

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108534

Headteacher: Mr T O'Grady

Lead inspector: Mr C T Hemsley

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th March 2004

Inspection number: 259388

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1058
School address:	Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.
Postcode:	NE7 7PE
Telephone number:	0191 2668813
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend D. Kellett
Date of previous inspection:	26 th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is an 11-18 average size Catholic comprehensive, with 1058 students, in east Newcastle. Many students also come from other parts of the city and beyond. The school has increased in numbers recently but is still around the same size as at the last inspection. The average size sixth form, with 159 students, draws principally from the main school students. The area served has social and economic disadvantage and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals, 22 per cent, is above average, and, at 12 per cent, is above average in the sixth form. The school has a diverse population. Around 60 per cent of students are catholic, the school is multi-faith and students come from 32 different primary schools. The majority of students are white but around 13 per cent come from minority ethnic heritages including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Libyan, with more than 12 per cent of students whose first language is not English, and 3 per cent of students at an early stage of learning English. Around 2 per cent of students are refugees or asylum seekers and there is a very small number of traveller students. Standards on entry to the main school are a little below average and improving. Standards of students entering the sixth form are around average, having fallen in recent years. There is an average proportion of students, 16 per cent, with special educational needs and a below average proportion of students, 1.4 per cent, with a statement of special educational need. Most students in the sixth form follow GCE advanced level courses and go on to higher education but an increasing number study vocational courses. The school is supported through the national Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative and within that through a small Education Action Zone (EAZ). It holds both Artsmark and Healthy School awards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1609	Mr C T Hemsley	Lead inspector	No subject
19646	Mr N Shinhmar	Lay inspector	No subject
16890	Mrs M Potter	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education
33109	Mr J Collings	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography
1622	Mrs L Aers	Team inspector	English
1547	Mr G L Clarke	Team inspector	Science Biology
32333	Mr R. Lilley	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
11895	Mrs C Earlam	Team inspector	Art and design
4715	Mr K Self	Team inspector	Design and technology
1544	Mr P Livsey	Team inspector	History
2626	Ms M Thompson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French in the sixth form
8009	Mr J Forsyth	Team inspector	Music
32087	Mr J Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education
16359	Mr J Farrow	Team inspector	Citizenship
8248	Mr C Riches	Team inspector	Business education
1608	Mr R B Higgs	Team inspector	Sociology
31550	Mrs S Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	12
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	17
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	58

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The **overall effectiveness of the school** is **satisfactory, but there are some weaknesses**. The school is inclusive and provides good care, support and advice. External links are good. Parents and students are pleased with much of what the school does. However, this school is **underachieving**. Standards in the main school are much lower than similar schools. Students do not achieve enough currently in four subjects, there is too much unsatisfactory teaching and too much of the management is only satisfactory, particularly in its focus on achievement. Income is slightly below average and **value for money** is **satisfactory**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is inclusive and very effectively develops cultural understanding. Relationships are good. Students from ethnic minorities achieve well.
- By Year 9 and Year 11 standards in tests and examinations are much lower than in similar schools, even though they have risen. Achievement is unsatisfactory by Year 9 in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design, and by Year 11 in ICT, art and design and modern foreign languages.
- The majority of teaching is at least good, but there is unsatisfactory teaching, learning and achievement in too many lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Too much management is only satisfactory, particularly in its focus on achievement. There are weaknesses in self-review and development planning and the use of assessment is unsatisfactory. There is unsatisfactory leadership and management in ICT and art and design.
- Although achievement in the sixth form has improved, too much is still only satisfactory.
- The school provides good care, support and advice for students. It acts on their views.
- Links with parents, the community and other educational institutions are good.

Since the inspection in January 1998 the school's effectiveness has not improved enough and consequently **improvement is unsatisfactory**. Achievement is weaker and teaching has not significantly improved. In the satisfactory responses made to most issues in that report, standards and attendance rose, leadership and management issues were tackled and accommodation improved. Not enough progress has been made in assessment procedures

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	D	C	E
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	C	D	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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is unsatisfactory. Students start school with standards just below average. By the end of Year 9 results in 2003 tests were just **average** overall, above average in English but below average in mathematics and science. Standards have been rising at around the national rate and are currently average in most subjects. Taking into account good achievement in English, music and modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory achievement in mathematics, ICT and art and design, and some weaknesses still in science, there is underachievement by Year 9.

By Year 11 GCSE standards in 2003 were just reaching the **average** range, having risen at around the national rate. Current standards are around average. Students achieve much less at GCSE level than students in similar schools. Unsatisfactory achievement in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is too

frequent. Students do achieve well in mathematics, design and technology and physical education, but achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT, art and design and modern foreign languages. Consequently, there is overall underachievement by Year 11.

Standards by Year 13 have declined in recent years and in 2003 were well below average. Standards on entry to sixth form are around average, having fallen in recent years. Standards now are below average. Achievement in 2003 examinations was below average but better focused work and some changes in staffing are now resulting in satisfactory achievement.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are being **well developed**. Attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**; for many students they are good but a small minority of students is disruptive. Attendance has improved because of the very good efforts by the school but is still below average, it is overall **satisfactory**. Attendance in the sixth form is good. Cultural development is very effective and most students work well together in an ethos of mutual respect.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall **quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory**. **Teaching is satisfactory** overall, but too inconsistent. The majority of teaching is good, but too much is unsatisfactory or poor, particularly in Years 10 and 11, often because of weak discipline or inappropriate levels of work. Good subject knowledge and planning support satisfactory and good learning but the use of assessment is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is good and improving; it is inclusive and developing vocational approaches. Care, guidance and support are good. The school has good pastoral care approaches. The partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are good and support the learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Satisfactory leadership from the head teacher, and most other leaders provides a good vision for the school. The head of sixth form provides good leadership. Management is satisfactory. The school runs smoothly but needs a greater focus on practical approaches to raise achievement. The work of the governing body is satisfactory and has improved but still needs more focus on achievement of students.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school. They believe their child likes school and makes good progress, teaching is good and they are comfortable in speaking to the school. They think their child is treated fairly, that he or she is encouraged to become independent and is expected to do its best. A minority of parents show some concern about behaviour, including bullying, homework and information. Most students like school; they think that teachers expect them to work hard and that relationships are good. They raised concerns about behaviour and bullying in a school survey, but said during the inspection that bullying was dealt with effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Increase the achievement of students in national tests and examinations, and in mathematics, art and design, ICT and modern foreign languages.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in unsatisfactory subjects and in other unsatisfactory lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, by setting work at an appropriate level and dealing effectively with poor behaviour.

- Improve the quality of management so there is more focus on approaches to raise achievement, including self-review, development planning and the use of assessment, and raise the standards of leadership and management in ICT and art and design. and to meet statutory requirements;
- Ensure that the curriculum requirements for Year 11 are met.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST MARY'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Standards and achievement have fallen in recent years. Current achievement is satisfactory because of more focused work, although standards are still below average. Teaching is satisfactory and there is much that is good. The effectiveness is less than at the previous inspection, but it remains a stronger part of the school. Cost effectiveness is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum provision is good and caters effectively for the aptitudes and requirements of the students.
- The leadership and management of the sixth-form co-ordinator are good.
- Achievement in examinations has been declining; achievement in current work has improved but too much is just satisfactory.
- Assessment is variable and outcomes are not used well enough to raise standards and achievement.
- Support, advice and guidance for the students are very good throughout and especially on entering and leaving the sixth form.
- Links with higher education institutions and other partnerships in the community are extensive and well used to support the students' learning and aspirations.

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	Satisfactory in English. Teaching is good. Teachers use an effective range of techniques to involve all students. Students have positive attitudes. Achievement is satisfactory. Satisfactory in French. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Small groups make it difficult to stimulate discussion. Achievement is satisfactory.
Mathematics	Satisfactory in mathematics. Teaching is satisfactory with good features. Students have positive attitudes and good relationships. Achievement is satisfactory.
Science	Satisfactory in biology. Teaching and learning are good with some excellent features. Achievement is satisfactory but students' skills for research and handling information are not developing enough. Sampled teaching and learning in chemistry were satisfactory and in physics were good.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory in ICT. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships are good and the students support each other well. Achievement is only just satisfactory but not enough work was completed in the previous year.
Humanities	Good in history. Teaching and learning are consistently good and support students' good achievement. Students take responsibility for their own learning. Satisfactory in sociology. Teaching and learning are mainly good. Students have positive attitudes and collaborate well. Achievement is satisfactory. Sampled teaching and learning in geography were satisfactory.

Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory in art and design. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there are weaknesses in assessment. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards reached in recent examinations have been high.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory in physical education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good. Achievement is satisfactory.
Business	Satisfactory in business studies. Teaching and learning are good. Students have positive attitudes. Achievement is satisfactory.
Health and social care	Health and social care was sampled; teaching and learning are good.
General education	The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is good, although it was not possible to make judgements on teaching and learning. Students respond well. A foundation level employability course was sampled; teaching and learning were very good.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students have access to very good advice, guidance and support throughout their time in the sixth form. They are well prepared for study and responsibilities in their further education through well-structured induction programmes. They quickly form good relationships with their form tutors, progression coach and the sixth form co-ordinator. Regular discussion on their progress takes place with form tutors, in times set aside in the PSHE programme. Subject teachers are not always providing students with sufficient advice as to how to improve their work. Good advice is available on entry to higher education. There is ready access to careers information both in discussion and in the careers section of the library. The students are encouraged to represent their views through their sixth form council and as members of the school parliament. The students are well prepared for life after the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management are satisfactory overall and of the sixth form co-ordinator are good. She has a clear vision of the place of the sixth form in the school and communicates this well to colleagues and students. There is an especially good commitment to creating an inclusive sixth form in which all students are equally valued. The co-ordinator regularly reviews provision and takes positive action on the outcomes. She carries out the monitoring arrangements that are within her role efficiently and establishes good teamwork, especially with form tutors. She manages links with higher education establishments and business partnerships efficiently and the support they provide for students in their academic and study skills is a strong feature of the overall sixth form provision. Subject leaders for the sixth form are not making sufficient use of assessment data to help teachers ensure good learning.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have frequent opportunities to comment on their life and work in the sixth form. Their responses are invariably positive. They speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers both academically and in their personal development. They value the relationships they have and the opportunities they have to participate in events within and outside of school. They feel they have good opportunities to voice their opinions and that their aspirations are well supported.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is unsatisfactory because there is underachievement in national tests and examinations, in four subjects and in too many lessons. Following a period of declining achievement in the sixth form, achievement in current work has improved but too much is only satisfactory. Standards are around **average** in the main school and **below average** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reached in tests and examinations in 2003 for Years 9 and 11 were well below those of similar schools.
- Achievement by Year 9 is unsatisfactory in mathematics, ICT and art and design, and by Year 11 in ICT, art and design and modern foreign languages.
- Achievement by Year 9 is good in English, music and modern foreign languages, by Year 11 in mathematics, design and technology and physical education, and by Year 13 in history.
- In more than one fifth of lessons in Years 10 and 11 achievement is unsatisfactory; frequently this is with lower attaining groups and reflects weak discipline.
- Students with English as an additional language achieve well, partly because of their positive attitudes to work.
- Although achievement in the sixth form has shown recent improvement, too much is only satisfactory.

Commentary

1. Students start school with standards just below average. They have increased in recent years but show annual variations. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science on entry to the school are a little below average and improving. The school is working with its main linked primary schools to improve standards on entry in science.
2. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average overall, but above average in English and below in mathematics and science. The trend in the school's results in the core subjects has been broadly in line with national improvements. The school surpassed the targets it set, but they were low in science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.6 (32.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.0 (32.3)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.8 (31.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 205 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Targets for 2004 for Year 9 are appropriate and more challenging than previously. Work currently seen in Year 9 is around average. However, standards are below average in ICT, art and design and history. In ICT and art these are unsatisfactory achievements and are a result of weaknesses in teaching and subject leadership. In history, although overall achievement is satisfactory, some higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged in their work. Although standards in mathematics are close to average, achievement in national tests is

unsatisfactory and teaching quality and achievement in lessons are too variable. Overall, therefore, by the end of Year 9 students are underachieving.

4. Standards by Year 11, in GCSE examinations taken in 2003, were average overall. Standards have risen in recent years broadly in line with the national trend and improved significantly in the percentage of students gaining five or more A*-C grades and five or more A*-G grades in 2003. However, when this group of students was in Year 9 their standards were above average, particularly in English. Consequently the overall achievement of students in 2003 was well below that of students in similar schools with previous attainment. The school did not reach its targets for the higher grades.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	47(38)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	87(78)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	32.7 (29.0)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 198 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. More challenging targets have been set for the 2004 GCSE group. Standards of work currently are around average as in 2003, but below average in ICT, art and design and history.
6. GCSE students in 2003 achieved their best results in mathematics and standards currently are above average. However, the good achievement in mathematics is based on students whose test results were low in Year 9. Current achievement is good in design and technology and standards are above average, but only a few students take the subject to GCSE. Students are achieving well in physical education currently. These good achievements are based upon a focus on standards.
7. There is some unsatisfactory achievement currently in Years 10 and 11. Students do not achieve enough in ICT, art and design and modern foreign languages. In too many lessons in these subjects learning is unsatisfactory and often teachers are not dealing effectively with indiscipline. Overall, over one fifth of lessons in Years 10 and 11 have unsatisfactory achievement, including some lessons in five other subjects than those referred to here. Taking into account the standards reached in examinations and the unsatisfactory achievement identified in specific subjects and lessons, students by Year 11 are underachieving.
8. Across the school, students with English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups achieve well overall. Some of these students enter the school other than at the normal starting time and make good progress in acquiring English, partly because of the support they receive. Some have good language skills and may already be bilingual. Sometimes in lessons they are seen to be well prepared to work hard and concentrate independently.
9. Students with special educational needs make adequate progress and achieve satisfactory standards while those with statements frequently achieve well because of the good support available.

