

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. ANTHONY'S CATHOLIC GIRLS' SCHOOL

Sunderland

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108871

Head teacher: Sister M Aelred

Lead inspector: Mr P Livsey

Dates of inspection: 6th – 10th October 2003

Inspection number: 259389

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 pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll;	1315
School address:	Thornhill Terrace Sunderland Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	SR2 7JN
Telephone number:	0191 5537700
Fax number:	0191 5537699
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. C. Barrett
Date of previous inspection:	16 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Anthony's is a Roman Catholic girls' school. It has been a specialist technology college for four years and became a beacon school in September 2000. It is involved in Excellence in Cities and has numerous links with outside agencies beyond the Catholic community. It has a high reputation and is over-subscribed. The school is bigger than other secondary schools (1315 compared with national average of 993). 310 are in the sixth form (average size nationally is 171). In 2002, 11.8 per cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals, broadly in line with the national average. This has been higher in previous years. 96 per cent of pupils are of white UK heritage. Only 10.6 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, compared with 18.1 per cent nationally. The school draws pupils from all 23 wards in the city, some of which are the most deprived in Tyne and Wear.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1544	Mr. P. Livsey	Lead inspector	
11358	Mrs. V. Lamb	Lay inspector	
31550	Mrs. S. Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics
1622	Mrs. L. Aers	Team inspector	English
22083	Mrs. K. Hinton	Team inspector	Science Biology
32333	Mr. R. Lilley	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
18955	Mrs. C. Earlam	Team inspector	Art
8751	Mr. J. Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology
1576	Mr. G.W. Stephenson	Team inspector	Geography
1608	Mr. R.B. Higgs	Team inspector	Citizenship History
1174	Mr. D. Clegg	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French
8009	Mr. J. Forsythe	Team inspector	Music
32087	Mr. J. Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education (PE)
1549	Mr. T. Robshaw	Team inspector	
16359	Mr. J. Farrow	Team inspector	
8248	Mr. C. Riches	Team inspector	Business education
1547	Mr. G.L. Clarke	Team inspector	Chemistry
16431	Mrs. E. Graham	Team inspector	Health and social studies

The inspection contractor was:

peakschoolhaus ltd

BPS Business Centre
Brake Lane
Boughton
Nottinghamshire

NG22 9HQ

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

ST. ANTHONY'S CATHOLIC GIRLS' SCHOOL

A large Catholic girls' school in the City of Sunderland
inspected 6th to 10th October by a team led by Mr P Livsey.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good school with examples of excellent practice**, achieving high standards in a school community where all are valued and included. It also provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils' achievement is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and behaviour around school is excellent.
- There is a high proportion of very good teaching, with excellent examples.
- There is a very good range of courses on offer and excellent standards in sport.
- There is very good care, welfare and guidance, including excellent transition arrangements.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- In some lessons pupils do not reach their full potential.
- Cross-curricular information and communication technology (ICT) in the main school is not sufficiently co-ordinated.
- Careers education in Year 9 is not extensive enough.

The school has maintained its strong position and improved well since the last inspection, particularly in attendance, achievement and sixth form provision. It has addressed its key issues fully, except for cross-curricular ICT, where progress has been made but which still remains an issue.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Standards at 14 are **very high**, and **well above average** at 16 and at the end of the sixth form. Pupils and students, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well at all three stages.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good**. Pupils' attendance and attitudes are very good. Their behaviour around school is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **good and often very good**, and are very good in the sixth form. Teachers generally have high expectations, provide varied activities and challenge pupils to succeed. There are examples of excellent practice.

The breadth and richness of the curriculum are very good, including very good extra-curricular provision and excellent standards in sport. Care, guidance and support are generally very good and arrangements for transition from primary school are excellent. Partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The school is very well governed. The head teacher and key members of staff provide very good, committed, principled leadership and manage the school well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school's values and almost all pupils enjoy being there. Almost all parents and pupils rate the teaching highly. A small proportion of parents are concerned about how well they are informed about underachievement. Almost all parents and pupils think the school is well run.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve satisfactory teaching by strengthening departmental monitoring, to ensure consistency of teaching, and to identify and disseminate good practice.
- Improve the cross-curricular provision for ICT:
 - by providing a more structured approach to coverage of the programmes in Years 9 to 11;
 - by ensuring that all subject areas deliver appropriate ICT learning activities through their schemes of work;
 - by improving the monitoring and evaluation of the cross-curricular ICT provision.
- Improve the provision of careers education in Year 9:
 - by providing a more extensive programme;
 - by improving access to careers information and opportunities to research using ICT.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST. ANTHONY'S CATHOLIC GIRLS' SCHOOL

The sixth form is larger than average, 310 students. Students are drawn mostly from the main school. Mainly advanced courses are offered, but the range is being widened.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** sixth form with examples of excellent practice. Its results are well above average and the students achieve very well. It is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in A and AS examinations are well above average.
- There is good and often very good achievement by many students across the range of courses.
- Attitudes and self-motivation are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Curriculum provision is very good.
- In a small number of lessons students are not fully challenged to reach their potential.

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	Very good in English . Teaching is often very good and pupils' independence of thought is very well developed. Excellent in French . Teaching offers high challenge and students show initiative and independence.
Mathematics	Good . The teaching is good on all of the well-chosen courses.
Science	Good in biology . There is a strong team of teachers and students are very well motivated. Good in chemistry . Teachers' expectations are very high and students develop a deep understanding.
Information and communication technology	Good . Students apply considerable intellectual effort to their work.
Humanities	Very good in history . Teaching is intellectually demanding. Very good in geography . Teachers have high expectations and very good knowledge of examination requirements.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in design and technology . The subject is very well led and teachers' expertise is high.
Visual and performing arts and media	Satisfactory in art and design . Attainment is high and teaching has good features, but the curriculum lacks breadth.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in PE . Teaching is very good and students are able to work independently and think for themselves.
Business	Good . Teachers' knowledge is very good and good use is made of targets for students.
Health and social care	Very good . Teaching is very good and assessment gives very good feedback.

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

Overall, advice, guidance and support are **very good**, on entry to the sixth form, on progress and choice of courses, and on application to university, although more general careers advice is somewhat narrow in Year 13. Students' views are regularly surveyed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is **very well** led and managed. The year leader and assistant and the deputy head know the students and their course requirements well and provide a supportive experience for them.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Almost all students rate the sixth form experience highly. A very high proportion think they are taught well and that the sixth form is well run. They have some concerns about the subject and careers advice on offer.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Main school

1. Standards are **well above average**. Achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is very high and achievement is very good by Year 9.
- Standards at GCSE are well above the national average.
- Standards and achievement are well above national expectations by Year 9 and Year 11 in English, French, Spanish, history, geography and design and technology.
- Pupils make good or very good progress in almost all subjects based on their prior attainment.
- There is some underachievement in science by Year 11.
- Standards and achievement in art could be higher.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.3 (37.5)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	37.1 (36.5)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	36.2 (37.0)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 213 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	69 (67)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	48.6 (49.3)	39.8 (39)

There were 194 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Attainment is very high and achievement is very good by Year 9. In 2002, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in all three subjects, English, mathematics and science. In comparison with schools in similar circumstances, attainment in English and science was very high and well above average in mathematics. Results were very high again in 2003, particularly so in the number of pupils reaching the upper levels. Pupils

come into school with above average attainment and continue to build on this at St. Anthony's, resulting in very good achievement.

3. Standards are also above average by Year 9 in other subjects of the curriculum, and well above in French, Spanish, history, geography and design and technology. They are satisfactory in art.
4. At GCSE, standards have been well above national averages for six years. In 2002, 69 per cent of pupils gained five A*-C, which was well above national figures and in the top five per cent of schools in a similar context. Based on prior attainment, pupils achieved very well. In 2003, the percentage at five A*-C fell slightly, but rose at five A*-G.
5. In work seen, standards are particularly high by Year 11 in English (including English literature), French, Spanish, history, geography and design and technology. Standards are above average in mathematics, music, PE, business studies and ICT (for those pupils taking the GCSE course in this). Standards in art and science are in line with national averages.
6. Achievement in lessons is good in the majority of cases and often very good. This is due to the quality of teaching and pupils' positive attitudes. Their motivation is very good. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

Sixth form

7. Standards are **well above average**. Achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment has improved since 2001.
- Standards in almost all subjects inspected were above average, and well above in geography and PE.
- Standards in French are very high.
- Students achieve well, and often very well, based on prior attainment.

Commentary

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.4	80.2
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	38.2	35.5
Average point score per pupil	67.0	57.4

There were 110 pupils in the year group.

8. In 2001, the school's average point score for advanced examinations was close to the national figure. The school score rose in 2002 to be well above the national average, and rose again in 2003.
9. In 2002, in individual subjects at A level, the average point score was well above national figures in art, geography and ICT. It was above in English literature, mathematics, history, design and technology, business studies, religious studies and general studies. Results at higher levels were particularly good in art and geography.

