

INSPECTION REPORT

THE EASTWOOD SCHOOL

Leigh-on-Sea

LEA area: Southend

Unique reference number: 115330

Headteacher: Mr D Penketh

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 3-7 November 2003

Inspection number: 259376

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	865
School address:	Rayleigh Road Leigh-on-Sea Essex
Postcode:	SS9 5UT
Telephone number:	01702 524341
Fax number:	01702 512181
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev C Beecham
Date of previous inspection:	16 March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a smaller than average-sized secondary modern school for pupils aged 11 to 19. It is expanding rapidly as its popularity and reputation in the area increase. There are relatively few higher-attaining pupils amongst the 784 on roll in Years 7 to 11 and the 71 in the sixth form, as 30 per cent of children in the area go to local grammar schools. Attainment on entry to the school is rising. It is marginally above average for the current Year 7 and 8 but was below average at best in other year groups. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds or have English as an additional language. Free school meal entitlement is average and there is low pupil mobility. The proportion of the pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The school is a specialist performing arts college. It uses this status to provide courses in the sixth form in partnership with a private sector performing arts college. This also increases the number of students studying for the small number of AS and A Level subjects provided in addition to some vocational courses. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is well below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Lead inspector	
9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
4351	Jeanne Strickland	Team inspector	English: drama (sixth form)
32379	Bob Brewster	Team inspector	Mathematics
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Science: human biology (sixth form)
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	History: religious education
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design; special educational needs
8911	John Witchell	Team inspector	Music
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	French; citizenship
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education; business studies (sixth form)
32597	John Marchant	Team inspector	Geography
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Dance (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

PBM Brookbridge and Bedford Ltd
 13A Market Place
 Uttoxeter
 Staffordshire
 ST14 8HY

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	21
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	48

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school providing good value for money. It is one of the most successful secondary moderns in the country for the progress made by the pupils in terms of GCSE results. The pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 11 because teaching is good and they have a positive approach to learning. Relationships are harmonious and the pupils are well-behaved. This helps to create a sense of purpose throughout the school. In spite of these features, there are shortcomings which if not tackled robustly may well limit further progress. Furthermore, the governing body is not fulfilling its responsibilities, particularly to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is a strong leader who is much respected by pupils and parents.
- There is some very good teaching, although the use of a large number of non-qualified staff and non-subject specialists is currently having a detrimental effect on achievement.
- Some unsatisfactory English teaching is leading to many pupils not achieving as well as they should.
- The pupils participate with much enjoyment in the very high quality drama, dance and music performances; however, the specialist status as a performing arts college is not having a significant benefit on the main school curriculum.
- Management structures and processes are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the work of staff is thoroughly monitored and that school policy is consistently implemented in key areas.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1998 is good overall. Standards have risen markedly in Years 7 to 11; GCSE results are much higher. Attendance has also improved considerably. The school has not tackled the key issues with the same success. Staff development now focuses more on raising attainment and senior managers are more involved in whole-school planning; however, other members of staff are not still consulted sufficiently during the process. A programme to monitor teaching and learning has been implemented, but is not sufficiently systematic to identify and tackle weaknesses. Training to improve the teachers' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) was undertaken but staff members still do not provide the pupils with sufficient opportunities to use ICT in lessons. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship and this is unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	C	B	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	n/a	E	E*	

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

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

Achievement is good for the pupils during their time in Years 7 to 11, but not in English. Standards are broadly average. National Curriculum test and GCSE results have risen considerably in recent years. The A* grade put the school in the top five per cent of similar schools. Most pupils make good progress during their time at the school; their GCSE results are much higher than anticipated from their attainment when they entered the school. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress as others in their classes. Science standards are above average throughout the main school. Standards in Years 7 to 11 are below average in English and average in mathematics. **Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.** Standards are improving here but are still below average overall.

The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall. Their moral and social development is good. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and attendance has risen to be slightly above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The good teaching and learning are offset by several weaknesses in the curriculum. Themes that the school is seeking to teach across subjects are not co-ordinated effectively and timetable arrangements are leading to the deployment of many non-qualified or non-specialist staff. These lessons are generally taught less effectively and at times unsatisfactorily. In spite of the pupils' application, learning suffers. Members of staff care for the well-being of the pupils but important aspects of their health and safety are not promoted. For example, no suitable assessment of the risk to pupils crossing the congested car park at the end of the day has been prepared or effective action taken. Careers support and guidance are inadequate. The accommodation has many excellent features but the lack of a school library is a weakness.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides strong leadership. The leadership of other key staff is only satisfactory. Management processes are unsatisfactory and are leading to some weaknesses in teaching and learning going unchecked. Management is reasonably successful in fulfilling its commitment to enabling all pupils to be included in all aspects of school life. Governors do not play an effective role, and they are not ensuring that many statutory requirements are met. They do not have the structures and procedures to be involved either in shaping the direction of the school or holding senior management to account.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally in support of the school. They are very pleased with improvements in recent years; this is reflected in the increase in the roll and it being considerably over-subscribed. A significant number of parents have concerns about communication with the school and do not feel that they are kept informed or consulted sufficiently. Both of these matters are confirmed by the inspection. Pupils are also largely satisfied with the school. They like the facilities and extra-curricular activities; however, many feel that staff are not interested in listening to their views and that there are inconsistencies in the way in which they are treated. The inspection confirms that the views of pupils are neither sought nor acted upon, but found no evidence that staff treated pupils differently.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise achievement in English;
- raise the effectiveness of teachers working outside their main subject area;
- increase the effectiveness of management processes, particularly in relation to monitoring the implementation of all aspects of the curriculum and the work of staff;
- ensure that the governing body fulfils its roles and responsibilities;
- extend the impact of the performing arts into the main school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- by fulfilling National Curriculum requirements for citizenship, careers education, PSHE, drugs awareness and for the use of ICT in subjects;
- for reporting National Curriculum assessments to parents;
- by providing a daily act of collective worship;
- for health and safety.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE EASTWOOD SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **reasonably effective** sixth form, which provides satisfactory cost-effectiveness. Recruitment has been low, but has been from small year groups. Examination results are well below average, although most students achieve standards that are comparable to expectations based on their attainment when they enter. Teaching is good overall. There has not been the same rise in standards in the sixth form as in the main school, and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. The impact of the school's specialist status as a performing arts college is having a beneficial effect. For example, an innovative partnership has been established with a private sector performing arts college, which is enhancing the students' opportunities considerably.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- High standards of performance are achieved in dance because of the high quality instruction.
- Expert teaching in subjects such as drama and ICT are resulting in committed students achieving well; however, shortcomings in expertise and experience in English and the theoretical aspects of dance are leading to students not achieving as well as they should.
- As in the main school, there are some weaknesses in management and a lack of clarity of management roles leading to the work of staff not being effectively monitored.
- Steps taken to tackle weaknesses in the teaching of human biology and ICT during last year have been effective.

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 for English is unsatisfactory. Teachers have good teaching skills but limited A Level experience. In spite of the students approaching their studies with enthusiasm they are not achieving as well as they should.
Science	Provision for human biology is satisfactory. Examination results were poor in 2003 and most students failed to achieve the standard of which their earlier GCSE results indicated they were capable. Action taken, including changing staff, has resulted in teaching that is now meeting the students' needs and enabling them to achieve satisfactorily.
Information and communication technology	Provision for ICT is satisfactory. There has been a considerable improvement in teaching and achievement this year following poor examination results in 2003.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for dance is good. Students achieve very high standards in their practical work because of expert teaching and very positive attitudes. Achievement is lower in theoretical aspects partly because staff are not qualified teachers and do not always know how to teach this aspect effectively. Provision for drama is good. Students respond well to the good specialist teaching and they achieve well, particularly in practical activities.
Business	Provision for business studies is good. The students achieve well because of good teaching and very good individual support and

guidance.

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 advice, support and guidance for sixth form students are satisfactory. While the students value the support from their teachers that a small sixth form can provide, and the careers support and advice that they receive, formal careers interviews are not available to all, unless requested. The students from the performing arts college do not receive the same quality of support because their progress is not monitored sufficiently.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. However, there are some weaknesses in management that hold back the students' achievement. For example, the dance and performing arts teaching provided by the private sector performing arts college partner has not been monitored effectively and these members of staff are operating without suitable management support. They are not qualified teachers and are struggling in their teaching of the academic aspects of some courses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form students are generally happy with the school. They particularly like the opportunities provided through the performing arts. Their main concern is that their views are not sought or taken into account by the school and some justifiably feel that they do not have access to suitable ICT equipment in their study areas.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Standards overall are average by Year 9 and by Year 11, and are generally below average in the sixth form. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of students of different ethnic backgrounds.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test results for Year 9 pupils and GCSE results have risen sharply and at a greater rate than nationally.
- GCSE results were above average in 2002.
- Students achieve high standards in dance performance in the sixth form.
- The specific needs of pupils with special educational needs are catered for well and they make good progress.
- The pupils do not achieve as well as they should in English. Year 9 test results in English were lower than those in mathematics and science in 2002; they fell in 2003, widening this gap considerably.
- Decisions taken by the school over the deployment of teaching staff are lowering achievement in several subjects.

Commentary

1. The main factors that account for the good achievement of the pupils in Years 7 to 11 found in most subjects are the fair proportion of good and better teaching, the fact that the taught week is much longer than in most schools, attendance is better than average and the pupils have a positive approach to their studies – they want to do well and succeed. These factors have combined to such an extent that the pupils have made very good progress from entry to the school and have attained much better GCSE results than might have been expected.
2. Overall National Curriculum test results for Year 9 pupils in 2002 were close to the national average and well above the results of pupils in similar schools. They represented very good progress for the pupils from their standards when they entered the school. Science results were better than English and mathematics because a greater proportion of the pupils achieved nationally expected levels. Mathematics results improved considerably in 2003, particularly for the proportion of pupils exceeding the national average. Science results were largely unchanged. English results fell and very few pupils exceeded the national average, while a considerable number failed to achieve nationally expected standards. The school's targets were met in mathematics and science in 2003 but missed by a considerable margin in English.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.5 (29.3)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	33.4 (33.2)	34.7 (34.4)
science	33.8 (34.2)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 142 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE almost doubled from 2000 to 2002 when they were above average and in the top five per cent of similar schools.

Girls have done better than boys at GCSE, reversing the Year 9 position, although apart from in 2000 the margin was smaller than nationally. Results fell in 2003 for a weaker cohort as their attainment on entry in Year 7 and their Year 9 test results had shown. They still represented good overall progress.

4. Science was the strongest of the core subjects in 2002 and again in 2003. The pupils made very good progress here from their Year 9 test results. English and mathematics results both fell in 2003 but still represented satisfactory progress from the pupils' Year 9 results. Both English and mathematics are among the lowest of the pupils' results on average. Relatively few pupils achieve the highest A*/A grades, reflecting the selection of the grammar schools in the area. Only in drama and physical education was the proportion of highest grades above average in 2002. The school's targets at GCSE were exceeded by a considerable margin in 2003; they have been set at a very challenging level in 2004.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	63 (44)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.9	34.2

There were 124 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 11 at a comparatively early stage of the school year was close to expected levels overall. These standards are broadly similar to the most recent Year 9 test results but are lower than the most recent GCSE results. The evidence from the inspection is that the pupils are not making the same rapid progress as in the past. The main reasons for this are the school's decision to deploy staff to teach outside their main subject and also that there are several graduate trainees and non-qualified instructors. This is having a particularly adverse effect in English.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as others in their classes; on occasion, such as in a mathematics lesson seen during the inspection, they make better progress when supported by a learning support assistant (LSA). Records show that many of the pupils withdrawn for additional literacy support make significant gains in reading and spelling. Gifted and talented pupils also make similar progress and achieve as well as others in their classes. By contrast, the small number of pupils with English as an additional language are not catered for effectively. The school has had little experience of pupils who do not speak English as a first language and who are at an early stage of acquisition. Assessments are made of pupils with English as an additional language by the local education authority and the school provides a learning assistant to work with pupils outside and later within English and some other lessons. Apart from dictionaries, no special books or materials are provided and there has been no special monitoring or recording of language development.