10. Across the school there are some variations in the achievement of other groups. Boys show better achievement than girls in aspects of modern foreign languages and science and occasionally in music but weaker achievement in geography. Higher attaining students make better progress than others in modern foreign languages, but weaker in history and sometimes in science. Lower attaining students achieve less than others in aspects of design and technology and modern foreign languages. These differences sometimes reflect differences in the challenge of work set and in some cases the teacher's ability to deal with behaviour issues. The school has used the support from EIC to provide learning mentors and activities for gifted and talented students. Students who have been involved with mentoring have made as good as, and sometimes better progress than, others. Gifted and talented students make more progress than others.
11. The development of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory with good features and, despite the wide range of students' backgrounds, literacy skills are not usually a significant bar to progress. Co-ordination is satisfactory. Competency in mathematics across the curriculum is average. Although there is no overall numeracy policy, teachers have been provided with some information about approaches; co-ordination is no more than satisfactory. ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory in its provision and effects because of a lack of proper co-ordination.
12. Since the last inspection standards at five A*-C and five A*-G GCSE results have risen as identified they should have done in a key issue. However, there is now too much underachievement. The school is becoming more focused on achievement but still needs to take more significant action to deal with those areas of underperformance identified above.

Standards achieved in the sixth form

13. Standards by Year 13 in 2003 were well below average. Standards on entry to the sixth form, although average, have fallen in recent years. Fewer higher attaining students than previously study here. School data also points to a decline in achievement over several years. Some students do not take their courses through from AS (Advanced subsidiary GCE, half of a full A-level qualification) to A2 (Second half of the full Advanced GCE qualification) and in some subjects, such as science, the results disappointed both staff and students. However, standards seen on inspection are mostly average in individual subjects, except for English and modern foreign languages where they are below average. Achievement of students is now satisfactory in all subjects, except in history where it is good as a result of good teaching and management. The current satisfactory and good teaching and learning, a better focus on standards, for instance in ICT and science, and some changed staffing are helping to ensure this current overall satisfactory achievement. However, the weaknesses in the focus on achievement through management approaches and unsatisfactory use of assessment in subjects, are preventing achievement from becoming better than this.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	85.9 (89.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	17.3 (24.4)	32.6(35.3)
Average point score per student	185.8 (208.1)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 40 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory** overall and good in the sixth form. Although most students behave well, a small minority do not. Exclusions have risen. Personal development is **good** because of the school's good provision for spiritual, moral and social education and its very good provision for cultural education. Attendance is **satisfactory** overall. It has improved but remains below average despite the school's very good efforts. Attendance in the sixth form is **good**. Punctuality is satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for cultural development and its effectiveness are very good.
- The school works very hard to promote good relationships, including racial harmony.
- The behaviour of a small minority of students is not effectively managed in some lessons. This results in some unsatisfactory learning and achievement.
- Systems for promoting good attendance are very good and have secured improvements but attendance still remains below average.
- Attendance is good in the sixth form.

Commentary

14. Attendance is below average overall but is similar to most comprehensive schools. The school recognises the importance of good attendance and has well-established procedures to monitor and act upon absences, including first-day calls home. A few students miss school or are late and blame transport problems because they travel across the city. The school rightly follows these up. The school is aware of the students who are most likely to be absent and local education authority help is employed to improve attendance. Special visits are arranged for persistent late arrivals to keep parents informed about the importance of good attendance and their child's achievement in school. The school places great emphasis on improving attendance through the school diary and school assemblies. Students are rewarded with certificates if they achieve targeted attendance figures continuously for four weeks. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and are now over 90 per cent, although still below average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	1.1
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

15. The behaviour of most students is satisfactory to good; many students have a positive attitude to school and are keen to learn. Students are friendly towards visitors. In lessons, relationships are usually good and many students show a mature approach. Many staff work hard to develop these relationships, knowing students as individuals and supporting good behaviour. The school uses an assertive approach to discipline, which, if used properly, is shown to be highly effective in dealing even with some of the most difficult groups of students. However, in a minority of lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, some students do not listen well enough to the teacher.

16. A small minority of students behave badly and, in the lessons where teachers do not use the school system effectively, there is a breakdown in behaviour leading to unsatisfactory or poor learning and achievement. The school has been making increased use of temporary exclusions to deal with some instances of poor behaviour, in particular physical violence, and the number of re-offenders has declined. However, governors do not have a clear time-scale on which they are judging the progress being made.
17. Students' respect for their environment varies across the school. In design and technology areas and physical education, students try hard and work in a good environment. Conversely, students do not pay sufficient attention to cleanliness and litter problems in the school cafeteria, despite the facilities available. The school is aware that the varying quality of the building can affect students' attitudes towards its upkeep. Inspectors noted no instances of vandalism or graffiti.
18. A particularly positive aspect of behaviour is the good relationships that exist between different groups of students. There is no evidence of racial tension, or of racial harassment. The school's own survey of students in the term before the inspection alerted staff to students' and parents' concerns about bullying. The school has put in place measures to act upon this. No incidences were seen during the inspection and students spoken to said that any issues were dealt with effectively.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	925	45	1
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	1	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	11	2	2
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	34	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	21	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	17	0	0
Any other ethnic group	31	0	0

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

19. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are well promoted throughout the school, in assemblies, lessons and curriculum enrichment activities. Cultural development is very good. Staff encourage students to work together. The PSHE programme of lessons and activities makes a good contribution to these developments. Students respond well and respect each other's views. Good opportunities are provided to explore cultural differences; a session on racism run by a police officer and work carried out on racial stereotyping at the city learning

centre are good examples. Students' responses to the school's questionnaire were positive about relationships.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities in the sixth form

20. Attendance in the sixth form is good and still improving and students appreciate the facilities in school that allow them to work between lessons.
21. Students' attitudes in the sixth form are good. Students have good relationships with teachers and take a mature attitude to their studies. They make good use of the school's facilities for private study. Some students sit at the back of lessons taught to other sixth form groups so they can work quietly and be supported if needed. There are no issues about behaviour.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory overall**.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but are too inconsistent and there are too many unsatisfactory lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is most consistent in quality in the sixth form. Assessment is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is good and improving. Care, guidance and support, involving students, and partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are **satisfactory overall** but there are some significant weaknesses with too many lessons unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Most students in Years 10 and 11 know their targets, but not those in Years 7 to 9. The use of assessment is **unsatisfactory** and inconsistent. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are always at least satisfactory and often good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is too inconsistent and there is too much that is unsatisfactory. Despite this much teaching is good. It is regularly satisfactory to good in the sixth form.
- Weak discipline is frequently a feature of unsatisfactory lessons; these lessons are often with lower attaining students.
- Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and most plan lessons effectively with clear objectives.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory; it is not used consistently to improve learning.
- Relationships are generally good and contribute positively to learning in the better lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 181 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	32 (18%)	74 (41%)	54 (30%)	11 (6%)	6 (3%)	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.

22. One fifth of the teaching is very good in a range of subjects, and a sizeable proportion is good. In physical education, design and technology, music and history, teaching is never less than

satisfactory and is mostly good. Too much of the teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

23. In lessons that are unsatisfactory there are weaknesses that have a negative impact on learning and achievement. Half of the unsatisfactory lessons occur in lower ability classes and the remainder include the whole ability range. The weaknesses are most apparent in lessons in ICT, art and design and modern foreign languages. In these lessons poor behaviour and the teachers' inability to control disruption frequently occur; teachers do not expect enough of the students, the pace is slow and the students are not clear what they are doing. Occasionally, these characteristics are also present, though to a lesser degree, in lessons judged to be satisfactory.
24. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and convey their enthusiasm to their students. Teachers use their command of their subject positively to: prepare good teaching materials, for example in English; develop the use of the target language in lessons in Spanish: and, promote learning through high quality demonstrations in music lessons.
25. Most lessons are well planned and prepared. In the majority, objectives for learning are well identified and provide a clear focus for students to make progress. An exception is in lessons in ICT where learning objectives are vague and activities are often inappropriate and repetitive. Lessons are generally well organised. In science, for example, good systematic teaching stimulates students to work hard and learn effectively.
26. In the best teaching, students are required to work hard and activities are interesting and motivating. Teachers use praise, support and encouragement effectively and create good relationships that contribute positively to learning. These are particular features of teaching in physical education, design and technology and drama. In some lessons higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and learning and achievement are not as profound as they should be. This is evident in some lessons in history and science. In most subjects ICT is not used well to promote learning.
27. Homework is set according to school guidelines and in a number of subjects is used effectively to extend and consolidate learning. Homework diaries are not used consistently by all students to record their homework. Some students value the diary system; it helps them to keep organised. The importance the school attaches to homework diaries as a link between students and subject teachers is not fully appreciated by some teachers and does not have the impact on raising achievement that the school intends. Parents recognise that the use of diaries varies and depends upon the varying approaches by teachers, students and parents.
28. Teaching and support for students with special educational needs are satisfactory. Lessons are generally well planned and provide a sound framework within which teachers and learning support assistants can adapt work to the needs of students with learning difficulties.
29. There are too many inconsistencies in both the application and the use of assessment across subjects. In some subjects assessment procedures are not well structured and marking does not relate to National Curriculum levels. This is evident in science and in art and design. Younger students are often unaware of their level and what they have to do to improve. Marking of the work of older students is more constructive. Students in Years 10 and 11 are generally aware of their targets and how to achieve them, but this is not true in Years 7 to 9. Self-assessment opportunities are limited in mathematics and in ICT teachers do not have appropriate systems to properly assess the students' progress on a lesson-by-lesson basis. There is some good practice. In English lessons, for example, positive comments and suggestions for improvement are an integral part of assessment practice. In design and technology, assessment is well developed and is used to challenge students appropriately. However, assessment is a weak feature of teaching and learning.
30. The quality of teaching has improved marginally since the time of the last inspection.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form

31. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory, with good features. Two thirds of lessons seen were at least good. Unsatisfactory assessment is a feature that contributes to the impact of teaching not being good overall.
32. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They use this well to provide carefully structured activities to help the students consolidate learning and understand new concepts. This is evident in sociology and biology lessons. In ICT, teachers use their good command of the subject to provide appropriate levels of pace and challenge. Teachers plan carefully and use interesting stimuli. In English, for example, careful planning enables all students to contribute to discussion. Diligent preparation and competent management of lessons in biology are among the excellent features of teaching quality that is overall good. Relationships are very good in almost all lessons. In mathematics and physical education this is the basis of good collaborative work and positive participation in debate.
33. In lessons that are satisfactory, for example in physical education, there is an over-reliance on worksheets that limits the development of independent learning. In French lessons the groups are too small to stimulate worthwhile discussion and although the teacher works hard to develop vocabulary and skills, the learning is often passive. In a number of subjects lessons are satisfactory rather than good because assessment is not used well enough to promote progress and achievement to a level of which the students are capable. In mathematics for example, marking is too infrequent and insufficiently detailed. This is also evident in physical education, English, ICT and business education. In art and design learning could be improved by providing a firmer structure for assessment although guidance on a one-to-one basis in lessons is generally supportive. In history, assessment is consistent and well managed, and in sociology students are well advised on what they should do to improve. In most subjects a reasonable amount of homework is set to extend the students' learning.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good overall** and very good for students in Years 10 and 11. Curriculum enrichment is **satisfactory**. The widening curriculum in the sixth form meets the needs of students. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is inclusive and caters well for the students' different aptitudes and abilities.
- Provision for PSHE is well planned and co-ordinated and is underpinned by coherent policies that are regularly reviewed.
- Participation in the EiC scheme is used well to develop innovative and flexible curriculum arrangements for specific groups of students.
- A good range and selection of activities, community links and events enrich the curriculum
- Curriculum provision in the sixth form is good.
- Statutory requirements for teaching design and technology and modern foreign languages in Year 11 are not met.

Commentary

34. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is well suited to the needs of all students. It is underpinned by a clear set of aims and values. The core subjects, (English, mathematics and science) and other entitlements are well provided for, along with widening choice and opportunities as students move through the school.

