one discussions with pupils stimulate improvement, confidence and enjoyment in all but a very small minority. Pupils, therefore, like their work and develop pride in their successes. The level of resources for ordinary materials in the department is unsatisfactory. Teachers often have to provide resources themselves to enable pupils to achieve as well as they do. This is an unsatisfactory situation. Teachers mark work well to provide very good guidance about how to improve. The department does not yet track improvement and achievement against known benchmarks.
90. **Art is led and managed very well.** Some classes are taught by more than one teacher. Where this occurs liaison between such staff is very effective and pupils benefit from the different approaches to their learning. The department is trying hard to develop methods for tracking pupils' achievement. School level management provides too little helpful data to assist this, for example to enable effective target setting. This impedes department level monitoring and analysis. Issues raised in the last report have been improved. The creative use of ICT is now satisfactory, but the department recognises that this needs further development. Improvement since the last report has been good.

## Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement over time is too low.
- Departmental and lesson planning are weak and underdeveloped so do not cater for the full range of pupils' needs.
- Information about pupils' previous attainment is not used to set targets and raise standards.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good, although work expectations are generally too low.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well but the organisation of the classroom inhibits learning.
- A growing range of extra-curricular activities is provided even though relatively few pupils attend some of them.
- Poor accommodation and inadequate resources are having a detrimental effect on teaching and learning.



## Commentary

91. **Standards are too low** because provision is not geared to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils do not progress well enough to enable them to achieve what might be expected of them. Results in the most recent tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations are below national averages and also show that pupils have made insufficient progress since they entered the school.
92. Although there is some satisfactory teaching, the **overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory**. This is because planning overall is not sufficiently rigorous. Planning for individual lessons is not based clearly on what is known about what individual pupils can do, know and understand. As a result, teachers' expectations are not high enough. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. This has encouraged more pupils to take the subject as an option in Year 10. However, work in lessons does not always interest pupils so they switch off. When they are involved in activities, pupils' progress is inhibited as they are not developing sufficient confidence in practical skills or in using musical language to refine their work and understanding. Work in folders shows an insufficiently broad range of experience. The marking of it is spasmodic and unhelpful as it does not give pupils a clear idea of how to improve. **Learning overall is, therefore, also unsatisfactory**.
93. A growing range of music ensembles take place regularly as extra-curricular activities. Although relatively few pupils join in these activities the department organises a number of concerts and performances are given within the school and the local area annually.
94. **The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory**. This is compounded by the lack of senior management monitoring and support. Other factors are also having a negative impact on learning. For example, the very poor accommodation is in a state of disrepair and there is disturbing sound transference from the practice rooms to the main music space. Resources are inadequate and unsatisfactory management of the timetable means that some music is taught by more than one teacher and sometimes a non-specialist. **Since the last inspection the work and impact of the department have regressed**.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Physical Education

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skilled teaching leads to good achievement.
- Very good leadership provides a clear vision for the development of the subject.
- Very good community links directly benefit the pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough knowledge of the National Curriculum levels to set their own targets for improvement.
- Teachers do not provide enough activities with different levels of demand to cater for pupils of different abilities.
- Indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

95. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement for most pupils and very good achievement for the significant minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 who enter the school with below average skills. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. GCSE results in 2003 are in line with the national average, continuing a long-term trend. Good grounding in subject skills and good teaching enable pupils to achieve well. They do better in physical education than in most other subjects in the school.