Sixth form

7. The number of students taking examination courses through to Year 13 each year is small and has fluctuated considerably. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is also well below average. Results have been at best well below average and in 2002 were in the bottom five per cent of schools, although, with only 4 students taking A Level, comparisons are hardly valid. A comparatively small number completed AS and A Level courses in 2003. AS Level results were particularly weak in 2003 in human biology and ICT. The school has taken steps to tackle the shortcomings identified in the teaching of these groups, the beneficial effect of which is already seen in both subjects.
8. The school has entered into a partnership with a local commercial performing arts college. Students from this college are taught alongside school students in A Level dance and drama and on the performing arts AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) course. Students from the performing arts college considerably outnumber those from the school; however, this arrangement considerably enhances the viability of these three courses in particular. The specialist dance instruction produces high achievement and performance of a high standard. Some students with special educational needs are also doing very well in this aspect of the course. However, these staff are not qualified teachers and do not have the skills to ensure satisfactory achievement in the academic part of the A Level course.
9. Achievement overall on sixth form courses is satisfactory but standards are at best below average. The students do well and achievement is good in business studies and in drama largely as a result of good teaching and high levels of commitment by the students. Achievement in English is unsatisfactory, as the teachers do not have sufficient expertise at present to challenge the students to achieve higher standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are good between Years 7 and 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Behaviour is generally good throughout the school though with a few aspects for improvement. Pupils' personal qualities are satisfactory. Their moral and social development is good; it is satisfactory for their spiritual and cultural development. Attendance is good for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 enjoy coming to the school and want to do well.
- The school has successfully established a calm, orderly environment in which pupils can learn and develop.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 10 report a significant amount of name-calling which occasionally gets out of hand.
- Attendance in Years 7 to 11 has improved significantly since the last inspection and enables pupils to achieve well as they move through the school.

Commentary

10. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 strongly agree that this is a good school. They like being pushed academically by the teachers so that they can get the qualifications they need for the next stage of their learning. They enjoy the range of sports and performing arts activities which are available before and after school. They respect the headteacher and the good reputation which he has established for the school. All these factors mean that they are willing to work hard and do their best. Attitudes in lessons vary between subjects and year groups. For example, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good in science where pupils respond very well to the high quality teaching they receive. This was seen to particularly good effect in a Year 7 lesson when the boys were greatly motivated by the very brisk pace and clear explanations provided by the teacher. In contrast, some boys in Years 8 and 9 do not respond well to the

inexperienced teaching they receive in some English lessons and so do not produce enough work.

11. The behaviour and moral education of the pupils are well supported by the general ethos of the school, which expects high standards of conduct and responsibility for one's own actions. Pupils move around the school with considerable self-discipline and little need for staff supervision, such as in the narrow corridors and the cramped dining room. In lessons, they usually behave well and there were no break-downs in discipline as occurred at the last inspection. Those joining the school from other schools greatly appreciate the safe atmosphere which enables them to make better progress than before. There are good opportunities for discussion of moral issues in a range of subjects, notably English, science and humanities.

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	655	63	1
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	8	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	169	0	0

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

12. Permanent exclusions have fallen since the last inspection, but fixed period exclusions have risen. The most common reason for exclusion is abusive language to staff. The school does not formally analyse its exclusions data by racial or ability groups. It excludes pupils from lessons when they are unable to wear the correct uniform.
13. Pupils' relationships with others are good and their social skills are developed very well in many lessons and extra-curricular activities, particularly in the performing arts and physical education. On the other hand, a high percentage of pupils feel that there is a considerable level of teasing of pupils who are different in any way, including their size or the colour of their skin. Relationships between some girls in Year 9 are particularly abrasive. The pupils tend to accept this as a part of life and say that telling a teacher often makes things worse. When incidents of bullying are reported to heads of houses, they are usually dealt with effectively. Pupils' understanding of their rights and responsibilities in society is restricted by the lack of a formal programme of personal, social and citizenship education. The school council has only very

recently been revived and does not involve pupils in schemes to bring about improvements in areas that concern them.

14. Beliefs and values are explored well in religious education but there are few opportunities for reflection on the wider significance of what pupils are learning in other subjects. The week's assemblies on the theme of remembrance encouraged pupils to consider the sacrifices made by past generations but lacked a warm and uplifting atmosphere. The school continues to fail to provide a daily act of collective worship, and has reduced the time in the morning which pupils spend with their form tutor when this could take place.
15. The status of performing arts in the school provides many very good opportunities for pupils' cultural development in dance, drama and music. The school is less successful in promoting appreciation of other cultures, except in music, geography and religious education. Involvement by Year 7 pupils in a multicultural week with a local junior school is an example of good practice in this area.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	1.3
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

16. Over the last four years, the school has consistently achieved an attendance rate that is slightly above the national average. Unauthorised absence fell last year. The school's pastoral manager has worked very effectively with the Education Welfare Officer to raise attendance from the well below average levels reported at the last two inspections. Pupils are now attending sufficiently frequently so that they are able to make the most of their lessons and other activities offered by the school. Parents understand the importance of sending their children to school regularly.

Sixth form

17. Students like the small size of the sixth form which enables them to receive a high level of personal support and guidance on their courses. The retention rate last year was good on all courses except for human biology, physical education, sociology and ICT. There are good opportunities for students' personal development through the two-week work experience placement, which all students are required to undertake, and the Trident Gold Award scheme which rewards community involvement and personal challenge. There is, however, no effective sixth form committee to give students experience of running their own activities.
18. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The school was unable to provide reliable data on students' attendance in the sixth form. There were several unexplained absences from lessons during the week of the inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. A significant proportion of the teaching is good or better. There are weaknesses in some aspects of the curriculum so that it is unsatisfactory overall, although it is enriched by extra-curricular drama, dance, music and sporting activities. Good links have been developed with the local community through the school's performing arts college status. The school is successfully involved in a consortium that undertakes graduate teacher training.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, but with considerable variation in quality. The assessment of the pupils' work and giving them guidance about how to improve are satisfactory overall but inconsistent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving teaching and the learning environment has contributed significantly to rising standards in the school.
- Teachers manage the behaviour of the pupils well so that learning flourishes in a calm and purposeful working atmosphere.
- The quality of teaching by inexperienced staff and the large number teaching outside their main area of expertise are having a detrimental effect on learning in some lessons and in English in particular.
- Teachers do not promote the use of ICT or develop the pupils' numeracy sufficiently in lessons.
- The good assessment practice in physical education is not matched in several subjects where inconsistency in the use of data to guide planning leads to work not being well matched to pupils' needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 156 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	32 (21%)	56 (36%)	54 (35%)	10 (6%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

19. There is a reasonable proportion of good and better teaching throughout the school that accounts for the good learning and achievement of most pupils. Members of staff have focused successfully on improving the environment for learning by developing good classroom control and teaching well-prepared lessons. This results in a calm atmosphere in most classes, enabling teachers to complete the planned work with the minimum of disruption. Learning thrives in these lessons, which generally have a very clear focus and in which skills are taught well. Teachers have also focused successfully on making sure that pupils understand test and examination requirements, through much practice of examination-style questions and techniques. Pupils are keen to succeed and work hard. They follow their teachers' instructions and guidance well and complete homework conscientiously.
20. This style of teaching has been very effective in raising standards in virtually all areas but has some shortcomings that limit further potential improvement. Pupils are only rarely taught lessons that develop their skills to learn independently of the teacher. Research, the use of ICT, discussion and group work are not methods that are systematically adopted. This creates a reliance on their teachers. Furthermore, the development of literacy and numeracy is not a consistent feature of many subjects in spite of some pockets of good practice.
21. Teaching boys and girls in separate classes in the core subjects has also helped to create a calm atmosphere in lessons and has improved boys' achievement and the standard of their work. However, only in a few cases were teachers seen to adopt different methods and styles to meet the potentially different ways in which boys and girls learn. This somewhat limits overall effectiveness of this system.

22. A further factor that is currently reducing teaching effectiveness is that the school has a large number of staff in training as part of the graduate teacher scheme and several instructors. In addition, a considerable number of staff are teaching outside their main area of specialism. This is having a particularly detrimental impact in English but also in several other subjects. This strategy is being employed to bring what the school sees as greater efficiency to develop the skills of teachers. Teaching in these lessons is generally less secure than when these members of staff are teaching their main subject. The methods that they adopt are limited because they have not been trained in the intricacies of the subject. They do not always have sufficient subject expertise to impart correct information or to put it over in a way that the pupils can understand. Learning is also not as rapid in spite of the application and patience of the pupils. Their achievement is at best satisfactory and at times is unsatisfactory. In some cases, these teachers have responsibility for examination classes in Years 9 and 11 for which they do not have sufficient expertise. This is a major factor in putting the future progress and continuing improvement of the school in jeopardy. The strategy has only been in operation for a short time and there are plans to provide staff with training, although currently this has been ineffective in most subjects. The exception to this is ICT, where several staff teaching this as their second subject are doing well.
23. The good practice in physical education, where all topics are assessed regularly and progress tracked from an assessment undertaken when the pupils enter the school, is not matched elsewhere. Other subjects test regularly but do not always use the information to modify their teaching as has recently happened in mathematics in response to the rising attainment of the pupils on entry to the school. One particular shortcoming is that several departments do not have secure procedures to fulfil the statutory requirements to provide teacher assessments of the pupils in Year 9. Electronic computer-based systems are being developed to track the progress of pupils against targets and predicted grades, but these are not currently complete. Good assessment of pupils with special educational needs is enabling their progress to be tracked well against the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). These are reviewed regularly and adapted where necessary. The progress of pupils with English as an additional language is not being assessed and monitored effectively and steps taken to support their achievement are generally not focused on their needs. Marking is inconsistent across and within departments. While there is much valuable and informative marking in history and constructive comments give the pupils an indication of how they can improve their work in art, these features are not consistently seen in all subjects.

Sixth form

24. Teaching is good overall in the sixth form, although with a considerable variation between subjects and in some cases within subjects. The steps taken to tackle poor AS Level results in ICT and human biology are having a good impact. The new members of staff who are teaching these courses are doing so well. There is also much high quality instruction on the A Level dance course. However, weaknesses in subject expertise and skills are having an adverse effect in some areas. A Level teaching of English suffers particularly in this respect as does the theoretical part of the A Level dance course.
25. Many of the qualities seen in lessons in the main part of the school are also evident in the sixth form. Careful planning and well managed classes, coupled with the considerable commitment of the students are resulting in good learning overall. Where members of staff have the necessary expertise, they teach with confidence and enthusiasm. Lessons in these subjects are interesting and methods varied appropriately. However, one weakness is that the students are quite dependent on their teachers and do not develop readily skills of research and independent learning.
26. Assessment in the sixth form also has the same attributes and shortcomings as in the main part of the school.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Some statutory requirements are not met and it lacks coherence in certain areas, especially those which relate to personal development. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. There are sufficient staff, but several are inexperienced or in the process of being trained.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has several shortcomings, particularly in its breadth and balance and the effectiveness with which cross-curricular themes are implemented.
- The following statutory requirements relating to the curriculum are not met. There is no religious education in the sixth form, no regular act of collective worship for any age group, no school policy for teaching about alcohol and drug misuse, and provision for citizenship in Years 7 to 11 is not comprehensive.
- The school provides well for pupils who have special educational needs.
- There is no co-ordinated programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE); it is taught in several subject areas as well as by visiting staff, but its effectiveness is not evaluated.
- There is no library and, while pupils are becoming accustomed to using the Internet for research purposes, they rarely consider using books or newspapers.
- Many opportunities for enrichment occur beyond the school day; performances of drama and music are frequent and of high quality.