10. The school carries out careful analysis of results based on pupils' prior attainment and predictions. This shows that the majority of students had added value in their sixth form results. Achievement overall is very good. More monitoring of pupils and better guidance on courses has resulted in the rise in attainment since 2001.
11. In work seen during the inspection, in those subjects that were observed, all courses leading to AS/A2 demonstrated standards above average except geography and PE, where they are well above and French, where they are very high. In chemistry, standards are close to the national average, but there has been some underachievement. In the advanced vocational course health and social care, standards are in line with national expectations, but pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

12. Attendance and punctuality are **very good**. Pupils' attitudes are **very good**. Their behaviour around the school is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is well above the national average.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and their work.
- Relationships are warm and supportive.
- When moving around the school, pupils are very polite and orderly.

Commentary

Main school

13. Staff make it clear to parents and pupils that good attendance is expected in order for pupils to make the most of the opportunities available in school. Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance and punctuality are thorough and very well managed throughout the school. Imaginative and caring support is available for any problems that occur and pupils and students feel that they can confidently turn to adults in school for help. Parents hold the school in high esteem. Consequently, attendance and punctuality are very good.
14. Pupils and students enjoy the activities on offer. For instance, they take part in competitions as part of their studies and extra-curricular activities. High levels of interest are apparent in relation to work experiences arranged with employers in the local community. The library is very well used to support independent study and pupils make good use of the spaces available during breaks and lunchtimes. Attitudes to work are very good because the staff are very clear about the high standards that they expect so that pupils and students learn good habits and are able to settle to their tasks quickly. In lessons, pupils and students pay attention and listen carefully to their teachers. They work independently and take care to present their work neatly. They respond respectfully to teachers' questions and collaborate sensibly in group work.
15. Pupils behave very well and are exceptional in their conduct as they move around the school, even when not directly supervised. They are polite and courteous to visitors and can be trusted to work quietly and independently in shared areas, such as the library and common room. No poor behaviour was seen during the inspection. However, some pupils are concerned that the unkind behaviour of some pupils causes distress to others, although they are confident that staff are approachable and manage any incidents very effectively. Procedures for eliminating harassment are well established and the clear roles and communications amongst staff support the high standards set. The school uses exclusion only in extreme circumstances.

16. Staff actively encourage constructive relationships with and between pupils and students. They provide opportunities for independent thinking and discreetly support those students who need encouragement to share their views and opinions. Staff show pupils how to behave with respect and courtesy by their own example, and this encourages maturity and dignity amongst students as they move through the school.
17. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school's aims are fully evident throughout the school in the strong Christian ethos. Moral issues and social concerns are effectively explored in subjects across the curriculum. There are good opportunities for pupils to use resources representing a range of cultures, and to participate in cultural visits.

Sixth form

18. All students enter into a contract with the school on entry to the sixth form that recognises the same high expectations of personal conduct that are present in the main school. Students respond very well. They act with maturity and dignity in their dealings with staff, each other and especially younger pupils, providing very good role models and considerate support. Students make responsible use of the opportunities provided for independent study and take responsibility for their own learning through discussions and formal reviews with their tutors. Students are enthusiastic about the very broad range of activities available to them inside and outside school and are commended as representatives of their school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.9
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.2

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1293	5	1
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

19. The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are good and often very good, and are very good in the sixth form. The curriculum, care, guidance and support, and partnership with parents, other schools and the community are all very good.

Teaching and learning

20. The quality of teaching and learning in the main school is **good** and often very good, and in the sixth form it is **very good**. There are examples of excellent teaching in both.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have expert knowledge.
- Most teachers challenge and have high expectations of all pupils.
- Most teachers engage pupils in active learning.
- Assessment is positive and informative.
- In some lessons pupils are not given the scope to show their full potential.

Commentary

Main school

21. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and of the requirements of external tests and examinations. They convey their enthusiasm to the pupils, for example their love of literature. They make very good use of technical language, for example in mathematics, and demonstrate skills in a highly effective way, for example in PE and design and technology. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs meets their learning needs very well with very good planning between teachers and learning assistants.
22. Teachers challenge pupils to work independently, think for themselves and use their imagination, for example in PE and history. They use very good questioning to help pupils develop their ideas, establish understanding and tackle misunderstandings. In modern foreign languages the brisk pace and high expectations convince all pupils that they can succeed. In science high expectations produce a high level of accuracy in pupils' responses. Teachers often use an interactive style, for example in modern foreign languages and mathematics.
23. Teachers' assessment generally gives pupils a clear view of how well they are doing: by making the criteria for their assessment clear, as in English; by making pupils aware of their target levels and grades, as in mathematics; and by careful marking and positive feedback on work in progress, as in art.
24. Teaching is very rarely unsatisfactory, but some otherwise satisfactory lessons are unvaried in activity and do not relate sufficiently to real life, for example in science. The structure of some lessons limits independent learning, for example in ICT and art, or participation, for example in English and history. In some modern foreign language lessons pupils are not challenged enough in the use of the target language.

Sixth form

25. A high proportion of the teaching in the sixth form is very good and there are examples of excellent practice. Knowledge of courses and examination requirements is very good. Teachers give expert demonstrations, for example in design and technology. They work hard to ensure students participate in discussion, for example in English, history and business education. They are not afraid to be very challenging, for example in the exclusive use of the target foreign language, and by asking probing questions in geography. Students appreciate the challenges offered. Teachers encourage students to think for themselves and undertake independent work, for example in mathematics, science, PE, ICT and health and social care. Teachers give students very good feedback from their thorough assessment of their progress. On a few occasions, in some otherwise satisfactory lessons the level of challenge is not high enough, for example in some lessons in art.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 224 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (3%)	65 (29%)	98 (44%)	51 (23%)	3 (1%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

26. Curriculum provision in the main school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good curriculum that caters very well for pupils' needs.
- There are very good extra-curricular opportunities.
- There is a very good match of staff to the curriculum.
- There is a good emphasis on technology college status.
- Accommodation issues affect the delivery in some subjects, but teachers work hard to overcome them.

Commentary

27. The curriculum is broad and balanced, is very well suited to the needs of all the pupils, including those with special needs and disabilities, and promotes very high standards and achievement. Specialist technology status is given due emphasis with its aims and targets particularly well represented in design and technology and by good provision in discrete ICT.
28. Pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is effectively delivered through discrete lessons and the tutorial programme in Years 7 and 8. In Years 9, 10 and 11 citizenship is taught discretely, is led by a specialist team, and is good. In Years 7 and 8 the provision lacks an overall scheme of work. In an effort to increase breadth on the curriculum the school has, since the previous inspection, maintained the reduction in time for music in Year 9. Time is also restricted for the delivery of PE in both key stages. The use of ICT is restricted across other subjects.
29. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is very clearly organised. Pupils receive a core subject entitlement followed by a wide choice of options. These include vocational opportunities, which are set to increase following the recent appointment of a work related co-ordinator.
30. Curriculum enrichment opportunities are very good across the school. In sports, for example, an extensive range of choices is available in sports clubs during lunchtimes and team games after school. The standards are excellent. There are master classes in art for Year 9 pupils, lunchtime opportunities for pupils studying Spanish, and summer schools in some subject areas. Very effective work experiences in engineering are arranged for some pupils in the design and technology department
31. The match of teaching and support staff to the curriculum is very good. Accommodation and resources are very good in PE. There has been very good refurbishment in some technology designated areas, including ICT. In some subject and curriculum areas, however, there are disadvantages with the size and/or the diversity of accommodation and the effect this has on the sharing of good practice within departments.

Sixth form

32. The school has been highly proactive in designing and implementing a curriculum in the sixth form that suits the needs of students with different requirements and abilities. The school policy on entry in the sixth form has been carefully constructed to ensure that students continue their education based upon their own particular strengths and interests. Students are expected to continue with general studies to maintain breadth, and very good care and guidance is given to ensure that individual students choose, and progress successfully with, their studies without being overloaded. The curriculum contains many subjects and courses at AS and A level which progress coherently from GCSE studies, as well as providing some opportunities for students to pursue a more vocational pathway in business studies, travel and tourism or in health and social care. The school has been very successful (through its curriculum design and support) in enabling the majority of students to continue their education, many to degree level and beyond.
33. Research conducted by the deputy head teacher into independent learning has resulted in improved use and availability of the library and resources centres, and more extensive study support facilities for students. An induction period has also been introduced for students, to support transition into the sixth form and to assist with developing their independent learning skills.
34. Curriculum enrichment opportunities are very good across the school and available for students who wish to participate. In sports, for example, an extensive range of choices in lunchtime sports clubs and after-school team games is available. Students can opt to work outside school with people in the local community; this can include an opportunity to experience working with a local commercial, industrial or business enterprise. In English and drama, students attend Shakespearean plays in the London Globe Theatre, linguists have experienced trips to France and Spain, and art and design students visit galleries.
35. The match of staff to the sixth form curriculum is very good. Accommodation and resources are also very good overall although a shortage of laboratories in biology, for example, results in limited practical work for students in large groups. Access to ICT resources in the sixth form are very good overall, although they are underused in the humanities department.
36. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and provides excellent integration for them. Teachers effectively help them to overcome potential barriers to their achievement.

