

# INSPECTION REPORT

**de Stafford College**

Caterham

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125308

Headteacher: Mr Gerry Wadwa

Lead inspector: George Knights

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 259367

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	990
School address:	Burntwood Lane Caterham Surrey
Postcode:	CR3 5YX
Telephone number:	01883 347818
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Woodburn
Date of previous inspection:	13 <sup>th</sup> to 17 <sup>th</sup> October 1997

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

De Stafford College is a mixed 11 to 18 comprehensive school, located in Caterham in Surrey. It is of average size, having around 940 students, including about 250 in the sixth form. Most of these sixth form students are based in Riddlesdown High School in Purley, about five miles to the north of de Stafford College. The sixth form provision at Riddlesdown is franchised from de Stafford College and there is no interchange of students or teachers between the two sites. Students attending de Stafford College mainly live quite close to the school and the majority transfer from five partner primary schools. The attainment of students on entry to the school is average overall, though the school takes in a lower number of the most and least able students. The school has some spare capacity, but is becoming increasingly popular. In the main, students come from homes with just above average socio-economic circumstances and employment levels in the area are above average. The number of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Around 15 per cent of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but very few have English as an additional language. The school has a very small number of traveller students on roll. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is below the national average, though the number with Statements of Special Educational Need is above average. This is because the school makes special provision for a number of students who have physical disabilities or who are dyslexic. Around a third of students remain in the sixth form at de Stafford on completion of compulsory schooling. Student turnover is relatively low.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3268	George Knights	Lead inspector	Mathematics - 6 <sup>th</sup> form
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
32149	Nick Dry	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs
5714	Frances Thornton	Team inspector	Science Biology
32216	Annie McCabe	Team inspector	Design and technology
32280	Alison Hutcheson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Citizenship
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communications technology
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music
3534	Ann Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design Psychology
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector	Chemistry - 6 <sup>th</sup> form Physics - 6 <sup>th</sup> form
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Religious education
32996	Alison Walker-Fraser	Team inspector	Business education
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Sociology

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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>12</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>16</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>27</b>
The work of the SEN Unit	
Workplace Learning	
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>SUBJECTS 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>58</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

De Stafford College provides its students with a **satisfactory** education. Standards are improving. They remain **below average** for older students, but are **average** for younger students. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Leadership and management of the college are **satisfactory** and the college gives **satisfactory value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving, particularly for students in Years 7 to 9.
- The good leadership of the acting principal provides a clear direction and purpose for the work of the college.
- There is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
- The school successfully meets the needs of all students and especially those with high levels of need.
- Work on enhancing students' emotional and physical well-being is not sharply focused enough.
- Assessment procedures are used well to track students' progress.
- Attendance is not good enough, being below average.
- The programme of departmental review is helping teachers improve the quality of their work and thus to raise standards.
- Provision for English is very good, but that for business education and music is unsatisfactory.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 9 have improved and by the end of Year 11 are similar to those at time of the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are similar in overall quality, though with a significant improvement in the proportion of lessons where teaching and learning are good or better. The curriculum is much improved and the school's climate for learning is much better than previously. Many aspects of leadership and management are better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has dealt well with the issues identified in the previous inspection.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. They were as expected, given students' attainment on arrival in the college, and represented a marked improvement on results in the previous year. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well below average and lower than they should have been. However, they were better than in the previous year. Sixth form students at de Stafford make good progress and, although overall results are well below average, they represent good achievement for the students involved. Students in the Riddlesdown sixth form do well and gain above average results.

### Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	E	E	D
		2000	2001	2002	
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations <sup>1</sup>	n/a	E	D	

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.

<sup>1</sup> The sixth form comparisons are based on an aggregate of the performance of students in the two sixth forms, one based at de Stafford College and the other based at Riddlesdown High School.

Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are working at average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. Older students' achievement is also satisfactory, though standards are below average, especially in Year 11. Sixth form students on both sites achieve well because good teaching caters well for students' individual needs.

For students in Years 7 to 11 the college encourages good attitudes. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the college, is satisfactory. The contribution made to students' personal development is satisfactory. Attendance is unsatisfactory because it is below average. Students arrive punctually to college and to lessons. In both sixth forms, students' attitudes and conduct are very good and attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education in the college is satisfactory overall and is good in both sixth forms.**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory for students aged 11 to 16 and are good for sixth form students. Teaching is not as good in the main school as in the sixth form because too many lessons for students in Years 7 to 11 are unsatisfactory. This is largely a consequence of difficulties in recruitment, which result in some classes not being taught by specialist teachers. Teachers know students well and the careful tracking of students' achievement helps teachers plan lessons that meet most students' needs. Some well-targeted support helps students with special educational needs achieve well but the most able are not always challenged enough.

The college's provision of support, advice and guidance for students is good and it has satisfactory arrangements for students' care, welfare and health and safety. Students take satisfactory levels of responsibility for themselves. Arrangements for involving students and seeking their views are satisfactory in the main school and good in both sixth forms. The college has established good partnerships with parents, other schools and the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall the **leadership of the college is satisfactory and of the two sixth form provisions is good.** The **management of the college is satisfactory** and **management of the sixth form is very good at Riddlesdown and good at de Stafford.** The acting principal is providing good leadership as the college seeks to bring about a range of improvements. His work has been instrumental in the improvements in standards and overall quality of teaching in the college. The management of the college is satisfactory, though there is a need for more consistency in the way that the senior management team functions. Governance of the college is good. The governors work very well and are aware of the need to bring about further improvement. They have drawn up an effective plan to ensure that the college moves away from a deficit budget and overall financial control is now efficient. However, they do not ensure that the college meets the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

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

Parents value the work of the college and are pleased that their children enjoy being students there. They rightly believe that arrangements for helping students settle into the college are very effective and they feel comfortable about approaching the college with queries. They recognise that teachers expect students to work hard. Parents and students recognise that the college deals well with students' misbehaviour, including occasional instances of bullying. Inspectors do not share parents' concerns about the quality of information parents receive about their children's progress. Nor do they share the concern of some parents and students about the amount of homework set.

Students at de Stafford like the college and say that they are expected to work hard and do their best. Students feel trusted and acknowledge that they have an adult to turn to for help and support. Many younger students do not feel that the college is particularly interested in their views, despite feeling secure and happy. Students praise the good range of additional activities available to them.

Parents at Riddlesdown High School are very positive about the sixth form education provided and students really enjoy being at the school. They recognise that the school values and invests significant time and energy in involving them in school life. Parents feel the school nurtures students very well. They rightly identify that the school promotes very good behaviour and a culture of hard

work. Parents recognise that students make good progress because they are taught well. Students and their parents are particularly positive about the school's leadership and management. Students appreciate the very good range of extra-curricular activities offered to them. They value the very good relationships with teachers and their peers and feel valued members of the school community.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning and especially make sure that there is no unsatisfactory teaching;
- sharpen the focus on enhancing students' emotional and physical needs;
- improve provision in music and business education;
- improve attendance levels;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- arrange a daily act of collective worship for all students.



## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION - DE STAFFORD COLLEGE

The sixth form at de Stafford College provides an effective education for its students. Although standards are well below average, students do better than expected. Teaching is good, enabling students to learn well. The small number of students somewhat restricts what it is possible to provide for them, so curriculum provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and, because it is subsidised<sup>2</sup>, the sixth form is cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and gain examination results that are higher than expected because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students are very supportive of one another and their attitudes and approach to work are very good.
- The leadership and management of the small sixth form are effective in creating a climate in which students thrive.
- The small size of groups in some subjects limits the range of activities that can be provided.
- Some of the students are not following courses that are most appropriate for their needs and aptitudes.
- The provision for English is particularly good.

### 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	Provision in English is <b>very good</b> . Teaching is very good because teachers have high expectations of students and adapt work and teaching approaches to meet students' needs very well.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is <b>good</b> . Teachers use imaginative methods to stimulate and interest students, who learn well. Although standards are well below average, students make good progress from low starting points.
Science	Provision in biology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Some recent results have been lower than expected. Teaching is satisfactory, enabling students to make steady progress.
Humanities	Provision in geography is <b>good</b> . Standards are above average and teaching is good, enabling students to achieve well. Provision in psychology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are average as students experience satisfactory teaching, which enables them to achieve as expected.

*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

The college's **provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is very good**. The college is successful in involving sixth form students well in the life and work of the college. The views of sixth form students are sought, valued and acted upon well.

<sup>2</sup> The college franchises a sixth form at Riddlesdown High School, the income from which helps subsidise the small sixth form at de Stafford College.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

**Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** Although the numbers in the sixth form are small, both governors and senior managers have a clear vision for maintaining and enhancing sixth form provision and for attracting more students.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form students thoroughly enjoy the college and are very appreciative of the teaching they experience. They are particularly positive about the arrangements for assessing their work and value the helpfulness of teachers. Year 13 students are more critical of some aspects of provision, such as the range of enrichment activities and suitability of careers advice. They also criticise aspects of management and the college's response to their views. These criticisms are largely unjustified.

## OVERALL EVALUATION – RIDDLEDOWN SIXTH FORM CENTRE

**The sixth form at the Riddlesdown High School Sixth Form Centre is very good.** Good teaching enables students to achieve well and reach above average standards. Leadership and management are good and the centre is very cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes to sixth form life and work.
- Consistently good teaching enables students to learn well and make good progress.
- Systems and structures in the sixth form have not been adapted to accommodate the expanding size of the sixth form.
- Good tracking of students' progress enables teachers to guide students well.
- Relationships are very good, both within the student body and between students and their teachers.

## 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	Provision in English is <b>very good</b> . Results are improving because teaching and learning are very good. Expectations of students are high and students develop good independence in their studies.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is <b>good</b> . Standards are well above average. Students learn well because teaching is good.
Science	Provision in chemistry is <b>good</b> . Standards are above average. Students are motivated to do well by good teaching that encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Provision in biology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are above average, teaching is satisfactory and students are encouraged to work hard. Provision in physics is <b>good</b> . Teaching is good, enabling students to achieve average standards in their work.
Humanities	Provision in geography is <b>very good</b> . Standards are above average and teaching is very good, enabling students to achieve very well. Provision in history is <b>good</b> . Standards are now above average as a result of good teaching. This enables students to achieve well. Provision in psychology is <b>good</b> . Standards are above average because students experience good teaching, which enables them to make good progress. Provision in sociology is <b>good</b> . Standards are above average. Students achieve well because teaching is good and they show a good grasp of sociological concepts.
Business	Provision in business studies is <b>very good</b> . Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well and produce work of a consistently good standard.

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*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**

The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is very good. Students appreciate the availability and approachability of teachers and tutors and their concern for students' well-being. Students are actively involved in the work of the main school and their views are sought and acted upon by way of the sixth form committee.

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

**Leadership of the sixth form is good and day-to-day management is very effective.** The newly appointed head of the sixth form at Riddlesdown has a clear understanding of what needs to improve as the sixth form population grows rapidly.

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

Students really enjoy being at the school and are confident that the school is led and managed well. They appreciate the very good range of enrichment activities. Students recognise that the well-qualified teachers are accessible and they get on well with their tutors.

They rightly comment that the increasing size means they have large classes and tutor groups. They therefore have reasonable attention from teachers for guidance about careers and university selection. Students recognise the very good relationships with teachers and their peers and they feel valued members of the school community.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses – main school

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were **average** in 2003 and were much better than in the previous year. Results in GCSE examinations were **well below average** in 2003, though better than in 2002. Students' achievement is now **satisfactory**, having been unsatisfactory until recently.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have not done as well as they should have done at GCSE level in recent years, but good steps are being taken to reverse this process.
- There has been a significant improvement in standards at the end of Year 9 because teaching focuses more carefully on students' needs.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress when they receive targeted support.

#### Commentary

1. When students arrive in the college they are of average ability. However, there are fewer of the most or least able students than would normally be expected. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below average, representing unsatisfactory progress by this group of students. Results in 2003 showed a marked improvement. They were average, representing satisfactory progress since entry to the college for this group of students. Results in 2003 were also average when compared with similar schools, again a marked improvement on the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.1 (29.6)	33.3
mathematics	36.9 (33.3)	36.2
science	33.0 (30.7)	33.7

*There were 155 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Students currently in Year 9 are working at average standards and their achievement over time is satisfactory. This improved situation is because teachers are now more aware of the needs and abilities of the students they are working with and are meeting these needs much better than previously. There is more good teaching than in the recent past to offset the remaining small amount of teaching that is unsatisfactory.
3. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 in art and design and average in most other subjects. They are below average in information and communication technology and history and well below average in music. Students are achieving well during their first three years in the college in English, art and design, physical education and religious education. Their achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects except music, where progress is slow because not enough teaching is undertaken by specialist teachers for it to be satisfactory.
4. Throughout the college the work of all students is closely monitored and any student who is not doing as well as expected is given support and guidance in order to help them improve. This monitoring ensures that all students, including those from minority ethnic groups, make satisfactory progress. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good where they receive targeted support.