Commentary

27. Curricular provision is unsatisfactory because some statutory requirements are not met and areas such as PSHE are inadequately monitored in the main school. The curriculum in most subjects is suitably broad; however, pupils do not make sufficient use of computers in subject areas in Years 7 to 9 and not all pupils take a course in ICT in Years 10 and 11. The way subjects are scheduled in Years 7 to 9 has a negative impact on learning because several teachers take subjects in which they are not qualified. The arrangements for options in Years 10 and 11 this year have led to a significant drop in the numbers choosing to study French to examination level. No regular act of collective worship takes place in assemblies or form tutor time. There is no suitable programme for careers education.
28. There are no timetabled lessons dedicated to PSHE or a programme of study. Aspects of PSHE are covered in subject areas and assemblies. The governors have not agreed a policy on alcohol and drug misuse. Members of the science staff teach parts of the sex education curriculum in Year 7 and deal with the effects of drugs on the human body and the community in Years 9 and 10, including issues like steroids in sport. This does not in itself fulfil all the requirements of the PSHE curriculum and staff members from outside the school teach aspects pertaining to ethics and relationships. However, no co-ordinated and coherent programme was available in school during the inspection and there are no records of monitoring or evaluation of the quality of teaching in either sex or drugs education.
29. The school is inclusive. Girls and boys have equal access to all parts of the curriculum and there are examples of good practice, including the involvement of large numbers of boys in dance. English, mathematics, science and religious education are taught in single sex groups for a large part of their time at the school and there is evidence to suggest that this has some positive impact on the quality of boys' achievement in mathematics and science. However, by including religious education in this arrangement, the school prevents pupils from having the opportunity of discussing ethical and religious ideas in mixed groups. The impact of this is not monitored. The school has made some alternative provision for pupils in the 14 to 16 age range by requiring all to take a general national vocational qualification, but there are few formal links with vocational programmes or other types of course in other institutions. The school does not have secure procedures to provide all of its pupils with a coherent programme from the age of 14 to 19.

30. The pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Need are provided with the level and nature of support that is required by the statement. They are usually provided with more hours of support than is required. The majority of pupils are taught in mainstream classes and so have their full entitlement to the school curriculum, including the National Curriculum. Those withdrawn from French lessons benefit from the additional literacy input. Targets in the individual education plans (IEPs) are not always clear and tightly focused, but they offer appropriate information and guidance on strategies for responding to those pupils in lessons.
31. The school does not follow conventional procedures for curriculum development. Uncertainty over why or whether a decision has been made means that members of staff fail to understand the whole picture, leading to curriculum development which is slow-moving, incoherent or based on insecure premises.
32. There is an extensive, published programme of extra-curricular activities for all pupils. These range from sports clubs during lunchtime and before and after school, homework and other clubs. Provision in performing arts is very good with numerous opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of productions held throughout the year. The Kings School and Mencap Music School provide very good additional musical opportunities. These significantly enhance the achievement of those involved. By contrast, opportunities for pupils to visit places as part of the teaching programme are limited, and restrict the broader development and understanding of the pupils.
33. The school is fully staffed. Twelve teachers are unqualified and some of these follow the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The school is a designated recommending body for the award of this qualification and participants receive suitable support within departmental areas. Restrictions imposed by the timetable have meant that several teachers are required to teach subjects for which they are not qualified. This has a negative impact on learning as they lack subject knowledge and familiarity with methodology.
34. The school's accommodation varies in quality; it is very good in music and good in art, drama and physical education. In other areas it is satisfactory, except in respect of the library. Resources are very good in music, good in history, geography and physical education and satisfactory elsewhere. The decision has been taken to abandon a conventional library and replace it with a media resources centre. The school has moved books, newspaper and magazine resources to departmental areas and provided central access to computers with Internet access. It is too early to assess the impact of this change, but conversations with older pupils indicate that they do not see the need for books and prefer to look things up on the Internet.

Sixth form

35. The breadth of curricular opportunities in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There is no religious education, act of collective worship, suitable numeracy course or formal PSHE programme. However, the school provides a range of vocational courses in the sixth form which meets the needs of those students who stay on. The Whitehall Centre provides a centre of excellence for those students wishing to follow a professional course in the performing arts. Similarly, students from Whitehall benefit from being able to study other mainstream qualifications during their three-year course, including dance, drama and performing arts, which enable them to leave with a number of relevant, recognised qualifications. The school teaches students communication and ICT as part of a key skills programme and has received commendation from the examination board for this. There is work experience for all Year 12 students, evaluated to identify potential improvements.

Care, guidance and support

36. The school provides satisfactory support, advice and guidance to its pupils. Procedures for ensuring the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are unsatisfactory. The school does not involve the pupils and students sufficiently in its work and development by seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are supported and guided well in Years 10 and 11 so that they are able to achieve highly in their GCSE examinations.
- A small but significant number of arrangements for child protection, first aid and pupil safety are not carried out properly.
- Pupils' and students' ideas and opinions are not systematically taken into account by the school.

Commentary

37. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are pleased with the way in which they are helped to adapt to the demands of their GCSE courses. Teachers provide effective support and guidance in their lessons by making clear, for example, exactly what the requirements for gaining good GCSE grades are. All Year 11 pupils are assigned a mentor from the teaching staff who helps them meet their targets by advising on, for example, prioritising their work in order to meet coursework deadlines and devising revision strategies. All Year 11 pupils also have good access to careers advisers from the Connexions service, whose impartial advice and support compensate to some extent for the lack of any formal careers lessons in the school. Because of this shortcoming, the school cannot guarantee that pupils receive consistent advice and support as they move up to sixth form or further education.
38. Parents are pleased with the arrangements for settling their children into school at the age of 11 and cite examples of summer schools in a range of subjects which provide opportunities for some pupils to meet each other and their teachers before starting school in September. A significant minority of pupils, mainly in Years 7 and 8, prefer discussing any problems they have with their friends rather than an adult in the school and are not aware of any confidential counselling services offered. As pupils get older, they develop a greater level of trust in the staff and are more willing to go to their form tutor or head of house. Good support is provided for pupils with special educational needs by the team of highly qualified teaching assistants. Pupils with talents in the performing arts are given good opportunities to achieve highly, but pupils gifted in other subjects are not identified or supported with special programmes. Arrangements for supporting and recognising the skills of pupils whose first language is not English are unsatisfactory.
39. The designated teacher for child protection is very experienced in the role, has good links with local agencies and also monitors the progress of pupils in public care closely. However, arrangements have not been made to ensure that the significant number of untrained teachers who joined the school this term under the graduate teacher programme are sufficiently informed about child protection procedures and possible signs of abuse. First-aid is satisfactorily administered by a well trained and experienced member of staff, but treatment is not recorded as recommended in national guidance. Although many appropriate health and safety checks and procedures are in place, inspectors found that arrangements in the car park at the end of the school day are unsafe as there is no separation of moving vehicles from pupils walking to the exit.
40. Pupils are satisfactorily involved in setting and reviewing their targets although there is some inconsistency between subjects. They are not, however, invited to contribute to their reports or individual education plans. They say that some staff listen to them, but not all. The school council no longer meets regularly as it did at the last inspection and pupils feel that the ideas

they put forward a year ago have not been taken seriously. The effect is to limit pupils' development as independent, responsible and active learners and citizens.

Sixth form

41. Students value highly the one-to-one support and guidance that they get from the teachers in this small sixth form. The current system for monitoring and mentoring students is new this term, but it is working well in vocational subjects such as business studies, art and design, and health and social care. Students are pleased with the careers guidance and advice they receive from staff in the sixth form and benefit from a compulsory two-week work placement in Year 12. However, formal careers interviews are only offered to those who request them. Some students feel that their views about the provision of computers and the dress code are not listened to. There is no sixth form committee for students to air their grievances or to enable them to take responsibility for improving facilities in the common room.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and other schools and colleges are satisfactory. Links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are pleased to send their children to the school and they support their learning well at home.
- The school does not communicate with or involve parents sufficiently well.
- Good links with other schools and the community have been developed through the school's specialist status as a performing arts college.

Commentary

42. Parents are keen for their children to come to the school because they value the ethos of discipline and examination success which the headteacher has established since his appointment. They also like the range of activities available before and after school which result in their children being well motivated and constructively occupied. Parents play their part by making sure their children attend regularly and carry out work at home. They are now informed more frequently of how well their child is doing with the introduction of two interim reports per year, but the formal end-of-year reports are unsatisfactory. The computer package is not always used thoughtfully, assessment grades are not linked to National Curriculum levels, citizenship is not reported as required, and parents are not informed properly of pupils' attainment in the end of Year 9 national tests and teacher assessments.
43. Parents report a number of frustrations in communications with the school, including short notice of meetings and infrequent newsletters. The school is aware of these concerns: it has recently upgraded its telephone system and has innovative plans to develop a series of linked websites which will soon be fully operational. The school has consulted parents about their experiences of the Year 7 induction process and involves them appropriately in setting targets for their children at the beginning of the year. It does not, however, have robust systems for consulting and involving parents at other times. The parent-teacher association is not as active as it was at the last inspection and parent governors are not closely involved. The effect is that parents' goodwill and support are not utilised for the pupils' benefit as well as they could be.
44. The school's dance, drama and music departments are the focus for a number of important links with other schools and local organisations which enhance pupils' academic and personal development and provide a valuable resource for the community. Large numbers of pupils take part in performing arts activities and productions after school, at weekends and during the holidays. These not only develop their skills but also bring them into contact with a wide range

of people of all ages, some of whom have learning or physical disabilities. Schools and local organisations benefit by being able to borrow musical instruments, perform in the theatre or develop staff expertise. Worthwhile community links have also been established in physical education, art and design and food technology. Some of these links provide opportunities for pupils to raise money for charity or to offer a service to the community, such as organising a tea party for elderly people.

45. The transfer of pupils from a large number of feeder schools is managed satisfactorily, but links which enhance Eastwood teachers' understanding of what Year 7 pupils have already learnt are underdeveloped. The school's programme of visits and visitors is limited. There are very few links with employers and colleges to enhance the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

46. Parents are kept satisfactorily informed of their children's progress through a system of interim and full reports and parents' evenings, and personal contact with the head of sixth form. The school does not involve parents when their children are making their choices about what to do after leaving the sixth form.
47. Provision in the sixth form is very significantly enhanced by the school's link with the privately-run performing arts college which operates on the site. Students are able to study dance and they gain further experience by coaching at the stage school in the evenings. There are few other links with sixth forms and colleges because of the competitive nature of local provision for post-16 education. Appropriate links with employers and other organisations are in place to support vocational courses and work experience placements. An external adviser from a multi-national ICT company is making a very significant difference to the learning and achievement of students by his excellent weekly teaching and technical support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is a strong leader. Other members of staff provide satisfactory leadership within their areas of responsibility. There are shortcomings in aspects of management, which is unsatisfactory overall. The governance of the school is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's vision, enthusiasm and drive have been instrumental in raising both standards and the school's reputation.
- Governors do not fulfil their roles fully and have not ensured that the school meets all of its statutory requirements.
- Data evaluation is haphazard and is not being used by staff within departments to evaluate performance and set realistic targets for improvement.
- Management procedures are not resulting in the consistent implementation of policies or giving the school a clear picture of teaching strengths and areas for development.

Commentary

48. The headteacher has been instrumental in turning round what was an unpopular school in which academic standards and attendance were low and behaviour was a source of concern to parents. He has considerable drive and a clear vision of where the school is to go next. Standards have risen rapidly, but fell in 2003 at GCSE. Weaknesses have been, and continue to be, robustly tackled. The inspection recognises the significant difference that the headteacher has made, but has some concerns over the procedures being employed to achieve the school's goals. There is a danger that the current direction adopted in many areas of the school's work will not lead to a continuation of the school's improvement in recent years.