35. Opportunities within the EIC scheme are well taken to support specific groups of students. Two programmes in Year 9, for example, involving booster arrangements and learning mentors, are having a positive impact on raising the achievement of under-performing boys and girls respectively. There is good curriculum support for students for whom English is not their first language. This is mainly provided in withdrawal lessons, but some individual teachers also work to improve communication in their subject. These students achieve well from the various levels of prior attainment represented in this significant minority of students.
36. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is clearly organised with a good range of GCSE subjects including vocational GCSEs in health and social care and business studies. The outcomes of regular curriculum review are used well to plan a flexible approach, especially for those students where disapplication from the National Curriculum is appropriate. A key skills course arranged in partnership with a local college is providing a positive approach in preparing a small group of students in Year 10 for life after school. A work-related programme set up with the support of a local Training Provider has been recently introduced for some students in Year 11. The students find this curriculum initiative engrossing, especially the preparatory work for the apprenticeships they will take up on leaving school. They are achieving well now; previously their work was marred by disaffection and low motivation.
37. Drama has been introduced for all students throughout the school since the time of the last inspection and is a good development. The good quality of teaching and learning in this subject has a positive impact on curriculum provision, both academically as a further GCSE choice and in building social and communication skills of those students with especially low self-esteem and aspirations. The well-structured programme for PSHE is a strong feature in curriculum provision. Sex, health and drugs-related issues are well supported through links with local agencies such as the police and health services. The extensive visits and visitors programme in which all students are variously engaged provides a firm basis for students to become involved in community life and to become aware of roles and responsibilities as good citizens.
38. Despite the strengths, there are some weaknesses. A minority of students in Year 11 take modern foreign languages or design and technology, a breach of requirements which the school has corrected for Year 10. The PE timetable prevents all students from taking part in PE every week resulting in a lack of continuity, which affects progress.
39. Curricular provision for most students with special educational needs is satisfactory; it is well organised to meet the needs of the students with statements and offers increasingly flexible alternative provision for students with learning difficulties who are also at risk of disaffection. However, individual education plans still do not provide useful targets or strategies that are sufficiently practical for subject teachers to implement.
40. The school curriculum is enriched by a variety of experiences beyond the school day both at home and abroad. Collaborative projects with European partner schools, cultural activities and a wide range of extra-curricular activities combine to positively enhance the students' curriculum experience. There are fewer out of classroom experiences associated with music than might be expected although the school has been successful in achieving the Artsmark.
41. The match of teaching staff to the curriculum is good and for support staff it is very good. Secretarial and site staff provide good support for management. Accommodation overall is satisfactory. Significant improvements since the last inspection, such as outdoors and pitch facilities for physical education and the acquisition of a drama studio, are being used well to extend and enhance the curriculum in these areas. Facilities for music have been enhanced although noise spillage from practice rooms remains a problem. Art rooms continue to be unkempt and badly lit and space is not well used. These are issues that remain from the time of the previous inspection and continue to have a negative effect on achievement. Resources are adequate overall.

The curriculum in the sixth form

42. The school has designed and implemented a good curriculum in the sixth form, which suits the needs of students with different requirements and abilities. The school policy on entry to the sixth form has been carefully structured to ensure that students continue their education based upon their own particular strengths and interests. Very good care and guidance are given to ensure that individual students can progress successfully. Students say that induction arrangements provide them with a secure introduction to their sixth form studies. Regular mentoring ensures that this continues throughout their course.
43. The curriculum contains a good range of subjects and courses at AS and A-level which progress coherently from GCSE studies. The widening of the curriculum to suit students' changing needs is a good feature. Opportunities are provided for students to follow a more vocational pathway in business studies and in health and social care. The recent introduction of an employability course, involving basic skills and ICT, is effectively engaging a small number of students in preparing them for the world of work. Students gain a City and Guilds accreditation and this is a good example of the inclusiveness of the sixth form provision. The school's progression coach and other support have enabled many students to go on to higher education.
44. PSHE is a strong element in curriculum provision in the sixth form. It is a focus for student self-review and provides them with good opportunities, both taught and in organised events, to continue to look seriously at personal and health related issues. Curriculum enrichment opportunities are very good and there is a high level of participation. Some of these are directly related to students' studies, such as theatre and cultural visits. Others, such as master classes with local universities, summer schools and 'understanding industry' days, offer enhancement through the wide links the school has developed to support the sixth form curriculum.
45. The match of staff to the sixth form curriculum is good. Accommodation is much improved since the time of the last inspection. The student study base is well equipped with ICT facilities and careers information. Sixth form students have their own dining room and a refurbished common room that they use well for social activities and for meetings of the sixth form council. Resources are adequate.

Care, guidance and support

Care, welfare, health and safety are **good overall**. Support, advice and guidance are **good**. The school is making good attempts to seek students' views and act on them. Advice, guidance and support in the sixth form are good. The degree of involvement of students in the life of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A social inclusion forum provides good support for identifying and acting on need.
- The transition and induction arrangements for students joining the school from other schools are very good.
- Pastoral care is good, especially for older students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

Commentary

46. The school's procedures to ensure students care, welfare, health and safety are good. This reflects the school's priorities of inclusion and concern for the individual.

47. Students are safe and secure in school and are well cared for. Child protection procedures are firmly established and the school has a named child protection officer. The school is a secure learning place. The staff monitor the entrance used by students and the main front door has an entry system.
48. The school has a health and safety policy, which is reviewed regularly. Risk assessments are completed. During the inspection, a small number of safety issues were brought to the attention of the school by the inspection team.
49. The school provides good support and guidance for its students. Every student is valued equally. This is an inclusive school and school works hard to ensure that the needs of all the students including behavioural and emotional difficulties are met. A behaviour support unit is financed through the EiC initiative; it plays an effective role in meeting school objectives.
50. The school provides good access to advice and guidance to students as they progress through their school life. Good quality displays effectively promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school employs various strategies to support students' learning, for instance a staff member employed as a progression coach gets involved in helping students to make subject and university choices to achieve students' goals and aspirations in Year 11 and in particular in the sixth form. The progression coach also helps in making decisions on education and career opportunities through his business and educational contacts. The Connexions and Careers Guidance office is fully staffed and has an office in the school building for further education and youth services. The school sixth form brochure provides good information. A drop-in centre is supported by an outside visitor to help with issues relating to young people and a confidential advice service is available during lunch break once a week.
51. Mentoring has helped borderline underachievers to make as much progress as other students in Years 10 and 11 and good progress when supported in Year 9. Mentoring is part of the EiC supported initiative. Some mentored students have become peer mentors after receiving three days training at an outdoor studies residential centre and are usefully employed to help students developing English as an additional language to complete their homework and develop their social skills, to settle in better at the school. The staff know students well and track their personal, social and emotional development through a social inclusion forum which is composed of the head of the lower, upper, and senior schools and other interested parties. This forum can suggest any one of the school booster strategies. These include the school supportive approaches for students called '555' (three level 5s by Year 9) and '604' (six higher grade GCSEs in 2004). The social inclusion forum makes a valuable contribution to providing a caring service for students.
52. The school celebrates students' achievements in assemblies. Students who achieved the highest attendance in the last half term were rewarded with basketball competition tickets. Monetary rewards are also given out for consistent good attendance in Years 9 to 11. Students trust their teachers and can turn to adults if they need help. The school has a strong stand on bullying following its survey of students and parents. School rules are displayed in every room and at prominent places and students are frequently reminded of these rules. Consideration is made of tolerance and reconciliation when dealing with individuals. Most teachers follow the school's assertive discipline policy. When this is done well even some of the most difficult students behave well and work hard. In a minority of lessons the weak use of the school's procedures is a factor in poor discipline.
53. New students are helped as soon as they join the school. Pastoral care and traditional links with feeder schools make induction successful. Pastoral care is good.

54. The school involves the students in its work and development. There is a school council, which suggests school improvements. A recently introduced recycling initiative is the result of school council work. The council is based on the European Union with each class acting as a country. Students know their own constituency area and neighbouring constituency area Members of European Parliament. The local Member of the European Parliament visits the school frequently to help develop the school council and the school parliament. The school canvassed the views of all students on a wide variety of issues within the past year and has acted on their responses.

Care, guidance and support in the sixth form

55. The very good advice, support and guidance available to students in the sixth form reflect the quality of concern for the individual and the personal care taken by staff. There is a well-organised programme that helps students prepare for life in the sixth form. Once students are in Year 12 they have access to a range of adults, including their form tutor, the head of sixth form and a progression coach. Relationships are good. The provision for PSHE is well managed so students have the opportunity to reflect upon their changing lives and wider issues. Sufficient time is available for students to discuss their targets and plans. However, within the teaching of individual subjects, students are not always provided with sufficient advice as to how to improve academically. As students work through the sixth form they have good access to careers information and advice. Account is taken of students' needs and views and there is the opportunity to present their views to the school through the sixth form council and the school's questionnaires. Sixth formers play a leadership role in the school parliament.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, schools, colleges and universities are **good**. Partnership with the local community and the outside world is **good**. Partnership with industry and business community is effective. Sixth formers have good links with higher education. Partnerships with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the EiC programme are effective in supporting school targets.
- The school has good and effective links with higher education, the business community and charities.
- Information to parents is good and communication between school and home is effective.
- Annual reports on progress are good.

Commentary

56. The school has developed effective links with parents, who are supportive of the school. Regular newsletters and magazines are sent out to parents, which include information about events, dates, educational activities and examples of students' achievements. A home-school diary system is operating from Year 7 to Year 11 and this provides daily opportunities for parents to comment on their child's progress and other matters. Parents' evenings are arranged to discuss students' progress and there are invitations in the summer to see children's achievements. Good written annual reports to parents contain details regarding a child's progress and results, which can be compared with the class average. There is a suitable complaints procedure for parents. The school web site, which has won an award, further supports links with parents and the community.

57. The school has improved its links with local schools by working in partnership, for instance with the small EAZ. The EiC link to a city learning centre is particularly useful in expanding students' horizons. The school allows the use of its science laboratories to Year 6 pupils of feeder schools to help improve their standards. It is one of the good features that helps to introduce the school to prospective students and helps with the very good transfer and induction arrangements that students and parents appreciate.
58. The school provides extensive opportunities to students to get involved in charitable projects that put them in contact with the local community and the world at large. International links are established with a school in Tanzania and students compare life in the two schools. Recently children took part in a Readathon competition and one student was able to raise £60 by reading the maximum number of books. This helped children have fun reading books of their favourite author and also at the same time helped raise money for charitable causes.
59. The school's links with the community and wider world are many and varied. Visitors from the Anne Frank Society visit the school annually and there are Holocaust reminder pictures displayed on the notice board which help students to develop their moral awareness and understand history. A visit to Pakistan is arranged for GCE A-level students through the Aim Higher project, to help develop their leadership talents. The visiting group will help local village communities. Pre-visit training was completed in Yorkshire.
60. Links with an international exchange project are useful. Recent work has enabled gifted and talented students to enhance their social and cultural development by a visit to Denmark. Other students go on annual exchange visits in four European Union countries to widen their experience of western society. The school has developed a traditional link with a ski resort and students go on a skiing course annually as part of the extended physical education curriculum.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community in the sixth form

61. Sixth form links are improving. The school has well-developed links with local universities and businesses and is using these to support students in their career development. The small number of responses from parents about their son's or daughter's education were very positive. Students and parents are given very good information about sixth form courses and there are good induction arrangements, with which students are pleased.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

School governance is **satisfactory**. Leadership is **satisfactory overall**, including within the sixth form. Although there are some good features, too much of the management is **only satisfactory**, particularly in its focus on raising achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong and effective belief in inclusion and the value of the individual.
- The head teacher has a clear vision for the school, although the vision has not been fully translated into practice.
- Too much management is only satisfactory, particularly in its focus on achievement.
- School self-review is not fully in place and development planning has some lack of focus.
- The use of data to support target setting in departments is weak.
- Teamwork is good and supports school priorities and ethos.
- The work of the governing body is improving.

Commentary

62. The main strength of leadership and management is a belief in inclusion. This is evident at all levels. Staff are keen to ensure equality and they have very good concern for individuals. Most parents believe that the school is well led and managed. This is not reflected in the achievement of students. The difficulty for the school has been in ensuring that the vision of inclusion is fully translated into practice when there are inconsistencies in teaching and management.
63. The head teacher provides satisfactory leadership. He joined the school shortly after the last inspection and dealt with the financial issues and some problems of leadership being faced at that time. Key issues were tackled and satisfactory progress was made on most of the aspects identified there. He has a good inclusive vision for the school and has worked to ensure stability. Since his appointment the nature of the school has changed. The proportion of catholic students has fallen from three quarters to three fifths; there are more students from ethnic minorities and the level of involvement and co-operation with other schools has increased. Within the past 18 months he has worked with outside consultants, governors and staff to redefine the aims of the school. This has been done successfully and there is now a more widely shared vision.
64. In managing the translation of vision into action, a long-term strategic plan has been developed, which involves further policy development, restructuring and improvements to provision. The short-term plan is detailed and identifies many areas of action. The impact of these initiatives is not clearly enough defined in relation to teaching, learning and achievement.
65. A recently appointed deputy head teacher has been added to the experienced senior team. There have been new looks at ways in which the school can be more outgoing and responsive to students' needs and making better use of data. The leadership team has rightly been extended to include five assistant head teachers. Leadership by the sixth form co-ordinator is good and helping to improve achievement. Roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have rightly been revised, but the most up-to-date documentation has little to say about how these roles should improve achievement.
66. Leadership by subject leaders varies in quality. Teamwork is a feature of good departments. Much leadership is satisfactory but it is unsatisfactory in ICT and art and design, where it is affecting achievement. It is good in science, design and technology, history and business studies and helping to improve standards.
67. Leadership is also good in English, where the head of department has used her work with the small EAZ to raise the quality of teaching. Her leadership of the transforming teaching and learning group has had an impact on subjects such as English, science and history by widening teaching styles. Practical translation of that good leadership has not been developed into good management, however, because the school does not have a clear route for the management of a strategy to extend good practice in teaching and learning across departments. This mirrors the relatively low-key development of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Although professional development activities have taken place for that, the school's management has not insisted that consistent teaching approaches be used. This was shown in the rather *ad hoc* approach to lesson planning shown during the week of the inspection, where it varied between very good and poor.
68. The special educational needs co-ordinator and her immediate team have well-established and clear roles and responsibilities and work together well to ensure satisfactory co-ordination of the school's special educational needs provisions. They also contribute to the school's successful social inclusion forum that helps promote the school's good inclusive provision.
69. Too much of the management is only satisfactory. The translation of vision into action needs to be more precise and effective. Performance management is in place, alongside local

education authority supported department reviews. However, there is no overall approach to self-evaluation that ensures regular review taking into account the full range of evidence available from assessment data, lesson observation, sampling of students' work, evidence from students, and external evaluations, within a structured system. The school had rightly identified many of the areas of weakness in this report within its pre-inspection document; but there has been the slow progress in dealing with some items, such as the areas of unsatisfactory teaching.