96. **Teaching and learning are good overall** but with some that is very good. The good teaching is characterised by clearly focused starts to lessons and pupils having a good understanding of the lesson objectives. In these lessons pupils learn effectively because they are able to apply the knowledge they have learnt to real life examples. Teachers make use of their expertise to challenge pupils and provide varied activities. Consequently, pupils make very good progress in all areas including aerobics, gymnastics, dance and traditional games. Teachers make good use of resources including PowerPoint presentations and video recordings to help analyse pupils' performances. Pupils enjoy their lessons and learn well because teachers create a positive atmosphere in lessons. However, there are not enough activities with different levels of challenge to match the different capabilities of the pupils. Plenary sessions do not consistently allow pupils opportunities for self-reflection. Also pupils' knowledge of National Curriculum levels is not sufficient to help them set their own targets
97. **Leadership is very good.** The recent application for Sports College status is but one example of the clear vision for the subject's development. Long-term planning is very well thought out and is the result of thorough research and reflection. Subject staff are fully informed and supportive of the various developments. Their commitment is seen in the very good extra-curricular programme on offer. A very good curriculum has evolved and includes good support for literacy. Pupils benefit from very good community links, such as the provision of indoor bowls equipment and coaching. Further development of the curriculum is curtailed by the limited, inadequate indoor accommodation.
98. **Improvement since the last inspection is good.** Teaching standards and participation rates have improved. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively through the use of some very good assessment procedures. The subject is thoroughly deserving of its Sportsmark Award.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business education**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching from a strong, able team ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Very effective target-setting extends pupils at all levels.
- Very high teacher expectations are transmitted at all times; this includes very good marking and assessment.
- Very good use of ICT creates exceptionally well presented work.
- The suite of business studies rooms creates an environment which has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and achievements.
- The new vocational GCSE course has started very well.
- The department does not have data from management to enable teachers to track performance well enough.
- The school does not use the department's very good target setting systems as common practice.
- Pupils would benefit from additional links with businesses and other organisations.

#### **Commentary**

99. **GCSE results in 2003 were excellent.** More than average numbers of pupils enter business studies and 93 per cent gained A\*-C grades. Results were also very good in 2002. Pupils did much better in business studies than in other subjects. Results are particularly good when compared with pupils' attainment in similar schools.

100. Standards amongst the current Year 11 pupils are already well above average. The proportion of pupils whose attainment is below C grade is very small. Pupils are particularly strong in their use of ICT. All units are excellently presented with pupils using ICT very effectively to eliminate the effects of weak literacy, spelling mistakes and grammar in their written presentations. Pupils work very hard indeed on these projects, taking pride in meeting the very high expectations of staff. They are all working above and mostly well above the levels predicted by the school's assessment systems. **Achievement is very good** and in some instances excellent in business studies. Year 10 GCSE pupils display good attitudes towards this new subject. The good progress they are making is evident in written work. The new Vocational GCSE has started very well, with pupils already making very good progress.
101. **Teaching and learning are very good.** Teachers have created a specialist, vocationally oriented suite of rooms which promotes a very effective, business-related environment in which pupils can learn in context. Very good, meticulous planning of courses and of lessons means that every minute of each lesson is filled with a rich variety of learning opportunities. Staff will not tolerate any lapse in the standard they expect of pupils. These very high expectations are consistent across the department. Marking is very good, giving pupils exceptionally clear information about what to do to improve. Staff set their own targets for individuals. These are much higher than those from school-level assessments and pupils meet or exceed these. Pupils identify strongly with the culture of expected success. This permeates the department and pupils work willingly to achieve this for themselves. They co-operate well and achieve very high standards of presentation using computers.
102. **Leadership and management are very good.** The head of department has a very clear vision of where developments are required and sets rigorous standards for all aspects of the department's work. The curriculum is good, with the innovative vocational GCSE representing good alternative provision in Year 10. Teachers arrange very useful work experience for these pupils to put their learning into context. Although insufficient to give full information, available data are used very successfully to track pupils' progress. These systems would provide good examples for the whole school. Access to ICT is good, so pupils learn to use this as an everyday tool in their business studies work. There was no subject report about business studies at the last inspection so it is not possible to judge how well it has improved since then.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

The overall quality of provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**. During the inspection there were no specific citizenship modules being taught so only personal, social and health education based lessons were observed.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements for the introduction of citizenship are not yet in place.
- Citizenship is not being taught across Years 7 to 11 in a planned or coherent way.
- Statutory annual reporting is not in place and there are no current procedures for assessing statutory attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2004.
- The new head of department is already addressing these issues and is drawing up plans to establish appropriate priorities and targets.
- There are examples of good practice in a few subject areas and within the programme of personal, social and health education.

### Commentary

103. **Leadership and management are unsatisfactory** because the governing body and senior management have failed to plan for the statutory introduction of citizenship in the school. Insufficient curriculum time has been allowed to teach the course in Years 7 and 9. No co-ordinated action has been taken to ensure that the courses are consistently and systematically

taught across the curriculum. Senior management has not carried out a full subject audit so gaps in provision for citizenship are not clearly identified. Although each subject area is required to identify where it might teach parts of the citizenship programme, there are no clear aims, priorities or targets to help them to do so nor are their contributions co-ordinated. A few subjects outline opportunities for teaching citizenship in their schemes of work but pupils and staff are not always aware of these links. There are no procedures in place to monitor or evaluate the courses or the way they are being taught. In-service training for teachers is unsatisfactory. Statutory reporting to parents did not take place in 2003. There are no systems in place to assess pupils in Year 9 for the end of year assessments and portfolios of citizenship work are not kept. All this has led to patchy and incidental coverage across the school.