49. Of particular concern are the decisions that have been taken this year about staffing and staff deployment. Currently, the school is staffed by a large number of teachers who are in training on the graduate teacher programme and several staff who are employed as instructors. Furthermore, the decision has been taken for others to teach outside their normal area of major subject expertise. These actions are to be supported by training but currently this is not firmly in place. Many classes are, as a result, being taught by members of staff who do not have confident levels of expertise in the subject. This puts in considerable jeopardy the progress made in recent years. Decisions are based on the belief that good teachers can teach outside the area of their expertise. However, with this being the case in so many areas, training, support and guidance are stretched very thinly. Furthermore, it is putting a considerable burden on some teachers who are spending much time preparing lessons in subjects where they are uncertain. One other weakness is that there is no clear picture among staff at any level of what makes for consistently good learning. Senior members of staff also carry a considerable teaching load. As some of their teaching is among the best in the school, they are able to lead improvements in teaching through their professional qualities. However, this puts considerable strain on their ability to remain on top of important management functions.
50. The school has made some quite significant progress in recent years, particularly in raising standards at GCSE. Future planning is articulated in a complex strategic plan prepared by the headteacher with very limited consultation with staff, governors, parents and pupils. The previous inspection report highlighted this shortcoming, which has not been suitably tackled. The strategic plan does not have priorities that are few and clearly expressed. It is also very difficult for governors to monitor its implementation. Similarly, the success of many of the department plans are difficult to evaluate as any measures of potential success and targets to be achieved are vague and imprecise. In addition, department managers do not have a clear understanding of the implications of the assessment data available in their subjects. Assessment data generally is not held in a form that makes it easily accessible and accurately interpreted. The school has identified this weakness and is in the process of developing an ICT solution; however, its handling and interpretation of data are currently inadequate.
51. There are also shortcomings in the monitoring of some important aspects of the curriculum and the quality of the work of staff. The teaching of curriculum features that the school has decided to teach in several subjects (citizenship, sex education, careers, PSHE and the use of ICT in subjects, to name a few) is not planned with sufficient clarity, and implementation is not monitored with sufficient rigour. Consequently, several important areas are inconsistently promoted and the pupils' learning incoherently developed. Monitoring of teaching is not against a clear set of criteria that make for the best learning in a particular subject, hence the comparatively narrow range of styles adopted by staff. Middle managers are still not sufficiently skilled in this aspect of their work. Their line management by senior staff has not identified how this area of their work might be improved.
52. Financial management has enabled the school to extend and improve much of its accommodation. However, the principles of best value have neither been adopted by the governing body nor implemented consistently when making financial decisions. For example, stakeholders are not consulted and comparisons of spending not made with similar schools.
53. Governors are not significantly involved in shaping either the strategic view of the school's future or in identifying short-term priorities. They have limited expertise and rely heavily on the headteacher and senior management for information and direction. As such, they are not sufficiently independent to provide a critical and challenging voice. They receive and note decisions that have been made within the school. Rarely do minutes of meeting indicate any great level of discussion. Few governors visit the school to see it at work other than to attend special events such as concerts and other performances. Parent governors are not playing a pivotal role and there are long-term vacancies for co-opted governors. The ability of the

governing body to hold the school to account is very limited as shown by the considerable number of statutory requirements that are not met.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,858,485	Balance from previous year	334,393
Total expenditure	3,011,415	Balance carried forward to the next	181,463
Expenditure per pupil	3,792		

Sixth form

54. The school has developed an innovative approach to ensuring the viability of the sixth form through its partnership in the performing arts. This creative approach has extended the range of subjects available, given access to high quality dance instruction and been a focus for much of the development of the accommodation in recent years. The sixth form is considerably enriched by this arrangement as are the extra-curricular opportunities for pupils of all ages. However, the performing arts are not permeating significantly below sixth form level into the curriculum of the main school.
55. The strength of the headteacher's leadership has been instrumental in the development and progress that has been made in recent years. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory. However, there are weaknesses in some of the management processes, which are having an impact on achievement. There is considerable lack of clarity over just who is responsible, for instance, for monitoring the performance of students who pay fees to the performing arts company yet appear to be registered with the school. In general, the use of data to monitor progress and evaluate the performance of individual subjects is not organised in such a way to be easily analysed. The work of staff, such as the dance instructors, is not monitored closely enough so that areas of weakness are identified and steps taken to provide training and guidance. There is also a lack of clarity in the management responsibilities of the head of sixth form, the head of performing arts in the school and the manager of the performing arts college.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well below average.
- Results in GCSE examinations were also below average.
- Staffing and staff deployment are unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory: there are too many unsatisfactory and too few good lessons.
- Pupils do not have access to a library.
- The new acting head of department has made a very positive start with analysis and plans for improvement.
- Good attitudes and relationships were a feature of almost all lessons seen.

Commentary

56. The results of this year's tests for pupils in Year 9 were well below both the national average and those in the other core subjects. Attainment in English at this stage has remained below national levels, with much fluctuation, since the last inspection. This year there was also a sharp drop in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level. Far more pupils attained above average levels in mathematics and science than in English.
57. The results at GCSE, although also below the national average, presented a better picture, with some satisfactory progress for the pupils from their Year 9 results. There was a high entry rate for both English and English literature and an increase in the number of pupils gaining A grades. Comparisons in 2002 showed that boys at the school were doing better and girls worse than they were nationally.
58. Currently, standards remain below average, although work in Years 7 to 9 shows some overall improvement. Effective support helps most pupils with special educational needs to make progress but expectations of pupils in the lower sets are not high enough and there is insufficient variety and challenge in the lessons to enable all pupils to achieve well. Schemes of work relate to National Curriculum requirements but teachers do not provide a wide enough range of support material. In Year 8, pupils asked to write diaries were not shown examples from published diaries, genuine or fictional. In a lesson on autobiography in Year 11, there were no extracts to share and no references to any books. A Year 10 lesson on writing to inform made no use of the good examples suggested in the National Curriculum: memos, minutes, accounts, information leaflets, plans, records, summaries, etc. A top set in Year 11, working on obituaries, had only an exemplar from the Internet, consisting of a series of brief facts and comments. They did not read any of the well-crafted obituaries from broadsheet newspapers. In all these lessons, opportunities to extend pupils' range of reading, knowledge and vocabulary were missed.
59. In contrast, in two very good lessons Year 8 pupils in top sets examined key features of newspapers, and discussed current news items, fact and opinion distinctions, and stylistic choices and contrasts. The buzz of interest and curiosity in these lessons showed that pupils were being challenged to think and explore new territory. Well-chosen material, skilful presentation and high expectations in the teaching resulted in very good learning. Expectations

are not sufficiently high of what pupils in lower sets in Years 8 and 9 could do and what would interest them.

60. The staffing situation in the department affects the quality of teaching and learning. The large number of non-specialist and unqualified staff teaching English includes teachers with major specialist or management responsibilities in other areas and teachers in training. Only three of the 12 teachers have English as their main subject and only two of these have previous experience as qualified teachers. Classes in key examination groups in Years 9 and 11 are taught by non-specialists, many of whom have good teaching skills and excellent relationships with their classes but insufficient subject expertise. They follow the schemes of work and tackle the task professionally but they do not have the subject knowledge, experience and range of reference material which good English teachers bring to their work. This was evident in several of the lessons seen. Good relationships and firm control were not enough when material or methods failed to extend pupils' experience of language and literature or to generate discovery and excitement in their learning. Where there was over-reliance on worksheets, teacher direction and routine exercises, pupils were usually compliant but seldom fully engaged intellectually. Teachers sometimes talked too much and pupils too little. There were few opportunities for pupils to show initiative, take on a role, make a presentation or argue a case. In whole class work, answering a teacher's questions was often the main speech activity.
61. There are good systems for the assessment of pupils' work and for helping pupils to understand their levels, grades and targets. Marking of pupils' work varies considerably in quality, not always because of non-specialist staff. Some teachers from other departments give pupils very helpful comments on their work, responding thoughtfully to content and suggesting improvements. Where marking is weak, it consists of little beyond brief comments, spelling corrections and ticks, with some mistakes or misunderstandings left unchecked, and is not helping pupils to know how well they are doing or what they must do to improve.
62. In most classes, pupils were eager to learn, and behaviour and relationships were very good. There were exceptions to this where negative attitudes and poor behaviour impeded learning and prevented the teacher in one class from completing the lesson as planned.
63. The schemes of work provide appropriate topics for writing and some good work has been done in Years 7 to 11. Lively and imaginative verse writing in Year 7, work on newspapers in Year 8 and descriptive writing in Year 9, show that pupils can respond to a good stimulus and take pride in their work. Many of the pieces pupils write, however, are too short. Short answers and exercises outnumber writing tasks in which they develop and sustain a narrative, description or argument. In GCSE classes, pupils develop their ideas in longer essays and studies of aspects of literature texts. Middle range attainment is more evident than high quality writing and few pupils are drawing on wider reading experience of fiction, non-fiction, journalism and poetry.
64. The learning environment lacks sufficient books and information about books and this disadvantages both teachers and pupils. The department has regular access to computers, and pupils make good use of the Internet but the school has neither main nor classroom libraries. Pupils cannot be taught research skills in a school library, nor can they select books for their own reading, look at newspapers or enjoy browsing. For class reading there is a satisfactory supply of set texts and shared novels but the novels being read in Years 7 to 9 cannot be taken home. When a Shakespeare play is studied in Year 9, only the scenes set for study are given to pupils in photocopied handouts. They do not have copies of the whole play to refer to in class or to read in their own time. The school does not show that it values books, and it is not surprising to hear teachers complain that their pupils don't read.
65. The new acting head of department has started well with a departmental review which confronts the key issue of attainment in Years 7 to 9. She and her deputy offer models of good practice in the main school, but until the staffing of English improves, the management and

monitoring of this large team will make very heavy demands on her time and skills. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been variable but unsatisfactory overall. The recent increase in high level grades in GCSE is very encouraging. Boys' attainment is now better, and is benefiting from the decision to teach boys and girls in separate classes. However, the attainment of girls has declined as methods are not significantly adapted to take account of the different ways in which they learn. Only limited time has been given to supporting and monitoring new teachers. The overall quality of English teaching has not improved, but the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers are still evident.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. The literacy strategy was introduced and co-ordinated successfully by the previous head of English. It has now been taken over by a member of the management team. In 2001, a staff handbook was issued, with good strategies recommended to all departments. These valuably covered note taking, spelling, vocabulary, reading skills and methods of teaching writing and analysing text. There was also useful advice on pupils' use of the school library and librarian, which unfortunately is no longer relevant as the library has been taken out of use.
67. Departments other than English have not developed policies for the particular needs and opportunities in their own subject areas but some good work is being done, particularly in developing subject-specific vocabularies. The main weakness, noted in religious education, geography, ICT and music, is in the quality of writing. Departments are not doing enough to develop pupils' writing skills and there is no shared policy for correcting errors. This lack of consistency was noted in most areas. Good writing was seen in history and in GCSE physical education but, in general, departments are not doing enough to challenge the weaknesses in literacy which affect the quality of work in their subjects.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results are above the national average but the number choosing French has fallen recently.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and are keen to do well.
- ICT is not used in Years 7 to 9.
- The department does not make use of attainment data to improve performance and monitor teaching.

Commentary

68. Pupils entered for French GCSE in 2002 achieved significantly better results than they did in the average for all their other subjects. Less than half the total number in Year 11 took French; of these, the percentage gaining higher grades was twice the national average. In 2003, the percentage gaining higher grades fell by over 50 percentage points. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well motivated, positive about the language, and achieving well. The school reports Year 9 standards as assessed by teachers in 2003 as well above national expectation, but standards observed in lessons are average, with achievement in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but sometimes teachers have insufficient information to give the support required. Very few pupils have English as an additional language but they often make better progress than others, especially when transferring their bilingual skills from one language to another.
69. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and pupils learn well. They make good use of ICT and some learn independently. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Methodology is varied, including games, song and video; classroom management is usually good. Most classrooms

are well presented and pupils enjoy being active in lessons. They learn from each other and benefit when allowed to move around, developing French and social skills by mixing with each other and sharing information. Most teachers speak French well, but few sustain the language as the natural means of communication. Younger pupils make no use of ICT in their French lessons, although some use computers at home.

70. The new head of department provides satisfactory leadership and a positive role model for pupils and staff. Development plans contain good ideas, based on a clear vision of what pupils can do and achieve. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. Analysis of data is not readily available so patterns of attainment are not spotted for the purposes of planning and improvement. The intention to monitor exercise books every half term has not been fulfilled and practice is inconsistent. No mutual observations of teaching within the department have taken place and several ideas for development are not yet in action. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching is more consistent, resources are better, with more pupils benefiting from the use of video, and the department is fully staffed with qualified teachers. However, the number of pupils taking French at GCSE is still low and younger pupils still do not use ICT.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well organised teaching has enabled achievement to be well in excess of national expectations, although girls are attaining lower standards compared with boys.
- Good relationships within lessons are a positive aid to teaching and learning.
- Good support enables pupils with special educational needs to progress as well as their classmates.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not taking place on a regular basis.
- There is insufficient use of ICT as an aid to teaching and learning.