70. The management of subjects is overall satisfactory but varies between good and unsatisfactory. It is good in English, design and technology, music and history. It is unsatisfactory in ICT and art, with consequent effects on achievement. Development planning is variable in departments. Even where planning is more detailed, the effect of actions on the achievement of students is not clearly defined. The school is rich in the data it holds and how it can be analysed; while it is being used well in some areas, such as the pastoral system, subject leaders are not making enough use of it to raise standards. School managers and governors need to have clear information about patterns of achievement to help them in decision-making.
71. The work of the governing body has improved and is now satisfactory. Within the past two years the committee structure has been rationalised and there has been some good professional development to raise awareness of requirements. The governors know much of the school's work well but are just coming to grips with their understanding of achievement. They are keen to learn more and support the school and two governors interviewed heads of department last year to gain a better insight into the issues. Governors are aware of the failure to meet statutory requirements in Year 11 and changes have been made for Year 10.
72. There is satisfactory management of the school's finances and some creative thought has gone into improving present and future accommodation. Income is a little below average. Finance for the sixth form is not unduly using income destined for the main school. Expenditure patterns are similar to many schools, although there is a greater than usual amount spent on adult help, a reflection of the school's involvement in EiC.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,279,189	Balance from previous year	195,041
Total expenditure	3,291,689	Balance carried forward to the next year	182,541
Expenditure per student	3,120.00		

Leadership and management in the sixth form

73. The leadership and management are satisfactory overall and of the sixth form co-ordinator are good. She has a clear vision of the place of the sixth form in the school and communicates this well to colleagues and students. There is an especially good commitment to creating an inclusive sixth form in which all students are equally valued.

74. The co-ordinator regularly reviews provision and takes positive action on the outcomes. She carries out the monitoring arrangements that are within her role efficiently and establishes good teamwork, especially with form tutors. She manages links with higher education establishments and business partnerships efficiently, and the support they provide for students in their academic and study skills is a strong feature of the overall sixth form provision. Good use has been made of the supported self-review carried out with the local education authority; this has helped to focus the work.

75. Subject leaders for the sixth form are not making sufficient use of assessment data to help teachers ensure that learning and achievement are improved.

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 **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reach the national average and achievement is good by the end of Year 9.
- Teaching is good, with effective use of active approaches.
- There is good support for students with English as an additional language, and for students with special educational needs.
- There is very good provision within English for multicultural education.
- There is a good curriculum in English, except for limited opportunities to use ICT.

Commentary

76. Students enter the school with results in English that are below the national average. By the end of Year 9, they reach standards in line with the national average. This is good achievement. In 2003, results exceeded the school's target, and were above the national average at higher levels. Overall, both boys and girls attained a score slightly above the national average. Work seen during the inspection shows that, by Year 9, higher attaining students can adapt their style skilfully to different writing tasks. They respond well to challenging texts, for example World War I poetry. There is a full range of ability, with lower attaining students finding it difficult to control their sentence construction and use of punctuation.
77. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results show that students have maintained their standards in line with the national average. This is satisfactory achievement from Year 9. Boys achieve slightly better in English literature than in English. The highest attaining students, both boys and girls, clearly enjoy literature and can make a detailed analysis with well-chosen evidence and a good use of quotation. Their coursework is sometimes over long. Lower attaining students show a good understanding of the texts they read, but written work tends to be descriptive rather than analytical.
78. Students with English as an additional language achieve well in English and are represented at all levels of attainment. Students with special educational needs also achieve well.
79. Teaching is good overall and has some very good features. The department has devoted time and effort to developing teaching and learning styles as a team, which has been successful. Objectives for lessons are clear. Staff prepare materials very well, for example quotations on cards for students to match together. Music is used, for example an Indian song, which is both relevant to the theme of the lesson and also acts as a time-scale for a task. Active approaches are used so that all students are involved. Group work is set so that students can share ideas. Students are encouraged to highlight texts and to make mind-maps to help them structure their thoughts. Learning is good because of the effective mix of activities that ensures all students are engaged. Students' skills in speaking and listening are developed well through discussion. Teachers use homework systematically to extend learning.
80. Students respond well to the activities that are set. They collaborate well in groups and listen to each other's views. On rare occasions, students do not respond well in lessons, and then their learning is unsatisfactory.

81. Students with special educational needs are given the same opportunities to take part in active approaches and their learning is good. Students with English as an additional language are well integrated into lessons and participate fully. Support given to both groups is carefully targeted.
82. There is good practice in assessment in the English department. Teachers mark work with positive comments and suggestions for improvement. Core assignments are used for assessment purposes. However, record keeping is not consistent across all classes, and some data (for example, from some primary schools) is not readily available for the department even though it is in school.
83. Leadership and management of the subject are good. A range of opportunities is provided for students within the English curriculum. There are very good links with drama, as all students in Years 7 to 9 experience drama teaching by a specialist. This reinforces their work, for example on Shakespeare, very well. The drama specialist also runs a club after school. The English department provides opportunities for students' independent reading and these are reinforced by activities organised in the library. Students are able to take part in theatre visits. There is targeted work with specific groups, for example gifted students, booster work for borderline students, and a spelling strategy for all those who have difficulty in this area. There are some opportunities to use ICT within the English curriculum, but these are limited at present.
84. The English department carries out very good work in multicultural education. In Years 10 and 11, there is specific work on other cultures as part of the GCSE syllabus. Teachers use well the experience of students who come from other cultures.
85. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Staff are now well matched to the curriculum. Teaching is much improved: there is a higher proportion of lessons that are good or very good. There is consistency in the provision of drama. However, use of ICT is still limited due to difficulties of access.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

86. Students enter the school with a wide range of ability in the use of language and literacy. Their skills are developed well in Years 7 to 9, especially through English, and students are able to access the whole curriculum. Special activities and programmes, for example in reading and spelling, are used for specific students who have most need.
87. Subjects across the curriculum display key words and introduce new terminology carefully, paying attention to spelling, for example in science. Most subjects give good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through discussion, and questioning is often used well to draw individual students in and to ensure they express their ideas clearly, for example in mathematics and physical education. Some subjects pay attention to the structure of written work, for example history, which makes use of writing frames, and music, which provides structured writing tasks.
88. Currently, there is no co-ordinator for literacy across the curriculum and the school is seeking to appoint one. In the meantime, members of the senior management team have carried out an audit of written work. This has led to a specific literacy issue each half term that departments focus on. Development of cross-curricular language and literacy is satisfactory overall.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and the achievement of middle and lower attaining students in Year 10 are unsatisfactory.
- Achievement is good for all students in Years 7 to 9 and for higher attaining students in Spanish in Years 10 and 11.
- The achievement of students with English as an additional language is good.
- Teaching in Spanish is frequently very good, especially in developing listening and speaking skills.

Commentary

89. Standards attained by Year 9 are in line with the national average, although higher in Spanish than in French. This represents good progress and achievement from when the students entered the school. Higher attaining students, especially boys, and students who have English as an additional language, make particularly good progress. In some very well taught Spanish lessons students reach above and sometimes well above average standards. Whilst the content of the lessons is as expected for the age group, the quality of responses is very good. There is accurate and careful writing, quick and accurate understanding of spoken Spanish, and very good pronunciation in reading aloud and fluent, and speaking is grammatically accurate. Vocabulary is well memorised and learning secure.
90. GCSE results in modern foreign languages in 2003 were above average, particularly in relation to higher A*-C grades, for the small groups of students entered. A change of policy this year has resulted in a much larger group of students, with a wider ability range, studying languages in the current Year 10.
91. Standards in Spanish, especially for the higher attaining students, continue to be above average in Years 10 and 11. Students, particularly boys, have a great deal of confidence and fluency in speaking and understanding spontaneous conversation in Spanish. Coursework is well prepared, and redrafted to a high standard, lengthy and accurate. In French, standards are below average for the small group of students in Year 11, but in line with prior attainment.
92. Overall achievement by GCSE courses is unsatisfactory because in Year 10 middle and lower attaining students in both languages underachieve. The range of work produced is very limited, with little or no opportunity to develop speaking or listening skills. Reading and writing in some lessons are limited to individual words and short phrases. Vocabulary is limited, learning is not secure and there is little knowledge and understanding of grammatical rules and how to apply them. Students with English as an additional language make good and sometimes exceptional progress in all lessons, due to their serious approach to learning.
93. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, despite the good teaching in Years 7 to 9. This is because the teaching of middle and lower attaining students in Year 10 is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching varies from unsatisfactory or poor to very good, with learning in around half of lessons being good.
94. In all lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and make the purpose of lessons clear to students. Homework is appropriate and set and marked conscientiously, helping students to improve their work.

95. In the best lessons teachers use the foreign language almost exclusively for the conduct of the lessons, checking back regularly to ensure understanding and enabling students to develop very good listening skills. They also ensure students have good opportunities to develop their own speaking skills and insist on high standards of pronunciation and fluency. As a result, students become confident speakers in spontaneous as well as prepared conversations. A wide and very appropriate range of activities is used, including games, songs, quizzes and competitions to ensure learning is secure and students are motivated. In some lessons, excellent use is made of assessment to clarify to students how to improve their accents and pronunciation. The pace of lessons is very fast and students are fully engaged.
96. In unsatisfactory and poor lessons the pace of lessons is slowed when casual or poor behaviour and time wasting are allowed in class. These lessons lack a sense of purpose. There are insufficient opportunities for students to practise or hear the foreign language and a narrow range of teaching approaches is used, that fails to engage students' interest. In these lessons, students have an overtly negative approach to their language learning, which leads to disruption and underachievement.
97. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The department works as an effective team and has maintained high standards in many areas since the last inspection. Monitoring of the department has identified inconsistency in the quality of teaching and action is being taken to address it. The recently emerging issue of the achievement of Year 10 lower attaining students has been recognised, although not yet dealt with. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because achievement and the quality of provision have not progressed as they should.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 9, achievement of students is unsatisfactory.
- By the end of Year 11 students achieve well and GCSE performance has improved to above the national average.
- The achievement of students with English as an additional language is good.
- Self-evaluation is not sufficiently developed.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.

Commentary

98. Standards in national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below those found nationally, whereas at the time of the last inspection they were in line. Compared to students with similar prior attainment in other schools, achievement by Year 9 was very poor in 2003. Students currently in Year 9 are reaching standards close to average. Overall achievement for students by Year 9 is unsatisfactory, partly because teachers are not dealing effectively enough with discipline in the minority of lessons where there is poor behaviour.
99. GCSE standards in 2003 were above the national average; students currently in Year 11 are reaching standards above average. Achievement by Year 11 is good. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory and those with English as an additional language achieve well.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with approximately half of lessons good or better, but around one lesson in six is unsatisfactory or poor. The department is fully staffed with teachers whose subject knowledge is good. Teachers plan effectively and in Years 7 to 9 are using a three-part lesson structure that helps them to make effective use of time.

101. In all lessons teachers use strategies to involve students in the lesson and much of the work involves a lot of interaction between teachers and students. Most students participate well in lessons. Teachers model solutions to problems that provide very good examples for students to follow. This results in well-presented students' work that contains detailed working and appropriately labelled diagrams. Higher attaining students are challenged by lessons in which very good links are made between topics. These students know their targets and how to improve their performance and that helps them to achieve well. Homework is given regularly which helps students consolidate and extend their learning. The department is not making enough use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in mathematics.
102. In one excellent Year 8 lesson with a top set, achievement was outstanding because students were immediately engaged by a thought-provoking starter activity and continued to work at a challenging pace on tasks that were imaginatively delivered by the teacher. Relationships were excellent.
103. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and most students respond well. Relationships are usually very good except in some lower attaining sets where students are less motivated and exhibit very challenging behaviour which some teachers have difficulty managing. In a minority of lessons students did not achieve as much as they should because of the poor behaviour and attitudes of some students.
104. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The experienced head of department has developed a team that is focused on raising achievement in the upper school. Systems are in place to assess students' learning and students' progress is monitored to identify those whose rate of improvement falls below that expected. Nevertheless, the underachievement of students by Year 9 has not yet been satisfactorily dealt with. Some self-evaluation is carried out, but the department has not yet fully developed a more formal self-evaluation framework involving lesson observation and scrutiny of work. There is a strong commitment to staff development. Progress in the implementation of the mathematics strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is satisfactory.
105. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress in the previous areas for development. Standards by Year 11 have risen considerably. Mental skills are better practised in Years 7 to 9 and higher attaining students are better challenged. However, the achievement of students by Year 9 has declined and this is unsatisfactory. The proportion of good teaching has improved but so has the proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory or poor. Overall, therefore, there has not been sufficient improvement in the standards and quality in mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

106. The school does not have a policy for numeracy across the curriculum; this is a weakness since subjects do not know therefore how best to support the numeracy development of students. There has, however, been whole-school training that has helped to raise awareness. Every term, areas of focus are identified for whole-school attention, for example use of jottings to explain calculations. Opportunities for the development of competence in mathematics were seen mainly in science, ICT and geography lessons. Overall, standards of competence in mathematics are average.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good or excellent teaching in a small number of lessons provides models of exemplary practice.
- Approaches to marking and assessment are not consistent, so a significant number of students do not know clearly enough how to improve.
- Underachievement in a few lessons stems from a minority of students, mostly girls, with poor attitudes to learning, or from low expectations in teaching.