Care, guidance and support

37. Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very well cared for, in a safe environment.
- The support given to pupils is very good.
- Transition from primary school is excellent.
- Guidance is good, but there is insufficient careers guidance provided in Year 9.
- Pupils' views are valued.

Commentary

Main school

38. There are very good systems for pupils' care and welfare. Appropriate routines and supervision arrangements are in place. The school buildings are checked regularly. Hazards, both around the school and in the activities within lessons, are identified and communicated to pupils. Pupils know how to use equipment and materials safely. Child protection procedures are in place and those in danger from situations arising from non-attendance or poor behaviour are monitored. The school's procedures assist them in developing good attendance and behaviour.
39. The head teacher and pastoral staff are aware of the pupils' circumstances. Links between achievement and behaviour or attendance are analysed. Pupils are given very good guidance in relation to their academic and personal development. They are provided with high quality induction to the school. They are given guidance on further study as they are thinking about the next stage of their education, for example, in relation to choices at Key Stage 4 and within the sixth form and have access to a number of adults they can and do trust. Pupils have good relationships with the staff. Through the tutorial system they are provided with information about their attainment and achievements. Older pupils are involved in reviewing personal targets and they are aware of their grades and where they are heading. Study support is provided to enable pupils to progress.
40. There is a satisfactory programme of careers education and guidance in Years 10 and 11, with some useful special events, such as an industry day and mock interviews involving employers. All pupils in Year 11 have a well-organised week's work experience, for which they are well prepared. There are good links with further education, higher education and employers. The Connexions Service provides very good support and all Year 11 pupils have an individual interview. The coverage of the framework in Year 9 provision is limited by the time allocated. The accessibility of careers information and opportunities to research using ICT are very limited.
41. Through the year councils, pupils are provided with the opportunity to express and convey their views, ideas and issues. This provides an effective means of communication that is valued by the pupils, especially when they see action resulting from these meetings. Through this process they have helped devise the school charter. However, some are frustrated when nothing happens and they have not been given a convincing reason. In lessons pupils' views are frequently sought and valued.

Example of outstanding practice

Induction procedures are impressive, have pupils' security and confidence at heart and are based on a firm commitment to prepare pupils well to benefit from all the school offers.

The Year 7 team are permanently deployed in that year group and get to know primary staff, pupils and parents very well over the years. The co-ordinator has devised extremely detailed recording and monitoring procedures to use the grades within levels to build accurate profiles of each pupil's achievements. This, and information about individual needs, is in turn passed to tutors and subject teachers to help them make groupings and begin monitoring progress. Parents and pupils receive reassuring information about support mechanisms and are encouraged to share any worries, however minor they may seem. Sample lessons, visits from the Head of Year 7 and Year 7 pupils, as well as the whole of the first day spent with tutors and peers, help pupils to become familiar with the new culture that they are moving into and to begin to build friendships. Personal contact between the Head of Year 7 and the parents of any pupil experiencing difficulties after transfer is at the forefront of the support that is offered. Parents appreciate the outstanding effort that is made to welcome their children and help them to settle. Pupils feel that they are valued from the start and are confident that staff get to know them very well.

Sixth form

42. In addition to the year councils, surveys have been well used in the sixth form to find the views of the students. These are taken into account in plans for the school's development. Students receive good guidance and support in preparing applications and for entry into higher education. The taught programme of careers education, to guide students in making appropriate choices for progressing beyond the sixth form, is somewhat narrow in Year 13. To guide and support the students they are provided with an 'academic achievement file' which records how they are progressing through the sixth form, including their GCSE and AS results. It includes a very useful individual action plan and a profile sheet to chart their progress against targets and goals.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

43. The school has established a very good partnership with parents, and works closely with other schools and the community to support pupils at key points in their school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are highly satisfied.
- Information to parents about the school, and pupils' standards and progress is very good.
- There are very good links with parents and primary schools to support induction.

Commentary

Main school

44. Parents express a very high level of confidence in the school and regard the staff as partners whom they trust to provide the kind of education and support that they want for their children.
45. Parents express a very high level of confidence that the school provides a very wide range of opportunities for them to learn about what is offered and to share their views with staff. This partnership begins in primary school through very detailed information packs given to prospective parents, and meetings between them and Year 7 staff and senior managers. The information provided for parents and the links established with them during the induction process make a valuable contribution to the well-being and personal development of pupils in their early weeks in the school. This is reassuring for parents and helps to ensure that difficulties encountered are tackled as quickly and effectively as possible.
46. Other information, such as the Governors' Annual Report and Prospectus, makes clear to parents the school's commitment to high standards in academic performance and personal conduct and details the many procedures that the school has established to support pupils in working towards their full potential. Good quality written reports are given to parents that tell them how well their child is getting on and meetings are arranged each year for parents with subject and form teachers so that they can share views on relevant issues. Parents feel that they recognise their children from reports by teachers and find the consultation evenings particularly helpful. In addition to the routine links throughout the year, the school holds meetings for parents of pupils who need to make decisions about the next stage of their education and uses these occasions to let parents know about the changes and to seek their views about what they consider is best for their child. The school keeps in touch with parents of pupils experiencing difficulties, seeking their views and providing support. This enables the school to make provision for individual needs as far as possible and reinforces the already strong home and school partnership.

47. The school has developed a very wide range of high quality links with external groups and individuals so that pupils are able to be actively involved in the community. They take part in fundraising and projects to help those in need; take part in competitions; perform in public; have opportunities for work experience; and make excursions to many places of interest in this country and abroad. The school values and celebrates pupils' community activities, whether organised through school or separately.
48. The school has developed a very good range of formal and informal links with other schools and colleges to share information that helps parents and pupils make informed choices and supports pupils in transferring confidently and successfully. The induction of pupils into the school in Year 7 is of an exceptional standard and is extended to those pupils who transfer from other secondary schools.

Sixth form

49. Parents are highly satisfied with the wide choice of subjects and range of additional activities available to broaden their daughters' experiences. They are pleased that the same high standards and support for personal development that are present in the main school continue into the sixth form. High quality written reports and meetings with tutors enable parents to continue to support their daughters' progress and help with decisions about subjects and further education or employment. A very broad range of formal and informal links within the community support the information given by sixth form staff and provide a wealth of opportunities to help students prepare for life after school. Parents are invited to a special awards ceremony when students receive certificates of achievement that mark the culmination of the highly successful home and school partnership.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

50. Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership is **very good**. Management is **good**. Governance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is committed and principled. It effectively promotes high expectations for all pupils.
- The school articulates its vision, aims and objectives very well, both in its documents and in practice.
- Management systems support the work of the school very well.
- The head teacher and governors are well aware of the strengths of the school.
- Not all subject managers have secure knowledge of all of the strengths and weaknesses of their subject area.

Commentary

Main school

51. The leadership of the school is the key feature that results in high achievement in an inclusive community where all are valued. High expectations are implicit in the policy and practices of the school. This results in a very positive ethos that is reflected in the pupils' and students' attitudes to learning, behaviour around the school, attendance and attitudes to others. All pupils are well provided for in both their curricular and personal development needs. There is a high level of professional trust. The head teacher's approach to school leadership and the shared decision-making of the senior management team are reflected in the style used by many managers in the school. For example, in the modern foreign languages department the strong teamwork ethic has led to a shared approach, resulting in excellent provision.

52. Management provides the school with clear and well-documented procedures. These result in fair and equal treatment and make it clear to both teachers and the pupils not only what is expected but also how issues will be addressed, for example in the areas of attendance and behaviour. The implementation and impact of these procedures are monitored well to ensure their effectiveness. The academic performance of the school is monitored well through the analysis of data and this contributes to the school's evaluation of both its impact on achievement and decisions implemented. Within a clear and appropriate budget planning cycle there are good financial administration and monitoring systems. The school makes good use of the range of funding it attracts, such as beacon and technology college status.
53. Through its leadership the governing body gives very good support to shaping and implementing the vision of the head teacher. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors have a clear focus on pupils' and students' achievement, and on promoting the education of all. They effectively plan and deploy the funds available to maintain and develop the school as well as to support the opportunities provided for individual pupils. Similarly there are sound systems to provide professional development and the performance management of teachers. The governing body has established a clear and sound approach to threshold assessment. The senior managers' involvement with these processes contributes to their knowledge of the quality of provision in the school. Clear channels of communication ensure that the governors are aware of the strengths and areas to be developed in the school. This informs the production of the school development plan.
54. Many heads of department and teachers responsible for the implementation of an aspect of the school curriculum have not got secure knowledge based on evidence from classroom observations of the strengths and inconsistencies of teaching that would enable them to make further improvement. Consequently some departmental plans are sketchy and unfocused. In all other respects the management of subjects is at least satisfactory. The welfare and guidance systems in the school and the majority of subjects are very well led and managed. The strategic planning for cross-curricular elements is good. However, the delivery and monitoring of cross-curricular citizenship and ICT are patchy and unco-ordinated.
55. The special educational needs co-ordinator and her senior colleagues work well together to provide very effective co-ordination of the school's special educational needs provisions. Their work complements the pastoral systems and is strongly influenced by the school's Christian ethos. Their leadership successfully combines high expectations, learning support and welfare together seamlessly, to produce a successfully inclusive school.