Commentary

71. Improvement overall since the previous inspection has been good. In the 2003 Year 9 national tests, the school's results were above the national average and those of similar schools. There has been good improvement over time at a rate greater than that achieved nationally. Overall performance was better than in English but below that in science. The percentage gaining the high Level 7 in mathematics was the highest of the core subjects. By contrast, GCSE results in 2003 fell from a performance at the national average in 2002; however, the number of pupils who gained a grade A increased. There was a difference of 15 percentage points in the pass rates, with the boys attaining close to their national average. These results represent good progress from the pupils' attainment when they entered Year 7. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with national expectations. Topics being learnt successfully, for example sine rule in Year 11 and probability in Year 7, represented good achievement. Books are marked thoroughly, with encouraging comments, but little guidance for pupils towards improving their performance.
72. Across the school teaching is good. Teaching is well planned with work that progresses at a suitably challenging pace. Specific tasks are provided in some lessons which provide extra challenge for the most able. Good use is made of homework to reinforce learning. Class control is good, with very good rapport between teachers and pupils. This creates an atmosphere free from stress in which pupils are confident to ask for help in front of their classmates. The practice of single sex classes is favoured by the pupils for this reason. No difference in the teaching of boys' and girls' classes was seen.

73. The department makes good use of assessment. Teachers have good knowledge of the pupils through clear records which include details of special educational needs. Teachers are careful to include all pupils fully into their lessons by using questioning well and helping pupils during the course of lessons. Teaching assistants, familiar with what is being taught, work well with the teachers and enable pupils with special educational needs to make the good progress of the rest of the class.
74. Pupils are well behaved with a good attitude. They want to learn. They respond enthusiastically in question and answer sessions, encouraged by teachers, who include all pupils. Pupils work well on set tasks. Little group work was seen, but there was good collaboration when paired working was required. Presentation of work is good; that of the girls a little better than that of the boys. Books give evidence that pupils across the school are reliable about doing homework.
75. Although members of staff are careful to use correct technical vocabulary, and pupils learn to explain answers in front of the class, the use of opportunities to develop literacy skills is not embedded in the department. Similarly, little use is made of pupils' ICT skills to aid teaching and learning, slowing their achievement. This is recognised by the department and a recent move close to a very good ICT facility provides opportunities for this matter to be tackled.
76. Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good elements. There is a clear appreciation of what is needed to raise standards further with the issues identified in the department's development plan. However, this plan is short on further detail, including accurate costings. There is a clear work scheme, essential when so many non-specialists teach mathematics, but this has insufficient detail about teaching strategies and does not tackle the lower achievement of girls. The monitoring of teaching and learning, referred to in the previous inspection, is still not being carried out effectively. The need for non-specialist teachers required by the blocked timetable makes this an even higher priority. Accommodation is good but has yet to provide the environment which reflects an enthusiasm for the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. The mathematics department teaches basic skills well. Pupils' standards are about the national average so progress in other curriculum areas is not hindered. Apart from a draft policy yet to be followed up, the development of mathematical skills across the curriculum is not being tackled. In science, the skills are both used and further developed but other areas only make use of mathematics as required by the needs of the subject. This holds back the pupils' ability to apply their skills in unfamiliar situations or to see the relevance of their learning in contexts beyond the mathematics classroom.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teaching is contributing to the rising standards and the good achievement of pupils.
- The very good pupil-teacher relationships provide a secure environment in which learning can take place.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked but comments on how the level of the work may be raised are not always included.

Commentary

78. Test and examination results show a very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were below average. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been below the national average. They made excellent progress so that results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were broadly average. These results were higher than those in mathematics and English. The results in 2003 indicate attainment levels that are higher and results are likely to be above the national average for all schools. The proportion of pupils who obtained grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in 2002 was well above the national average. The results at the end of Year 9 had been in line with the national average and so this represents good progress. Pupils performed better in science than the average in their other subjects. The percentage of A* -C grades was slightly lower in 2003 but still represents good progress based on the pupils' previous levels of attainment and predicted levels. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and virtually all pupils obtain a GCSE grade. There is no significant difference in the achievement of girls and boys, again an improvement since the last inspection.
79. Teaching is good overall. It ranges from excellent to satisfactory and is better in Years 10 and 11 where it is more consistently very good. The harmonious relationships and gentle but firm management give a secure stimulating environment enabling boys and girls to think scientifically, and lessons move on at a suitable pace. The good knowledge and understanding of the teachers are used to add interest to the lessons. Teachers give pupils everyday examples to assist learning and often link the work to the examination requirements and expectations. Pupils work well as individuals, in pairs and in groups. The good behaviour and attitudes makes a positive contribution to pupils' good progress. One shortcoming is that in some lessons teachers tend to fill in and develop the answers of the pupils, so restricting the development of the pupils' thinking skills. Pupils' books are marked with encouraging comments, but there is variable use of constructive comments that say how the work could be improved. The use of homework is generally good with tasks following on from, and developing the work of the lesson. This high quality of the teaching is leading to the high level of achievement of the pupils, including those with special educational needs. However, in lessons taken by non-specialist and non-qualified staff the achievement is lower. In these lessons the work is not so well targeted at the particular needs of the group and the focus less clear. There is a good emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary; reminders about grammar are given and advice is frequently given on possible research methods. The numerical aspects of the subject are also included at appropriate points in lessons and pupils use graphs to present data in relevant situations.
80. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision that has and is continuing to move the department forward. Non-specialist and less experienced staff are well supported and data is analysed carefully, used to track pupil progress and identify areas that require improvement. The decision to teach boys and girls separately is having a beneficial effect on making classes calm. However, the impact of this is limited at times because teachers do not consistently adapt methods to account for different styles of learning. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, standards improved considerably, the lower attainment of boys has been tackled with success, there is more active learning and a greater emphasis on investigative work. The use by pupils of ICT has improved but is still developing and the resources are still only satisfactory. Textbooks, although available in the homework club, cannot be taken home.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are now following the National Strategy for ICT and, as a result, standards are now consistent with national expectations.
- The number of computers for use by pupils is better than the average for a school of this size and extra-curricular access is good.
- National Curriculum reporting requirements for ICT have not been met at the end of Year 9.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. Some National Curriculum subjects are not yet adequately meeting the requirement to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
- Those pupils who do not take an ICT examination course in Years 10 and 11 are not guaranteed opportunities to use and develop their ICT skills and knowledge.

Commentary

81. GCSE results were above average in 2002, when over half of the year group studied the course. The percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades and A*-G was above the national average and above the average of the pupils' performance in their other subjects. The attainment of boys was slightly better than that of girls. The percentage gaining A*-C grades fell significantly in 2003 and is likely to be below average when national comparative figures are available. However, results were still the subject of an appeal at the time of the inspection.
82. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 pupils are currently following a course based upon the National Strategy for ICT. In Year 9 all pupils are now following a course which will lead to a GNVQ unit accreditation and provide a sound foundation for work in Year 10. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall, although some good teaching was seen in all years. In Years 7 and 8, lessons had suitable pace in an effective and supportive, working atmosphere. Appropriately challenging resources were used to cater for a range of abilities. Teachers' support for individuals or small groups during lessons is often good, although some less able pupils do not have the benefit of the availability of basic software guides. Records of the last end of Year 9 teacher assessments were not available in the department, or apparently known to teachers. This impairs the ability of staff to use past assessment experience to plan the current course to best effect and for pupils to gain an understanding of their progress.
83. More than half of pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow either a GNVQ intermediate ICT examination course or the applied GCSE ICT course. Achievement is good. Standards are consistent with expectations overall in both examination courses, although some good work was seen in all lessons and work samples. In the examination courses in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good overall. Much good individual support is provided for pupils. This enables pupils with special educational needs in particular to make good progress. Work is assessed appropriately in relation to examination requirements. Most lessons have clear objectives and good pace. The lack of short-term objectives in some lessons slowed the pace of learning for some less able pupils.
84. Leadership and management of discrete ICT provision are satisfactory. From evidence seen during the inspection, the non-ICT specialists who teach the subject are well briefed, well supported and generally well prepared for their role. The management and use of assessment information are unsatisfactory. Evidence was not available or seen of National Curriculum levels being reported to parents at the end of Year 9 in 2003. Pupils' reports are very brief and lack appropriate and specific targets to help them to make progress. The improvement in the provision of discrete ICT up to Year 11 since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. However, the lack of clarity regarding assessment in Year 9 is a significant weakness in management. Pupils have good access to ICT resources in various parts of the school outside lesson times to complete homework and examination coursework.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. The use of computers to enhance teaching and learning is still inadequate in many subjects. This was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and insufficient progress has been made since then. This is despite a better than average number of computers and the programme of New Opportunities funded ICT training, which has been completed by teaching staff.
86. Both the leadership and management of cross-curricular ICT are unsatisfactory. Overall responsibility for ICT across the curriculum rests within the senior management team. There is neither an up-to-date audit of ICT use in subjects nor an overall plan to ensure that subject departments meet National Curriculum requirements. This is of particular concern for those pupils in Year 10 and 11 who do not take an ICT exam course. There is no standardised booking system for ICT rooms, which would enable a record of departmental use to be kept and analysed. However, the heavy use of ICT resources by regular timetabled ICT lessons can, at times, make it difficult for subject departments to have access to computers at appropriate times.
87. The school is deriving great benefit as a result of the excellent level of technical support from an adviser who is on sabbatical release from a multi-national ICT company. This contribution is making a very significant difference to the effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of the school's ICT infrastructure. It is also providing innovative management and communication facilities, which will soon be fully operational. Improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the teaching by subject specialists enables pupils to achieve above average standards by the end of Year 11.
- The positive attitudes shown by pupils enhance their learning.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT as a teaching and learning aid.
- Procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of geography are ineffective.

Commentary

88. Standards have improved since the last inspection, particularly at the end of Year 11. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 are average, with girls attaining a higher standard than boys because they more often display a broader range of skills and use technical vocabulary with greater accuracy. Pupils achieve above average standards at the end of Year 11. The percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades at A*-C and A*-G for 2002 was above the national average with further improvements in 2003. Most pupils achieved or bettered their predicted GCSE grade. There is a rising trend in the number of pupils attaining the highest grades at GCSE. Girls attained at a higher level than boys in 2002, although boys did marginally better in 2003.
89. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils use an increasing range of geographical skills. For example, pupils in Year 7 can draw accurate maps, use four and six-figure grid references and locate places using an eight-point compass. By the end of Year 9 they have a good sense of place and can compare with confidence development issues relating to different countries. However, pupils cannot routinely describe and explain patterns and are given limited opportunity for independent study by the insufficient use of ICT to aid their learning. By Year 11, pupils can describe the formation of a hurricane and its impact upon a country. They use an increasing range of skills to select and present data, including temperature and rainfall graphs and synoptic charts. However, only

higher-attaining pupils explain physical processes with confidence. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, who make sound progress.

90. The quality of teaching and learning remains good, as it was at the last inspection. In Years 7 to 9 subject specialists use their secure knowledge to teach well-planned and focused lessons. For example, the teacher in a Year 9 lesson on economic activities used a wide range of resources and challenged pupils' understanding with incisive open-ended questioning. Positive attitudes mean that in the majority of the lessons pupils work collaboratively. The less effective lessons were due to teachers having insecure subject knowledge and being reliant upon the textbook. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is consistently good. The best lessons were well planned and pitched at the appropriate level. For example, the teacher of a good lesson on hurricanes in Year 10 made very good use of a range of resources, challenged pupils' understanding by focused questioning and provided a range of learning opportunities. The use of ICT remains very limited despite the increase in the number of workstations available in the school. Only one lesson made use of ICT to aid pupils' understanding.
91. The geography department is well led by an experienced member of staff. The department has a clear sense of purpose, is well organised and has detailed schemes of work. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Members of staff make effective use of assessment data. However, management is only satisfactory as there are very limited monitoring and evaluation procedures in place to support the increased number of non-specialists now teaching the subject. The good practice of some of the teachers is not shared with others so that their teaching can improve. In addition, marking is very inconsistent and ranges from incisive comments with clear targets to work not being marked. There is little opportunity for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9, restricting the pupils' progress in this important area.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well across the school and GCSE results now equal the national average.
- Teaching targets historical skills effectively through extended writing about historical events and changes in the periods studied.
- Assessment procedures are well planned to monitor pupils' performance, and constructive marking is helping pupils to raise their standards.
- Very good leadership and teamwork have advanced the subject's position.
- Opportunities for independent enquiry and use of ICT are limited.