5. Results in GCSE examinations were well below average in both 2002 and 2003. These groups of students had thus made unsatisfactory progress as they moved through the school. Results in 2003 did, however, show a significant improvement on those in the previous year. Nevertheless, these students did not do as well as they should have done. Teachers and governors are aware that this is an unsatisfactory situation and are taking good steps to improve standards. Significant work is being undertaken to improve teaching so that students learn more effectively. Early evidence of the success of the measures being taken is the small improvement in 2003. Having not met its targets in recent years, the college has set realistic but challenging targets for the coming two years.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	34 (29)	(52.6)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	82 (82)	(86.3)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	91 (91)	(94.6)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	28.3 (27.0)	(34.7)

*There were 110 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

6. Students currently working in Years 10 and 11 are making satisfactory progress. Those in Year 11 began their GCSE studies with well below average standards and so are unlikely to do as well in GCSE examinations as their attainment when they joined the college in Year 7 would suggest. However, they are achieving standards of work that suggest that they will gain better overall results than those students who took the examination in 2003. Students in Year 10 are working at higher standards, reflecting better preparation in Year 9.
7. During the inspection, standards of work seen were above average in geography and music and well above average in art and design. They were average in most other subjects but were below average in mathematics, modern languages, design and technology, history and business education. However, only in business education are students' achievements lower than they should be. This is because teaching in this subject is unsatisfactory. Students are achieving particularly well during Years 10 and 11 in art and design, English, music and geography.

**Standards achieved in subjects and courses – sixth form at de Stafford**

Results in the sixth form at de Stafford are **well below average**, but are impressive, given students' abilities on starting the course. Students are achieving **well**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students do better than expected in most A-level examinations.
- Students are achieving well because teachers are careful to make sure that work meets students' needs.

**Commentary**

8. In the sixth form on the de Stafford site, the ability of students entering the courses is well below average. Numbers taking most subjects are too small for reliable comparisons with national results to be made. However, students completing sixth form study in 2002 and 2003 secured grades that were, overall, better than they were predicted to do based on their abilities at the start of the course. This represents good achievement and is the outcome of some well-focused teaching that ensures that the needs of each student are met well. This is borne out in the lessons observed during the inspection, where students are being taught well, particularly as teachers tailor activities to meet individual students' needs.

9. In the five subjects that were the focus of this inspection, standards of work seen in lessons were above average in English and geography. They were average in biology and psychology and below average in mathematics. However, students were achieving well in mathematics and geography and only in biology were they not making as much progress as expected. This variation in achievement closely matches some variation in the quality of teaching from subject to subject.

### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses – sixth form at Riddlesdown**

Results in the sixth form at Riddlesdown are **above average** and improving. Students are achieving **well**.

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

- Results are improving as the sixth form increases in size.
- Students currently in the sixth form are achieving well because of the good teaching they experience.

#### **Commentary**

10. When students join the sixth form at Riddlesdown their abilities are, overall, above average. They make good progress in their studies during the sixth form. Results in 2002 were above average and were significantly better in 2003. This represents good achievement. Teachers have ensured that, as numbers in the sixth form have grown, standards have continued to improve. This is because the needs of each student are taken careful note of and catered for well.
11. Students currently in the sixth form are making good progress and are learning well because they experience good teaching. The school receives a significant number of students new to the school at the start of the sixth form. Many of these students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. They are helped to settle well and are fully integrated into lessons. Careful monitoring of the progress of all students, including those new to the school, helps ensure that they are achieving as well as the rest of the students.
12. In the ten subjects that are the focus of this inspection, overall standards of work in lessons are above average at this early stage in the academic year. They are well above average in geography, where students achieve particularly well. Students are also achieving very well in business studies where they are working at above average standards. Students studying English and mathematics also make good progress and are working at above average standards. Standards were also above average in history, business studies and psychology. Students following chemistry and physics courses make good progress whilst those taking biology make satisfactory progress.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

#### **Main school**

The development of students' attitudes is **good**. Student's behaviour is **satisfactory**. Arrangements for promoting students' personal qualities are **satisfactory**. Attendance at the college is **unsatisfactory**.

#### **Main Strengths and weaknesses**

- Students like the college and get on well together.
- Too many students miss too many lessons because of absence from college.
- Students generally have good attitudes to their work, but a few misbehave in lessons and are rowdy around the college.
- Students welcome and respond positively to the wide range of activities arranged for them to take part in.

- Some students lack self-confidence because of the college's inconsistent arrangements for promoting their personal development.

### Commentary

13. **As at the time of the previous inspection, students enjoy life at the college. They relate well to others, taking particular care of the needs of students in wheelchairs. They work co-operatively in lessons and are very supportive of one another when teaching inspires their commitment. They socialise well in the dining hall and playground areas, where most students behave well. The youngest students do not like being restricted to the front playground at break times but nevertheless play well together.**

### Attendance

Attendance in the last complete reporting year 2002-2003

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School Data:	9.2%	School Data:	0.6%
National Data:	7.6%	National Data:	1.2%

14. Attendance at the college is better than at the previous inspection but is below average and requires improvement. The attendance of a small number of students is erratic because of their indifference to school, difficult home circumstances or anxiety about attending. Heads of year rigorously encourage reluctant students to commit to regular attendance. Despite these good efforts, there has been little improvement in attendance this year. The college has very recently installed an electronic registration system but teething problems restrict its success. Although tutors record attendance, mistakes still occur and prompt follow-up to absence is consequently insecure. Students usually arrive on time and most lessons begin promptly.
15. All students, including those with special education needs, enjoy their lessons when the teaching is good. They look forward to lessons where teachers encourage their involvement. In these lessons, students take significant pride in their achievements. They do not, however, show the same commitment to all their studies. Some students, often boys, misbehave when teaching is dull or when they recognise that the teacher has inadequate skills to control behaviour. This hinders the progress of the class. Students also play up to new or supply teachers. Some bullying occurs, most of which is boisterous play at break times and during movement between lessons. This is well managed by college staff so students feel safe. The exclusion rate is falling as the college improves its arrangements for managing behaviour.

### 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		64	2
White any other		1	
Asian		1	
Black Caribbean		3	
Bangladeshi		2	

16. The wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school help foster good personal development of those students who participate. Students participate willingly and responsibly in a wide range of activities. Sports and drama are particular favourites because the students enjoy working in teams. The college effectively fosters students' understanding of the needs and rights of others. Students show a satisfactory understanding of other faiths, cultures and societies and can therefore reflect on the implication of differences. They value fairness and can debate moral issues from a variety of different points of view. Students sometimes act immaturely or inappropriately because they are uncertain of their relationships with some adults. Too many teachers shout unnecessarily at students. This is an aspect of school life

that causes some students to believe that their needs do not always appear to be the focal point of some staff or school systems.

### **Sixth Form at de Stafford**

The development of student's attitudes is **very good**. Students' conduct is **very good** and their attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

#### **Main Strengths and Weaknesses**

- Students have very good attitudes to college and behave very well.
- The college encourages sixth form students to attend regularly.
- Students take good levels of responsibility for themselves and others because they are consistently encouraged to do so.

#### **Commentary**

17. Students show very good commitment to their learning and want to do well. Lessons invariably continue without interruption because students are absorbed in their work. Students conduct themselves maturely and sensibly and so present good role models for younger students. They eagerly participate in a wide range of college activities and organise events for themselves and main school students. Teachers and tutors work harmoniously with the students. This harmony fosters students' growing independence and also ensures that any absence is instantly noticed and quickly pursued.

### **Sixth Form at Riddlesdown**

The development of student's attitudes is **very good**. Students' behaviour is **very good** and their attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

#### **Main Strengths and Weaknesses**

- Students have very positive attitudes to school and behave very well.
- Students attend regularly and punctually.
- Very good relationships help students mature well.

#### **Commentary**

18. Students show very positive attitudes to school and are proud of its reputation. Attendance is satisfactory. Students conduct themselves with dignity, setting a good example to younger pupils. Teachers' perceptions of students as responsible young adults, coupled with high quality relationships, lead to an early maturity and the development of confident young people.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

### **Main school**

The quality of education in the main school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** and the curriculum is **good**, with good enrichment activities provided.

#### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning in the main school are **satisfactory** overall, though with some good features. The assessment of pupils' work is **good** and assessment information is used **well**.

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

- The proportion of good or very good teaching has improved since the last inspection, but there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching.
- Teaching and learning are good in English, art and physical education, but are unsatisfactory in music and business studies.
- Assessment of students' work is good and the information gained is used well to guide students and in curriculum planning.



- Regular school reviews ensure that senior teachers have identified strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and guide action to bring about improvement.
- Teachers match work to meet the needs of students of different abilities, although the most able are not always challenged enough.

### Commentary

19. Teaching is satisfactory, as at the last inspection, but the greater proportion of good or very good teaching represents a significant improvement. Observation of lessons during the inspection confirms the school's own self-evaluation that teaching and learning are satisfactory. A summary of the teaching is shown in the table below.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 158 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	31 (19%)	58 (37%)	53 (34%)	11 (6%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. This is an amalgam of the main school and the 60 lessons of the two different sixth forms.*

20. Teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9. This has led to the recent improvement in national test results in these subjects at the end of Year 9. During recent years, important strategic decisions have been made to improve teaching and learning, which have been a main focus for teacher development and departmental reviews. English in particular has been at the forefront of improvements, for instance, in encouraging starter activities and effective checking of learning at the end of lessons.
21. The most effective teaching is in Years 10 and 11. It is characterised by teachers setting high expectations and enthusiastically using a variety of challenging teaching styles that stimulate students' interest. Teaching successfully focuses on developing pupils' knowledge and building up their skills. Homework is used effectively to build on learning in lessons. Teaching is sometimes less effective in helping students' personal development and it is for this reason that teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Teachers sometimes do not engage and involve students enough in their learning so that they do not build up a full understanding of the work they are studying. Students do not work enough in groups, so that their skills of speaking and learning through discussion are not always well developed.
22. More than one in ten of lessons in the main school were unsatisfactory. The majority of this unsatisfactory teaching is because teachers do not match work to students' needs, have low expectations of the most able students or do not ensure that lessons move at good pace. Inadequate lesson planning and the poor management of the behaviour of a small number of students slow learning in some lessons. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching is associated with problems of recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teachers and half of the unsatisfactory teaching observed was by temporary teachers in the college. Senior managers are fully aware of the problems of inexperienced or unqualified teachers and are finding ways to support these teachers and improve the quality of teaching.
23. Students with special educational needs are mostly taught in main school classes. Teachers make good use of the information provided about these students to modify their lessons and set suitable learning objectives. Learning support assistants also provide valuable and effective classroom support. Consequently, students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. However, there is some inconsistency, with some teachers too reliant on learning support assistants or the setting system to ensure work meets the students' needs rather than adapting their own teaching strategies.
24. Very positive steps have been taken to improve assessment since the previous inspection. Good whole school marking and assessment policies now guide successful practice.

Information about students' performance is communicated well to teachers so that they are able to track progress and set targets. This is well established in Years 10 and 11 and is now successfully being extended into Years 7 to 9. A mentoring programme for all students has been successfully developed, with close analysis of results providing a framework for consultation with students about how they can improve. Nearly all subjects now have good assessment procedures that enable them to analyse results well and use information effectively to guide curriculum decisions and set students targets for improvement. English and mathematics in particular have significantly improved in these respects since the last inspection.

## **The curriculum**

The breadth of the curriculum for students aged 11 to 16 is **good**. Activities provided for curriculum enrichment, both within the school day and beyond it, are **good**. Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum offers a good range of courses and subjects.
- The college is careful to meet the needs of all students. It provides very well for students with physical disabilities and high levels of special need; this allows them to make good progress.
- The range of extra-curricular activities offered is extensive and valued by students.
- The lack of a daily act of worship restricts pupils' moral and spiritual development.

### **Commentary**

25. The school provides all students from 11 to 16 with a good range of worthwhile activities. It has recently extended its provision to offer vocational based courses in Years 10 and 11 to a carefully identified and guided group of students. An effective partnership arrangement with a neighbouring college of further education that extends these students' opportunities to access work-based learning is now in its second year. Early evaluation indicates this very good provision meets the needs of a small but growing group of students well.
26. Curriculum enrichment for all students, through extensive extra-curricular activities both within and outside the college, is good. Students value this provision highly, but take-up is not formally monitored and so the college does not know if the programme is meeting the needs and interests of all students. The overall contribution made to students' personal development is satisfactory, though the lack of provision for a daily act of collective worship restricts the moral and spiritual development of students.
27. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. For students with high levels of need, particularly those with physical disabilities or dyslexia, provision is very good<sup>3</sup>. The monitoring of students with special educational needs is very good and the commitment of a strong learning support team ensures to meeting these students' needs are strong. All teachers are provided with a comprehensive but accessible outline of every student's needs and this enables teachers to plan well to meet these needs. Students with special educational needs are valued and included well within the college. The college also has good systems for tracking and providing support for those students who speak English as an additional language and those who are from minority ethnic and traveller communities.
28. The overall quality and quantity of staffing are satisfactory, but the college continues to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably experienced and qualified teachers in some curriculum areas. This contributes to students making less progress and achieving lower standards in lessons particularly in design and technology, music, religious education and business education.