Sixth form

56. The sixth form is very well led and managed by a sixth form manager within the whole school ethos. Links to the senior management system of the school are provided through a deputy head teacher. There is very good leadership and management of most of the sixth form subjects. The sixth form is cost effective and run to the same principles of best value as the main school. Sixth form provision is managed well from within the funding allocated.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,228,877	Balance from previous year 01/02	78,026
Total expenditure	4,097,207	Balance carried forward to the next	209,696
Expenditure per pupil	3,069		

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

57. Provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is well above average and achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Guidance and preparation for examinations are very good.
- Pupils' response to lessons is very good.
- ICT opportunities should be identified in the scheme of work.
- Occasionally, pace in lessons could be improved.

Commentary

58. Pupils' attainment by Year 9 and Year 11 is well above the national average. In Key Stage 3 tests, many pupils improved on their Key Stage 2 results by two levels. This is very good achievement. Pupils continue to build on their high attainment throughout Key Stage 4. Results in GCSE English at A*-C in 2002 were well above the national average, and rose even higher in 2003. Achievement by Year 11 was very good. Results in English literature were well above national averages, although taken by fewer pupils. Standards in current work are also well above expectations. Written work is well presented. Many pupils clearly take pleasure in writing. Response to literature is very good with perceptive comments. Spoken language is also very good. Pupils at both key stages are keen to participate in discussion, and many are able to justify their views clearly. They show confidence in drama activities.
59. The quality of teaching is consistently good, sometimes very good. Teachers plan carefully. Texts chosen are often challenging, particularly for higher attaining classes. The teachers themselves have a love of literature that is infectious. They use good questioning, which helps pupils to develop their own ideas, and set up different groupings for pupils to take part in discussion. Homework is regularly set. Pupils produce a very good range of writing for different purposes and audiences. Teachers mark work with positive comments, and criteria for marking are clear to pupils. Preparation for Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations is very well organised, with detailed advice. Pupils respond very well to their lessons and this results in very good learning. Occasionally, a few lessons, although well planned, lack pace and pupils make little contribution.
60. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department leads a team of good, committed teachers. She has put some very good systems in place that promote teamwork. There is good challenge and support in English for pupils with special educational needs. The only gap in curriculum provision for English is in the lack of opportunities to develop the subject through use of ICT. The department intends to include these following its revision of schemes of work. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Standards of literacy in the school are high. Development of reading, writing, speaking and listening is good. The work done by the English department is enhanced by work across the curriculum. There is a focus on key words in most subjects. Explicit teaching of writing is given, for example for the writing of assignments in history and mathematics.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – FRENCH AND SPANISH

62. The overall quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in French and Spanish are well above national averages.
- Classroom teaching and planning are very good.
- Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils very well.
- Most teachers use French or Spanish extensively in lessons.
- Leadership in modern foreign languages is excellent.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to speak French or Spanish at length.
- The use of the target language by teachers is inconsistent.

Commentary

63. Standards are well above average. At GCSE, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C has been significantly above the national averages in both French and Spanish. It is also important to register that in 2002 (and again in the as yet unconfirmed results for 2003) 100 per cent of pupils entered for French or Spanish achieved a pass grade A*-G. In Key Stage 3, standards are well above the national average. Pupils' achievement is very good.
64. In Key Stage 4, all pupils speak French or Spanish at their different levels with confidence, good fluency for their age, and good accuracy. High attaining pupils speak French at some length, giving opinions and reasons, describing for instance their own recent work experience. These pupils' writing in French is accurate, personalised and interesting, and they show initiative by extending their writing ambitiously.
65. In Key Stage 3 in Year 9, for example, pupils in a middle set used visual clues to talk simply but fluently and accurately in French about town information. In a top Spanish group, pupils talk about their daily routine from memory, speaking at some length, using their own initiative, with few or, in the case of some pupils, no mistakes, maintaining very good pronunciation.
66. It is the strength of teaching in particular that leads pupils of all abilities to achieve so well. Teaching is very good or excellent in two thirds of lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In the main, teachers' high expectations and the realistic challenge they bring to lessons cause pupils to learn well. Teaching in lessons is characterised by a brisk pace and high expectations, which engage and convince even potentially reluctant learners in Year 11 to learn and participate well. Planning for teaching is first rate, both in the detailed and comprehensive schemes of work for both languages, and in teachers' plans for individual lessons. Teachers effectively develop a series of interactive language tasks that help pupils build up their use of French and Spanish in a planned, incremental way. However, there is inconsistency in teachers' use of the target language, which is extensive and challenging in most lessons but only satisfactory in some. More generally there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to pull together what they have learned and to speak at length, on current topics and, for revision, on past topics.

67. Pupils' attitudes to learning French and Spanish are very positive, and they enjoy their learning and successes. They respond well to the demands placed on them by listening attentively and participating in speaking in the target languages willingly and confidently. Sometimes pupils, especially younger pupils, are disconcerted by the speed of native speakers' French or Spanish on tape.
68. Leadership in modern languages is excellent. Experienced teachers provide a shared sense of purpose and high expectations of pupils' performance, building a very strong team.
69. Management is very good, especially in guidance for teachers in the department's documentation, including schemes of work, and in support for less experienced colleagues and trainees. Departmental monitoring is good, identifying for example a weakness in the proportion of Key Stage 3 pupils achieving Level 6 in 2000 (7 per cent), and successfully planning to improve this, to 21 per cent in 2002 and to 28 per cent in 2003. There is, however, no programme of lesson monitoring by senior staff in the department.
70. Since the previous inspection in 1998, standards have improved. Pupils often display good levels of independence and initiative, especially in Key Stage 4. There has been progress in the use of ICT, especially in teachers' own skills and use, and there are attractive displays of pupils' work in most classrooms using ICT. However, pupils' application of ICT skills through modern languages is at an early stage of development.

Example of outstanding practice

A lesson with a Year 9 Spanish high set achieved high levels of active concentration and learning.

The key ingredients were pace and challenge, and a knowledge of pupils' capabilities to be able to target questions when necessary. Pupils had earlier worked on an exhaustive, detailed description of daily routines, with times and reflexive verbs. At the start of the lesson, individual pupils could sit down only when they had remembered and correctly given the next activity in sequence, and the speed of young minds was impressive, and quietly competitive. Then volunteers were invited to repeat this, in reverse! Pace was then sustained, along with the teacher's almost totally exclusive use of Spanish for instructions, improvements to pupils' answers, and praise through a sequence of activities designed to embed pupils' understanding and fluency. Finally, pupils worked in pairs, with tight and demanding timing, to make the longest possible sentence about daily routine, which pairs were eager to do most successfully.

MATHEMATICS

71. The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Standards in Key Stage 4 are above average and achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good, with half the teaching in Key Stage 3 very good.
- Pupils have limited opportunities for using and applying mathematics or the use of ICT.
- The department is well led but management systems do not sufficiently allow good practice to be fully shared.

Commentary

72. Standards attained in national tests in Year 9 in 2002 were well above those found nationally and those of similar schools. Results in 2003 are equally high with improvements at the higher levels. Standards attained in lessons and in the sample of work are well above average and achievement is very good. Pupils present their work neatly with detailed diagrams and full solutions. By the end of Key Stage 3, most of the work of higher attaining pupils is based on topics at Levels 7 or 8 of the National Curriculum. The three-part lesson structure of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is in place and supports learning for pupils of all abilities.

73. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C is above the national figure and achievement is good. This is reflected in the standard of work seen where higher attaining pupils make rapid progress. They produce coursework, which shows good development of extended writing and logical argument.
74. Standards and achievement are a direct result of the quality of teaching in the department, which is good and has a number of strengths that support pupils' learning and achievement in lessons. Teacher's knowledge and understanding of mathematics are very good and they set high expectations. They make very good use of technical language and challenge pupils of all abilities with their questioning. The climate that teachers establish in the classroom encourages pupils to seek clarification or to pose questions. Teachers give good quality notes, modelling techniques and methods. As a result of this good teaching, pupils also quote technical terms and meanings correctly and present their written work fully. Pupils work with good levels of concentration and are aware of their target grades or levels. The very good teaching in Key Stage 3 is characterised by the use of an interactive style and teaching methods, such as the use of small whiteboards, which allow all pupils to participate and explain their reasoning. There is insufficient emphasis on using and applying mathematics, especially at Key Stage 3, and on pupils' use of ICT.
75. The department is well led. The head of department has vision and high aspirations that are focused on raising achievement and providing wider curricular opportunities. A review of schemes of work is underway. A departmental development plan is in place with appropriately identified activities that encompass both school development needs and technology college action plan initiatives. Management systems such as the electronic management of departmental data are being set up but have not yet been embedded. Other systems such as monitoring are not sufficient to enable the head of department to have the best view of the departmental strengths and needs. Nevertheless, the head of department has established an accurate appraisal of the department and has initiated actions, which will further increase its effectiveness. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.
76. Accommodation for mathematics is dispersed and includes non-specialist rooms in which there is little or no mathematical focus. This restricts the support that pupils can gain from the environment, for example, from number lines and information posters.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. Other subjects such as science, technology and geography provide good opportunities for pupils to develop mathematics across the curriculum. These include weighing in technology and discussion of dependent and independent variables in geography.

SCIENCE

78. Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very high results at the end of Key Stage 3 with very good achievement for most pupils.
- All pupils behave and work well and almost all are well motivated.
- Good leadership and management are beginning to be established by the new head of department, although there are no formal procedures for identifying and disseminating good practice.
- The level of underperformance at Key Stage 4 is too high, especially for the large percentage of pupils taking single award science, some of whom lose interest in the subject.

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of investigative procedures are not systematically developed, especially at Key Stage 3, and access to ICT is limited.

Commentary

79. Standards by Year 9 are well above the national average and those in similar schools, for both Level 5+ and Level 6+. This is a consistent pattern over the past few years and for most pupils this represents very good achievement. Progress slows somewhat by Year 11. In 2002 A*-C grades were below the national average for all three of the science courses, single, double and triple award. On average pupils did less well in science than in other subjects. Results have improved in 2003 for all three of the courses, with the overall percentage of pupils gaining high grades now in line with the national average. This slower progress is partly explained by the high proportion of pupils who take single award science, in which it is difficult to achieve the higher grades. It is also a result of weaknesses in some of the teaching.
80. Whilst there is very little unsatisfactory teaching, only half is good or very good and this is less than in the school as a whole. In the best teaching, teachers plan a variety of activities, often including practical work, which interest the pupils, are made relevant and challenge their thinking. Teachers' expectations are high so all pupils work with a high level of accuracy. Teachers' questioning gets underneath surface information to underlying understanding, and misunderstandings are discussed and explained. Pupils keep up a good pace of work and time is not wasted copying or preparing results charts. Relationships are friendly and supportive with warmth and humour from the teacher. These features are being developed by the Key Stage 3 Strategy but are particularly important in maintaining achievement during Key Stage 4. In good teaching some of these features are present, such as in a Year 9 lesson in which a well-chosen series of examples helped pupils to understand that particles move in liquids and gases. In the few very good lessons all the features contribute to very good learning, such as in a lesson with a Year 10 class which started with an eye-catching optical fibre lamp and moved quickly on to some very well planned, accurate practical work and information sheets to explain how the fibres work. However, too many lessons are teacher dominated with dull, unvaried activity. The science is not related sufficiently to real life and individual lessons not related to the topic as a whole. Teachers' questioning is superficial, relying on recall of one-word answers, so pupils' understandings of underlying key ideas are not explored and misunderstandings are not addressed. Pupils are not encouraged to ask questions or to feel confidence in the subject. The teaching of investigative science is not systematic or at a high enough level, especially at Key Stage 3.
81. The new head of department is already providing good leadership on some policy issues, such as the numbers of pupils entered for the triple award at GCSE and the departmental development plan. He is also establishing good management procedures, such as the analysis of performance data to check individual pupil progress and work towards highest possible attainment. These procedures now need time to take full effect and to involve all members of the department. There also needs to be ways of disseminating features of the very good teaching. Since the last inspection Key Stage 3 results have remained high although Key Stage 4 results are not as high as they were. ICT remains underused.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, prepared and delivered, resulting in good achievement for the majority of pupils.
- Pupils are highly motivated and apply considerable intellectual effort to their work.
- Resources are well used in lessons to support pupils' learning.
- ICT resources are good and provide good access.
- The planning, co-ordination and monitoring of the delivery of ICT across the curriculum lack coherence.
- The planning for, and structure of, learning activities in some lessons limit the achievement of higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

83. By Year 9 the standards in ICT are around national expectations in the discrete subject. However, there is good use of ICT in some subject areas, particularly design and technology, where extra teaching time is allocated to enable ICT learning activities to take place. Overall therefore, pupils' standards are above average and achievement by the end of Year 9 is good.
84. There has been a sharp dip in the ICT GCSE results this year, 91.2 per cent five A*-C in 2002 to 43.8 per cent five A*-C in 2003. However, this cohort of pupils was the first to sit an ICT GCSE. The previous two years of very high attainment related to an information studies GCSE that has been discontinued, necessitating the change of course. Two long-term staff absences also affected the group that sat their exams in 2003. By Year 11 standards are above the national average. This represents good achievement for these pupils.
85. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to use software to edit, amend and present information in a variety of ways, including *PowerPoint* presentations and Internet web pages. They have a good command of the software at their disposal and are confident and efficient users of the school network. In some cases the match of technical skills to purpose is not as good. For example, the *PowerPoint* presentations make good use of the facilities of the software but the content and fitness for audience are not as good.
86. By Year 11 pupils are able to design and amend their work on the basis of system life cycles. Their coursework is of above national standard with well-annotated sequences of amended tasks that show clearly progression and improvements during the task.
87. Lessons are nearly all well planned, prepared and presented, making good use of digital projectors and worksheets. In some lessons an over-tight structure limits independent learning to some extent, resulting in limitations to the achievement of the higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, however, and achieve highly.
88. The department is well led and managed. Teachers are highly committed to the success of their pupils. Schemes of work are thorough and the organisation of the GCSE course is good.
89. ICT resources are good, most computers being nearly new. The ratio of computers to pupils is 1:5.4, which is close to the 2004 DfES target of 1:5. Access to the computers is also good though the booking of computer rooms by subject teachers is on an *ad hoc* weekly basis.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the monitoring and control aspects of the subject, but the planning for co-ordination and monitoring of the cross-curricular delivery of ICT are still insufficient. This results in inconsistent use of ICT across the subjects.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY

91. The provision for history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and achievement is very good.
- Higher attaining pupils do particularly well.
- Teaching is mostly good or very good and lessons are varied and interesting.
- Teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and teach with enthusiasm.
- Teachers do not use ICT enough to support learning.
- The range of expertise of teachers could be used more to further improve the consistency and quality of teaching.

Commentary

92. Standards by Year 9 are high. Teacher assessments have indicated standards that have been well above average and improving in recent years. Greater proportions than nationally attain the highest levels. Pupil's achievement is very good and they make good and sometimes rapid progress due to demanding and interesting teaching. In particular, pupils become good at reading and interpreting historical sources and producing structured writing.
93. Results at GCSE in 2003 were above average and higher than in the previous two years. The subject is increasingly popular and considerably more pupils than in most schools take the examination. In 2003 all pupils received a graded result and attainment at the highest grades was also above average. In the current Years 10 and 11, pupils are taking a different history syllabus from previously but standards are equally high. Teachers have planned the new course carefully, showing a very good understanding of course expectations and paying particular attention to monitoring progress. Teaching is mainly good or very good so that pupils of all abilities achieve very well by Year 9 and Year 11.
94. Teachers have high expectations, based on very good subject knowledge. Pupils respond very well and work hard, covering a lot of ground. Particularly good lessons challenge pupils to think for themselves. For example, Year 9 pupils worked very well in teams to produce a very good display of nineteenth century village and urban life. Year 11 pupils eagerly debated the strengths and weaknesses of Nazi leaders, using well-developed skills of source analysis. In the minority of lessons that are less successful but still satisfactory, the teacher talks for too long and gives too much direction to the class.
95. In both key stages, teachers are able to teach to their strengths within schemes of work that provide a common context but allow flexibility of approach. This works successfully on the whole as teachers are very professional and understand the nature of the subject. However, though teachers are competent in ICT, a combination of individual choice and difficulties of access mean that pupils have very limited opportunity to learn using computers.

96. The leadership of the department is very good and management is good. Analysis of pupil performance is thorough and documentation lays expectations out clearly. However, the monitoring of classroom practice within the department is largely indirect. The large group of staff work well as a team with a lot of informal sharing of ideas but more could be done to know about and share the different strengths and skills evident in teaching.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen at Key Stage 3, planning has improved though schemes of work lack detail, and resources are better.

GEOGRAPHY

98. Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good with high expectations and very good knowledge of examination requirements.
- The geography department is very well led.
- ICT is underused in lessons.
- The quality of marking and use of day-to-day assessment are inconsistent.