Commentary

92. GCSE results in history were below average in 2002 and pupils did not do as well in history as in their other subjects. More pupils took the examination in 2003 and there was a considerable improvement in the results. Pupils' achievement in the current Year 11 is good; they are maintaining overall standards in line with the national average. They have already produced some impressive coursework on the era of prohibition in America. This marked improvement is the result of the teachers' emphasis on developing examination techniques through regular practice questions and detailed feedback on work. Pupils' study of the development of medicine is thorough and their notes well presented. The majority of pupils are highly motivated and make good progress in lessons, but some lower-attainers do not apply themselves fully to working at tasks on their own.
93. In Year 9 standards are average and achievement is good. Pupils have used historical sources well as a basis for their detailed essays on the slave trade. Instruction in how to plan a history essay is helping most pupils improve their writing. Their reviews of developments

during the Industrial Revolution show the ability to evaluate which changes made progress and which were regressive. Structured examination of contemporary sources enabled lower-attainers to demonstrate similar skills by producing posters for or against the early railways. Higher-attainers showed initiative in finding out information on famous inventors and entrepreneurs but many pupils lack the skills for independent enquiry. Pupils enjoy their lessons, behave well and work hard.

94. Good teaching is producing effective learning in most lessons but split classes in Year 11 do not help continuity of learning. A particular strength of the teaching is the rigorous assessment and detailed marking of pupils' work. The level of academic challenge is well-pitched for the different sets and pupils are well prepared for examinations in Year 11. Teachers place due emphasis on literacy by practising reading aloud, defining subject vocabulary and giving opportunity for pupils to develop their writing in a range of styles. Drama and role-play are used to some extent to engage pupils in learning, but there is still scope for greater variety of learning styles. In particular, opportunities for independent enquiry with access to reference books and computers are limited. Local history and fieldwork are neglected areas of the history curriculum.
95. Highly effective leadership and management have produced a revival of the subject's fortunes over the last two years and its standing is now higher than at the time of the previous inspection. There has been a large increase in the number of pupils studying history to GCSE and a significant rise in standards. Resources have improved to cope with the expansion and the department's new location gives it the potential to make full use of new technology.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment is well organised and standardised across years.
- There are too many non-specialists teaching the subject and little in-service training
- There has been insufficient preparation for the recent changes in how the subject is delivered.
- Negative attitudes, particularly in all-boy classes, are responsible for underachievement in Year 11.

Commentary

96. Results for the GCSE short course in religious education rose significantly from 2001 to 2002, reaching a position that, while below the national average for all schools, compared favourably with similar schools. The upward trend was reversed this year, when results plummeted both on the short and full courses at GCSE. Bad planning led to a situation where one-third of pupils found themselves on the full course against their wishes and they responded negatively, producing poor quality coursework assignments.
97. In Year 9 pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are average for similar schools. In their work on faith heroes, pupils showed reasonable understanding of the concept of self-sacrifice for the good of others, although many were not sure of the particular religious motivation behind the work of Father Damien and Mother Theresa. Higher-attainers are able to apply their learning to practical ideas for making life better for groups of needy people in the local community. Pupils generally respond well to activities that help them to identify with the needs of others. However, some pupils in lower sets are reluctant learners, who are underachieving, despite the stimulating use of artefacts and videos by teachers.
98. Standards are below average on both the GCSE courses in Year 11, and there is a fair amount of underachievement, particularly in the all-boys classes. The standard of work is variable both within classes and between sets, as the first common assessment on issues around the

sanctity of life has shown. Many pupils lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of relevant religious teaching to be able to apply it to specific situations. In written answers to discussion questions, many pupils tend to state their views without justifying them or considering other views. Some pupils have kept thorough, well-presented notes but others have an incomplete record, for example, copying out key texts without any explanation of their relevance to the issue being studied. Coursework on religion and the media is well advanced with a few pupils but far from completion by most.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but with some significant shortcomings. Teachers try to connect lessons to pupils' experience of life, for example, tapping into their sense of fairness to introduce Christian teaching on justice. Humanities teachers are using their particular subject expertise to good effect as an added dimension to the study of topics such as crime and punishment. Where expectations are the same as in other humanities subjects, pupils are responding more positively. Most of the problems stem from the fact that the timetable needs teachers from other departments to cover lessons, so there is not a manageable team that can build up its expertise over time and benefit from a programme of professional development. Consequently, humanitarian aspects tend to take precedence over religious significance in the treatment of topics and the spiritual dimension is neglected. Teaching is made more difficult by the lack of sufficient textbooks to service the number of classes being taught at any one time in all years.
100. Leadership is satisfactory. However, the school's arrangements for managing the subject are unsatisfactory given the number of teachers involved whose priorities lie in other areas of the curriculum. Lunchtime consultations by the subject leader offer good support for teachers. A well-organised system of half-termly, common assessments, often marked by the head of department, facilitates accurate monitoring of standards in all years. There is no direct monitoring and evaluation of teaching and no training for teachers new to the subject. In these circumstances, the detailed lesson plans are an asset in Years 7 to 9, but there is not the same guidance for non-specialists in Years 10 and 11, nor the same variety of teacher-produced resources. Cramped accommodation makes it difficult to establish an accessible resource base. The organisation of coursework is too protracted to ensure prompt completion.
101. Religious education is in transition from being mainly taught by one or two specialists in the past, to team delivery of the subject this year. Planning for the change has been minimal but teachers have responded professionally in showing commitment to making the system work. The gradual improvement in standards achieved up to 2002 was lost dramatically in 2003 and it is too early to judge how successful the current experiment will prove in raising standards in the long term.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching from a strong team of specialist staff encourages good achievement.
- Limited knowledge of pupils' capability in design and technology on entry in Year 7, results in some teachers not taking account of prior learning.
- National Curriculum guides are used very well, but a lack of standardisation means that members of staff do not have a common understanding of attainment across all elements of designing and making.
- Very good use is made of ICT as a tool for learning.
- There are limitations in designing techniques in Years 9 to 11.

Commentary

102. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below national averages because the good planning of the newly formed department has only just started to feed through from Years 7 and 8. There is no assessment for design and technology when pupils enter the school in Year 7, which makes judgements of improvement in learning between Years 7 and 9 insecure. Pupils achieve well. Standards of work seen were in line with national averages. There has been a good improvement in assessment and schemes of work.
103. Standards achieved at GCSE in Year 11 were below average in 2003 because the pupils' basic design skills were neglected. Techniques such as speed sketching, isometric and orthographic drawing skills, applying dimensions to working drawings, flow planning and rendering had limited groundwork during their time in Years 7 to 9. Work seen is just in line with national expectations for the majority of pupils because precise planning is beginning to raise standards in the design process; achievement is good.
104. Teaching and learning are good across all years; there are elements of outstanding teaching in food technology and electronics. These teachers have backgrounds in industry which they use to good effect in their demonstrations. These raise standards of making and challenge thinking. Teachers and pupils make very good use of ICT to promote learning. In some classes pupils email in their homework and examples of their practical work are stored on the computer so they can review the designing of their peers. Group work is used to develop ideas and evaluate outcomes but is restricted to friendship groups, missing the opportunity to challenge the pupils' communication skills. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 use confidently ICT as a tool to improve their learning. Teachers use a good variety of methods to ensure that the pupils reach their potential. Pupils with special educational needs have good support and achieve well. More able pupils have the freedom to extend their learning, as seen in the master classes for sugar craft at an after-school club. Pupils' learning is purposeful. They know that designs will sometimes fail and that it is part of learning, so are clear what they must do to improve. Teachers use modified language of National Curriculum levels to ensure that pupils are starting to be more independent and self-motivated. However, teachers are generally not standardising their judgements to gain a common understanding of attainment across all elements of the design and technology curriculum. Marking is inconsistent across the department; pupils explained they preferred to have comments to help them understand how to improve. Resources in lessons are consistently good and the effective use of wall displays and photographs celebrate positive achievement across the department.
105. Leadership of the department is very good because the new manager has aimed to build on the many strengths of the staff, including the technicians. Skilled mentoring makes the department particularly suited to training students and new staff on graduate teacher programmes. Management is good. There are clear and succinct policies in place that mirror whole school policies, but monitoring is limited. There are good links to the local community, which are strongest from food technology.
106. Good improvement from the previous inspection has systematically addressed points raised during the previous inspection, but inconsistency in marking remains an issue.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

107. Art and design and music were inspected in depth, but lessons were also observed in drama and media studies. Three **drama** lessons were seen. Teaching in these lessons was always at least satisfactory and one Year 11 lesson was very well taught. Pupils were achieving highly in practical skills in this lesson because of the expert teaching and excellent relationships that had been established. Standards in another Year 11 and a Year 8 lesson were broadly satisfactory. The Year 10 **media studies** lesson was taught well. The teacher had secure subject-knowledge and used technology well to direct the teaching and to encourage the pupils to respond. They showed considerable enthusiasm for the subject and were achieving average standards in their work.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in public examinations are very high, driven up by the very good teaching and learning experiences offered to pupils.
- The great majority of pupils display very good behaviour and positive attitudes to work; they achieve well in lessons.
- Although good records are kept of pupils' progress over the units of work, examination grades are not analysed effectively to enable the department to respond to individual or group needs.
- Relationships are very good and contribute to a relaxed, but industrious working environment in which good progress in learning can be made.
- The use of computers is not sufficiently well developed to enable pupils to exploit the wealth of creative possibilities in digital art.

Commentary

108. In recent years this very well led department has improved on public examination results year on year. The examination courses were changed to vocational studies for 2003 and the department has attained a very high performance peak in the GNVQ full intermediate examination for that year, far above national averages. This is the leading edge of the very good improvements made since the previous inspection. The GNVQ part 1 results were disappointing, brought down by some disaffection and poor attendance towards the end of the course. In spite of the success of the full course, few pupils go on to advanced level courses at the school. The department is reviewing these courses, which tend to restrict the creative development of the more able and talented pupils, and do not enable the department to explore effectively links with the performing arts. The very good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils are in a large part responsible for the maintenance of such high standards. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that the department may not improve further in future years. Very good interrelationships and the very good behaviour in lessons ensure that the environment for learning is positive, industrious, and characterised by very good progress against lesson targets and over time.
109. The excellent grades attained in public examinations are not analysed and the opportunity to explore any differences in performance between individuals or groups, such as ethnic or gender groups, is missed.
110. The department is improving its computer resources and benefits from a very good level of understanding of the potential for exploring digital art and animation. A small collection of fine art CDs has been produced for presentation to classes, but the department is not yet equipped to use these to full effect.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Levels of participation and achievement are excellent in extra-curricular stage performances and have improved since the last inspection.
- Additional provision for music in the community is good, including the Mencap Saturday School for young people and adults with special educational needs.

- Leadership and management of music are very good and teachers give generous amounts of time to extra-curricular activities.
- Although standards are satisfactory overall, recent GCSE results have been below the national average.