Commentary

107. Students enter the school with well below average standards in science. Results in Year 9 improved in 2003, but were below the national average overall, although average at higher grades. They were well below the average of similar schools. Girls attained a little higher than boys.
108. The 2003 GCSE results improved markedly from 2002 to marginally above the national average for A*-C grades, but the level of A* and A grades, especially for girls, is below the national average.
109. Standards in lessons and work seen throughout Years 7 to 9 are average, and in Years 10 and 11 coursework is also about average. The improvement in standards partly reflects the improved standards of students on entry.
110. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. Students generally have a secure knowledge of facts, but many lack precision when trying to relate them to give explanations. Students' literacy and mathematical skills are promoted well, for example spelling and interpreting graphs, but there is no evidence of a contribution to developing their ICT skills. Lower attaining students struggle with units of measurement, such as for electricity.
111. Teaching quality is good in Years 7 to 9 where the national strategy for improving teaching is implemented successfully. The very best lessons lead to successful learning and high achievement. For example, in a Year 9 practical lesson on cooling, really expert teaching strongly reinforced literacy and students demonstrated excellent laboratory skills and clear understanding of physical change. Where lessons are not sufficiently challenging, learning by more able students is not as profound as it should be and they underachieve. Effective teaching, in conjunction with support assistants in Years 7 to 9, helps students with special educational needs to learn and achieve well.
112. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Very good systematic teaching stimulates students to work hard and learn effectively, such as in a Year 11 lesson about balancing chemical equations. Given students' average attainment when they started their GCSE course and average attainments in their work, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.
113. However, achievement throughout Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory amongst a small but significant minority of students, mostly girls, who have poor attitudes to learning. Skilled management of misbehaving students enables satisfactory learning by the majority, for example in an exciting Year 9 lesson demonstrating the combustion of hydrogen to propel a rocket. Importantly, although misbehaviour is dealt with successfully, it does detract teachers from giving support to other students in the class.

114. Assessment and marking arrangements are inconsistent. In Years 7 to 9, guidance on improving attainment is not related to National Curriculum levels and is rarely given in a way that helps students know what they have to do. Support is not systematically directed at specific students to meet Year 9 or GCSE targets. Voluntary opportunities for boosting attainment, such as after-school classes, have limited take-up by those most in need.
115. Courses are well structured and backed by good guidance, appropriate resources and efficient technician support. Laboratory accommodation is adequate. Some are drab and not enlivened as much as others, with examples of students' work and display to promote literacy.
116. The department is well led and managed satisfactorily. A perceptive management strategy for raising standards and achievement is backed by commitment and endeavour amongst the staff. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Newly introduced lesson activities that reflect ways of learning deserve success but it is too soon to judge their impact. The need now is for active promotion of the most effective teaching throughout the department, and to develop rigorous evaluation to judge its effect on raising achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Significant numbers of students underachieve in all years.
- There is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
- Standards in ICT by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below national expectations.
- Curricular opportunities in ICT are good for most students.

Commentary

117. Teachers' assessments in Year 9 show that only 57 per cent of students achieve Level 5 and above, which is below the national average. Standards seen are below average and by the end of Year 9 achievement is unsatisfactory, largely because of weaknesses in teaching and assessment. Students are able to handle core applications quite competently but their work does not show a good understanding of suitability for purpose. In one lesson on presentations, students' work was unsuitable for the intended audience due to the use of gaudy colours and poorly researched content.
118. The 2003 GCSE results in ICT are well below national average with just 19 per cent of students achieving grades A*-C. Standards observed by Year 11 are below national average in both the GCSE and the GNVQ courses. This represents unsatisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11, again linked to weaknesses in teaching and assessment. Students are able to analyse a problem and identify a solution but the processes of refining, improving and evaluating work are weak, with insufficient annotation. Folders are often disorganised with some tasks missing.
119. Overall teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, with around two thirds of lessons unsatisfactory and the others satisfactory or good. In the unsatisfactory lessons weak behaviour management allows disruptive behaviour to go unchecked, limiting progress for many students. Learning objectives are either vague or inappropriate and teachers do not properly assess progress or existing knowledge. In the good lessons clear learning objectives are identified and shared with the students, and progress with them is established in the review. Interesting main activities and good student-teacher relationships result in well-motivated students and good achievement. Teachers have insufficient knowledge of the students' standards in ICT on entry to Year 7 and therefore find it difficult to match work to their abilities.

120. Leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory. Raising attainment has been identified as the top priority for the ICT department, but the approaches used to improve teaching have not had the desired impact on standards. New personnel have been appointed, including a new head of department, and new resources have been purchased but not enough emphasis has been placed on improving the use of ICT in subject teaching. However, the head of department provides good mentoring for the less experienced member of the department and changes to the curriculum have improved the opportunities in ICT for most students. Extra-curricular clubs run before and after school on most days and good use is made of the city learning centre to supplement the work done in school.
121. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards have not improved sufficiently in Key Stages 3 and 4. The opportunities in ICT are now better for most students, though the impact of this is not yet evident in the attainment of students.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

122. ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are few planned ICT learning activities in the subject schemes of work and little co-ordination across subject departments. Access to computers is a problem in many subjects. Recent investment is beginning to address this issue. The school is on track to achieve the national target of one computer to five students by August 2004. In some subjects there is evidence of good use of ICT for the preparation and presentation of project work but opportunities for the use of ICT to raise attainment are often missed.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 11 achievement is good in work done currently.
- Failure to meet coursework requirements prevented a significant number of students from achieving a grade at GCSE in 2003.
- Teachers are using a variety of teaching and learning techniques to improve learning.
- Self-evaluation is not sufficiently developed.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 are uncertain about the standards they are achieving.

Commentary

123. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Results of teacher assessments in Year 9 show standards are rising. Boys' standards are well below those of girls. Achievement in work seen is satisfactory. Students enter the school with variable experience of geography from their primary schools. Teachers concentrate on teaching basic skills and knowledge so that, by Year 9, students have made satisfactory progress.
124. Standards reached in GCSE for students in Year 11 have been well below average. Although the results in 2003 were much improved for those students who sat the examination, a quarter of students who followed the course were not entered because they did not complete their coursework. This was an unsatisfactory achievement overall and boys performed less well than girls. Students currently studying for GCSE are achieving well in their class work and they are on track to complete their coursework satisfactorily, showing overall satisfactory achievement and reaching average standards.

125. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The best teaching is characterised by challenging content delivered imaginatively by teachers with good subject knowledge. Teachers use published schemes of work in both key stages but have begun to enhance these with a variety of teaching and learning strategies such as mind mapping and ICT. Teachers give clear, specific instructions and have good, positive and supportive relationships with their students. By both Years 9 and 11, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because the teachers know the students well. Teachers are not yet making sufficient use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and as a result the ends of lessons are rushed, without adequate time to review progress.
126. Assessment is satisfactory, although in Years 7 to 9 students are not always aware of the level they are working at and this makes the teaching in these years groups weaker.
127. The head of department is providing good leadership in developing the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. Students use ICT well to research topics and improve the presentation of coursework. Homework is given regularly which helps students consolidate and extend their learning.
128. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject, but development planning lacks detail. The department does not make enough use of self-evaluation to improve its work. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory, with achievement maintained by Year 9 and now improving by Year 11. The quality of teaching has been improved, with more variety in teaching and learning strategies. However, progress in improving student assessment in Years 7 to 9 has been slow.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a core of good practice in the department and this is shared as a team to provide varied activities for students.
- Good relationships and good knowledge of individual students ensure that lessons are orderly and students on task.
- A lack of challenge in some tasks for higher attaining students results in some underachievement.

Commentary

129. By Year 9 in 2003 teachers assessed standards to be below average, particularly at the higher levels. Standards currently are below, but closer to, the average. GCSE standards were below average in 2003 for the higher grades, but more students than nationally obtained a grade. Students currently in Year 11 are working at below average standards. By both Year 9 and Year 11, students' achievement is generally at least satisfactory, given their below average standards at the start of the courses. Students with English as an additional language often achieve well. The higher attaining students are sometimes underachieving because the tasks given to the classes do not challenge them enough.
130. By Year 9 students can write clear factual notes, analyse maps and pictures as sources of evidence, and write letters in character, for example about the Slave Trade. Lower attaining students work conscientiously, despite problems with literacy. Higher attainers do not have enough opportunities for extended writing. By Year 11 students have developed their skills in writing extended paragraphs, giving reasons and analysing pictures, newspaper accounts and cartoons. Higher attainers too often write at greater length rather than questioning in greater depth.

131. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and quite often good. The teachers show good knowledge of and enthusiasm for their subject. They manage students and time well. They often draw out modern comparisons, for example with the English Civil Wars and wealth and poverty in 1920s' USA. There is an emphasis on the students being active in their learning and on including all of them by questioning and individual support. Too often, however, the single exercise or worksheet used does not give higher attaining students the chance to show what they can do. Homework is set regularly but not all students use their homework diaries to record it. Assessment is satisfactory. Marking by level or grade is provided at regular intervals. A new system of day-by-day grading has recently been introduced. Comments on how to improve written work are common at GCSE, but less so with younger students.
132. Leadership of history is good, with the head of department providing a good role model of planning and enthusiasm of delivery. Good management ensures that the staff in the department, including two who also teach other subjects, have the means to succeed, and that they work as a team to share good practice. However, planning, assessment, monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped.
133. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Levels of achievement have been at least maintained and have improved for lower attainers at GCSE. The quality of teaching has improved and is more varied and students are more active in their learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, leading to good learning by students.
- Good leadership and management ensure the department makes a good contribution to the school.
- The lower ability groups achieve less well in the designing element of the subject.
- The common structure for design folders supports students' achievement.
- The facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture are few.

Commentary

134. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average with some students attaining above this. For some students this represents good progress; overall achievement is satisfactory.
135. Students can apply the designing and making skills to a variety of tasks. For instance, students in Year 7 food technology lessons are able to evaluate the substance of a sandwich and use a wide range of techniques to establish whether this product is healthy and represents value for money.
136. By the end of Year 11 students have completed full courses in GCSE and attain standards above national expectations. This is evident across all of the options taken by students and considering standards in Year 9 this represents good achievement. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. However, when compared to the national picture, boys attain standards above but girls slightly below average. Standards of students now are above average. The quality of design presentation is generally above the national average but some lower ability students do not always achieve to their potential. Students develop a satisfactory knowledge of a range of materials and have enough skills to work well with these materials with increasing accuracy.

137. Teaching overall is good. Teachers insist on good standards of behaviour and use a range of methods to challenge students of all abilities to keep up the pace of learning. Good quality planning ensures students are provided with appropriate learning experiences and they develop their understanding about the materials they are using. Teachers work at developing students' technical vocabulary and make good use of homework to further this area. Good use is made by students of ICT to research and present their work. However, there is little use made of computer-aided design and manufacture.
138. The head of department has good leadership and management skills. He is aware of the strengths of the department and the areas for development. Assessment has been well developed and is used by all staff to ensure every child is appropriately challenged. The department also uses data well to measure student progress and inform the next teacher of the attainment of each student. The head of department monitors the work of the department as part of his team leader role within performance management. Regular department meetings are held and every member makes a valuable contribution to the development of the department.
139. They also carry out in-service training and members of the department disseminate information to colleagues following training. The accommodation is satisfactory; however, the resistant material rooms are limited in space and a health and safety issue was brought to the attention of the department.
140. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been resolved and levels of attainment have remained above average. The curriculum has been revised and students only attempt full GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11. This has clearly had a positive effect on the standards and achievement overall in GCSE. However, statutory requirements for all students to study design and technology in Year 11 are not met for most students so this good practice has not been spread across all students. The school has reconsidered this and the revised option system meets requirements for students in Year 10. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average in drawing and painting and achievement overall is unsatisfactory.
- There are examples of good achievement, where well-motivated higher ability students complete their work to a high standard.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there are important weaknesses that affect progress.
- Assessment and recording procedures are not properly established and do not inform learning.
- The learning environment has a negative effect upon achievement.

Commentary

141. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average; however, the higher ability students attain good standards in their drawings and experiments with mixed media to represent textures of animal furs. They use colour effectively in their large-scale 'Icon' paintings, which they have enlarged, using a grid, from secondary source images. Standards of drawing, painting and investigation are below average for the majority of middle and lower ability students. Too many students do not complete their work and their sketchbooks show a lack of sustained development. Knowledge and understanding about art and design is limited because opportunities to discuss the work and context of other artists are not planned and resources for

this element are inadequate. Students do not have the opportunity to use the computer as an art and design tool. Consequently achievement by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory for the majority of students across the National Curriculum programmes of study.