104. The new head of department is fully aware of these deficiencies in provision and is in the process of drawing up plans to carry out a full subject audit. Year 8 now collate their work in individual portfolios and arrangements for assessing students at the end of Year 9 are about to be put in place.
105. **The quality of teaching and learning of those parts of the courses that are taught is satisfactory overall.** In the best lessons teachers have good subject knowledge and this, combined with effective planning, ensures that pupils learn constructively. In these lessons pupils are given the opportunity to participate and act responsibly as required by the National Curriculum for citizenship. However, in other lessons, teachers lack the subject knowledge to capture pupils' interest and are too reliant on worksheets. The failure of senior management to monitor and evaluate teaching leads to inconsistent teaching across the school. Learning is also facilitated by the good opportunities for all pupils to take on responsibility in their year groups. They raise money for charities, undertake environmental initiatives and become involved in the work of the local community. However, the main school does not have a school council and this restricts opportunities for pupils to play a meaningful role in school affairs. Preparation for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society is unsatisfactory.

## 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 2003.

### *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
Physical education	5	60	NA	0	NA		NA
Sociology	3	0	NA	0	NA		NA

### *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
Business	3	100	NA	66	NA		NA
Physical education	1	100	NA		NA		NA
Sociology	2	50	NA		NA		NA

### *Level 2 vocational qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	2	100	NA	50	NA		NA
Business	4	100	NA	100	NA		NA
Health & social care.	7	100	NA	28.5	NA		NA
Leisure & tourism	7	71.5	NA	28.5	NA		NA

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' marking gives effective support for learning.
- The very good relationships between students and teachers promote students' self-confidence.
- The small group taking the course and their limited ability range mean that opportunities for higher-level discussion are restricted.
- Some of the students' writing lacks the formality expected at this level of study.

#### Commentary

106. In 2003 no pupils were entered for the GCE AS level examination in English and English literature. Three pupils started the course but two left the school and one decided that the course was not suitable. Currently four pupils are following the course. **Standards of work seen in lessons and in students' assignments are satisfactory.** All pupils are operating at the lower end of the ability range. Achievement is satisfactory considering the students' levels of attainment at GCSE.
107. **Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall**, in the sixth form, but the quality of teaching is varied. The best teaching is clearly linked to the requirements of the examination. Marking is good because teachers engage in a detailed dialogue with students. Teachers' comments help students make progress so that they achieve satisfactorily. The very good relationships between students and teachers promote confidence in the students who do not find this level of study easy. The small group and their limited ability range mean that opportunities for higher-level discussion are restricted. However, some teaching lacks clear purpose and pace and does not challenge students sufficiently. Where teaching is good, students are encouraged to think independently. In one lesson, for example, students made pertinent responses to the teacher's effective questioning regarding both literary and linguistic approaches to text. When writing, students sometimes struggle to achieve the formality expected at this level of study. Teachers continue to address this factor in their marking.
108. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are satisfactory. The area is managed by the second in the English department who introduced the course two years ago to complement the vocational provision in the sixth form. Planning is secure and ensures that the course is an appropriate preparation for the examination. The monitoring of pupils' progress is good and is done in response to the very effective systems set up within the sixth form as a whole. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to promote consistency in teaching at this level. Improvement since the time of the last report has been satisfactory.

#### Language and literacy across the curriculum

109. The school provides separate lessons in the key skills. Communications lessons did not occur during the inspection and were therefore not sampled. In the other sixth form lessons observed, teachers created good opportunities for students to practise their linguistic skills in discussion and in writing.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in ICT course was inspected in depth.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good specialist knowledge.
- Standards are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The good relationships between teachers and students support their learning effectively.
- The lack of opportunities for students to experience the use of ICT in the business environment and talks from visiting speakers is limiting students' overall experience.
- The good partnership between the school and local businesses for the website project contributes positively to students' understanding.