Commentary

111. Achievement is satisfactory in music and standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average in relation to the national expectation. In Year 8 lessons, most pupils controlled their musical resources effectively, but few generated a sense of style in their jazz pieces. Year 7 pupils were creating question and answer phrases in pairs. They all enjoyed making up short musical patterns and pupils of higher attainment shaped them into satisfying musical structures. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 often perform well, but recent GCSE examination results have been below the national average. Pupils enjoy singing, both in ensembles and solos. Their best performances convey the character of the music at a personal level, but lower-attaining pupils also sing expressively. Pupils compose in a more restricted style. Pupils of all abilities apply simple techniques effectively, but do not always develop them into coherent musical forms. Knowledge of key words in music is good and pupils in all classes are regularly encouraged to use appropriate technical vocabulary.
112. The highest levels of achievement are in extra-curricular musical productions where pupils of all ages and abilities sing with passion and zeal. Their music making is strengthened by natural links with dance and drama. Large numbers relish the opportunities to perform with others on the stage. Pupils' instrumental skills are generally not developed to this standard, but opportunities and standards are already improving in the new music school.
113. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. At best, very good teaching promotes a positive response from pupils. The lessons are thoughtfully planned, well organised and with a focus on musical understanding. Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques, incorporate very good demonstrations, are sensitive to pupils with special educational needs, and promote literacy and citizenship awareness. However, teaching is less effective when pupils write about music before engaging at a practical level. Sometimes pupils spend too long in practice rooms when they are working in small groups. At other times, opportunities are missed to make connections between activities and to strengthen the pupils' holistic understanding of music. The quality of pupils' learning is often good, taking into account the wider performing opportunities. Pupils are co-operative, responsive and well behaved around the department, including at break times.
114. Vision, energy and very high levels of commitment are the main features of leadership and management in music. There is excellent management of accommodation, resources and instrumental teaching. Lessons are monitored and support is threaded through all activities in the department. Although the schemes of work have been revised, areas of assessment, recording and reporting are in their early stages of development and have not had a significant impact on standards. The department has recently been equipped with a suite of computers and is now planning how to use them. Instrumental teaching is organised on a charged-for basis within the King's Music School; however, the school does not yet have a written Remission of Fees policy identifying how families on low income may have access to instrumental lessons.
115. Since the last inspection, music has improved significantly in the breadth and depth of provision. The department has extended the range of performing opportunities, introduced exciting outreach work in the community and increased levels of participation in Years 10 and 11. Standards of achievement have improved in extra-curricular performances.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results for 2003 are significantly above the national average.
- Numerous community links and extra-curricular activities provide further opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and participate in sport.
- Pupils are very well behaved and participate with enthusiasm in lessons.
- There is no formal development programme for unqualified staff in the department.
- There is insufficient core curriculum time for physical education in Year 10.

Commentary

116. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve very well in physical education, making sufficient progress so that by the end of this period the majority are attaining at the level expected nationally but with several very talented pupils. They are able to work as individuals and in groups to copy and practise simple skills with control and co-ordination. Most are able to understand how to improve their own performance, for example, by practising passing moves in netball, evaluating swimming technique and working in pairs to perfect gymnastic sequences. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are performing at a level at or above that which would be expected at this stage and the GCSE results reflect this. In 2003, 88 per cent of pupils on the full GCSE course gained A*-C grades, a significant achievement, being well above the national average. GCSE results are consistently above the national average. All pupils in this year group were offered either the full or short course physical education qualification, with about a quarter gaining a pass grade in the latter.
117. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They teach lessons which are well-structured, use a variety of activities and are conducted at a lively pace. Most lessons were judged good or better. In all year groups, there is a wide spectrum of attainment but teachers accommodate this through positive support, guidance and encouragement, carefully constructed lessons and differentiated activities. Teachers provide an environment in lessons in which all pupils, regardless of ability or gender and those with special educational needs, feel valued for both effort and achievement. As a consequence, all pupils achieve well. Pupils enjoy physical education and behave well in lessons.
118. The teacher's authoritative and enthusiastic delivery of a very good Year 10 hockey lesson ensured pupils made progress in both performing and evaluating passing skills. The teacher's clear instructions in a very well managed Year 8 swimming lesson ensured all pupils were able to progress in developing the backstroke. The teacher's good management and careful preparation ensured pupils worked conscientiously and co-operatively in a GCSE theory lesson to reinforce understanding of how the heart works. Year 9 girls responded positively to the teacher's challenging activities in a good gymnastics lesson to perfect sequences. In all lessons, teachers make supportive interventions, for example in netball and hockey lessons where teachers are able to demonstrate and inform pupils as to how to improve.
119. Curriculum time is generous for all years apart from Year 10, where pupils have significantly less than the recommended two hours of sports activity. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and school teams provide additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy sport and improve their skills. Many pupils and teams have enjoyed success at local, regional and national level. Accommodation for sport at the school, including swimming, is very good although the absence of a dedicated classroom for physical education theory lessons does not create an appropriate learning environment.
120. Leadership and management are good. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The recently appointed head of department has made a good start in establishing procedures, deploying and managing the seven members of staff and setting high standards in terms of participation, performance, behaviour and kit. However, there is no

formal development programme to support the teaching of unqualified staff in the department. The department implements a formal literacy policy, for example by the use of written examinations. However, there is some inconsistency in the marking of GCSE theory work, for instance in the checking of spelling. A numeracy policy and the formal use of ICT are being developed. Pupils are regularly assessed and the work in assessing pupils prior to entry to the school provides valuable information for curriculum planning and measuring progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

121. The school does not have a coherent programme for PSHE and there are significant weaknesses in the arrangements for teaching citizenship. Very limited evidence was provided to show that the school is fulfilling requirements for **citizenship** and the provision has many shortcomings. Average standards were observed during the inspection in certain parts of the course by certain groups of pupils. Samples of work were of good quality. The attitudes of pupils towards each other and towards their school and the values it stands for are positive. The teaching of single units of work in citizenship, observed during the inspection, was at least satisfactory and often better, but the school has no process for monitoring the teaching of citizenship specifically. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory because the senior leadership team has not given citizenship enough priority. Many pupils are unaware that they are studying citizenship. The teacher in charge has been in post for a very short time and it is understandable that management is also not yet satisfactory.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

As very few students sat final examinations in 2002 (the latest year for which national data is available) comparisons with national figures are not valid.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well below average.
- Numbers are a concern: in 2003 only 2 students stayed on to take A Level, though this year class sizes have improved.
- Teachers have good teaching skills but limited A Level experience and their deployment is unsatisfactory.
- The school has no library to support sixth form work.
- Students and teachers work with considerable enthusiasm and shared enjoyment of the books being studied.

Commentary

122. Attainment in examinations has been low. The two students who took A Level in 2003 passed with D and E grades, but only three of the 11 AS candidates reached a grade D and four were unclassified. Written work seen this year has faults of style and content, which show that students' understanding and analytical skills are as yet poorly developed. They do not appear to read widely. They are sometimes too reliant on the Internet for research and assistance and not sufficiently selective in their use of it.
123. Only two students continued the two year course and took the A Level examination in 2003 but this year numbers have improved and in Year 13 seem more stable. The seven students in this second year appear to be committed to the course and keen to complete it.
124. The timetabling of the sixth form lessons makes it impossible for the two teachers to share the teaching in each year, as they would have preferred. With such an arrangement, students benefit from the ideas and styles of two teachers, and by working on at least two books at the same time. It is also useful for teachers to share their assessments of students' needs and progress. At present, classes lack the variety and range that A Level studies should offer students. Despite some good features, especially the relationships and attitudes of teachers and students, the teaching overall is unsatisfactory.
125. In the lessons observed, it was clear that students in Year 13 found it difficult to recognise and understand the particular qualities of the Wilde play they were reading. They saw the characters as material for realistic character analysis of the kind they had done in GCSE literature work and the nature of high comedy was unfamiliar to them. The teacher was not sufficiently confident about the nature and characteristics of the genre to give them a firm lead and good analogies. Nevertheless, there was no doubt that teacher and class were enjoying their work on the play and that their explorations were leading gradually to better understanding of it.
126. In a Shakespeare lesson in Year 12, time was wasted initially on some standard 'Introduction to Shakespeare' print outs which had little relevance to their reading of *Othello*. In the second lesson, when the teacher abandoned this approach and took the class straight into the text,

students responded with interest and contributed perceptive questions and comments. Shared enjoyment and good learning were evident.

127. Students' essays show that they need to spend a great deal of time on close reading of the texts. Some study of critical comment is both useful and necessary but is not always well chosen and of real value. Their essays lack clarity and quality when they strive for impressive effects and use words and phrases which they do not fully understand. Teachers' marking does not always help them to recognise and remove muddle and absurdities in their writing. The question 'What do you really mean?' is rarely asked.
128. Two full-time specialists teach the A/AS Level classes. They are experienced teachers, though not in A Level work. They are keen to develop and improve their knowledge and methods. They teach in adequate rooms where circular seating for seminar style classes encourages interaction and exchange of views. Outside the classroom there is little enrichment for students. The department has organised few theatre or other excursions, there is no school library and no clubs or meetings at which students can argue and debate, develop their reading and writing skills or listen to visiting speakers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

129. Small teaching groups in the sixth form provide good opportunities for interaction and talk. These are particularly well used in drama, which throughout the school has contributed much to the development of students' confidence and fluency in speech.
130. In English lessons, most students talk readily but some are surprisingly reluctant to read aloud and do not do it well. Good presentations by students, with clear delivery and good subject vocabulary, were noted in physical education. ICT students also made good use of the special vocabulary of their subject. Higher level reading and writing skills are less well developed in AS/A Level work. For research purposes regular use is made of the Internet but very little of libraries.

MATHEMATICS

131. Mathematics teaching is limited to one class of 12 students studying for a repeat GCSE attempt at intermediate level which had been running for three weeks. The teaching seen in one lesson was good with the students anxious to succeed. Indications are that this successful provision which would enable students who missed a C grade in Year 11 to reach their target.

SCIENCE

Human biology

Provision in human biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most of the students who recently took examinations did not achieve the results of which they were capable.
- Strategies have been put into place to raise attainment levels but the full impact of these is yet to be seen.
- Much improved teaching is meeting the needs of the students.

Commentary

132. This course was recently introduced with the first students taking the A Level examination in 2003. Individual results were well below the national average although with only 2 candidates

no overall statistical comparison can be made. The results in the AS examinations in 2002 were below average and poor in 2003. Most students did not obtain grades predicted by their previous levels of attainment. However, the school has introduced good strategies to compensate the Year 13 for the shortfall in Year 12 and to prepare the current Year 12 students for the examination. A system for developing the learning skills of Year 12 has been put into place, motivating them to read around the subject and develop their independent learning skills.

133. The confidence of Year 13 students is being built up at the same time as enabling them to acquire a greater depth of factual knowledge. As a result, achievement for these students is now satisfactory although the standard of work seen in lessons is below average. They are able to write essays at the expected level when having access to information but are still acquiring the factual body of knowledge required for the examination. The work of the current Year 12 students is a mixture of below and well below average. In carrying out an investigative experiment developing their practical skills they showed variable theoretical understanding of the processes being investigated. Many needed individual support to construct accurate graphs and interpret the information. They are experiencing a steep learning curve in moving from GCSE and currently show satisfactory achievement. Students in both years are still very dependent on their teacher and are not able to study independently with any great confidence. Indications are that the achievement and thus attainment levels of the students are improving with a reversal of the underachievement of the current Year 13 students.
134. Teaching is good overall with a mixture of good and very good teaching. Although much teaching is of a similar style, it is meeting the current needs of the students. The very good subject knowledge of teachers is evident in their lesson planning and enables students to understand difficult concepts. Questions are often linked to the examination expectations; however, short and one-word answers are often accepted and so opportunities are missed to develop answers. Teachers have excellent relationships with students who respond very well to the challenges given.
135. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Good strategies have been put into place. These are moving the subject forward but there was unsatisfactory management that allowed the poor AS Level results in 2003. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS Level ICT results were poor in 2003.
- Current very good teaching on the A Level course is enabling students to make very good progress following poor results last year.
- A more suitable ICT curriculum is now available to sixth form students, which is a better match for their aptitudes and abilities.
- There has been a lack of clarity in management, which has been detrimental to the work of the department.

Commentary

136. There was no data available for sixth form ICT courses before 2003. Examination results in 2003 were poor. There were no higher grades at A Level, and only just over half of candidates attained pass grade. There were no passes from eight entries at AS Level.
137. The majority of students are now taking an AVCE course in ICT, which is proving to be a more suitable course. There was a wide range of ability in evidence but standards seen in lessons

were satisfactory overall. A small group is continuing with an A Level course and several pupils are retaking the AS Level examination. There is limited time available for these courses but students have made progress and some are now producing work which is close to average. The achievement of students in lessons and work seen was satisfactory overall, and for about one-third of candidates progress was good in relation to their past performance. They are increasing in confidence and making good progress on all courses.