### **Sixth form at de Stafford**

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<sup>3</sup> The school is designated by the local education authority to make special provision for these two groups of students.

The quality of education in the sixth form at de Stafford College is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** and the curriculum is **satisfactory**, with a reasonable range of enrichment activity provided for students.

### Teaching and learning

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, so that students' interest is stimulated and they thus achieve well.
- Most teachers set high expectations, but in some subjects the level of challenge and pace of lessons is not good enough.
- Students are being encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning and are responding well.
- Assessment of students' work is used well in all subjects.

### Commentary

29. Teaching and learning in the sixth form have improved and are now good, with some very good features, especially in English. This improvement is the result of the intervention of the senior management team who now monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the support given to students on a regular basis. This improved teaching is improving students' achievement and standards of work. As a result, students are now encouraged to undertake research, to investigate and to enter into enquiry much more than previously.
30. The table below illustrates the good overall pattern of teaching in the sixth form, where nearly two thirds of lessons seen were good or better. The two unsatisfactory lessons occurred in information and communication technology, a sampled subject that was not part of the detailed inspection.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 18 lessons in the sixth form

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	2 (11%)	9 (50%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in the sixth form in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages. The significance of the percentages must be tempered by the small numbers of lessons in each category.*

31. Many lessons feature discussion and presentations, often using students' good information and communication technology skills, as in English, geography and history. This enables students to gain confidence in their understanding of the topics they are studying and helps them take more responsibility for their learning, contributing to their personal development and preparing them for undertaking independent study in further and higher education.
32. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to interest and engage students in most lessons. Maintaining good levels of challenge ensures that students learn at a fast pace and successfully extend their knowledge and analytical thinking. However, teaching is less challenging in biology and psychology, where teachers' expectations are not as high as in other subjects. Teachers assess students' work well and take account of the outcomes of this assessment in planning lessons. They also make sure that students are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, often assessing each other's work, as in English. In turn, students are helped to take responsibility for planning their work and setting targets for themselves.

## Curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good access to a wide range of subjects.
- Some students are recruited onto inappropriate courses.
- Very small groups sometimes limit the range of activities possible in lessons.

### Commentary

33. The college offers good access to a wide range of subjects at A-level. Students also benefit from participation in extensive extra-curricular and enrichment activities, within and beyond the college. Teachers, accommodation and resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the sixth form curriculum. The small teaching groups studying subjects at A-level enable teachers to ensure that the individual needs of each student are met well. However, where there are very small groups, opportunities for students to benefit from class discussion and sharing of approaches and ideas are limited.
34. The recruitment of some sixth form students onto A-level courses is inappropriate. Where students have not gained sufficiently high achievement at GCSE level, they find A-level work very difficult and achieve below average standards at AS-level. This results in a small number of students completing two years of sixth form study.

## Sixth form at Riddlesdown

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good**, as is the quality of the curriculum and enrichment activities.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The assessment of students' work and the use to which assessment information is put are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in English, business studies and geography and is good in other subjects except biology, where it is satisfactory.
- Most teachers set high expectations and encourage students to be responsible for their own learning.
- Students' personal development is promoted by their effective and active involvement in their own learning.
- Assessment of students' work is used well in all subjects and students know how to improve.

### Commentary

35. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. As a result, students achieve well and reach standards that are above average. The school has focused on developing more varied and challenging teaching styles with a stronger emphasis on developing students' independent learning skills. Students are encouraged to undertake research, to investigate and to enter into enquiry, especially in English and geography. Teaching is very good in these two subjects and in business studies. In the other subjects that were the focus of this inspection, teaching is good, except biology where it is satisfactory. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to interest and engage students in most lessons. Maintaining good levels of challenge ensures that students learn at a fast pace and successfully extend their knowledge and analytical thinking. The overall pattern of good teaching in the sixth form shows the measure of consistency and sharing of good practice within and between subjects. Details of lessons observed are given in the table below.

## Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons in the sixth form

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	11 (26%)	19 (46%)	11 (26%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in the sixth form in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages. The significance of the percentages must be tempered by the small numbers of lessons in each category.*

36. Students gain confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the topics that they are studying. This contributes well to their personal development and prepares them for undertaking independent study in further and higher education. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long, thus constraining independent learning by students. This is particularly a feature of some work in history and mathematics. In biology, some teaching is not challenging enough because teachers' expectations are not as high as in other subjects.
37. Sixth form teachers mark and assess students' work well and effectively use the outcomes in planning lessons. They also make sure that students are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students are also helped to take responsibility for planning their work and setting targets for themselves.

### Curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The courses offered meet students' needs well.
- A well-structured tutorial programme and a good range of enrichment activities complement the taught curriculum well.

#### Commentary

38. Students are offered a wide range of subjects and courses including one-year vocational and two-year advanced courses. The one-year courses include intermediate GNVQ and less common subjects, such as the Legal Secretaries' Certificate. All Year 12 students follow a general studies course that includes statutory provision for religious education. Regular review of course provision ensures that the curriculum caters well for students' needs and builds effectively on their studies in the main school. As a result, most students complete their chosen courses of study and many go on to higher-level studies at university.
39. All sixth form students follow a well-structured daily tutorial programme. This includes personal, health, careers and social education as well as the two key skills of information technology and communication. Although the school does not offer a formal examined key skills course, it requires all students undertaking advanced level study to have gained at least a C grade in GCSE English and mathematics or to work to gain these qualifications. As a result the numeracy and literacy skills of all sixth form students are adequate to support their studies.
40. The sixth form offers a good range of enrichment activities such as Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These are popular and successful. Sixth form accommodation and provision of resources are good. They complement the skills of well-qualified teachers in ensuring that students are able to learn successfully.

## Care, guidance and support

### Main school

The college provides **satisfactory** care for students. It has **good** arrangements for supporting students' development. **Satisfactory** arrangements are made to help students get involved in the life and work of the college.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between adults and students are inconsistent.
- The school has developed a comprehensive framework for supporting students' progress.
- Very good induction procedures help students settle into the college.
- Not all teachers give enough attention to students' feelings
- Good identification of students with special education needs ensures that additional support is swiftly targeted at those in greatest need.

### Commentary

41. Many teachers, and especially the heads of year, relate very well to the students. They are sensitive to individual circumstances and respond carefully to them. Some teachers are unnecessarily abrupt with students, causing them to sense a lack of respect for them on the part of those teachers. Students often have new, supply or cover staff and are not quite sure how to respond to these teachers who have variable expectations of students' involvement. Some tutors engage students successfully by using tutor periods to good effect. Tutor time is limited, however, so that it is difficult for tutors to provide constant support for all their students.
42. The college meets statutory requirements for health and safety so that students, whether indoors and out, are secure and safe. Child protection procedures meet local requirements and policies controlling student access to the Internet are adhered to. Sometimes the college pays so much attention to students' physical safety at the expense of their feelings. This is illustrated in the Year 7 playground arrangements that students dislike. Very effective heads of year provide good support for their tutor teams. However, because they do not have enough time allocated to monitor the work of tutors, some inconsistency in the quality of tutors' work persists.
43. Systematic and well-managed assessment procedures ensure that teachers track students' progress carefully. Links between academic performance, behaviour and attendance are routinely identified so that teachers can guide students in how to improve. Students and parents value the termly academic review process that underpins these activities. Students know how well they are doing and therefore take increasing responsibility for their work. The school seeks students' views and most teachers and tutors respond reasonably. Secure referral and assessment procedures, including the application of correct criteria, ensure that students with learning difficulties are identified at an accurate level of need. Effective mentoring fosters all these students' well-being. Good support and monitoring meets their individual needs.
44. Good links throughout the college and with other schools ensure smooth transitions to, through and from the college. Parents and students praise the careful induction procedures. Satisfactory careers guidance helps students approach sixth form education comfortably.

### Sixth Form at de Stafford

Procedures for supporting and guiding sixth form students are **very good**. Students' involvement in the work and development of the college is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good staff-student relationships and small classes help support students' welfare.
- Good tracking procedures provide students with regular guidance on their studies.

- Teachers encourage students to take increasing responsibility for aspects of college life.

### **Commentary**

45. Teachers promote very good relationships with students and this encourages students' commitment to the college. Teachers know their students very well and quickly arrest any deterioration in attitude or attendance. An outcome of small classes is that students constantly receive individual attention. The college provides good access to careers education and guidance.
46. Teachers routinely share assessments with students who thus know how well they are doing. Students' self evaluation is at an early stage but students already take good responsibility for many aspects of their studies. Students run the sixth form committee and are increasingly ambitious about activities, events and the ability to influence college management decisions.
47. A few students choose inappropriate courses in the sixth form, owing to their desire to remain at the college, but they are then supported well. Small classes mean that teachers quickly get to know how to support students' learning and to promote their personal development.

### **Sixth Form at Riddlesdown**

Procedures for supporting and guiding sixth form students are **very good**. Students' involvement in the work and development of the school is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Academic tutoring helps ensure that students make good progress with their studies.
- Guidance of students as they enter and leave the sixth form helps ensure that students make good personal choices.

### **Commentary**

48. Students recognise and appreciate that the support and guidance they receive is good. Very good relationships between students and their tutors are central to the effectiveness of the help provided by tutors, both in academic studies and wider personal development. Students' views are sought, particularly through the sixth form council, and are taken account of in actions to develop and improve sixth form provision.
49. The academic progress of students is carefully monitored and subject teachers give students clear and effective guidance on how to improve. This is a significant factor in the overall improvement in standards in recent years. Many subject departments provide catch-up lessons that help ensure that students do not fall behind in their studies. Students are given targets for improvement and parents are encouraged to be involved in monitoring students' progress. This, coupled with individual tutorials with tutors, help students to feel well supported in their studies.
50. Students receive good advice about courses to study on entering the sixth form and very few fail to complete the courses they embark on. Guidance is similarly good concerning future pathways on leaving the school so that almost all students leaving the sixth form go on to higher education or successfully enter the world of work. Students are encouraged to become involved in the life and work of the main school. Many do so, for instance, by acting as prefects or helping supervise sports teams for younger pupils.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college has **good** partnerships with parents, other schools and the community.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college fosters a good partnership with parents so that they feel included in their children's education.
- The college keeps parents well informed about college life and the progress their children make.
- Good links with the community help students feel part of a wider society.
- Students settle well at the college because of the well-established links with primary schools.

### Commentary

51. The college is careful to make parents welcome. This happens from the outset, when parents and their children first come into contact with the college as they enter Year 7. Hence parents feel comfortable in approaching the college. Open evenings and induction meetings are particularly well organised. These mean that parents are confident in their choice of school and it encourages them to support their children as they move through the college. The college regularly seeks parents' views, including making good efforts to communicate with, and involve, those parents who may be difficult to reach. It responds effectively to parental concerns.
52. Teachers provide good information for parents. Annual reports are good, despite the brevity of some comments. Termly progress reviews guarantee regular updates for parents about students' achievements, effort or conduct. Clear targets for improvement enable parents to support their children in responding to any suggestions made. Very good advice about study skills helps parents support the homework provided. Regular information about the life and work of the college ensures that parents know about recent activities and can participate in future events.
53. The college is outward looking and has productive links with the community. People from the community help with the college's work and many regularly use its facilities. The college nurtures its links so that governance is now well supported and the students' learning is enhanced. Regular visits outside also contribute well to students learning. The very fruitful link with a school in Kenya helps students learn about the lives of young people in another culture.
54. The college maintains regular contact with its main partner primary schools so that Year 5 and Year 6 pupils there know what de Stafford College offers. Imaginative and effective transfer and induction arrangements help new students settle quickly. The college ensures efficient transfer of information from local schools. Teachers can immediately plan and track individual performance. The college provides clear information about sixth form provision at de Stafford and at other colleges in the local area. Students in Years 10 and 11 have increased curriculum choices because of the productive partnership with a neighbouring college of further education.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher is **good**. Leadership by the senior team and other staff with responsibilities is **satisfactory**. Management of the college is **satisfactory**. Governance of the college is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting principal provides good leadership. He has a very clear vision of improvement for the college and is managing a difficult period of transition for the college well.
- Governors are very involved in shaping the future of the college and raising standards.
- Good long-term plans have been developed with the involvement of governors and the local education authority.
- The difficulties with the recruitment and retention of staff are barriers to improvement.