142. In 2003, GCSE examination results were slightly below the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average for the majority of students. There is some good achievement from the most able students in Year 11, who have completed careful drawings, investigative work in mixed media and very competent painting and sculpture. However, the majority of students do not have enough completed coursework, and sketchbooks show limited evaluation and ideas development. Progress in Year 10 has been too slow for the majority of students. Achievement is unsatisfactory because students are not made sufficiently aware of the assessment criteria and do not know how they could improve their work. The range and quality of drawing are limited, with much small-scale work in pencil and coloured pencil and not enough use of primary observation.
143. Students have the opportunity to attend art clubs at lunchtimes and have taken part in enrichment activities, such as the 'Big River' project and work on community murals. These activities provide good support for the achievement of those students involved.
144. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the majority of lessons but there are considerable weaknesses that affect achievement. Behaviour management is inconsistent and, in some groups, continual chatter and off-task behaviour affect progress. Systems to develop good working practices, such as mixing paint, and the care and storage of work, have not been properly established. Assessment procedures are not effective and progress against National Curriculum levels of attainment is unclear to both staff and students. Poor record keeping and marking mean that students following the GCSE course and also those in Years 7, 8 and 9 are insufficiently aware of their progress and potential target grades.
145. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. New schemes of work have been introduced, but important aspects, such as critical studies, ICT and opportunities for assessment are not planned into projects. The departmental development plan does not effectively address the necessary priorities for improvement. Since the last inspection the over-stretched accommodation and inadequate storage have not been improved. In addition, the learning environment is badly lit, dirty and untidy, and space is not used well. The weaknesses in the organisation of students' work and their surroundings have a negative effect upon achievement. As a result improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement have risen since the last inspection.
- Good teaching, characterised by good lesson planning, inclusion, high expectations and good discipline, is supporting good learning.
- Good subject and classroom management of the subject and the integration of literacy are helping to raise standards.
- The progression of core skills is not consistent across the units of study in Years 7 to 9.
- Good use of learning resources, except for ICT, supports learning.
- There is inadequate extra-curricular provision.

Commentary

146. Standards by Year 9 have improved, and are now around average. This represents a gradual annual improvement since the last inspection. Students enter this school with low standards in music and they make good progress so that by Year 9 their achievement is good.
147. By Year 11, standards at GCSE are average, although only a small number of students study the subject. All students following the course are successful and the majority gain the higher grades (A*-C), representing satisfactory achievement.
148. The high expectations of the teacher, clarity of delivery, good discipline and the use of relevant learning materials enable students to produce at least satisfactory and frequently good outcomes each lesson. Student achievement is realised through practical opportunities. During a Year 7 'keyboard skills' lesson, students were presented with a certificate of merit, when they achieved their performance target. Similarly, in a Year 9 lesson, where students were learning how to play Samba, with improvisation breaks, the whole class achieved its learning target with many students achieving excellently. Students at both key stages now use musical terminology and this supports their understanding and growing awareness of the subject.
149. Teaching is good and often very good. The teacher has high quality musical skills and uses demonstration very effectively. Lessons are well planned with a sense of progression in learning. Pace is appropriate for the needs of each group and strong discipline and high expectations help students remain on task and therefore succeed in their learning programme. Learning materials are varied and literacy work is good. It is this sustained quality of teaching that continues to be the key to the gradual improvement in standards by Year 9. However, there is a small undercurrent of poor behaviour in some classes, where students, mainly girls in lower sets, are disrupting learning. Noise spillage from poorly soundproofed practice rooms still interrupts learning and student concentration.
150. The curriculum is broad and meets all statutory requirements. Progression of learning within each unit of study at Key Stage 3 is effective. However, the progression of learning of core skills across the various units of study is not secure and this reduces the effectiveness of teaching and learning across the key stage. All students are given ample opportunity to succeed and the teacher displays great understanding when dealing with students with English as an additional language. Whilst strategies for literacy, special educational needs, English as an additional language, inclusion, and social, moral and cultural education are in evidence, there is less emphasis on the spiritual aspect of music and natural opportunities for citizenship have not been implemented. The provision of extra curricular activities such as sports clubs, whether done voluntarily or paid for, is less than in most schools.
151. Overall, the department is well managed and leadership is satisfactory. Regular meetings occur with the senior management team although the head of music should have more input into the agenda. Policy documentation is good. Schemes of work are up to date and relevant and there is an ongoing development plan. Assessment procedures are in place and the department makes good use of data in helping set targets. The instrumental teaching is well managed and is beginning to have an effect, particularly with the new local education authority music service support. The department is working to increase the number of students taking instrumental lessons. ICT provision is poor.
152. The department has improved considerably in many areas and overall improvement is good since the last inspection. However, music remains an isolated subject and this affects standards and student attitudes toward the subject. The teacher works hard to provide an atmosphere that will foster a positive student response.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, relationships, consistency and teamwork lead to good learning and positive attitudes and behaviour from students.
- Standards in GCSE physical education are improving; results are getting closer to the national average.
- Departmental monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped.

Commentary

153. Standards are below average on entry in Year 7. By Year 9, standards reached are just reaching average, the majority of students having made some progress in all lessons and overall achieving satisfactorily. Teaching is focused on establishing a broad range of skills in games, gymnastics, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities. In football, Year 7 girls can dribble, pass and control the ball in small drills but struggle to replicate these skills in a full game. Year 8 boys use basic maps to locate information around the school grounds and compete well in small groups during orienteering. In gymnastics, students perform only rudimentary balances and their knowledge of how to link actions together into a short sequence is limited.
154. Standards by Year 11 are more consistently average and achievement is good. Students make good progress in lessons because they are given long periods of time to practise skills and consolidate learning. Year 11 boys demonstrate a good level of skill in volleyball and perform some processes with precision and accuracy. Their attacking skills in the game are not as well developed but they work well as a team to generate a good standard of continuous play. Year 11 girls can work for sustained periods at improving fitness levels but show limited understanding of the changes occurring to their bodies during and after exercise. Whilst progress in lessons is good, students do not get weekly physical education lessons and consequently standards remain average. Curriculum time for physical education is below what is needed to achieve national strategy targets for participation in physical education and sport.
155. In 2003 half the number of students entered for GCSE physical education achieved A*-C grades, and all students achieved a pass. Whilst still below the national average this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. In practical lessons, boys and girls work independently in small groups and fulfil different roles such as umpire and coach. Some students could be challenged further, and a few less able students need more opportunities to practise and reinforce skills so they can be more effective playing in a full game. Written work has an over-dependency on worksheets and note making; there are few written resources to aid learning and insufficient opportunities for students to find things out for themselves through using ICT. Marking of homework tasks does not refer to GCSE examination grades or inform students on how to improve their work.
156. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are never less than satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. Specialist teachers work together as a team and apply a consistent approach towards class organisation and management of behaviour that allows them to forge strong working relationships with students, based on mutual respect. This creates a positive environment in which to learn. The majority of students participate wearing the recommended physical education kit, with hair tied back and jewellery removed. At the start of lessons, teachers use whiteboards to share with students what they want them to learn. Teachers are most effective when they use demonstration and questioning effectively, make best use of the time available and praise students regularly to motivate and reward them. They make learning fun, challenge students by planning increasingly difficult tasks and expect high quality responses from them.
157. Learning is good because students listen to instructions and advice. High activity rates are generated and time is taken to question and review what they have learnt. Students work in pairs and small groups, and co-operate with each other to organise equipment and practise

drills. It is most effective when students are given sustained periods of time to practise and refine skills, and regular advice is provided on how to improve. At times, staff teach lessons together to maximise the time available and manage large numbers of students in confined teaching spaces. Opportunities to evaluate the work of others are not taken often enough. For example, in a Year 11 trampolining lesson, learning could have been enhanced by asking students to observe each other's performance and offer advice on how to improve.

158. The department is well led. The team of specialist staff work well together and considerable efforts have been made to ensure there has been good improvement since the last inspection, including implementing new lesson planning and developing a wide range of out-of-school-hours learning. Management is satisfactory overall but insufficient time is dedicated to monitoring achievement. Too many games are covered in Years 7 to 9; students do not study each activity in sufficient depth.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies was inspected in Years 10 and 11 only.

Health and social care was sampled in Year 11. Teaching and learning were good to very good, based upon good relationships, high expectations and structured planning. Students responded very well, showing the ability to work independently and constructively and relate their own lives to the subject of study.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject knowledge is very good and supports learning.
- The use of question and answers is good and challenges students.
- Students work well together to enhance learning.
- Formal assessment has weaknesses in structure and comments on assessed work are not full enough to improve achievement.

Commentary

159. Results over the last five years have been below the national average, but in line with school predictions based on past performance. The department is aware of the problem and has instituted a number of initiatives to address this. One initiative at GCSE has been successful for boys, but less so for girls. Further changes are anticipated to improve the situation. Work being done by students now is around average with students achieving satisfactorily. Students are good at oral work and providing feedback from activities.

160. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The standard of teaching and learning and the achievement demonstrated by the students in most lessons at GCSE indicate improvements are being made. The organisation of the teaching at all levels enables students to engage in a wide range of activities. Good questioning approaches support learning. In one Year 11 GCSE lesson students were working very well together using the Internet to access information on theme parks and then reporting back in a plenary session that generated very stimulating discussion of relevant issues.

161. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory. In some lessons it is good and sometimes very good, but in one GCSE lesson it was unsatisfactory. In this case the students were set an unchallenging task that did not enhance the standard of work or their learning. In most lessons, however, students contribute in a positive way to the lessons, enhancing not only their own

learning, but, also that of all the members of the groups. In these cases, students are able to explain what they had done to the rest of the class. These explanations showed that the students can achieve a good level of understanding.

162. The standard of work out of class is satisfactory, but the demands made on the students are sometimes insufficient. Equally, while all the work is marked and is sometimes accompanied with good comments and clear indication of where marks have been gained or lost, this is not always the case.
163. Leadership of the department is good while the management is satisfactory. Regular departmental meetings are held and resources are allocated fairly. Industry links are well integrated into the courses and preparations are being made for expansion. A determined effort is being made to address the issue of standards and achievement, but the head of department is fully stretched having taken over the leadership of ICT at the same time. Greater monitoring of the work of individual members of the department is needed to ensure that the teaching and assessment are consistent and contribute to the need for improvement in standards. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, given the changing nature of students following the course.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The focus for inspection was the citizenship course, which was satisfactory. Where possible, judgements are also made about aspects of provision in PSHE, which are good.

Personal, social and health education

PSHE was not inspected as a discrete subject course. Judgements, where possible, are indicated below.

Commentary

164. Provision is made through the school's pastoral approaches, some tutor time and specific timetabled lessons, but these were not available to be seen during the inspection week, as the school operates a two-week timetable. Judgements were made on a range of other evidence, including discussions with students and scrutiny of work, which demonstrates that students show a good commitment to this aspect of their learning. This is reflected in the response that most students make to school, with many demonstrating good relationships, appreciation of each other and the varying cultures, and respect for feelings and beliefs.
165. The well-structured taught programme covers a wide spectrum of topics relevant to the developing maturity of the students and for their life beyond school. Sex, health and drugs-related issues as well as matters surrounding cultural diversity and racial harmony are well supported through links with local agencies such as the police and health services. As a result of this and other provision, the school has recently gained the Healthy School Award.
166. The careers education and guidance elements fully meet the students' entitlement and engage them appropriately in decision-making and confidence-building activities.
167. Time set aside for personal reviews provide a regular and effective basis for the students to reflect on how well they are doing. This makes a valuable contribution to discussion with form tutors on progress and target setting.
168. The leadership of the co-ordinator for PSHE is good. The many strands that combine to create the comprehensive provision are planned with a clear sense of direction and good teamwork, a good improvement since the time of the last inspection when provision was considered fragmented.

169. The practical management is very good and is exemplified in the smooth organisation of an extensive visits and visitors programme in which all students are variously engaged. Arrangements for monitoring overall provision and planning resulting action are not so well embedded although the coherent policies that underpin this area of the curriculum are reviewed annually.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The values promoted within citizenship lessons pervade the life and work of the school.
- There is a clear vision for, and commitment to, the subject's continued development.
- Arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and curriculum coverage lack rigour; this is inhibiting consistent development within the subject.
- Student self-assessment is developing well but assessment does not focus sufficiently on achievement.
- Students have good opportunities to learn about and practise active citizenship within and beyond their own school community.

Commentary

170. Students are reaching standards that are in line with national expectations by Year 9 and Year 11. For example, by the end of Year 9, students show increasingly responsible attitudes to themselves and others. This is developed through community-based activities designed to study issues such as stereotyping and discrimination. By the end of Year 11, students have learnt to reflect upon and use different forms of information, for example from the media, to form and express considered views on issues such as racism or the criminal justice system. These standards represent satisfactory achievement.
171. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, ranging from predominantly good to poor. In the good lessons teaching is well planned with clear citizenship specific objectives. These lessons are relevant to the students' age and interests, proceed briskly and give them opportunities to discuss relevant current issues such as the diverse nature of national identities. In these lessons teachers are aware of the potential problems that can arise from the study of controversial issues, such as euthanasia, but are confident enough to use appropriate curricular material to provoke further exploration and learning well. In the one poor lesson observed, activities were not well prepared, course material was unfamiliar to the teacher and relationships were poor. Consequently students were not well motivated, rapidly lost interest and some became disruptive. By contrast, a lesson on health and social care overtly used one aspect of citizenship as a vehicle for students presenting to each other the research they had completed on personal diet changes, a very effective approach to combining subject themes. Currently there are no systematic arrangements to oversee and monitor the quality of teaching in the subject that would help to identify and then address such weaknesses. The school is refining the use of an appropriate self-assessment end-of-key-stage report, but assessment arrangements to help teachers develop a shared understanding of their students' standards and achievement are still at an early stage of development.
172. Students enjoy good opportunities to practise citizenship skills within the school community. There is an active school parliament that draws upon the democratic practices established within tutor groups; this supports students' beliefs that their ideas and opinions are valued. Students also have good opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of international concerns about stereotyping by accessing the diverse cultures of young people living in other European countries through the use of email. The positive values promoted by citizenship are also reflected in and permeate the wider life of the school; for example, students demonstrate

respectful and considerate inter-personal relationships between their diverse social and ethnic groups.

173. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for its future development and has successfully combined its delivery alongside PSHE while establishing citizenship as a discrete subject. Practical management arrangements are satisfactory and there are good features in the arrangements made for visits and visitors. Self-review, monitoring arrangements and development planning are underdeveloped.

174. At the time of the last inspection there was no requirement to report on what is now a new and separate subject and so no judgement is made here regarding improvement since then. However, the school has made good progress on the introduction of this new subject.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	6	83.3	80.1	50	23.7	36.7	29.9
Business studies	3	33.3	76.4	0	16.3	6.7	26.2
Chemistry	1	100	72.7	0	13.9	20.0	24.1
English / English language	1	100	82.9	0	17.5	30.0	28.7
English Literature	4	75.0	85.9	0	19.1	22.5	30.2
French	1	100	78.2	0	18.9	20.0	27.6
General studies	3	66.7	73.9	0	17.8	20.0	25.7
Geography	4	50.0	74.3	0	19.8	10.0	26.5
History	2	50.0	80.7	0	19.5	10.0	28.6
Mathematics	3	0.0	61.9	0	17.1	0.0	22.1
Physics	1	0.0	68.6	0	14.4	0.0	22.7
Religious studies	2	100	80.2	0	22.6	23.3	25.4
Sociology	3	100	71.8	0	18.4	23.3	25.4
Total	34	64.7	73.9	8.8	17.4	18.5	25.7

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	13	100	98.6	53.8	50.2	95.4	87.5
Biology	4	75.0	96.4	0.0	39.2	40.0	78.6
Business studies	10	80.0	98.7	0.0	36.8	48.0	80.1
Chemistry	5	100	97.6	20.0	49.0	72.0	84.9
English / English language	12	91.7	99.4	16.7	36.3	65.0	80.9
English literature	10	100	99.5	20.0	46.5	68.0	86.5
French	2	100	98.8	50.0	51.5	90.0	87.6
Geography	8	100	98.7	12.5	44.5	65.0	84.0
History	9	100	99.0	22.2	44.6	75.6	84.6
Mathematics	4	75.0	96.7	25.0	55.6	60.0	88.8
Physics	5	80.0	96.7	20.0	44.6	60.0	81.7
Religious studies	11	100	98.8	18.2	46.7	69.1	85.6
Sociology	4	100	98.2	25.0	44.3	70.0	83.6
Spanish	3	100	98.3	0.0	50.2	66.7	81.9
Total	100	94.0	97.7	21.0	42.1	68.6	81.9

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
No students entered	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Advanced level GCE courses in English language and literature and in French were inspected.

Spanish was also sampled; one lesson of each of Year 12 and 13 was seen and a scrutiny of work undertaken. Standards reached were above average, particularly in relation to speaking and listening. The quality of teaching and learning was good, and a wide range of strategies was used to promote discussion and debate. Students had positive attitudes to their work, which supported their learning.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average but achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching is good and staff use an effective range of techniques to involve all students.
- There is not enough advice on how to improve written work when it is marked.

Commentary

175. Standards at AS and A2 in English literature and English language are below average. Students have a high level of success in attaining pass grades, but the proportion who gain higher grades is below the national average. However, this is in line with students' prior attainment and achievement is satisfactory.
176. There continues to be a wide range of attainment in current AS and A2 groups. In Year 12, for the English language course, students are given language frameworks and can understand a number of significant factors that govern how and why language is used in specific ways. By Year 13, they can apply language frameworks independently. A small number of students can do this at a sophisticated level. The highest attaining students can deconstruct style, and create their own texts in accordance with audience and purpose. In Year 12, for English literature, students can generally understand the contexts in which literacy texts are written and understood. They are accustomed to using mind maps and flow charts to interpret texts, a positive effect of the school's involvement in the small EAZ. By Year 13, they can comment on the effect of form and structure as well as language. Again, this is done at a more sophisticated level by a minority of students. Written work demonstrates detailed analysis but tends to lack structure, for example a clear introduction and conclusion. As students for both courses accumulate a wealth of material, it is important that their files are well organised, and this is not always the case.
177. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan carefully to involve all students and to enable them to contribute to discussion. Teachers use interesting stimuli, for example music, and different activities such as card-sorting and mind-maps to involve all students. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ensure that students use correct terminology. In literature, students are given useful notes and hand-outs, especially on the historical and social background of texts. Discussion in class focuses on the effect of a writer's choice of language and students are helped to select evidence. In language, students are also given good introductory material and well-chosen texts, from a wide range of sources, which they are asked to analyse.
178. In both courses, teachers have to plan for a wide range of ability, using questioning carefully to extend the thinking of some students, and to build up the confidence of others. Some lessons are pitched too much towards the middle. Written work is thoroughly marked according to assessment criteria, but comments tend not to give much advice on future improvement.
179. Leadership and management of the courses are satisfactory. Students are given a clear overview of their course. All results are carefully analysed. The department makes good use of teaching techniques that are used successfully with main school classes. Students have opportunities to go on theatre visits and to attend A-level conferences and master classes.
180. There has been good improvement in the quality of provision since the last inspection. Standards are not as high as they were but results are in line with prior attainment.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

181. There is no separate policy for the development of literacy across the curriculum in the sixth form. The school enables students who wish to, to improve their standards in English through re-sit examinations, to help their work in advanced courses. Most students are coping with the written demands of the advanced level courses. Opportunities are given to develop skills in speaking and listening through whole-class and group discussions, and individual presentations. Standards in literacy across the curriculum are average.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes support their learning.
- Reading is developed well.
- Discussion and debate are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

182. Small groups of students have entered for GCE A and AS-level examinations over the last two years and, whilst most students have gained a pass grade, levels have been below those predicted in relation to prior attainment. In the current Years 12 and 13, groups are relatively small. Standards are below the average but are in line with students' prior attainment. Achievement is satisfactory and some students who found the transition from GCSE to AS-level difficult are retaking the examination in Year 13 to improve their grades.

183. Reading is the best-developed skill and students pick out detail and understand the gist of fairly complex texts on social and educational issues, such as the growth in alcoholism in women or the education system in France, after preparation with the teacher. They are able to guess what unfamiliar words mean from the context or from similarities with English and to organise a cut-up text into the right order, by interpreting the meaning.

184. Standards of reading aloud are varied, but below average overall, with some hesitancy and mispronunciation. Writing is rather inaccurate, in spite of intensive revision of tenses and verbs, but students successfully develop arguments on, for example, the effect of drugs and alcohol on health, justifying the argument with reference to facts. A range of tenses is used and students incorporate phrases they have encountered in their reading to enrich their writing. Some students in both groups are reluctant to develop discussion and debate, and give quiet and brief answers to questions. Listening skills are adequate for the conduct of the lesson but some students experience difficulty in understanding longer passages of text or dialogue.

185. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are good role models for students. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities to develop all skills and grammar. Teachers use French well for all aspects of teaching, but shy attitudes of students in small groups make it difficult to stimulate argument and discussion. Resources used are satisfactory, for example texts from books, but few really stimulating current texts are used. Homework is well planned and regular, and marking is helpful in supporting students to improve their work.

186. Lessons are steady in pace and supportive rather than challenging; for example, answers are sometimes provided when students experience difficulty rather than using other prompts to get them to answer. Volunteers are allowed to answer a large number of questions rather than ensuring all take an equal part in oral work. Students are hard working and conscientious but are inclined to take a passive approach to oral work.

187. Leadership and management of modern foreign languages are satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Students have positive attitudes towards learning; relationships are very good which allows good collaborative work to take place.
- Marking is too infrequent and is insufficiently detailed.
- Self-evaluation is insufficiently rigorous to influence strategic planning.
- Students are offered a broad curriculum.
- Some female students in Year 12 are passive in class.

Commentary

188. The inspection focused on the AS-level and A-level courses. Standards attained at A-level in 2003 were below average and none of three students entered for AS-level gained a grade. Standards of work seen in both Years 12 and 13 suggest that these students are now working around national averages at both A and AS-levels. The achievement of students currently in the sixth form is satisfactory at both levels.
189. The teaching of mathematics in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, with some good features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to model solutions to problems. Time in lessons is used well and teachers make good use of praise to motivate students who are then willing to participate actively in lessons. Students have positive attitudes towards learning, and relationships are very good which, in turn, lead to good collaborative work. An example of this was seen in a lesson in which pairs of students worked on different sets of problems and then demonstrated their solutions to the whole group. In this way, the teacher enabled students to experience a wider set of questions than they had been able to attempt themselves. Despite the lively style of teaching, which seeks the active involvement of all students, some female students in Year 12 are passive in class. They are attentive and concentrate well but do not volunteer answers to questions.
190. Homework is used well to consolidate learning and is followed up with good oral feedback in lessons. Whilst teachers also support students by providing them with examination module mark schemes for past tests, they do not provide sufficient detailed marking of their students' work to eliminate some errors of mathematical presentation. Students do not support their communication of mathematical argument with linking words or reasons for justification, even though full working of problems is presented.
191. Students are offered a broad curriculum for A level courses, which includes modules in pure mathematics, applied mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Students choose to specialise in either mechanics or statistics alongside the core modules in pure mathematics. Students express enjoyment in the study of mathematics, with some students intending to pursue mathematics-related courses at university.
192. The leadership and management of mathematics in the sixth form are satisfactory. An enthusiastic and suitably qualified teaching team has been assembled. There is good allocation of teachers to modules to reflect the strengths and interests of the teachers. Self-evaluation and the use of findings from analyses and monitoring are not yet sufficiently rigorous to influence strategic planning. There is only limited use of ICT to enhance the teaching of mathematics. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; the achievement of students continues to be satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

193. Students make satisfactory use of mathematics across the curriculum. For example, Year 12 students use scientific calculators effectively in science and can manipulate formulae accurately. Students in Years 12 and 13 undertake statistical analyses in science but the analyses are limited to superficial calculations with no application of statistical methods such as consideration of measures of spread. Overall, standards in mathematics across the curriculum are average.

SCIENCE

Biology was the focus of the inspection.

Chemistry and physics lessons were sampled. Teaching in these two subjects develops an appropriate emphasis on scholarship. In Year 12 physics, an effective seminar style lesson on astrophysics stimulated students to analyse graphical information and share perceptions leading to clear gains in knowledge. In Year 12 chemistry, a skilful exposition on energy changes in reactions held students' attention and successfully improved their understanding.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching successfully draws upon knowledge of human learning.
- There is a clear commitment to raise standards at A-level.
- Students value the support they receive from teachers but the over-large Year 12 class limits its effectiveness.
- Students' study skills are not continually developed to help them achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

194. Standards in GCE A-level in 2002 were above the national average, with half gaining A or B grades. They declined in 2003 with a small entry. The school analyses results carefully and was disappointed by the results, which were well below expectation. Students who studied the AS-level carried on to the A2 course so there is no comparative data about the standards reached in the AS examinations.
195. Standards of coursework and in lessons are average and achievement is satisfactory. By Year 13, higher attaining students reach a clear understanding by using skills of analysis and evaluation. Others lack sufficient incisiveness for high attainment at A-level. For example, their written work shows inability to be selective when drawing upon information sources and this limits the quality of their explanation. However, most successfully use tactics based upon knowledge of human learning to represent complex principles in a concise way. Year 12 students have a grasp of factual information but most find difficulty in relating it to give descriptions. Most students embark upon the biology course with relatively modest GCSE grades and they are achieving satisfactorily. However, their study skills for research and handling information are not developing in a way that supports their learning throughout the course.
196. Teaching quality in both Years 12 and 13 is good overall with some excellent features. In particular, these relate to new learning styles that are being very effectively introduced. Teachers' expert knowledge, diligent preparation and competent management of a range of well-structured activities successfully realise the purpose of lessons. Students value their teachers' support highly, both in the help given in lessons and when they seek it independently.

This reinforces learning. However, learning and achievement are limited by the size of the Year 12 class, which, with 28 students, reduces the time available for and effectiveness of support. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work that are fostered by excellent teacher-student relationships. They become fully involved in lessons and most are diligent and industrious. However, a small minority undertake work in their own time in a cursory way that does not reflect the scholarship needed at this level.

197. Students' work is very diligently assessed using examination criteria meticulously. In turn their abilities are well known and effective support is given informally. However, these arrangements do not have the structure of a systematic, scheduled approach for giving subject-specific guidance to all students.
198. The subject is led well and managed satisfactorily. Teachers working with the same groups collaborate well in planning their approaches, which reflects both a strong team spirit and a determination to raise attainment. The impact of recent innovations in teaching is yet to be fully evaluated so that their benefits can be shared more widely. The previous inspection did not report specifically about sixth form biology so it is not possible to judge any change in effectiveness since then.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in the GNVQ and AVCE courses.
- The range of courses offered is well matched to the students' needs.
- Feedback to students about their progress and targets in the AVCE course could be improved.