### Commentary

110. The AVCE ICT course was first offered to students a year ago and students will have a final assessment for the first time in 2004. However, topics that have already been submitted to the examinations board for assessment show that students are achieving well and **standards overall are above that normally seen at this point in the school year**.
111. Students have good knowledge of a spreadsheet and a clear understanding of the formulas for a variety of calculations. They know the more advanced formulas, for example the 'lookup' facility, and use them with understanding. They create data systems and use macros to link to different spreadsheets confidently. Students know about websites, designing sites of high quality. The topic was linked with local business organisations and students were given clear specifications about the designs. Students had regular contact with their 'customers' who suggested improvements such as hyperlinks and digital photographs resulting in websites that have been placed on the internet and have already had several 'hits' (potential customers who have already accessed the websites). Although students are able to discuss the use of information technology in its wider context they have not had the benefit of first hand observation of its use in large organisations or talks from visiting speakers about the complexities of a large network.
112. Students' attitudes to the subject are positive and show a very good level of interest. They are confident to discuss their work commenting that they find the work challenging and consider the teaching to be of a good quality. In discussion all the students felt that they were well advised about the course and are well supported. The retention rate is good, the majority of students continuing the course. The course is proving a popular choice with students, several having joined the course recently.
113. **The quality of teaching is good** and as a result students learn and achieve well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and computing skills and use their expertise well to guide students. Teachers circulate well during lessons guiding, advising, discussing students' projects and using focused questioning to ascertain understanding. This was very noticeable when a teacher helped a student to correct a formula, questioning the student on every step of the process. Students welcome the individual support they are given to develop their coursework and are confident to seek help when required. This leads to good learning.
114. The overall management and leadership of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is successfully organising the course using on-line schemes of work and adapting them to the needs of the students. The assessment of students work is very thorough with detailed comments on how they are progressing and ways that their individual projects can be improved. This contributes positively to students' learning and progress.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

115. The school provides separate lessons in the key skills. In the other sixth form lessons observed, students' ICT skills contributed significantly to the progress they make. Many students apart from those taking the ICT courses have fluent ICT skills and use them constructively to support their work. Teachers in art, physical education and business studies use ICT productively with students.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### Art and design

The teaching of the AVCE course in Year 13 and the AVCE and GNVQ courses in Year 12 were inspected.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inspirational teaching challenges stereotypical thinking, extends students' perceptions and provokes original and creative responses.
- Teachers plan the units of work skillfully, encouraging students to organise themselves and learn independently.
- The vocational courses cater well for the different needs and abilities of the students who achieve very well.
- The art department is very well led and managed.
- Teachers make critical but constructive oral assessments but do not always identify specific targets clearly enough.
- The studio accommodation for Year 13 allows them their own personal work space. This generates very positive attitudes and responsible behaviour.

### Commentary

116. Students' attainment is above average. The department has maintained the high standards that were reported in the last inspection. Such standards are a product of consistently high quality teaching. The school did not enter any students for vocational examinations in art and design last year. Current students produce work of a high standard, show a good grasp of different styles and methods and achieve well. The vocational nature of the courses means that students gear their work towards a future career. This helps them make contact with professional artists and brings realism and purpose to their work. Students start the courses with above average attainment. They make rapid progress from term to term so that by the time they are in their second year their work has a more personal character and they are developing a more sophisticated individual style. This represents very good achievement over the two years.

117. Teaching is always good with some that is inspirational. Overall this adds up to **very good teaching**. It is characterised by very good one to one tutoring, high levels of challenge, informed individualised planning and an excellent rapport developed between the teachers and the taught. Students are encouraged to make their own decisions about their work and teachers use a balance of challenge and support when making ongoing assessments. Students of all abilities, including those with particular special needs, benefit from this individual attention. However, sometimes teachers do not follow up the oral comments with specific targets that help students concentrate on those aspects that will improve their work.

118. The department is very well led and is managed equally well. Teachers work as a team and have developed very sensible and successful ways of sharing the sixth form teaching. Students appreciate the mix of skills and views they receive in consequence. Students also enjoy the relaxed working atmosphere and, in Year 13, the benefit of their own individual work



area. In both years, students work with total commitment emulating their teachers who act as very good role models.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

This area was not inspected in full during the inspection. Three courses, physical education Level 3 A2 (which is A Level physical education), the AVCE leisure and recreation, and leisure and tourism GCSE were each observed once.