- The college makes good use of data to review progress and help raise standards.
- The leadership and management of subjects are successful in maintaining and improving standards.
- Not all policies and reviews are implemented consistently.
- Financial management is efficient, including the arrangements to reduce the budget deficit.

### Commentary

55. The acting principal has successfully led the college through a difficult start to this term. Supported by his senior colleagues, the governing body and the local education authority he has established a clear vision for the future development of the college. Members of the senior management team have willingly taken on additional responsibilities pending the appointment of a new principal. The underachievement of previous years has been recognised and is being reversed. Staff with positions of responsibility recognise the need for change and support his vision. The day-to-day life of the College runs smoothly.
56. The acting principal's evaluation of the college's position shows a good knowledge and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, based on a detailed analysis of the data available. The college has an effective plan for further improvement. This follows reflection and review by senior managers and the governing body, working with the local education authority. Other improvement plans developed with the local education authority and plans for collaboration with other local sixth form providers are being incorporated into an overall college improvement plan and this will support further improvement. Financial management is satisfactory. Budgets are being managed in accordance with a local education authority approved plan for reducing the considerable deficit that had built up over several years. The college has a sound approach to achieving best value in its spending decisions.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,364,811
Total expenditure	3,577,648
Expenditure per pupil	3,893

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-212,000
Balance carried forward to the next	-409,853

57. Governors are working very well, in partnership with the acting principal, to bring about improvement. They fully understand why the college has not worked as effectively as it should have done in the recent past and have been fully involved in bringing about the necessary changes. They are helping to shape the vision for the college and to challenge and support the acting principal in his work. They do not fully meet their statutory obligations because there is not a daily act of collective worship.
58. Leadership by the restructured senior management team is satisfactory. The team is successful in managing the school well on a day-to-day basis, but some policies and practices in the school are not implemented by them as consistently as they should be. In not ensuring this consistency they are not as supportive as they could be of the acting principal's efforts to bring about improvement. An important element in their work is the management of the subject review process, successfully started last year. They have received recent guidance on how to use departmental reviews to bring about improvement. In most subjects, this process is having a positive effect in helping subjects to improve. However, the quality of these reviews and of departmental support generally is inconsistent and improvements in some subjects are not taking place as fast as they should be.
59. Subject leadership is good overall and is leading to improved standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The management of music and business education is unsatisfactory. The system for the review of the work of year tutors, guided by heads of year, and of the learning support department is less well developed. Hence practice in these aspects of the college's work is less consistent than in the subjects where review has become well established.

60. The recruitment and retention of well-qualified and experienced staff are difficult for the college and are barriers to improvement. Governors and senior managers are well aware of the problems that this causes and they are working very hard to recruit and retain teachers of quality. Almost a fifth of teachers in the college are, however, unqualified<sup>4</sup>. The college is working hard to support some of them to gain qualified teacher status. The support they get from subject leaders varies and is not always sufficient to help them tackle problems of behaviour management and provide a full understanding of the work to be covered. More generally, effective use of performance management is helping to focus professional development on the priorities of the emerging improvement plan.

### **Sixth form at de Stafford**

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **good**. Governors have a good understanding of the issues surrounding such a small sixth form.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are good.
- The college is working hard to increase numbers in the sixth form.
- The sixth form is inclusive and encourages students from a very wide range of ability.
- The cost of the sixth form is high but is ameliorated through the financial arrangements with a neighbouring school.

### **Commentary**

61. Leadership is good. The head of the sixth form has a good understanding of strengths and weakness and there is a clear vision of the priorities for improvement. These are set out in a comprehensive development and improvement plan. Management of the sixth form and in subjects is good. Performance data is used well to monitor students' achievement. Students receive considerable individual support, which ensures that they make good progress in their studies. The small sixth form provides an inclusive environment in which students achieve well.
62. Governors are well informed about the sixth form and keep it under review. The small numbers of students and thus the high cost of providing sixth form education are a concern. A five-year projection shows a steady increase in numbers as larger year groups move through the college and recruitment improves. The first increase in numbers is expected from the current Year 11. The college is working hard to raise aspirations of students in Years 10 and 11 to encourage them to enrol in the sixth form. Governors do not meet their obligations for a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.
63. The college has business arrangement with Riddlesdown High School, for which it retains a significant management fee. This income offsets the very high cost of funding the small sixth form in the college so that funds meant for main school education are not used to fund the sixth form. The sixth form is thus currently financially viable because of the financial arrangement with Riddlesdown. Financial management of the sixth form is satisfactory.

### **Sixth form at Riddlesdown**

Leadership is **good** and management, undertaken on a day-to-day basis by staff at Riddlesdown, is **very effective**. Responsibility for the governance of the sixth form lies with the governors of de Stafford College and is undertaken at arm's length. The sixth form at Riddlesdown is very cost-effective.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new head of sixth has a clear vision for improvement but a detailed plan has yet to be completed.
- Leadership and management in subjects are very good.

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<sup>4</sup> The school has a significant number of teachers recruited from abroad. Many of these have teaching qualifications in their own country which are not recognised for qualified teacher status in this country.

- There is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all students.
  - Financial management is very good.
64. The newly appointed head of sixth form has been in post since the beginning of this term. He has a clear set of priorities for improvement. This information has yet to be set out in an improvement plan for the sixth form that covers both strategic and operational aspects of development. There is a clear understanding of how performance data can be used to monitor, and thus improve, student achievement.
65. Governance of the school sixth form lies with the governing body of de Stafford College. In practice, this mainly consists of receiving an annual report, publishing sixth form results of the school and fulfilling other statutory responsibilities. The governors of de Stafford College are not meeting their obligations to ensure the provision of a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form at Riddlesdown. The governors at Riddlesdown effectively maintain an overview of developments of this sixth form and have helped guide the school in raising sixth form standards. Relationships between the two governing bodies are good.
66. Management and leadership in subjects and courses are very good. Students report that they are encouraged to do their best. There is good use of data for student review and individual target setting in subjects. The role of tutors, particularly in the support and guidance of students, has not developed sufficiently as numbers in the sixth form have grown. This is recognised by the new head of sixth form, who has plans to improve this aspect of the school's work.
67. The school has a business arrangement with de Stafford College in order to make this sixth form provision. The College retains a management fee that significantly reduces the overall funding for sixth form students at Riddlesdown. Within this context the school gives very good value for money, given students' good achievement and the good teaching they experience.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Provision for students who have a physical disability and for dyslexic students**

The provision for these students is **very good**.

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

- Very good adaptation of the building for students with a physical disability.
- Very good provision for dyslexic students through the appointment of a well qualified and experienced teacher who trains staff to effectively meet their needs.
- Very good over-sight of provision by the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- The needs of students are identified well because regular reviews take place.
- Students achieve well across the school at their respective levels of attainment.

#### **Commentary**

68. Teachers use their good assessment procedures very well to recognise and determine the needs of students who attend the college with a physical disability or a learning need arising from dyslexia. The good Statements of Special Educational Need and the effective individual education plans to meet these needs are regularly reviewed as students progress across the college.
69. These individual educational plans guide all teachers on how to modify their teaching programmes to meet the students' needs. Students receive good levels of extra support in classes from well-qualified and experienced support assistants. This support, and the withdrawal of dyslexic students for extra support from the teacher appointed to meet their needs, enables them to achieve well and make good progress at their individual levels of attainment. Because of this good support, many students go on to achieve good results in public examinations. The college is successful in providing, where necessary, the special

arrangements needed to enable these students to take these examinations. For example, all dyslexic students have access to a laptop computer.

70. The very good management of provision by the special educational needs co-ordinator, together with the very good team approach amongst staff, ensures that regular reviews of progress are held. These reviews also help to develop the very good programmes of work designed to meet the students' individual needs. The whole of the school building has been successfully adapted by the governors, with the addition of lifts and ramps as necessary, so that students in wheelchairs can gain access to all curriculum areas.

### **Workplace learning**

71. A small number of students in Year 11 are disapplied from aspects of National Curriculum provision to take part in courses that are provided partly in school and partly as work placements. These are students whose attendance has been poor, who are in danger of exclusion from school or for whom the National Curriculum is not suitable. Overall, provision for these students is very good. They are given very good support by local businesses who work well with students and with the school to ensure that students have real opportunities to develop their skills and continue their education. This scheme is very well managed and monitored by school staff who give generously of their time to support and monitor the work of these students.

### **School site**

72. The college has a franchise arrangement whereby a sixth form is provided at Riddlesdown High School, some 5 miles away from de Stafford College. This arrangement works to the mutual benefit of both schools. Riddlesdown benefits from being able to provide sixth form education for pupils who have completed their GCSE studies there and de Stafford College benefits from the levy it makes before transferring a balance of funds to Riddlesdown. This levy helps augment funding for the small number of sixth form students at de Stafford College so that this sixth form provision is cost-effective. There is no regular interchange of either teachers or students between the two sites.

## **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 **very good**.

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

- Achievement is good and the standard of students' work is improving.
- Students achieve well because of good teaching and the effective leadership of key teachers within the department.

##### **Commentary**

73. The proportion of students gaining an A\* to C grade in the 2003 English language examinations was just below average. This represents a slight decline on what was attained in 2002 but a significant improvement on the standards reached in 2001 and at the time of the previous inspection. The 2003 English literature results were better than in 2002 and were close to the national average. The results for boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and those from different cultural backgrounds, compare well with their national counterparts in both subjects. Students' levels of achievement are good when account is taken of their progress over time.
74. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was average. Boys and girls did much better than last year and the standards reached were higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Girls did particularly well and their results exceeded expectations. This was also the case for those students with different cultural heritages. The results overall compare well with those of similar schools and represent good levels of achievement.
75. The standards of written work seen at the end of Year 9 are average and students' levels of achievement are good. This is because extended writing is well organised, fluent and accurate and students can work in a range of styles. They have access to computers to help them in this. The quality of written work seen at the end of Year 11 is average and is broadly similar to the standards attained in recent public examinations. The achievement of boys and girls is good in terms of the progress they have made over time. Such levels of achievement are also seen in the work of students with special educational needs and of those with different cultural heritages.
76. Reading standards are average and achievement in this skill is good. The good work of the librarian makes a significant contribution to how well students progress. Students read a range of increasingly difficult texts from their own and other cultures and so enhance their awareness of the diversity of society. The moral and social issues they confront in their reading contribute to their personal development. Students use drama techniques well to improve their communication skills. Standards of speaking and listening are also average and represent good achievement. Students express themselves well when working in small groups and they can use standard English correctly when the situation demands.
77. Teaching and learning are good. Lesson planning is thorough and is closely linked to National Curriculum and examination requirements. This represents a big improvement since the last inspection and is now a strength of the department's work. Teachers' subject knowledge is impressive and they have built very good working relationships with students. This has resulted in a positive working atmosphere which encourages students to give of their best. They behave in lessons, learn well and make good progress over time. Marking is thorough and students are given clear pointers about what they must do to improve their work.

Teachers successfully employ a range of lesson activities to meet the differing needs of individuals and groups. This was seen in the very good work undertaken on the progress units with younger, less competent students.

78. The head of department's leadership and management of the subject are very good. She is well supported by a very capable senior colleague and committed and skilled teachers. There is a strong sense of common purpose and direction, with a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards. The focus on developing schemes of work has resulted in a coherent and systematic approach to teaching that was lacking before the appointment of the head of department. The analysis of the subject's performance is undertaken rigorously and effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate students' progress over time. Teachers review the way they teach and look to improve their performance through on-going professional development. Priorities for improvement and the action to be taken are set out in an up-to-date development plan. The department's commitment to meeting the needs of all students is seen in the way its procedures promote equality of opportunity.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

79. The literacy co-ordinator provides a very good programme of support and guidance to ensure that all subjects place a strong emphasis on improving written and spoken English. The current focus is on auditing the teaching strategies used to support students' extended writing and so to share good practice. All teachers have been trained in improving students' literacy skills and further training has been planned. Most subjects have produced policies on language in their area of the curriculum and are putting these policies into practice. This was seen to good effect in art, modern foreign languages, design and technology and history.

### **Drama**

Provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Recent results at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form have been too low.
- Students do not have the basic skills needed to make progress in the subject.
- The newly appointed head of department is beginning to improve drama provision.

### **Commentary**

80. Results in recent GCSE and AS-level examinations have been poor and levels of achievement have been unsatisfactory. The quality of work seen at this early stage in the academic year is also below average but students are making satisfactory progress and their levels of achievement have improved.
81. The improvements seen during the course of the inspection are a result of good teaching. Subject knowledge is exemplary, as is the understanding of how to teach in an inspiring way. The subject is beginning to raise its profile in the school as a whole and has already made an impact on the conduct of morning assemblies. Teaching concentrates on the development of basic skills and provision is also being made to broaden students' understanding and enjoyment of the subject through a developing programme of theatre visits and workshops. Students are responding to these changes with greater interest and a desire to learn.
82. The newly appointed head of department has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to address the problems of underachievement. He has already improved curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. He has put in place a monitoring and assessment scheme to evaluate students' individual successes and he uses it to plan teaching approaches. His leadership and management of the subject are good.