Commentary

199. There is no sixth form examination data from 2003. Standards seen by Year 13 are around the national average in the AVCE (Vocational A-level) course. Not enough work was covered last year, however, so there is a disproportionate amount of work to cover this year. Due to this, although achievement in work being done currently is good, overall by the end of Year 13 achievement is just satisfactory. Students create sophisticated spreadsheet models related to business solutions. In one case a student created an effective system for tracking orders, costs and profits for a business. Some of the students use *Excel* macros and visual basic programming to customise their solutions, these are good approaches.
200. In Year 12 a GNVQ course is offered to students with lower attainment in ICT. Foundation and intermediate level units are integrated within the lessons, providing a good match of course to student. Standards seen are below the national average, but this represents satisfactory achievement for these students. In one lesson, students analysed commercially-produced presentations, identifying clearly the features that make them well suited to their purpose and applied them to their own presentations.
201. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Lessons are well planned and prepared with clear learning objectives that are shared with the students at the start of each lesson. Teachers display good subject knowledge, enabling them to provide appropriate levels of pace and challenge in the lessons. Students respond well and apply good levels of effort to their work. There are very good relationships between teachers and students; students also support each other well. The GNVQ group is very well organised with clear guidance about time scales, deadlines for submission of work and target grades. This could be improved in the AVCE course where some students are unaware of the grades that they have achieved in some of the completed units of work.

202. Current leadership and management of sixth form courses are good. The departmental documentation contains clear schemes of work for the AVCE and GNVQ courses. Students have good access to ICT resources both within and outside of the normal school hours. The opportunities provided and the match of course to student is good. Small group sizes enable all students to have individual access to computers and plenty of working space away from the computer terminals to develop and refine work.
203. There was no analysis of sixth form ICT standards at the last inspection so a comparison with current achievement is not possible. There have been recent satisfactory improvements made to the range of courses on offer and the match of courses to students but overall since the last inspection improvement has been slow.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

204. Students' general competence in ICT is satisfactory with students using the school network and software packages fluently and confidently. Students have good access to ICT resources and use them well to support work in other subjects, particularly in the presentation of their course work.

HUMANITIES

History and sociology were inspected.

One lesson was sampled in geography, in which teaching and learning were satisfactory. Standards in geography have varied between average and well below average in recent years. In 2003 achievement was around that of other subjects. A small number of students are studying A-level currently and are expected to reach average to below average standards.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and supports students' good achievement.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, in a variety of groupings.

Commentary

205. Standards at both A-level and AS-level are below average. Standards vary year on year and in 2002 were, unusually, well below average. The 2003 results were closer to the national average. Students generally achieved as well as in their other subjects and in line with predictions based on their GCSE grades. Currently students are below average but students are generally achieving well, given their GCSE grades. Most students continue onto the A2 course. The present Year 12 has more than double the numbers who took AS last year.
206. Students on the AS course are making good progress and their later work shows increasing depth of analysis and development of argument. Their notes are thorough on topics both from English history, such as the Wars of the Roses, and from European, such as Louis XIV. There are good examples of source evaluation, both of original documents and of the contrasting views of historians. Students use a variety of ways to present information, including mind maps and diagrams.
207. Students on the A2 course organise their work well and keep extensive, thorough notes. They have continued to deepen their analysis of issues in the history of Tudor England and 18th

century Europe. They present arguments well, both in extended writing and in presentations to the class.

208. Teaching and learning are consistently good. The teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of the students well. Teachers assess their work in a way that shows students how to improve. While providing useful notes and guidance teachers also ensure that students participate actively in their own learning. A particularly strong feature is the identification of aspects of a major topic that can be assigned to groups or pairs within a class. This develops students' skills of analysis and presentation. It also compels them to listen carefully to each other and to ask questions for clarification or to comment on the argument being put forward. These groupings are varied by the teacher to ensure a mix of personalities and, in Year 12, of prior attainment. This method enables students to engage in depth with, for example, social change in Elizabethan England and the contradiction between Westernisation and autocracy in 18th century Russia.
209. Leadership and management of the sixth form provision are good. Co-ordination between the two teachers and of resources and assessment is well managed. They provide good role models of commitment and enthusiasm. The maintenance of good achievement for a changing intake represents satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is mainly good and the course is planned well.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and collaborate well.
- Some students lack confidence when expressing themselves orally; this is also reflected in their extended writing.
- There is no use of ICT for teaching and limited use for independent study.
- A very limited range of resources is available outside the main textbooks.

Commentary

210. Standards at both A-level in Year 13 and AS-level in Year 12 are broadly average in work seen. This is better than the results in GCE examinations in recent years based on small entry numbers. This improvement follows changes in the staffing of the subject. Students' achievement is satisfactory though those who enter with weaker grades at GCSE make more variable progress. This accounts for the low attainment of a number of students at the end of Year 12.
211. This overall satisfactory achievement is due to the lead teacher's secure understanding of course requirements and expectations for learning based on good subject knowledge. By Year 13, students have a sound understanding of main theories and concepts though are less confident when applying these to new topics. They can accurately describe research findings but find the comparative evaluation of different studies difficult. Many have an uncertain grasp of the foundations of research methods. They can write detailed essays, but often these lack clear structure and deftness in handling alternative explanations. In general, they make sound notes in independent study. Students engage well in the small group discussions that are a feature of most lessons, though only a few are able to provide sustained responses in whole-class question and answer sessions.
212. Students in Year 12 are coping with the higher demands of AS-level study and their work on the whole meets the standard expected. They respond well to teaching that expects them to consider alternative definitions of the family and apply these to a range of different cultural

examples. They are beginning to appreciate the sociological imagination necessary to critically appraise their own cultural assumptions. Higher attaining students write good essays but other students find it harder to marshal evidence and theory in their work.

213. Teaching is mainly good and based on secure subject knowledge. A prominent method is the use of carefully structured activities that students work through together to understand new concepts and research. Students respond well to the teaching. However, many find it hard to sustain concentration because they have several lessons on the same day. This is because the teacher is part-time and so sociology lessons are timetabled on only two days per week. Lessons have clear aims but the main outcomes are not made explicit to the students nor is their understanding followed up routinely through well-focused plenary sessions to confirm learning. However, assessments are done conscientiously and marking often gives clear indication of what to do to improve. No use is made of ICT for teaching and students make limited use of it for research. Though the number and range of textbooks are sufficient, the range of other reading material is very limited.
214. The teacher leads and manages the course well within the constraints of a part-time contract. Sociology is growing in popularity as changes brought about by new staffing arrangements work through into improved learning and standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects in this area were inspected.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is satisfactory but the learning of all students could be improved by providing a firmer structure for learning and more rigour in assessment.
- The course provides opportunities for students to develop their own ideas in drawing, painting, mixed media and sculpture but resources for digital art and critical studies are inadequate.
- The learning environment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

215. By Year 13 standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Examination results have previously been high but there have significant changes in personnel, which have influenced uptake, standards and achievement.
216. In Year 12 standards of work on the AS course are average and achievement satisfactory, with some examples of good achievement from the most able students. The most highly motivated students respond well to the individual tutorial style teaching, which allows them to work independently and experiment with new processes, for example in sculpture and mixed media. Some students have benefited from the opportunity to visit London galleries with the school and take part in a life drawing class. These opportunities have helped them to develop sustained work, for example one student's thorough investigation of the figure, using a range of media, influenced by the painting of Jenny Saville and the photography of Bill Brandt. There is some well-written personal research reflecting sound knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists. Some of the less able students are not achieving as well as expected because there is not enough emphasis on structured visual investigation and exploration.

217. In 2003, examination results at A2 were well above average, with many students attaining high grades. In Year 13, the present small group of students are attaining the expected standard and their achievement is satisfactory. They are willing to experiment with media they have not previously tried and produce successful work in oils and mixed media. There is a range of work, from photo-realist drawing to large-scale collage using natural materials, influenced by Andy Goldsworthy. For the most able students, written research shows a thoughtful and perceptive appraisal of works of art. They are confident in discussing the work they have seen and how it has helped them to develop their own ideas. Primary research is encouraged, with one student having worked with nursery children to further his understanding of the development of drawing.
218. Teaching is satisfactory and the students receive positive and supportive one-to-one guidance. Progress is reviewed on an individual basis and students are helped to move forward with appropriate advice about artists and ideas for development. There are weaknesses in the structure for learning and the rigour of assessment.
219. Leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. The learning environment for students is poor. Although they are fortunate in having a dedicated studio that they can use for independent study, this is not well organised. Storage is limited and the dirty and untidy surroundings have a negative effect upon the learning ethos. Access to subject-specific computer software is limited and resources for critical studies are inadequate. Although some of the strengths evident at the time of the last inspection have been maintained there has been no more than satisfactory progress in improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teacher-student relationships facilitate learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory.
- Students do not achieve higher grades in examinations.
- There are few opportunities for students to gain leadership or coaching qualifications.
- ICT is not used to enhance learning.

Commentary

220. Standards by Year 13 are average. Over the last three years since A-level sports studies was introduced, relatively small numbers of students have opted for the course. A significant number complete AS-level but do not go on to complete A2 in the second year. In 2001, eight students achieved pass grades at AS-level, but no higher grades were achieved despite several students having achieved well at GCSE physical education. Similar AS results were achieved in 2002; however, no students went on to sit the A2 examination in 2003. Currently 12 students are following the AS course, but only two students in Year 13 are following the A2 course. Although achievement is overall satisfactory, some students do not achieve what is expected of them when compared to their performance in other A-level subjects. Scrutiny of work indicates students are capable of a high standard of work in producing their own personal exercise plans. These are usually well-structured, presented in word-processed format and illustrate individual research into ways of improving sporting performance in a chosen sport. The majority of students make satisfactory progress in lessons.

221. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned. Teachers forge good working relationships with students and encourage them to generate and debate issues, to respond to questioning and to evaluate and compare different ways of providing and performing in sport. In most lessons there is an over-reliance on worksheets and tasks from a few texts. ICT is not used to promote individual research or make learning interesting by drawing upon current affairs and issues arising in the media. Homework is set on a regular basis but marking does not always refer to examination grades or advise on ways of improving the standard of work. Students display positive attitudes towards their studies and can explain when questioned what they are planning to do with a qualification in sport.
222. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Whilst opportunities exist for students to participate in sport on a casual basis, students are not given access to leadership or coaching qualifications that would support their learning or opportunities to participate in different roles in sport such as coach or referee. Insufficient time is dedicated to monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning in order to raise standards achieved. No judgements were made about physical education in the sixth form at the last inspection so at this point no judgement is made about improvement since then.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Although no subject was inspected, an observation of one lesson in health and social care, for students studying GCE advanced and GNVQ foundation and intermediate levels, was made. The quality of teaching was good, based on good relationships and well-planned activities. Students worked very hard in the lesson, demonstrated good knowledge of the topic, built well upon previous work and showed the ability to work independently.

BUSINESS

Business studies was inspected.

A new employability course for lower attaining Year 12 students was sampled for one lesson. Teaching in that course was very good and most appropriate to the group. The achievement of students was good.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject knowledge is very good.
- Good use is made of target setting and of progress sheets.
- GNVQ and employability courses have been successfully introduced.
- Formal assessment with marks, enabling students to judge their performance, is not regular enough.
- Learning is based on a variety of prior knowledge.

Commentary

223. Results at A-level over the last five years have been below the national average, but achievement is in line with or better than might be expected from GCSE results. At GNVQ achievement is above the level expected from the GCSE results. The department is aware of the problems and is trying to improve both the intake and the outcomes. Work being done by the students is around average at A-level, but above average at GNVQ. Students are good at oral work and participate willingly and freely. They understand and apply technical terms well. They are less good at applying prior knowledge gained from earlier modules.

224. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features at A-level, and very good at GNVQ. In one Year 13 A-level business studies lesson students used the knowledge and understanding gained from part-time jobs, and prior business knowledge, to enhance their learning about appraisal in the work place. This ensured that existing learning was reinforced and new learning and skills were developed. This led to students making good progress in lessons with clear explanations and the development of skills, such as analysis. One GNVQ lesson saw students engaged in a range of activities, including a poster exercise where they had to stand up and explain what they had done, designed to reinforce their understanding of public limited companies.
225. The standard of work in lessons is at least satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. In one GNVQ lesson students at both intermediate and foundation levels were able to respond well to questioning and went on to draw up and carry out sensibly thought out surveys. Learning materials and notes are being placed on the school's intranet, the school's internal computer information system.
226. The standard of work out of class is satisfactory and the work set appropriate for the courses being followed. While the marking at GNVQ is constructive with comments that would assist further progress, at A-level not all the assessment is of a satisfactory standard in terms of helping students to understand how to improve their performance.
227. Leadership of the department is good, while the management is satisfactory. The introduction of the employability course in 2003 has provided a valuable course for a well-defined group of students. Regular department meetings are held, with emphasis on the demands of the awarding bodies. Opportunities for insight into industry and enterprise are provided. More emphasis needs to be placed on the assessment of work by the department so as to ensure that this enhances the overall standard of achievement. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

228. PSHE was not inspected as a discrete subject. Work was scrutinised, students spoken to and documentation reviewed. The school's arrangements are good and students gain a great deal from the provision. A very small number of students took an AS examination in general studies in 2003; results were below average.
229. Students receive advice, information and support from a variety of adults, taught activities and informal relationships. The arrangements are effective; students have a good and positive attitude to school, have good relationships with each other and teachers, and value their own and others' cultures and backgrounds. Their attendance is good and students value the time available in school out of lessons to continue their course of study.
230. Students are well supported through careers education and know what the options are for higher education and other opportunities. Arrangements for transfer to sixth form education are good and students readily accept the degree of responsibility needed at this level. Students recognised that they received advice as needed on personal matters and that there were adults in school they could talk to. Students following the health and social care course were well aware of the dangers of smoking, and of changing patterns of use. They understand the factors that influence diet and health and the social pressures on lifestyles.
231. Tutors regularly help students review their work and set targets, although students would benefit from more advice from subject teachers so that they know exactly what to do raise standards in each subject.

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

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