Commentary

99. Standards by Year 9 and Year 11 are well above national averages. Year 9 results, based on teacher assessments, show pupils have performed at consistently high levels for the last three years. GCSE results have been well above the national average for the last three years. In 2002 more than a third of pupils gained A* or A grades. The very good results have continued in 2003. Geography is a consistently high performer when compared to other subjects in the school. Pupils' achievement is very good. In Years 7 to 9, pupils make very good progress in learning important skills. For example, by the end of Year 9 they are able to interpret data and construct accurate graphs. In Key Stage 4, examination coursework is very good and contributes considerably to the very good GCSE results. Pupils are well prepared for the examination by their teachers and learn to write detailed answers to examination questions. Their work includes some good examples of extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
100. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have high expectations, present good challenge for pupils of all abilities and work hard to ensure they are actively engaged in learning. Planning for most lessons is good and teachers are always well prepared. In the less good lessons, plans do not have clear enough focus on what pupils will learn. Teachers have very good knowledge of the topics they teach. Programmes of study are well structured and progressively develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Through very good, detailed knowledge of the demands of the examination, teachers ensure that pupils are well prepared for GCSE. Clear, detailed explanations and instructions are given by teachers and learning is reinforced by effective questioning. Carefully directed questions are used, appropriate to the abilities of pupils, encouraging them to think about their work. Literacy and numeracy are well developed, but ICT is underused in lessons. A good assessment system is used in Key Stage 4 to monitor pupils and set individual examination targets for them. In Key Stage 3 a useful new system, based on the assessment of topics and awarding National Curriculum levels, had just been introduced. The use of day-to-day assessment is inconsistent.

101. Leadership of the department is very good and management is good. The enthusiastic head of department has a clear vision for the department, has high expectations and sets high standards. The team of teachers is well led, meeting regularly to share information and ideas. Administrative and organisational tasks are effectively carried out, but department planning lacks detail. Management of the department is hindered by teachers not being located in the same building and by limited opportunities to monitor teaching. Progress since the last inspection is good, but the use of ICT is still an issue to be addressed.

TECHNOLOGY

102. The provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards overall, especially at Key Stage 4, are well above average.
- Achievement overall is very good.
- Teaching overall is good and often very good.
- Leadership is very good.
- Assessment at Key Stage 3 needs improvement.

Commentary

103. By Year 9 standards in designing and making are above national averages. Pupils progress quickly during the key stage through handling a range of tools, materials and components – and with considerable skill – to make and complete products. Standards by Year 11 are well above national averages between grades A*-C and in the top grades in food studies, textiles technology, and graphics products. These high grades are reflected in the quality of the practical work that pupils of all abilities demonstrate, and in the systematic approach to completing comprehensive design solutions to their design briefs.
104. Pupils' achievements are very good by Year 9 and Year 11. Project assignments and skills-based activities are designed to meet the interests of pupils and are well planned to enable pupils to make consistent and rapid progress during lessons. Further recognition of what pupils from primary schools can do, and know, about materials for example, could provide more challenging opportunities to design and make. The department has recognised the need, and is planning to extend pupils' experiences to include control technology and working with metals. Pupils make better progress with their making than with their design skills in Years 7 and 8, although some teachers are developing innovative approaches in supporting pupils' skills in analysing products.
105. Teaching is good and often very good, particularly in Key Stage 4. One Year 9 practical lesson in bread making was excellent, where the teacher conducted several skilful and effective demonstrations to a large group, and managed all the resources available highly efficiently, enabling every pupil to complete all of the planned tasks and produce top quality products. Teachers across the department have very good subject knowledge in their respective specialist areas and prepare their lessons very well. However, sometimes lessons are teacher-dominated. Also, teachers' knowledge of examination systems enables them to support and guide pupils at Key Stage 4 more effectively than younger pupils. The department needs similar supportive mechanisms for continuously assessing pupils during Key Stage 3.

106. The department is very well led and consists of a highly effective team of specialist teachers and technicians who are well deployed to maximise the efficient daily running of a popular department that has made substantial improvements in many areas since the previous inspection, particularly standards. More formal opportunities for teachers to share good practice across the department could stimulate even higher standards. The direction of the department is clearly established and is supported by the vision outlined in the technology college status development plan. Significant improvements have taken place in the refurbishment of some of the accommodation in ICT resources since the previous inspection and need now be extended to the food technology section that is in need of updating.

Example of outstanding practice

A lesson in bread making with a mixed-ability Year 9 class encouraged excellent responses from the pupils through excellent demonstrations and challenging questioning.

The teacher began with a clear explanation of the task. A variety of materials and ingredients were already prepared and were briefly discussed. The teacher provided very good advice for pupils on making decisions on the design of products. The pupils were also encouraged by an excellent demonstration to experiment with different shapes. The pupils were well organised with individual working spaces and ready-made materials. The preparation of resources enabled all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make very rapid progress to match the teacher's high expectations. All the pupils reached an excellent level of skill and achievement. Throughout, the teacher provided helpful comments and encouragement to individuals. The pupils recorded the outcomes in development sheets responsibly and effectively. There was a sense of urgency and excellent pace throughout. The teacher left time for a final demonstration to examine scientifically the function of carbon dioxide in making bread. Again, the pupils were challenged and fascinated by the skill and knowledge of the teacher.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

107. Overall provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is at least satisfactory and often good.
- Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory, although there is some underperformance.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT and experience a wider range of approaches to art and design, including gallery visits, should be provided.

Commentary

108. By Year 9 standards of work are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. There is some good achievement, especially in research, where pupils use sketchbooks well for annotated collections of source material and ideas, as in the Year 9 designs for jewellery based on Celtic and native American sources. Standards in drawing and painting are average. There is some accurate observational work of objects and natural forms, but the use of visual elements such as line, tone and texture, and knowledge and understanding of colour could be improved. Most pupils, and especially the more able, could achieve more highly if skills in these core areas, and in three-dimensional work, were developed progressively across the key stage.

109. In Key Stage 4, although GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, they remain in line with national average. There is some high achievement where thorough research is attractively presented and ideas developed well, such as in a 'portraits' project, where there are examples of digital photography, wire drawings and responses influenced by styles varying from the artist Arcimbaldo to Gothic horror. Drawing and painting are satisfactory but the range of approaches is narrow. Most pupils know characteristics of the work of certain well-known artists and a range of cultures, but their critical and analytical skills are less well developed.
110. Teaching is satisfactory and often good. Lessons are well planned and resources well organised. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk and lively and pupils are stimulated by the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge about the subject. Some projects provide more challenge and are made interesting by the use of artefacts and primary resource material, for example in the Year 8 lesson where pupils modelled exotic clothing and made quick fashion drawings using the end of the paintbrush dipped in ink. Teachers demonstrate techniques and often encourage pupils to evaluate their own and others' work in group discussion. However, some teaching is unimaginative and does not sufficiently encourage pupils to choose from a range of approaches or develop independent ideas, for example in a Year 8 'portraits' project. Pupils are encouraged in lessons by positive feedback and careful marking of their sketchbooks. In Key Stage 4 a useful booklet helps the pupils to monitor their own progress against assessment objectives. In Key Stage 3 teacher assessment against National Curriculum levels is too high. A clearer understanding of the level descriptions from both teachers and pupils is required in order to raise standards by the end of Key Stage 3.
111. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The main areas for development have been recognised in the development plan and action has been taken to address underperformance in Key Stage 4, which is beginning to have a positive effect. However, there is no overview of progression in Key Stage 3 and the use of ICT has not been planned into schemes of work. The three art rooms are in separate buildings and this makes it more difficult to ensure all pupils make consistent progress and that good practice and new ideas are shared.
112. The art and design department contributes well to multicultural awareness through specific projects, but could improve pupils' cultural development by providing first-hand experience of art through gallery visits and work with artists.

MUSIC

113. Overall the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and assessment very good.
- There is a very good extra-curricular instrumental teaching programme.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is insufficient curriculum time for the majority of Year 9 classes.
- The lack of ICT has a negative impact on composition.
- The extra-curricular ensemble programme does not cater for the majority of those who play instruments.