## Modern Foreign Languages

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Dedicated and hardworking teachers form good relationships with students.
- Lesson planning is good.
- In some lessons teachers too readily use English rather than the language being learned.
- Standards in GCSE examinations are lower than they should be.
- A shortage of textbooks reduces the scope for independent learning.

### Commentary

83. In 2003 teacher assessments show that, by the end of Year 9, standards are below average, though students' standards are as expected, given their ability on arrival in the school. Results in GCSE examinations are improving, having been well below average in recent years. As evidence of this improvement, results in French in 2002 were close to the national average. These results indicate that the students in question had made satisfactory progress during their time in the college.
84. By Year 9, students are producing work in both French and German that is of average standard. Improving standards are the result of good lesson planning and the establishment of effective working relationships between teachers and students. By Year 11, students make satisfactory progress. Standards are higher in French lessons than in German because teachers have higher expectations and make better use of the target language than is the case in some German lessons.
85. Teaching is satisfactory because teachers provide work that matches individual students' needs and capabilities. Questioning is good as it involves all students, including those with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds. Lessons are generally well planned and contain a variety of activities. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk and teachers use lesson objectives well to review progress with students. Teaching is also most effective when students take an active part in lessons, for instance when taking part in games or pair work activities.
86. Occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory because class management in these lessons is insecure and expectations are too low. Learning is slower in lessons where teachers use English rather than the language being learned because this means that students do not hear the foreign language enough. Teachers' marking of students' work does not give clear guidance on how the work can be improved and this slows students' ability to take responsibility for improving their work. A shortage of textbooks also limits the scope for students to undertake independent study.
87. Students' attitudes to work in modern foreign languages are satisfactory. Both boys and girls respond well when they are actively engaged in activities in lessons, but quickly lose concentration when activities are not stimulating or challenging. Students respond well to the provision of study visits, coursework and revision sessions and the visits, particularly, make a useful contribution to developing students' awareness of aspects of citizenship.
88. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department now provides clear direction in order to raise standards and this is a clear improvement since the previous inspection. The management of the department is satisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The mathematics department is well led and managed.
- Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching and to help students perform well in examinations.
- Standards in mathematics have risen significantly faster than they have nationally.
- Teaching and learning are good in many lessons.

### **Commentary**

89. In 2003, results in national tests for students at the end of Year 9 were above average. This represents good achievement given students' entry standards in Year 7. Standards at the end of Year 9 are rising significantly faster than they are nationally and are much better than they were at the time of the previous inspection. The most able students in Year 9 are currently achieving very well, particularly in handling data and algebra.
90. In 2003, GCSE results for students at the end of Year 11 were below the national average. Many students in these groups had been affected by a lack of qualified staff, particularly in lower ability groups where too many students failed to achieve a GCSE grade. These issues have been dealt with by employing more qualified teachers, changes to the syllabus and better teaching. Because of this, and tighter monitoring of coursework, achievement is now satisfactory and standards are improving well.
91. Teaching is good. Many lessons seen were good or very good, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and more experienced teachers set a good example for other teachers to follow. The department's involvement in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has helped improve teaching and learning, and more innovative teaching styles are being introduced into the classroom. This includes students' involvement in presenting their work to the whole class and an active approach to learning, including discussion and practical activities, which increases students' interest and understanding. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers do not plan carefully enough for different levels of need and the range of teaching styles is limited. Hence, some students make less progress than they should. Standards of behaviour in mathematics lessons are good and this contributes greatly to students' achievement.
92. The mathematics department is well managed and the head of department leads by example through her enthusiasm for the subject and by her teaching. There is a good monitoring policy and analysis of student assessment is very strong, giving teachers and students a clear idea of strengths and weaknesses so that they know how to improve. The departmental review system has led to the production of an effective plan that can be used as a basis for future improvement. There are now enough qualified teachers and they are beginning to work well as a team. The department has led a range of extra-curricular activities that have increased students' enthusiasm for the subject.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

93. Students' application of mathematical skills in other curriculum areas is satisfactory. Good use is made of mathematical skills in subjects such as languages, geography and technology. The mathematics department provides useful guides to other departments, such as a poster on representation of data or the use of information and communication technology, and this has helped bring about a consistent approach across the school.



## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved due to good leadership and management.
- Assessment is good and helps students to improve their work, but students do not always respond to teachers' comments.
- Involvement in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has helped bring about improvements in science.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in science.

### Commentary

94. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were average, as expected given students' abilities when they joined the school. These results were better than in the previous year. GCSE results in 2003 were below average, but represented satisfactory progress, given that these students were below average in science when they joined the school. Results in 2002 had been lower because of staffing problems, which have now been resolved. Arrangements for supporting most students who fall behind in their studies are effective, but a small proportion of less able boys do not make enough progress because work is not well matched to their needs.
95. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are better in Years 7 to 9 than Years 10 and 11. The strong features of most lessons are thorough preparation and a good range of activities, which make students think and keep them interested. Homework is used well to reinforce the work completed in class. Most teachers stress the use of correct scientific language and show good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations. Occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory. This occurs when the teacher does not manage student behaviour well. As a result, students lose interest in the tasks and thus do not learn well.
96. Systems of assessment are good. Marking is regular and targets help students to improve. In most classes students have a clear view of what they should do to improve, but students do not always respond well to teachers' helpful comments. Despite this, students' overall attitudes to work in science are good because they are interested in the subject.
97. Leadership of the department is good. After a period of instability, the head of department has created a team who are taking advantage of involvement in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to improve teaching and learning. There is a strong drive to raise standards. Management is good. There are effective systems of monitoring students' work and all teachers use the information to measure student progress. The head of science reviews the progress of all students and takes action to help groups and individuals who are falling behind. Revision sessions are a regular feature of the work of the department and materials from the national strategy are used effectively to improve students' progress.
98. The science department does not make enough use of information and communication technology to help students' learning. Action is being taken to improve this situation. Technicians work very efficiently and effectively and provide very good support to teachers.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communications technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff work well together in an enthusiastic team.
- The development of GNVQ in Years 10 and 11 allows teaching of the subject to all, but the time allocation is too low.
- Students gain knowledge and skills well but their understanding develops more slowly.
- The mapping and co-ordination of the use of ICT in other subjects have not been good enough.

### Commentary

99. When students join the college their standards in ICT are below average and they do not improve to reach the national average by the end of Year 9. Thus, in recent years, progress in ICT during the first three years in the school has been no better than satisfactory. Teachers are, however, gaining much from involvement with the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy which is ensuring that students are now making faster progress in lessons.
100. Results in GCSE examinations have improved considerably in recent years and those currently following the course are achieving well. All students in Years 10 and 11 study a course in ICT, with those not following the GCSE course working for a GNVQ qualification. Results in this newly introduced course are below average, but steps are being taken to improve standards, partly by beginning some of the work for the qualification<sup>5</sup> in Year 9. This is because the time allocated to the subject is inadequate to cover all elements of the course in two years. In Years 10 and 11, students gain a good grasp of knowledge and skills, but teaching is not focused enough on giving them an understanding of the course content. This is why standards are still lower than they should be.
101. Teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall and is sometimes good or very good. However, in too many lessons teachers fail to challenge and stretch students, especially in Years 10 and 11. Here teaching is not always interactive enough, so learning can be passive and students' attention can wander. Involvement with the Key Stage 3 Strategy has helped teachers of younger students to provide lessons that are more challenging and stimulating. Teachers' marking always shows great care and helpfulness and students respond well to the guidance they receive.
102. There is much enthusiasm among the effective team of teachers and technical support staff. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Accommodation is good, though the air conditioning units are far too noisy for students to be able to hear teachers easily.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

103. Only in English is the use of ICT better than satisfactory as a tool for enjoyable, efficient and effective learning. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the contribution of teachers of other subjects to the development and application of students' ICT skills has not been mapped. Secondly, consultation between teachers on how best to set up good ICT-based activity has not taken place. Thirdly, the use of ICT has not hitherto been properly co-ordinated. Some teachers are enthusiastic about the potential of using ICT but lack of a co-ordinated system for gaining access to the college's good resources frustrates their good intentions.

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<sup>5</sup> The Intermediate GNVQ course in ICT counts as the equivalent of two GCSE subjects.

## HUMANITIES

### History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving. They are now close to the average and all students make satisfactory progress.
- Good assessment procedures and target setting help raise standards in Years 10 and 11.
- There is some inconsistency in teachers' expectations and in developing students' learning skills.
- The sharing of good practice through monitoring of teaching and revised schemes of work is undeveloped.
- Students' good attitudes help them to learn satisfactorily.
- The subject is well led, but recent changes in staffing have placed strong demands on management.

#### Commentary

104. Standards at the end of Year 9 are just below average. This represents satisfactory progress, given that students enter the school with skills in history that are below average. Students understand and recall key events satisfactorily. Year 9 students, especially the most able, use their sound literacy skills to write effectively at length, often with strong empathy. However, skills of critically analysing sources and explaining the different interpretation of events are undeveloped.
105. GCSE examination results have been well below average in recent years. However, standards are now approaching the national average and students are achieving the standards expected of them. Research skills, often using the Internet, are indicated by students' satisfactory coursework and concise note-making. Students' confidence and oral skills are being developed well by group work and presentations on such aspects as the Cold War after 1945. However, skills of analysis and interpretation, though more developed by Year 11, are still below expectations for the majority of students.
106. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is better in Years 10 and 11, where specialist teachers have higher expectations and use a wider range of stimulating activities. Good planning ensures that teachers consolidate and extend students' knowledge, understanding and skills. However, inexperienced or unqualified teachers do not always plan adequately to engage students quickly and retain their interest. Learning is also constrained when teachers do not establish close working relations with students or inadequately monitor their progress in the class. Marking is done frequently and provides students with good advice about how to improve. Analysis of assessments and target setting are good in Years 10 and 11, but undeveloped in lower years. Students have good attitudes to learning, especially when lessons are made stimulating, challenging or exciting.
107. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are improving, but will be helped by further improvement in the department. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 do not adequately emphasise the development of analytical and thinking skills, linked to assessments, which would encourage more challenging teaching. The sharing of good practice is inhibited because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are undeveloped. The large turnover in teachers and the difficulty of recruiting experienced, qualified staff make this a priority for development.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising steadily.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 but there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 and 8.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students behave well and show good attitudes to work.
- Good assessment procedures help teachers guide students well.

### Commentary

108. GCSE results in 2002 were above average but were lower than this in 2003. The school attributes this to variations in the quality of students' coursework for GCSE. A number of changes to the curriculum have been made in order to ensure that the decline is reversed and these are resulting in improving standards.
109. Standards of work of students currently in school are average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. Students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Girls do better than boys because their work is better researched and written than that of boys. Students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other students.
110. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired a satisfactory geographical vocabulary and understand patterns that exist throughout the world. They successfully study a number of physical aspects of geography and a range of environmental issues. Field courses and case studies help to develop students' research and independent learning skills. By the end of Year 11, students extend their factual knowledge and vocabulary in preparation for GCSE examinations. The emphasis put on development of knowledge and skills through coursework and field studies is shown in the good coursework produced by more able Year 11 students for GCSE.
111. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 and 8 but also excellent and very good teaching. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not plan well enough to ensure that all students in classes are sufficiently challenged. There are also elements of class control that are not sufficiently strong. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students are challenged and are encouraged to think and investigate rather than simply learning basic geographical facts. Relevant homework is regularly set. Students are well-behaved in lessons and show good attitudes to work. Assessment procedures are good and enable teachers to set targets and give advice to students about how they can improve.
112. Geography makes a good contribution to citizenship, to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the enhancement of students' literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum is enriched by a number of trips and visits for fieldwork. The department review procedures are thorough and contribute to raising standards. The department is well led and managed. Teachers work well together in joint planning. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lack of continuity in teaching has led to disaffection and under-achievement amongst some older students.
- Teachers who are not specialists in the subject have received good guidance from the head of department on lesson planning and assessment.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 have good attitudes towards the subject and achieve well.
- The unsatisfactory match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum has a detrimental effect on older students' learning.