### **Physical education Level 3 A2**

Good teaching, including some very valuable teacher feedback, ensures that students know what they have to do to improve their work. This contributes to students' good achievement. Students reach standards that are in line with nationally expected levels.

### **Leisure and recreation AVCE**

Students benefit from good teaching. Teachers mark work that is then redrafted by students so as to improve their performance. Students achieve well and attain standards that are in line with nationally expected levels.

### **Leisure and Tourism GCSE**

One very good lesson was observed. Students' attitudes are very positive. They contribute well and make very good progress. Students' reach high standards and this reflects very good achievement.

## **BUSINESS**

The school provides the 12-unit, two A2-level (A Level) equivalent, Advanced Business Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) award in Years 12 and 13 and GNVQ Intermediate in Year 12. The VCE course was inspected in depth and GNVQ was sampled.

### **Business GNVQ**

The six GNVQ students all passed in 2002, with one merit and one distinction. In 2003, the four students all attained merits. These results represent very good achievement for students. Most of them entered the courses with very low GCSE grades and were predicted lower grades than they eventually achieved. Similarly small numbers in the current Year 12 GNVQ Intermediate group are also doing well. All are on target to achieve merits or distinctions in their final results. Most are boys, some with very low reading ages. They are doing very well indeed to achieve these levels of success. Teaching and learning were very good in the lesson seen. Students' work shows that they learn effectively from their work experience, which helps them make sense of their classroom work.

### **Business AVCE**

Provision in business AVCE is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average.
- Very good teaching in the department enables students to achieve much higher grades than were predicted.
- Very effective target-setting, with detailed assessment and marking, means that students know exactly where their strengths and weaknesses lie.
- Very good use of students' work-based experiences helps them make sense of their classroom learning.
- The rooms in which classes take place simulate a business environment effectively.
- ICT is used very well as an integral tool for all presentation.
- Very supportive relationships between students and with staff facilitate very good levels of personal development.

- The very good practices in the department could be extremely useful for other areas of the school.
- The head of department has insufficient data from school managers to facilitate more detailed department monitoring.

## Commentary

119. Students' grades in the Business Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education results in 2002 and 2003 were very high compared with all schools nationally. Students did very well compared with their predicted grades on entry to the course and **achievement was very good.**
120. The Year 13 group is now relatively small but **standards are again high.** Students who left the course mostly did so because they got good employment. Those remaining are achieving well above the levels which were predicted when they started. Progress has been very good. This achievement encompasses a wider scope than students' academic progress because most have developed impressively as individuals. Students acknowledge that the jump in expectations when they entered Year 12 was intimidating but all have risen to the challenge, overcoming these hurdles well. Students also make good use of their work experience placements to understand their classroom learning better. The Year 12 Vocational Certificate of Education group is larger and all have made a much better start to their course than would have been expected given their school-level target grade expectations. The department sets very high targets for all students. They are realistic and students achieve them. These targets show that half of this Year 12 group are set to achieve A/B grades, which is significantly above average. At this early stage, standards indicate that these targets could be realised. **Achievement overall on this course is very good.** An exceptional aspect of students' attainment is their use of ICT, which gives all their work a very professional appearance.
121. This very good achievement is derived from **very high quality teaching and learning across the department.** Students have almost always done GCSE business studies in Year 11, so come to sixth form work with a very good understanding of the extremely high teacher expectations they will encounter. Most relish this and find the challenges very stimulating. They very much appreciate the supportive, adult relationships with staff, which they experience from the start of Year 12. Many attribute much of their success to these relationships. They feel, correctly, that teachers and students work as a team to ensure their successes. The very good feedback and assessment they receive enables students to amend and improve work until it meets the optimum standards they can reach. The environment of the department itself provides an effective, simulated business culture where students can turn readily to resources such as ICT. They therefore come to regard this properly as part of the business experience. Very good revision sessions enable students to overcome their apprehensions about examinations, at which few have had good levels of past success.
122. **The department is very well led and managed.** The experienced teaching team promotes a common ethos of high expectations. They have created a business environment very conducive to effective subject learning. Assessment and target setting are very good and could be a model for the school. Insufficient contextual data, for example about national statistics or value added information, are available from management to make this as sharp as they should be. Planning and administration in the department are excellent.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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