Commentary

114. Standards in music are above average by Year 11. During the past two years, the number of pupils opting to take the GCSE course has increased, including pupils with special educational needs. Whilst the achievement of pupils of average or lower than average ability has been good, the department should look at ways of creating a more challenging curriculum for the more able. Standards by Year 9 are above average, with the majority of pupils achieving Level 5 by the end of the key stage and approximately 35 per cent achieving beyond Level 6. Pupils use notation confidently. Their analytical skills have improved and through practical music making, using voices, tuned percussion and keyboards, the quality of achievement is good and often very good. The quality of singing is very good at both key stages. However, insufficient curriculum time for the majority of Year 9 classes has a negative impact.
115. The teaching is good and often very good. It is characterised by good planning, an interesting range of activities, good classroom management and positive relationships. Whole-class teaching often leads to group or paired work and the final sharing is managed effectively. Assessment is a strength in the department. It is used in a variety of ways and the data informs the department about the progress of the pupils. In particular, the department is aware of the rate of progress of pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 and the progress of pupils who play instruments is also tracked via regular termly assessment. The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a strong emphasis on literacy through the use of musical terminology, descriptive observation and discussion. The numeracy strategy is less well developed but there are many examples of the social, moral, cultural and spiritual aspects of music being considered in a variety of ways. The lack of ICT at Key Stages 3 and 4 is a major weakness. It is having a negative impact on the quality of composition, particularly at Key Stage 4. The provision of instrumental tuition is very good, with nearly 15 per cent of the pupils playing a variety of instruments. However, the extra-curricular ensemble programme does not cater for the majority of pupils who play instruments.
116. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The instrumental teaching programme is managed effectively. The music staff work well together and their individual strengths complement one another. They have restructured the Key Stage 3 syllabus imaginatively, ensuring good preparation for Key Stage 4.
117. The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory. The rooms are cramped, thereby reducing the effectiveness of practical work. There is insufficient storage, and security is a problem. Consequently, computers linked to keyboards cannot be left permanently in place. Resources tend to become damaged as a result of being moved regularly. Recording facilities are poor and therefore this aspect of the National Curriculum cannot be effectively managed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. Overall, provision for PE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The department is very well led.
- Pupils enjoy PE; participation rates are very high.
- Curriculum time in both key stages is below the recommended time allocation.
- An extensive extra-curricular programme promotes and enhances standards.
- There is no systematic schedule for monitoring teaching and learning.

Commentary

119. Standards are above average and pupils achieve very well. Over 90 per cent of pupils achieved the expected standard by Year 9. Pupils learn to play games to a high standard, particularly hockey and netball. Regular swimming lessons provide opportunities to improve strokes and develop water safety and survival skills. In gymnastics and dance, pupils work co-operatively in small groups to create quality movement sequences and when observing others, can suggest good ways of improving. By Year 11 pupils can plan their own activities, assume the roles of attacker and defender in games, test each other's fitness and umpire in different games. Curriculum time allocated to PE is below what is recommended to deliver the prescribed programme of study in both key stages; additional time would result in higher standards.
120. Pupils enjoy PE; participation in lessons and in extra-curricular clubs is very high. Teachers provide a safe, stimulating environment where pupils are encouraged to achieve their very best and sporting success is celebrated. Pupils make very good progress because they are given lots of time to practise and advice on how to improve. In Key Stage 4 pupils develop skills and apply them in several different sports, especially games and gymnastics where they perform to a high standard.
121. By Year 11 the majority of pupils become very effective performers in their chosen sports as a direct result of high quality teaching backed up with opportunities to practise at lunchtimes and regular competition against other schools after school. Standards in school sport are very high; the school was the National Championship Winner in netball in 2002.
122. Teaching and learning are very good. Lesson planning maximises the limited time available and generates high activity rates. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They foster good working relationships, demonstrate the required standard and encourage all pupils to aspire to achieve their very best. Good subject knowledge and questioning skills combine to test pupil understanding and reinforce learning. Pupils are expected to work independently, think for themselves and use their imagination. This results in mature, articulate pupils confident to express their opinions, perform in front of others and challenge sporting issues during discussion.
123. GCSE PE standards are improving. In 2001 and 2002 results were below the national average. However, this year over half (55 per cent) achieved A*-C grades and all pupils achieved a pass. Coursework shows a range of different resources, regular tests and homework tasks. Whilst there has been some improvement this year further improvement is required and the department has already begun to address this issue. Priorities should include a revised marking policy for GCSE PE that relates to examination grades and informs pupils of what they need to do to improve. Additional monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning will also help to raise standards.
124. The department is very well led. The subject leader has created a strong sporting ethos in the school. An impressive array of curriculum support materials for staff and pupils is in place. Provision of a new classroom base for GCSE lessons has been established and this, along with two new staff in the department this year, will help to raise standards. The high quality wall displays in all PE facilities promote learning and boost pupil self-esteem; these could be developed further to incorporate pupils' work and other resources to promote literacy and numeracy.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP

125. The provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is making sound, thoughtful and cautious progress with implementing this new subject.
- The new curriculum is being developed within the context of the school's aims and is fostering a culture of citizenship.
- The specialist teaching of citizenship in Years 9, 10 and 11 is good.
- The contributions of different subjects and experiences to citizenship learning are insufficiently co-ordinated and monitored in order to provide a coherent scheme of work, particularly in Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

126. Citizenship has had to be provided for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 since September 2002. At this stage of development, standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations and pupils are achieving soundly at both key stages. This is due to the good teaching and learning in specific lessons that are timetabled in Years 9, 10 and 11, to the very positive relationships in the school, and to the readiness that pupils show to participate in activities and express views and opinions across the curriculum. Taking account of the wider evidence, pupils' skills are developed better at this stage than the breadth of knowledge and understanding expected. This is because the range of provision even in the timetabled lessons is narrow, the other experiences they receive have not been consolidated into an overall scheme of work and some provision is left to incidental references to content in some subjects.
127. By Year 9, pupils are learning to engage actively in considering the communities in which they live. They are interested in expressing views about the priorities that make good communities such as the importance of 'free health care' as opposed to 'no taxes', and are beginning to appreciate the complexity of values involved. There were also two examples seen in history lessons in Year 7 and Year 9, where the subject matter was directly relevant to learning about citizenship. Learning was good but the teacher did not explicitly make the connection to the citizenship curriculum. In Year 10, pupils worked effectively in groups to share their views about issues in the news before doing further research. Pupils' files and discussions with pupils show that learning is good in relation to the topics taught in Year 11 as well.
128. The direct teaching of citizenship in timetabled lessons is good. Teachers have a good understanding of the aims of citizenship education and are skilful at developing learning activities that encourage appropriate attitudes and skills. There is a good emphasis on active citizenship within these lessons. In lessons that were not directly planned as citizenship, such as in history, the teachers' very good knowledge of their subject enabled them to provide good explanations and encourage relevant discussion. However, whether pupils experience these learning activities across the curriculum is very dependent on the current stage of planning for the subject and teachers' awareness, and this is not yet consistent in all areas.

129. The school has adopted a clear long-term strategy for developing citizenship that includes wider provision such as year-group councils and opportunities for community involvement. Good progress had been made on setting out a policy, doing an initial audit of subject links and introducing the taught modules within a combined course with PSHE and careers education in Years 9 to 11. A successful pilot entry of 35 pupils for short course GCSE was provided in 2002-3. In these respects, strategic leadership has been very good and the management of the new timetabled provision good. However, the contributions that subjects and other experiences can make have not been consolidated into a scheme of work, so wider curriculum provision is patchy and unco-ordinated.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

130. In the inspection, 13 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 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	7	71.4	83.5	42.9	36.1	32.9	34.6
Business studies	6	100.00	89.7	50.00	33.3	45.0	36.0
Chemistry	9	77.8	87.5	11.1	39.9	77.8	36.9
English literature	5	100.0	94.9	60.0	38.7	48.0	39.4
General studies	47	76.6	80.1	21.3	27.4	26.4	31.0
Geography	5	80.0	89.6	80.0	41.3	46.0	38.2
Information technology	13	69.2	78.6	15.4	20.1	24.6	28.5
Mathematics	9	33.3	78.0	11.1	37.3	10.0	33.3
Other sciences	6	100.0	86.1	16.7	35.9	36.7	35.2
Other social studies	9	77.8	85.2	11.1	35.5	26.7	35.1
Religious studies	5	80.0	91.4	40.0	40.5	32.0	38.5
Sociology	12	91.7	85.3	8.3	36.3	29.2	35.1
Sports/PE studies	5	100.00	91.4	60.00	37.3	44.0	37.8

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	10	100.00	96.7	70.0	52.3	100.0	87.8
Biology	24	95.8	92.6	50.0	38.7	77.5	76.3
Business studies	15	95.8	96.8	50.0	35.9	77.5	78.4
Chemistry	20	100.0	95.1	45.0	49.2	83.0	83.8
Classical studies	9	100.0	99.3	11.1	56.3	60.0	90.9
English literature	31	100.0	98.7	61.3	44.1	90.3	84.7
Design and technology	10	100.0	98.0	40.0	39.3	84.0	81.0
General studies	78	98.7	91.0	37.2	30.2	78.2	70.5
Geography	17	100.0	97.9	64.7	47.3	100.0	85.3
History	28	96.4	97.4	46.4	43.3	82.9	82.6
Information technology	24	95.8	91.9	37.5	23.4	81.7	66.6
Mathematics	13	100.0	95.0	69.2	56.4	98.5	88.3
Music	5	100.0	97.8	40.0	42.5	80.0	82.7
Other social studies	10	100.0	95.2	30.0	41.6	86.0	79.9
Physics	9	100.0	95.4	44.4	50.0	84.4	84.6
Religious studies	9	100.0	96.7	44.4	44.5	86.7	82.8
Health and social care	14	85.7	90.3	0.0	16.7	55.7	62.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

131. Provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at AS/A2 are above national averages.
- Achievement is very good.
- Teaching is good, and often very good.
- Students' independence of thought is very well developed.