### Commentary

113. Examination results at GCSE in 2002 were above average for the small number of students taking one module of the short course in religious studies. This represented good achievement for both boys and girls, as they were entered for the examination in Year 10. However, results were not as good in 2003, when the same students took a second module, and a larger number of students in Year 11 were entered for the original module. Students' progress had been adversely affected by the discontinuity in teaching during the year.
114. Standards in Year 9 are average in the course, which meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Most students of all levels of ability achieve well because they have positive attitudes towards the subject. They have a firm knowledge of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major world religions, such as Islam and Hinduism, and they can explain how religious beliefs influence daily life and individual decision-making. Standards are also average in Year 11. However, the lack of continuity in teaching in the recent past has led to a considerable amount of disaffection among students in both Years 10 and 11. These factors have led to some under-achievement.
115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, where there is a good ethos for learning and most students respond well to being able to find out about different world religions. Lessons are carefully planned to develop literacy skills and written work shows that students of all levels of ability have learned how to record their information and ideas effectively in a wide variety of ways. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The examination syllabus makes heavy demands on non-specialist teachers who also have to contend with the negative attitudes of a considerable number of students. However, a strong feature of the teaching throughout all years is the good use of resources.
116. The leadership of the subject is good, providing a clear vision for future development. The head of department has worked hard to update the course in Years 7 to 9 and provides guidance on lesson planning and assessment for teachers who are not specialists in the subject. Nevertheless, further training is needed in the GCSE modules. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, notably in the range of examination courses provided. However, there remains the problem of lack of consistent availability of specialist teachers. This results in limited student progress in those classes where there is no regular teacher.

## Leisure and tourism

117. Leisure and tourism was not a focus subject for the inspection, but work was sampled. Standards are below average at the end of Year 11. This is because the subject is focused mainly towards less able students. Students taking the course work hard and achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know the subject well. They carefully and skilfully achieve the balance between encouraging students to work for themselves and the amount of information given by teachers. One teacher is away from school on long-term sick leave at present and standards are declining slightly as a result. The other teachers are

working very hard to maintain a level of regular teaching and to limit the impact of this absence.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Standards in public examinations are improving.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management.
- The high proportion of lessons taught by temporary and non-specialist teachers slows the progress of too many students.
- Some workshop accommodation is too small and limits the range of possible activities.
- The quality and use of displays of students' work to support their learning are good.

#### **Commentary**

118. Standards on entry are below average, with students having had very varied experiences of design and technology in their primary schools. By the end of Year 9 most students have made good progress and reach average standards. Having experienced work with a broad range of materials and processes, they are well prepared for entry to GCSE courses.
119. Standards in GCSE examinations have, in the recent past, been below the national average but have been rising for the last three years and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Students make satisfactory progress during their GCSE courses. However, in Year 11, some students are absent for too many lessons and this limits their achievement in this subject.
120. Teaching is satisfactory and this enables students to make satisfactory progress in their learning. Where teachers understand and therefore meet students' learning needs, both staff and student expectations are high and relationships in lessons are good. This results in good, and sometimes very good, teaching and learning. However the high proportion of lessons taught by non-specialist and temporary staff means that this is not consistent enough to ensure that all students experience teaching that is better than satisfactory.
121. The department has well planned schemes of work that are clearly linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grade criteria. This helps teachers in their assessment of students' work and enables them to give students good guidance on how well they are doing. Teachers track students' progress well, but they do not always use their knowledge of students' achievements to guide their day-to-day lesson planning and teaching. Where this is the case, teaching is less effective.
122. Leadership and management of the department are good. Regular monitoring and review of the department's work contributes well to continuing improvement. The high quality and use of display in most workshops and corridor areas to celebrate student achievement and to inform their learning are very good. Much of the accommodation is old-fashioned and dingy, with few storage facilities. Some workshops are too small and limit student activity and learning.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

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

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11.
- Good teaching enables students to learn well.
- The good management and leadership of the department promote an effective team approach.
- Students show a good enthusiasm and motivation for the subject and take part in the extra-curricular activities provided.

#### **Commentary**

123. When students commence Year 7 they do so with a varied and sometimes limited experience of art. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Supported by good and sometimes very good teaching they achieve well in both their two- and three-dimensional work. In GCSE examinations, standards are well above average. Results in these examinations have improved since the last inspection. The good teamwork between staff and students and the good levels of support the students get in lessons promote very good learning.
124. The quality of teaching is good and is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Lesson planning is effective, supported by a good scheme of work. Good thought is given to ways in which students' work in art can help improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. Regular references are made in lessons to the work of artists and students incorporate their analysis of the work of artists into their own designs. Good attention is paid to ensuring that all students are fully involved in lessons. Students behave well, showing good levels of motivation and enthusiasm for their work. Classrooms and surrounding areas contain good displays and the previous work of students is used well to promote high standards.
125. Assessment is good and the good evaluations by teachers as the lesson progresses help the students to understand how they can develop and improve their work. Homework is regularly set and this builds effectively upon the understanding of the students.
126. The management and leadership of the department are good. Regular meetings are held and these are helpful in enabling teachers to explore how they can improve their work in order to improve the attainment of the students. Students voluntarily attend the department at lunchtimes when teachers provide further help and extra-curricular provision is good.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- The progress of students from Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because non-specialist teachers teach some lessons for these students.
- The head of department is enthusiastic and committed. She gives good encouragement to colleagues in adverse circumstances.
- The attitude and behaviour of some students, particularly in Year 9, are unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

127. Students enter the school with below average standards. They make unsatisfactory progress during Years 7 to 9 so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are well below average. By the end of Year 9, for instance, they interpret and create graphic notation but are not able to demonstrate the stylistic understanding that would be expected at this stage. The subject has not been very popular in recent years and so very few students take the subject in Years 10

and 11. The few students who do so achieve well in GCSE examinations because they are taught well by an enthusiastic and committed teacher. Students currently in Year 11 compose confidently and use information and communication technology well to present their work accurately. They are, however, insecure in listening work and have gaps in knowledge.

128. Teaching is unsatisfactory and, as a result, most students in Years 7 to 9 do not make enough progress. The specialist teacher concentrates on teaching older students and some lessons for younger students are thus taught by teachers who do not have enough specialist knowledge to teach these students well. Lessons taught by the specialist teacher are well paced. Students are keen to learn when activities are inspiring, but in too many lessons, tasks are less appealing and so students quickly lose interest and make less progress. Students are not required to evaluate their work and hence do not know what to do to improve its quality. Some Year 9 students have negative attitudes but students in Years 7 and 8, who have had regular specialist teaching, are positive about the subject. Although students generally make good progress in Year 11 they do not do so when non-specialist teachers supervise lessons.
129. Leadership of the subject at senior management level is unsatisfactory. The specialist teacher is deployed to teach very small examination groups, leaving a large number of students in Years 7 to 9 inadequately taught. Management of the subject is satisfactory and the non-specialists who teach the subject are given good encouragement and guidance by the head of department. The accommodation is very well designed and attractive displays create a good learning environment.
130. Take-up of instrumental tuition is low and modest numbers of students engage in an expanding extra-curricular programme. Progress since the time of the last inspection is unsatisfactory because the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 has not improved.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision for physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership is contributing to raising standards.
- Good teaching builds on very good attitudes and behaviour of students, who achieve well.
- Assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not used to help students improve.
- Behaviour is good because teachers set high standards.
- Teaching is not monitored enough to promote consistency and good practice.

### **Commentary**

131. By the end of Year 9, standards are average. In 2002, GCSE results continued the decline of recent years and were well below average. Results in 2003 improved but were still below average. In order to improve standards, teachers have taken greater care in the selection of practical activities and have ensured students complete coursework to a better standard. As a result, standards of work seen during the inspection in examination classes in Year 11 and, particularly in Year 10, were average.
132. Teachers work hard to ensure all students make equally good progress. Students from minority ethnic groups do as well as other students. Students with particular special educational needs, such as those in wheelchairs, benefit from good arrangements to include them as far as possible in lessons. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well. They make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of a good range of activities. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Boys achieve better than girls. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show boys working above average in some activities such as swimming. The work of a few girls is below average because they rely too much on the teacher and are not active enough. Achievement in GCSE groups and general lessons in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and improving. Good teaching and more attractive curriculum choices are bringing more positive attitudes.



133. Teaching is good overall, though inconsistent. It ranges from very good to satisfactory. Teaching is not adequately monitored in order to identify and share good practice. The best lessons have an urgency and pace to the learning and teachers use a range of methods to sustain and motivate students. Students respond with hard work and enthusiasm. They have well developed skills in independent learning and working together to learn. They know what to do to improve because of clear individual coaching and comment on their performance by the teacher. In other lessons students are less involved in their own learning. There is not enough challenge, particularly for girls in Year 9. Behaviour is very good because all teachers insist on this.
134. Leadership is successfully bringing about improvement in attitudes and standards. There is a strong desire for improvement and teachers are working well together to bring this about. Management is good. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. There is a clear vision and good plan for development of physical education. Assessment information is used well to review overall progress and to check students' progress. However, these assessments are not always used to show younger students what to do to improve. Very good use is made of the excellent facilities. A good programme of extra-curricular activities caters well for a range of interests and enables talented students to make good progress to higher levels of competition.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The overall quality of provision in business education is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Unsatisfactory teaching in some Years 10 and 11 lessons impairs learning.
- Inconsistency in assessment means that students are not given good guidance about their progress.
- The introduction of a GNVQ course has provided a business education course for students of a wider range of abilities.

### **Commentary**

135. Standards are below average. Students do not make enough progress during their course in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is unsatisfactory. Students' learning is restricted by ineffective teaching methods, lack of challenge and insufficient individual support. Where teaching is poor, tasks and resources are not matched to the needs of the range of abilities of students. Because students are not interested in their work they do not behave well and so the teacher's attention, in too many lessons, is on behaviour management to the detriment of teaching the subject. The marking of work is inconsistent and thus is not helpful to students.
136. Although teaching is unsatisfactory overall, it is sometimes better than this. When teaching is satisfactory or good, students respond well. They demonstrate good skill levels in study and research, using available resources well. Visits to local businesses enrich the learning for students following the GNVQ course but this aspect of the course is not adequately developed for students studying the GCSE course.
137. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory because they cannot guarantee teaching that is at least satisfactory for the students taking the subject. There are some aspects of the work of the department that are satisfactory, however. Resources, when well used, support students' learning. Information and communication technology makes a significant contribution to teaching and learning in the better lessons. However, in many lessons, there is too heavy a reliance on worksheets, which are of varying quality and do not cater for the needs of each student.
138. In the period since the previous inspection, standards rose until 2002 and then fell owing to unsatisfactory teaching. Difficulty in providing well qualified teachers for the GCSE course

have placed some students at risk of underachieving and the school has plans to provide additional support to these students. The introduction of GNVQ supports student learning by catering for a wider range of student abilities.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good progress has been made in developing a course in citizenship for all students, linked to the personal, social and health education course.
- A dedicated team approach to the teaching of this subject is improving the quality of provision.
- Some subjects are more successful than others in promoting citizenship.
- Monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the subject are in the early stages of development.

### **Commentary**

139. Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are average and students' achievements are satisfactory. This is a result of the introduction of a number of modules of citizenship within the personal, social and health education lessons taught by a dedicated team. Assessment and tracking of standards are not yet fully in place and, for this reason, students are not fully aware of their attainment levels.
140. Teaching and learning in the subject are good owing to teachers' skills in involving students in practical work such as improvisation, discussion and role-play. Teachers have high expectations and plan lessons well. As a result, students have positive attitudes towards their studies and enjoy discussing and debating issues such as cultural differences, relationships and public, private and voluntary sectors. During the inspection, some personal, social and health education lessons were observed in which citizenship was a major focus and the quality of teaching was good overall.
141. Good contributions to citizenship education are made in other subjects such as geography and English. In other subject areas the contribution is unsatisfactory because planning is not careful enough to take account of the potential in those subjects. The link with a school in Kenya makes a very positive impact on students' understanding of their responsibilities to people in other circumstances. Elections to the school council make an effective contribution to students' appreciation of the democratic process. Activities such as the Year 7 student visits to the local primary schools are effective in developing responsible attitudes towards others.
142. Leadership of this subject area is good. The recently appointed co-ordinators for this subject have approached their role with enthusiasm and commitment. They have produced effective development plans to ensure that students receive their full entitlement to a course in citizenship education. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Arrangements for the recording of student achievements are being made, although these are incomplete, as is the mapping of what aspects of the course students are covering.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM AT de STAFFORD COLLEGE

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

*Note that this section refers to work in the sixth form at the de Stafford College site. Work in the Riddlesdown Sixth Form Centre of the College is reported in a separate section. There is no curriculum liaison between the two sixth forms. Nor is there any sharing of staff or movement of students between the sites.*

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in the de Stafford sixth form in 2002.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	8	13	52	13	2	0.50	0.79
Business Studies	7	86	76	14	12	1.71	1.69
Mathematics	8	38	62	13	15	1.25	1.51

### Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	100	96	0	46	2.00	6.57
Biology	1	100	88	100	34	10.0	5.25
Business studies	4	100	92	25	32	5.00	5.50
Chemistry	2	50	90	50	43	4.00	5.90
English literature	3	100	95	33	37	7.33	5.91
French	1	100	89	0	38	2.00	5.59
Geography	1	100	92	100	38	10.0	5.74
History	1	100	88	0	35	6.00	5.45
Sociology	1	100	86	100	35	10.0	5.32
Sports/PE studies	2	100	92	0	25	6.00	5.09

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus in this curriculum area was on English. Work was also sampled in French. In the one lesson observed in French, students were being taught well and were making good progress, though standards of work were below average.

### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Students' levels of achievement by the end of Year 13 are good.
- Students achieve well because of the consistently good teaching.
- Systems for the monitoring and evaluation of students' progress over time and for giving them feedback on what to do to raise standards are rigorous.
- Year 12 students have yet to develop an independent and critical approach to their work.

#### **Commentary**

143. Results in English literature at A-level at the end of Year 13 and at AS-level at the end of Year 12 have been average over the last two years. When account is taken of students' attainment at the start of the courses, this represents good achievement. The standard of work seen in Year 13 during the course of the inspection is also average and achievement is good. Students in Year 12, however, have yet to develop enough confidence in their ability to take and justify an independent view on what they read. Hence, standards in this year are average and achievement is satisfactory.
144. The teaching of English is very good. Teachers' command of their subject is impressive and their planning is thorough. They know students well and adapt work and teaching approaches to take account of their individual needs. Strong working relationships have been established and students value the continuity of teaching. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor and evaluate progress and both oral and written feedbacks make clear what has to be done to improve. Expectations are high and lessons are taught in a challenging way. This has resulted in students having far better analytical skills than at the time of the previous inspection.
145. Both leadership and management of the subject are very good. Student recruitment and retention rates have improved significantly over recent years and standards have risen. There is a strong sense of common purpose and direction in the work of the department and a commitment from all teachers to improve the quality of provision further. The performance of the subject is reviewed regularly and priorities for development are identified and implemented.

#### **Key skills in language and literacy**

146. Provision for the development of key skills in language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is evidence that students are encouraged to use literacy skills to improve the quality of their written work and oral discussions. When this happens, students' literacy skills support their learning and enable students to achieve well in their examination courses.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- Teachers provide imaginative lessons that enable students to learn well.
- Students are very willing to participate and to engage in collaborative work.
- Some activities need to be modified to ensure that all students can progress at their own rate.

#### **Commentary**

147. Results in recent years have been well below the national average, but students reached standards that were above those expected, given their prior attainment. Students currently in the sixth form are working at below average standards but are achieving well and making good progress. They are able to do this because teachers are committed to ensuring that lessons are stimulating and interesting and because the students are keen, interested and very willing to help one another.
148. Teaching is good, enabling students to learn well. Lessons are lively, with students able to perform experiments and successfully analyse results. In some lessons, students lead activities, having undertaken independent research to prepare activities for their peers. In these lessons, there is lively debate and discussion between the teacher and students. Such activities enable the students to build up their confidence, both in putting forward ideas and identifying any lack of understanding. Teachers know students' abilities well and use this knowledge well in question and answer sessions so that all students are able to participate. Most activities involve all members of the group. While this has many benefits, the learning of the most able students is sometimes slowed because extension work is not provided or because they are not required to work at a faster pace on their own.
149. The leadership of the subject is good and there is a clear vision for how to improve and develop mathematics in the sixth form. The potentially difficult situation created by small groups and the need to teach students from Years 12 and 13 together is well managed.

#### **Key skills in mathematics**

150. The school does not offer a course in mathematics for all students in the sixth form. However, teachers in other subjects ensure that the mathematical skills required are known well enough to support learning in those subjects.

#### **SCIENCE**

151. The focus was on biology, but chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry, examination results were well below average. This year there is no GCE A-level chemistry course but five students are studying AS chemistry. One lesson was observed where the teaching was good. In this lesson, the students made good progress in their understanding because the teacher skilfully provided visual models of difficult scientific concepts and then challenged the students to respond.

#### **Biology**

Provision is **satisfactory**.

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

- In 2003, results in GCE A-level and AS examinations were lower than expected.
- Marking is thorough and there are good systems for guiding students' progress.
- Good individual support helps student to learn and make progress.
- Some students who start the course with low GCSE grades make slow progress.

#### **Commentary**

152. Standards in GCE A- and AS-level biology are below average. In 2002, the one student who took the GCE A-level course obtained an A grade, as expected. In 2003, the results of the two students who took the examination were slightly below those expected. The biology course had been disrupted by long-term absence of the teachers, which also contributed to lower than expected results in the AS examinations and to slow progress since the previous inspection. The school admits students to the AS course whose prior attainment is low. These students find the course difficult, though their achievement at this early stage of their Year 12 course is satisfactory. The standards of work of students in Year 13 are below average but their achievement is satisfactory. Boys and girls make similar progress.

153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The principal strengths are a good range of practical activities, which make the students think. The teacher provides good individual support and guidance and thus all students make satisfactory progress. The teacher shows good subject knowledge in questioning and explanations and in the tasks set. Students are attentive and respond well to practical work. Relationships are good. Tasks set for the students to undertake between lessons complement the work completed in class. Marking is regular and thorough and overall systems for assessment are good. Occasionally, teaching is not challenging enough because teachers' expectations are not as high as they need to be. Effective systems for tracking students' progress are used well to guide students on how to improve. Technicians work very hard and provide very good support to teachers.
154. There is no full-time teacher in charge of sixth form biology but the head of science and the part-time teacher of biology have provided satisfactory leadership and management on a day-to-day basis.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

155. Work in ICT was sampled. Standards of work are below average, though very few take the subject. In the lessons observed, teaching was unsatisfactory because students were not challenged or required to work hard enough. Students' practical work is satisfactory.

### **Key skills in information and communication technology**

156. Formal classes in key skills in ICT do not take place and ICT skills are not systematically assessed. Sixth formers' competence with ICT depends very much on the courses they follow and the teachers they work with. In general, they do not have the skills they need to make best use of ICT as tools for sixth form learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

157. The focus in this curriculum area was on geography and psychology, but work was also sampled in history and law. Very few students take history. Results in A2 history in 2002 were average, but below average in 2003. In the one lesson seen, the two Year 13 students achieved well. This was due to stimulating teaching and to students' very positive attitudes as they thoroughly researched and presented a key topic. In law, students achieved well at A-level in 2003. Students are taught effectively through distance learning by video conferencing with the tutor elsewhere. In the one lesson seen, most of the Year 13 students were successfully involved in a good discussion and achieved well as a result of good teaching.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and hence students are highly motivated and work very hard.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to prepare students well for examinations.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is very good.
- The numbers of students who study at A-level are low and the entry qualification for the sixth form is lower than usually found.

### **Commentary**

158. The numbers of students entered for AS and A-level examinations are too low for reliable comparisons to be made against national statistics. Students are often accepted on to the sixth form geography course with lower GCSE grades than is usually found. In 2002, three students entered for A-level and all passed at lower grades, though based on GCSE results these students achieved well.

159. Standards are below average at the end of Year 12. Standards for the two students currently studying at A-level are above average. There are no differences in attainment between male and female students or across the different minority ethnic groups in the school. A fairly small number of students continue to take up the subject in Year 12 and retention into Year 13 is satisfactory.
160. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge for work at this level. This applies not only to the level of factual knowledge required, but also to the advice given to students about how to maximise marks in examinations. Students' work is regularly marked and corrected and teachers make very good use of this type of assessment to give advice about how students can improve their work. Formal and informal assessments provide good data for teachers and students about the progress students are making and about their likely grades. Students are highly motivated, work hard and show good independent learning skills.
161. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers support students well and provide very good support if students find difficulty with their work. The course is well managed and the programme of work is carefully planned to ensure that a consistent curriculum is on offer. A range of trips and field courses provide enrichment for students and enhance the curriculum.

## **Psychology**

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement at A-level is good and is satisfactory at AS-level.
- Assessment is not used well to guide students on how to improve.

### **Commentary**

162. Many students who follow this course at AS-level have overall academic standards below those of most students who follow this course nationally. Not enough time is spent with the students early in the course guiding them on how to study and to deal with the difficult concepts in the subject. Due to satisfactory teaching, however, students achieve satisfactorily overall, though the five students studying the course at A2 level are achieving well and working at above average standards. For these students, good achievement results from good teaching. They receive good levels of support from their teachers and are thus able to apply themselves well to their studies.
163. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers prepare their work thoroughly, basing lessons on a good scheme of work. Recording of the assessed progress of the students is under-developed. When work is marked students are not always given enough guidance on what to do to improve. When improvements are suggested students are not always encouraged to conduct further research or redraft their work to a higher standard. Students are regularly tested. However, the results of these tests are not used effectively to guide students on what they need to do to improve their understanding and progress.
164. Leadership and management of the course are satisfactory, with good teamwork between the two teachers involved.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No subject in this curriculum area was focused on in this inspection.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

165. No subject in this curriculum area was focused on in this inspection. Work was sampled in art and design, music and drama. Provision for art and design is good and students achieve well and attain above average standards because they experience good teaching. The small number of students who take music courses achieve good standards due to the high levels of support provided by the teacher. The previously poor provision for drama is now starting to be effectively improved by the new head of department.

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

166. There was no focus subject in this curriculum area. Work was sampled in physical education. In this subject provision is satisfactory. The very few students taking the course achieved what might be expected. Teaching in the lesson observed was satisfactory. Planning was good but the methods used did not sufficiently involve students in the lesson and their own learning.

## **BUSINESS**

There was no focus subject in this curriculum area.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

There was no focus subject in this curriculum area.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

No work was sampled in this curriculum area.



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM AT THE RIDDLEDOWN SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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

*Note that this section refers to work in the sixth form at the Riddlesdown Sixth Form Centre. Work in the sixth form on the de Stafford College site is reported in a separate section. There is no curriculum liaison between the two sixth forms. Nor is there any sharing of staff or movement of students between the sites.*

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed at the Riddlesdown Sixth Form Centre in 2002.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	3	100	52	0	2	4.67	0.79
Business Studies	1	0	76	0	12	0.00	1.69
Mathematics	2	100	62	0	15	3.00	1.51

### Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	0	96	0	46	0.00	6.57
Biology	14	100	88	21	34	4.57	5.25
Business studies	15	100	92	27	32	5.47	5.50
Chemistry	4	100	90	50	43	6.50	5.90
English literature	3	100	95	67	37	8.00	5.91
Geography	3	100	92	0	38	2.67	5.74
History	10	80	88	10	35	3.60	5.45
Mathematics	10	100	87	50	43	7.20	5.80
Physics	13	100	88	38	40	5.85	5.67
Sports/PE studies	5	100	92	20	25	4.80	5.09

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus in this curriculum area was on English. Courses in modern foreign languages are offered in the sixth form but not enough students choose these courses for them to be viable.

### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Standards in A-level English literature work are improving and levels of achievement are good.
- Students achieve well because of consistently good teaching.
- Rigorous systems are in place for the monitoring and evaluation of students' progress over time and for giving them feedback on what to do to improve.
- The subject's very good leadership and management have created a positive climate for learning that enables students to make very good progress.

#### **Commentary**

167. Results in the 2002 English literature A-level examinations were average. This was a significant improvement on what was attained in 2001. Improvement was maintained in 2003, when results were better than those of 2002. These results were better than had been expected, given students' prior attainment. The quality of work seen during the inspection is above average. Levels of achievement are very good when account is taken of the broadly average standards attained by students in the AS examinations at the end of Year 12.
168. The teaching of English is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge and planning are impressive, as is their use of a variety of teaching approaches to motivate and sustain students' interest. Working relationships are strong. Students' work is assessed thoroughly and the feedback they get on how to improve is a significant factor in the progress they make. Expectations are high and students respond with a commitment to developing an independent approach to their work. They are confident in advancing their own views on what they read and support their analysis with relevant textual references.
169. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. A rigorous appraisal of the subject's performance over recent years has resulted in action leading to the improvement in standards. Effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate students' work and teachers also look to improve their own teaching strategies by responding to outcomes of evaluations. The head of department provides a strong sense of direction to the work of the department and he is well supported by a team of committed and able teachers.

#### **Key skills in language and literacy**

170. The provision for developing students' communication skills is satisfactory. In subjects like science imaginative teaching strategies are used to improve literacy standards and this supports students' learning. Students write well and engage readily in discussions to develop their understanding of their work.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- Good teaching enables students to learn well.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of teachers encourage good student attitudes.
- A good range of mathematics courses is offered to students.
- Students are not always encouraged to be active participants in lessons.