138. Teaching in lessons seen was good in both Years 12 and 13. Teaching and learning on the AVCE course are good overall. Much good individual support is provided for the students. Marking and assessment are at least satisfactory and often good. Work is assessed appropriately in relation to examination requirements. Most lessons had good pace and clear objectives, although objectives were not sufficiently sharp in a minority of AVCE lessons. The department is deriving great benefit from excellent weekly teaching and technical support of an external adviser from a multi-national ICT company. This external contribution is making a very significant difference to the learning and achievement of last year's A Level and AS Level students who are retaking their examinations. The intensive teaching arrangement requires a great commitment from all concerned but it is proving successful.
139. Weaknesses in management are being resolved with imminent changes in staffing, the reallocation of responsibilities within the department and the establishment of a clear management structure. Appropriate changes have been made in examination courses to match students' aptitudes and abilities. ICT facilities available for sixth form students are satisfactory, although there are no printing facilities in the sixth form area. Work is currently in progress to enable staff and students to access the school network from home computers which will enhance teaching and learning opportunities. ICT resources have improved and ICT provision has been extended since the last inspection. The reliability of the school network has improved significantly in the last year. This is having a beneficial effect upon both teaching and learning. The improvement in provision for sixth form ICT since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

140. Students' standards in the use of ICT vary considerably. Standards seen in lessons and in private study were satisfactory overall. Students use computers effectively to enhance learning in most subjects, with notable exceptions in business studies and geography. Those students who took ICT key skills tests last year had mixed success. At Level 3 results were poor with no successful candidates. A very high proportion of candidates passed at Level 2.
141. Sixth form ICT resources have improved and ICT provision has been extended since the last inspection. Access to computers for sixth form students is generally good; there are usually enough computers available in appropriate areas but sometimes they have to move to other parts of the school when demand is high. The reliability of the school network has improved significantly in the last year, which is having a beneficial effect upon both teaching and learning in the sixth form. There are no printing facilities in the sixth form area and students have to print elsewhere in the school, which wastes time. Work is currently in progress to enhance learning by enabling students to access the school network and resources from home. A lack of clarity relating to responsibility for sixth form ICT provision has now been resolved with changes in staffing, the reallocation of responsibilities and the establishment of a clear management structure.

HUMANITIES

142. No humanities subjects were inspected in depth during the inspection. However, lessons were observed in history, geography and sociology
143. **History** entered its first two students for AS Level last year and one is continuing to A Level, benefiting from personal tuition. Five students have started AS Level studies in Year 12 and

are making very good progress in analysing historical sources and developing essay style. Very good teaching and detailed feedback on work are helping them to achieve the expected standards.

144. In Year 12 the standard achieved by students in **geography** is satisfactory. From the work seen students are able to explain the processes related to hydrology and the hydrological cycle although there are limited opportunities for independent learning and the use of ICT. The range of geographical skills used is limited, particularly cartographical and are not at the level expected. The standard of teaching during the single lesson observed was satisfactory.
145. The second part of a Year 12 **sociology** lesson was observed. This was very well taught as the three students discussed different forms of family life in post-modern society. Teaching was demanding of the students, who responded very well, although their overall standards were below average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

146. Dance and drama were the main areas of focus for the inspection, although lessons were also observed in art, media studies and music. Only two students currently follow A Level **art** courses. Both are in Year 13 on the AVCE in art and design, where standards seen were average and the lesson taught well. The department has been unable to attract students to the course for 2004. A satisfactory lesson was observed in **media studies** in which the standard of the students' work was average. Students observed in the Whitehall Performing Arts School taking some **music** lessons were also highly motivated, even though their singing skills were limited.

Dance

Provision in dance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain consistently very high standards in all aspects of practical work, although standards in theoretical aspects of the examinations are below average.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and the students' attitudes are excellent.
- The school does not provide sufficient support for the staff of the college, who are not qualified teachers but hold specialist dance accreditations.
- The excellent accommodation greatly helps learning.

Commentary

147. Dance courses and teaching are provided by an independent college (Whitehall) which shares the school site. The college offers an excellent range of dance and performing arts courses. These include a full time diploma in performing arts, AVCE in performing arts, AS and A Level and GCSE dance courses. The college has a high profile in the local community and its dance and stage school classes are very popular mostly for younger children who attend twilight, evening and Saturday classes. Students of all abilities join the dance courses. Those who have continued from the stage school are often very talented dancers but students of average and more modest levels of ability join because they wish to combine it with music and drama. They see it as an essential way forward to their anticipated careers on the stage. At present four students from Eastwood are taking the dance courses. These and the other students say they feel part of the Eastwood sixth form because they use the common room and study facilities alongside the main school students when not in dance lessons.

148. Unconfirmed figures for 2003 indicate that A and AS Level results are below average with the majority of the 19 students attaining D and E grades. One student attained a B grade and 5 students were ungraded. Facilities in 2002 were extremely limited and had an adverse effect on the 2003 results because of lack of space. New specialist accommodation has now been completed and provides excellent studios for dance. Standards of practical work seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 are very high and students' achievement is good. Because of the students' great enthusiasm and commitment to the courses, their dance skills develop rapidly in their first year and they experience a variety of dance techniques as they progress through the college. A further reason for their successful achievement is the very good relationships which exist between students, and also with their teachers. As a consequence, they work very well, both independently and in small groups. They enjoy lessons, particularly when working practically and choreographing their own compositions. Four boys who had very little previous experience of dance joined the courses in Year 12 because they wished to improve their overall skills in performing arts. These boys are achieving very highly and one is now a professional dancer. Students' standards in 2003 in the theoretical aspects of the examination are below average. The department has recognised this and are keen to use more effective teaching methods and to support and monitor the coursework element more systematically this year.
149. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; very good in practical lessons but unsatisfactory in theory lessons. In practical lessons, the teachers' high level of subject expertise and the quality of individual feedback very effectively show students what they need to do to improve their movement. Students of all ages are inspired by the teachers who have very high expectations and insist on high quality performances. Because members of staff are not qualified teachers, they have little knowledge of how to teach the theoretical aspects of the courses. They do not use enough variety of teaching methods, students are not sufficiently involved and questioning is not used effectively to consolidate learning.
150. The leadership and management of dance in the college are good. The head of department has recently established all the courses and has organised timetables, schemes of work and specialist teachers. Students have an extremely high workload because they are studying the equivalent of four A Levels and a diploma in three years and some of them also teach the stage school classes in the evening. Department members frequently meet together to evaluate their performance and to share best practice: they are constantly looking for ways to improve even further. However, the department is not properly supported by the school, particularly in the professional development of staff. No dance is taught in curriculum time in Years 7 to 11. Sixth form courses have little to build on as dance is not taught consistently throughout the school, although GCSE dance is taught outside the school day and dance performances are promoted through various extra-curricular activities. Dance makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral and cultural development through the issues explored, the styles of dance studied and the emotional elements evoked.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has a good record of examination success for students of average prior attainment.
- Sixth form students benefit from the inclusion of drama in the curriculum from Year 7 and from a successful and popular GCSE course.
- Students respond well to good specialist teaching.
- Accommodation is spacious and flexible.
- Drama offers very good extra-curricular activities within the school's performing arts programme.

Commentary

151. Drama was established as an A Level subject in 1996 and since then has been gradually building up student numbers. The six students who took the examination in 1999 attained results above the national average and this sound level of attainment has been sustained. In 2003 the eight A Level candidates achieved a 50 per cent C pass rate. In the AS Level examination, there were 18 candidates and over 60 per cent reached A-C. As a result, 17 students are now preparing to take A Level in 2004, a significant increase in numbers.
152. Eastwood students are now joined by students from the Whitehall Theatre School for the A Level course, a collaboration which works well apart from one time-tabling problem. Although girls outnumber boys in the drama classes, there is a good gender mix in both years. Accommodation is very good, with adjoining studios opening to a large single space and providing the school with a fine flexible theatre.
153. Good work was observed in two lessons in Year 13, where students were collaborating very well on their six week 'devising' exercise. Their concentration was excellent, all members of the groups contributing ideas and practical skills. The teacher's interventions were well-judged in an activity which demonstrated good levels of independent learning and creative effort. Students were able to evaluate and improve their work and good progress was evident. Their written work does not always match the standards they are achieving in their practical drama.
154. Year 12 students work in two groups of 14 and were also seen working together in a larger group with team-teaching. At this stage, students are tentative, but they show understanding of drama disciplines. There was promising work in the scenes they were preparing for a film session. They responded thoughtfully to the two teachers' good introductions and comments, which helped them to make links between their practical work and the Lorca play they are studying. An imaginative exercise, requiring them to interpret the play in a painting, led to a discussion of their work; however, in this they found it difficult to articulate or exchange ideas. They are more confident within an improvisation than when asked to discuss or evaluate their work.
155. Teaching is good. A Level drama is currently taught by the head of department and a graduate trainee drama specialist. Both have good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for their work to which most students respond with keen commitment. All drama teachers are involved in the two major productions which the department mounts each year.
156. The head of department leads and manages well. There are clear analyses of progress and good development planning. The school's performing arts status has given drama further opportunities and importance in the curriculum. It is now making a significant contribution to the school's academic achievement, its rich extra-curricular programme and the confidence and social development of its students.
157. In the last inspection there was no report on sixth form drama so improvement, with the setting up of a successful A Level course, has been very good. Achievement needs to be raised so that students' examination results include more A and B grades.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

158. The five students who completed the A Level in **sports studies** in 2003 all passed with grades ranging from B to E but only two of the five taking the AS Level managed a pass. Two lessons were observed, one in each year, with very good student-teacher relations observed in both. In the good Year 13 lesson, the teacher's enthusiastic style and use of relevant sporting examples enabled the students to understand the effects of stress on performance. In the Year 12 lesson, the students worked conscientiously from relevant, pre-prepared handouts although the teacher was unclear in his analysis when comparing pre-industrial and contemporary sport.

BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student achievement is good – students often do better than their GCSE results predict and virtually all achieve at least a pass.
- Students appreciate the teacher's very good individual support and guidance.
- Teacher-student relationships are very good and as a result students' attitudes are positive.
- In lessons, there are too few student centred activities and insufficient challenge of students' understanding of technical vocabulary.
- The computers used for the subject are unreliable and do not include printing facilities for students' work.

Commentary

159. All five students entered for the full VCE (double award) in 2003 achieved well, gaining grades ranging from AB to DD. There was a similar success with the AS Level award, where four of the five candidates achieved a D grade. This has continued the trend in the subject where all students usually gain at least a pass grade and achieve at least, if not better than their GCSE results predict. This is as a result of very good individual support and guidance offered to students both in and out of lessons. Current students in Year 12 are beginning to understand some of the basic technical vocabulary of the subject, but are not yet able to apply this to real business examples. Achievement in Year 13 is good.
160. Students appreciate the access to and the time and commitment of the teacher. The very good understanding and application of the assessment requirements for students' portfolio work ensure that feedback can be productive and targeted to students' individual needs. This was confirmed by the positive comments from the subject's external verifier. However, students are very unhappy about the use of unreliable computers and their inability to print their work in the business area.
161. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are generally well planned and, with very good teacher-student relationships, ensure a pleasant but productive working environment. This was observed in the Year 12 classes where students were analysing a case study and were able to discuss possible advantages and disadvantages of takeovers. The very good Year 13 lesson observed involved productive one-to-one teaching in preparing the student to carry out a health and safety analysis as part of this optional unit. Methods and approaches used lack breadth and students are not always challenged rigorously to explain key terms and answer direct questions.
162. The subject is managed effectively. The course is planned well with a clear schedule for students to follow, to ensure that students are kept on course to prepare and complete the units. Students' support is very good and the demands of the assessment system fully understood. Student progress is assessed and monitored regularly and additional business activities organised to supplement learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

163. **Health and social care** was not inspected in detail but one lesson was observed. This was a well taught lesson for a joint Year 12 and 13 class in which the students responded well to individual support and personal feedback as they completed coursework activities. Several made very good use of ICT in accessing information and presenting their reports.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	3
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	3
Attitudes	4	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		5
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	5	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	6	6
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	5	5

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