## **Commentary**

171. Results in A-level examinations in 2002 were well above average. In 2003 results were lower, but all students gained results that were at least as good as they were predicted to get. Students currently following mathematics courses are, at this relatively early stage in the year, working at above average standards and are achieving well. This suggests that the school is likely to maintain the pattern of impressive results in the coming year. Those students repeating their study for GCSE examinations are working at below average standards, but all are making good progress.
172. Students learn successfully because teaching is good. They achieve well, building successfully on earlier learning because teachers plan tasks that are modified to match students' needs. Teachers are able to do this because of good day-to-day assessment of students' work. They are particularly successful in building up students' knowledge of facts and developing their skills. Students make slower progress in building up their understanding of the topics they are studying. This is because students are not often encouraged to be active in discussion or to undertake enough independent enquiry and investigation.
173. All teachers are enthusiastic about their teaching and thus students have good levels of motivation. Some of the most able students are very confident in their mathematics, but limited active participation in discussion and group work slows the development of confidence in others.
174. The department is well led and efficiently managed. The work of the team of five teachers contributing to advanced level work is well co-ordinated. The range of courses offered in the department is good, catering for the most able by offering further mathematics and for the least able by enabling repeat study for a GCSE qualification.

## **Key skills in mathematics**

175. No key skills in mathematics course is offered, but all students studying in the sixth form either have secured at least a C grade in GCSE or are required to work toward gaining this qualification. Hence the mathematical ability of all sixth form students is adequate to support study in other subjects.

## **SCIENCE**

176. Chemistry, biology and physics were focus subjects in the inspection. They are co-ordinated within a single faculty and there has been considerable effort put into recruiting, training and supporting graduates, some of whom have not received formal teacher training but who are now confidently and successfully delivering A-level sciences.

## **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm and commitment that are strong motivating factors for their students.
- An effective assessment and monitoring system keeps students well informed about their progress.
- High quality relationships between students and staff lead to an informal but positive ethos for learning and to interested and well-motivated students.
- Challenging lessons frequently have a high level of practical work.

## **Commentary**

177. Results in 2002 were well above average overall and average for the number of students gaining A and B grades. Results in 2003 were lower and affected by staffing problems that have now been resolved.

178. All students are interested in the subject, well motivated and appreciate being able to learn independently and take responsibility for their own work. Students quickly come to terms with the demands of A-level work, both in its complexity and the greater work-load, and they meet the new challenges cheerfully and with determination. In the work seen, written work is of a good standard and students' files are comprehensive and well organised. The practice throughout the science department of treating students as responsible young adults fosters their early maturity as learners. This maturity, coupled with growing confidence and faith in their teachers, helps students learn well and results in an atmosphere where students have the confidence to ask for clarification and even to challenge ideas politely but firmly.
179. The standard of teaching is good, as is the learning resulting from it. The informal yet well-mannered dialogue which results from the very good rapport between teachers and students enhances the learning process and encourages more reticent students to seek help when it is needed. Students value the regular marking and constructive criticism because they recognise that it helps them to improve. Practical work is well planned and resourced with students taking responsibility for all aspects of it and growing in confidence and skill.
180. Leadership and management are satisfactory even though the teacher in charge of the subject is not working full time at the moment. Earlier staffing problems have been overcome and the department is moving forward with better teaching and improving results. Good resources levels and reference materials, together with good accommodation, support independent learning and research well.

## **Biology**

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in GCE A-level examinations were above average
- In 2003, students did better than expected in GCE A-level examinations.
- Systems for assessment and marking are good and students know how to improve.

### **Commentary**

181. Standards in biology examinations are above average. In 2002 results at A-level were above average, with all students doing at least as well as expected. In 2003 students generally did better than was expected. Results in AS-level examinations in 2003 were as expected on the basis of students' prior attainment. Students currently studying biology in Year 13 are on course to achieve the expected grades. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course but are achieving as expected. All students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, work well together.
182. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of biology, which they use to explain ideas and provide a good range of interesting practical activities, including fieldwork, which make the students think. Students are attentive and respond well to the variety of learning styles that they experience. They are interested in their studies and ask good questions. Equally, teachers are skilful in drawing together students' ideas and this leads to effective learning.
183. Teachers relate well to students and expect them to work hard. A strength of the department is its emphasis on correct examination technique. Systems for assessment are good, with regular and thorough marking of students' work. This provides good information to allow teachers to track and guide students' progress so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
184. Leadership is satisfactory. There is a clear focus on raising students' achievement and extensive support is provided to them. Management of the subject is good. Technicians work effectively to provide very good support to teachers.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic and committed teachers enthuse and motivate students.
- Lessons contain a variety of activities, maintaining interest and leading to good learning.
- High quality relationships lead to informal and informed dialogue which help to produce a well motivated and determined student body.

### Commentary

185. A-level results in 2002 were average and results were similar in 2003. The number of A and B grades fluctuates annually and recent staffing problems have been partly responsible for some of the most able students not reaching their full potential. Currently, standards in the work seen are average and students are achieving well. Written work is well presented and of a good standard, with particularly good graph work. Experimental work is done purposefully and accurately, with skills improving steadily. This is clearly evident in the 'practical week' that was taking place during the inspection. Students are well aware of examination requirements and work well independently. There were no perceptible differences between the work of male and female students and all students, including those joining the sixth form from other schools, work well together. High quality staff-student relationships, high expectations of students and staff perception of students as responsible young adults lead to the early maturity of students. This maturity and growing confidence means that students learn well and obtain maximum benefit from their lessons.
186. Teaching is good. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for all aspects of their work. They place an emphasis on examination techniques and what is required to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Students acknowledge their teachers' very good subject knowledge and expertise and appreciate the informal, well-mannered and good-humoured atmosphere in lessons. As a result, they enjoy their physics. Marking of work is regular, providing constructive comment on how to improve.
187. The leadership and management of the subject are both very good, with a clear sense of direction and a shared staff commitment to achieve the best possible result for each student. A good level of resources and modern, comfortable accommodation encourage good teaching and good learning. Teachers are supported very well by excellent technician support, despite inadequate preparation and storage facilities and restricted technician time.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

188. Work in ICT was sampled. Courses in ICT are new and the students were examined for the first time in 2002. Results were above average, with all students gaining at least an E grade. Provision is good. Students are better at practical work than in factual knowledge and in understanding principles in the subject, largely because this is the aspect best taught.

### Key skills in information and communication technology

189. Some consideration of ICT is part of the work of the daily tutorial programme followed by all sixth formers. However, it has been decided not to enter anyone for the key skills coursework assessment and national tests. Thus ICT does not have enough impact on what happens in most subjects, so learning is not as good as it could be.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus in this curriculum area was on history, geography, psychology and sociology.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

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

- Standards are improving and students achieve well.
- Good teaching with a variety of well planned, stimulating activities ensures students make good progress.
- The students' very positive attitudes to their work help them to learn well.
- Students are not consistently challenged by rigorous questioning and discussion to think more critically.
- Good leadership and management give a clear direction to the subject.
- The sharing of good practice through more formalised monitoring of teaching is undeveloped.

#### **Commentary**

190. Examination results at A and AS-levels have recently improved. They are now above the national average and are among the best in the school. This has been due to close monitoring of students' progress and by teachers placing more emphasis on developing students' learning skills.
191. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students have a good knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of the periods under study. They show good skills of individual enquiry and recording of evidence from a range of sources. Essays are well researched, especially by the most able students who are developing good skills of analysis and mature essay construction. However, these skills are less developed in students of other abilities. Students generally articulate ideas well, encouraged by stronger emphasis on group research work. Some less able students, especially in Year 12, are less confident about contributing to discussion.
192. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to thoroughly plan a variety of tasks, often based on a range of stimulating resources. Students individually undertake challenging enquiries, which develop their skills of critical analysis and independent thought. Very thorough marking and careful setting of targets for improvement also promote students' progress. Teachers benefit considerably from students' strong motivation and very good attitudes to learning, which enable them to teach effectively. This produces very good working relationships in the classroom and an atmosphere where nearly all students are ready to participate in discussion. The effectiveness of this is occasionally constrained when inadequate time is provided for lively, stimulating group or class discussion. Not all teachers use rigorous enough questioning to make students defend their opinions or invite challenges from others.
193. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction. Recent improvement has been good. Examination results are thoroughly analysed and positively responded to, especially in closely monitoring students' progress. The team of experienced teachers is committed to improvement and works well together. However, the systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching through mutual classroom observation are undeveloped. This inhibits the sharing of good practice.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

The quality of provision is **very good**

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students achieve very well.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Take up in Year 12 and retention in Year 13 is very good.

### **Commentary**

194. Recent A-level results have been above average, with no significant difference in the results of male and female students or those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
195. Students currently studying geography in both Year 12 and Year 13 are working at above average standards. Male and female students are achieving equally well. There is good take-up for the subject in Year 12 and a good proportion of students carry on with the subject in Year 13. Students achieve very well in relation to their previous GCSE grades.
196. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge for work at this level. They also understand well how best to prepare students for examinations. Teachers' planning for lessons is thorough and detailed. Working relationships between teachers and students are very good and teachers give valuable extra support where this is needed. Teachers' marking of students' work is very detailed and gives very good information to students about their likely levels and about how they can improve their work further. Information from formal and informal assessments also provides good information to students. Students show very good attitudes to work and develop very good independent learning skills.
197. Extensive use of trips, fieldwork and conference visits enhances the curriculum provision and contributes to raising standards. The subject is very well managed. Comprehensive systems are in place to improve standards and to check for potential weaknesses. The recently appointed head of department is showing very good leadership in identifying priorities for development and in her leadership of a strong team of teachers.

## **Psychology<sup>6</sup>**

Provision in psychology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average.
- Students achieve well and make good progress.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students are not required to improve their work by following-up comments on their work.
- All students show good attitudes.

### **Commentary**

198. As a result of good leadership and management, students apply themselves with high levels of interest and motivation to their studies. As they progress they start to show an increasingly secure knowledge of the main concepts and apply them well to their work. In AS examinations students find studying the course difficult and obtain below average grades. Supported by a good scheme of work and the continued good teaching, at A2 level they achieve well,

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<sup>6</sup> At Riddlesdown, psychology is taught within the faculty of natural sciences. It is reported here under humanities for consistency with other OFSTED reports on sixth form provision.

effectively learning how to substantiate and present their answers and attain above average grades.

199. A good scheme of work supports the progress of students' work. The recent appointment of a new head of subject and further teacher appointments have now established a good and well qualified team to teach the subject. Students are very well encouraged to become independent and collaborative learners. Their progress is supported by the very good preparation of lessons that hold their interest and involve them in giving their views, showing an increasing understanding of the subject as they progress. The marking of students' work is undertaken conscientiously, but comments on how they can improve are not always adequate to guide improvement. Nor are students encouraged to follow up comments that are provided by re-drafting and presenting their work again in a more detailed and accurate manner. All students work well together and enjoy the subject.

## **Sociology**

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good, enabling students to make good progress.
- Teachers have very good relationships with students, who have good attitudes.
- ICT is not easily available in lessons.
- Students' use of industry and the community is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

200. Sociology is an increasingly popular subject in the sixth form, though it is not taught in the main school. In recent years few students have completed assessment and there was only one candidate in 2002. In 2003, three of the four students entered for the A2 examination gained high A or B grades. In the AS examination, results were near the unconfirmed national averages. This represents good achievement by these students, with about a half gaining higher grades than expected.
201. In the two A2 lessons and work seen, standards were above national expectations. This is because good teaching promotes very good student attitudes. In class discussions, students develop good critical evaluation skills and consolidate their understanding of some of the main sociological concepts and ideas. Students just starting the course in Year 12 are working at average standards.
202. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' well-structured lesson planning and real life examples make the subject come alive, helping students to remain engaged. Students have a good understanding of the work being taught and they are set challenging homework tasks. Teachers mark essays promptly, with constructive targets to help students improve. Students' learning is slowed in two ways. They do not find their own examples of current sociological issues from newspapers or the community as a means of helping understanding of the ideas and they do not use information and communication technology enough to explore statistical data relevant to the topic being studied. Teachers encourage students to debate ethics of research methods. Students receive well-focused guidance on methodology from teachers.
203. The subject is well led and satisfactorily managed within the humanities faculty by young, enthusiastic teachers. Students' progress over time is well monitored. The subject has good capacity for further improvement.



## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

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

There was no focus subject in this curriculum area. Work was sampled in physical education. In this subject provision is good. Students achieve well and they have very good attitudes to their work. In the two lessons observed the standard of teaching was good and very good. A particular strength is the very good range of methods used to motivate students

## **BUSINESS**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are improving.
- Very good teaching supports effective learning for all students.
- Relationships between students and their teachers are positive, leading to good student attitudes.

### **Commentary**

204. Work is consistently of a good standard, demonstrating satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding. Students make steady progress and achieve average standards. All students, irrespective of ability, are fully supported and they respond enthusiastically to the challenges provided.
205. The very good teaching, supported by positive student attitudes, strengthens rising standards. Teachers challenge students well and demand rigour in students' work. This approach has ensured a steady improvement in standards.
206. Access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities including, for example, the Young Enterprise Scheme and a visit to the New York Stock Exchange, enriches the learning experience for students. Teachers create a good work ethic and this contributes to student success.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

No subject was the focus for inspection in this curriculum area.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

No subject was the focus for inspection in this curriculum area.

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

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