Commentary

132. Results in AS and A2 English literature are above national averages. This represents very good achievement, as more students took A2 in English than any other subject (except general studies), and they came onto the course with a wide range of prior attainment. Achievement is very good. Work currently seen is above average. AS English literature students are making detailed notes and are already developing skills of analysis and synthesis. They enjoy close reading and make perceptive comments. By Year 13, A2 students are able to evaluate cultural and historical influences, and can articulate independent opinions. In AS English language, students analyse a wide range of texts, including spoken texts, and become familiar with discourse structures. They develop increasing confidence in using linguistic terminology. In both language and literature courses, students' skills in writing are good. They construct their arguments carefully. In oral work, most students speak confidently and make articulate contributions. Some remain quiet in discussion.
133. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Teachers work hard to ensure students participate well, especially in group discussions. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good. Teachers prepare useful materials to promote discussion. Pace in sixth form lessons is good. Students are encouraged to form their own views and justify their choices. A very good example of this was in a lesson on *Antony and Cleopatra*, when each group in the class had to create their own argument to defend or accuse Antony or Cleopatra, and to summon witnesses. Relationships and students' attitudes are very good in the sixth form. Students make very good progress.
134. Management of the courses is very good. Students are given a clear overview of their course. Teachers mark work carefully and give advice to help students be more specific in their writing. All teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements, and help students be familiar with assessment criteria. There are good systems to track students' progress.
135. In the previous report, standards at A level were in line with national expectations. They are now above.

Literacy across the curriculum

136. Standards in literacy are high. Students' reading skills are developed well in most sixth form courses by opportunities to carry out research, including use of the Internet. Spoken skills are very well developed through speaking and listening activities in a range of contexts that teachers plan for classes.

MODERN LANGUAGES

137. Two sixth form Spanish lessons were also sampled, confirming the same excellent qualities as in French.

FRENCH

138. The overall quality of provision is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A and AS levels are outstanding.
- Teaching offers high linguistic and intellectual challenge.
- A high level of initiative, independence and responsibility is shown by students.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to speak at length.

Commentary

139. Students overall speak French fluently and accurately, though in some cases hesitantly. They recall vocabulary and structure very well, developing the specialised language of and their ideas on current themes, for example drugs, well. They write in the main with very good levels of accuracy, especially in Year 13, by which stage they have eradicated some of the mistakes of detail, for example in inflections and agreements, that are evident in Year 12. The sustained progress that students make is very good overall and in some lessons excellent.
140. Teaching in sixth form lessons is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers' planning is very good and the range of activities they introduce provides a high level of intellectual as well as linguistic challenge, causing students to think hard. In the best lessons, teachers use French exclusively as the vehicle of communication, frequently paraphrasing and checking students' understanding where necessary. This is very challenging for students, but the students themselves confirmed that they appreciate this level of challenge and do not find it disconcerting. Teachers do not, however, build into lessons as a matter of course opportunities to challenge students to speak at length, as part at least of a final plenary or summary session. Feedback to students in marking and assessment is very good.
141. Students think and learn intensely in sixth form lessons; they enjoy this, and value the challenge. They show initiative, present their own ideas and opinions, and even share a teacher's sense of humour in French. They evaluate cause and effect, in relation to drugs for example, and talk through this in French confidently and modestly. Some students take the initiative to word process written tasks outside lessons, and use the Internet to access sources of information, developing their ICT skills through their language studies.
142. The excellent leadership in evidence in the modern languages department also has a positive impact on the consistently high expectations of students' achievement in the sixth form. Support and guidance for teachers' planning and the range of materials they can call on for lessons, including those they produce themselves, are of a very high standard.

Example of outstanding practice

In a lesson with a Year 12 AS French class of 23 students, pace and challenge resulted in intense concentration and active engagement.

The lesson was delivered with such pace and challenge, with a rigorous use of French by the teacher, that the inspector found it necessary to check with six of the students, in a later interview, whether they felt overwhelmed or at times disconcerted. On the contrary, they appreciated the level of challenge and recognised its value for their learning. The theme was a transport strike. The teacher, in French, constantly paraphrased, introduced new language, reworked it, modelled language, asked questions at different levels, some factual, others inviting hypothesis and empathy, and gave thinking time when necessary. Interesting but quite standard materials became the basis for students' intense concentration and active engagement, speaking French clearly, fluently and confidently, in both brief and extended answers, with enjoyment. This intense level of interaction in French, containing both linguistic and intellectual challenge, included the students sharing the teacher's sense of humour, in French of course.

MATHEMATICS

143. The quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at AS and A level are generally above average and achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students work well in collaboration; relationships are excellent.
- The choice of courses and modules offered is good.
- The department is well led.
- The presentation and organisation of work of middle attaining students could be improved.

Commentary

144. The inspection focused on the AS level and A level courses in mathematics and further mathematics. The GCSE course for students who did not gain grade C in Year 11 was also sampled.
145. Standards attained at A level in mathematics in 2002 were above the national average for girls and well above the national average for all students. All those entered for A level mathematics in 2003 achieved a pass grade, although the average point score was lower than in 2002, reflecting the relatively weaker performance of this group at AS level in 2002. All students achieved pass grades at AS level in 2003. The percentage awarded high grades A or B, pass grades A to E, and the average point score were all above the corresponding national figures for 2002. One student entered AS level further mathematics in 2003 and was awarded grade B. Achievement at A and AS levels is good.
146. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' books is above average. Mathematical arguments are generally well presented with full working supported by appropriate diagrams. Some work by middle attaining students at AS level is less organised and is sometimes untidy.

147. Teaching in all sixth form courses is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use to plan questions to challenge students and to provide good quality notes and exemplar solutions to support them. Good links are made between topics and to earlier work. Teachers choose methods that allow students to engage with the learning and, where opportunities are given for collaborative work, this is very effective as students confirm arguments or debate differences. Students are given opportunities to make decisions about their learning and to engage in independent work. For example, in a GCSE resit lesson, students were required to select the questions that they would work on. Students participate well in lessons working with concentration. When they encounter problems teachers are very supportive and model how to break down complex problems into chunks which students can work with. Some students express pleasure in studying mathematics, recognising the difficulty of the subject but also the pleasure at overcoming the challenges.

Mathematics across the curriculum

148. Students are offered a choice of six courses at A level and four at AS level. There is a good choice of modules covering pure mathematics, applied mathematics, statistics, mechanics and discrete mathematics.
149. The leadership of mathematics in the sixth form is good, with good assessment procedures. Departmental review has led to the recent introduction of further mathematics and to consideration of which courses are most appropriate for students of average ability. *PowerPoint* technology is used effectively to allow lessons to proceed with pace and capture the interest of students.

SCIENCE

BIOLOGY

150. Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is popular with numbers going up.
- Students are very well motivated, most achieve well and many continue with biology-related education.
- There is a strong team of teachers with a good percentage of very good teaching.
- Teachers provide good assessment and support for students.
- Practical work needs further development and an increase in quantity.
- Some groups are too large for all the students to do practical work at the same time or for sufficient attention to be paid to individual students.
- A shortage of laboratories leads to some lessons being timetabled in classrooms.

Commentary

151. Biology is one of the most popular courses in the sixth form and over the past few years the numbers taking the subject have doubled. All students who take the AS course continue to the A2 course. Almost all students gain a grade at both AS and A2 levels and the results overall are around the national average. The percentage of higher grades has been either above or similar to the national average. Students work hard during the course and the majority achieve well. Many are very interested in the subject and go on to university to continue to study biology or subjects such as dentistry or pharmacology, which are biologically based.

152. All teaching is satisfactory and a significant proportion is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare well for their lessons. Explanations are always clear and teacher-prepared handouts are of a good quality. Students pay very good attention to the teacher and are able to pick out the most important points in a lesson. In the very good teaching there is a series of activities that require the students to think for themselves, to work collaboratively and to produce a very useful record of their work. The teacher asks searching questions and uses the student-produced ideas to gauge how well they understand the subject and to provide further explanation where needed. In the satisfactory teaching there is less activity for the students and insufficient interaction between the teacher and the students for the teacher to know how well the students are learning. Usually this is checked through homework based on the lesson and which the teacher will mark, but this is not as effective as conversation during the lesson.
153. Students are expected to take considerable responsibility for their notes and files and most do this well. Key pieces of work and past examination questions are carefully marked according to mark schemes which are shared with the students and which include advice for improvement. All students are aware of their target grades and twice-yearly reviews enable teachers to provide individual advice and support. Practical work is increasing although none was seen during the inspection. Further development of this is being planned and evidence from the scheme of work and student files shows that it needs to be increased in frequency.
154. Leadership of the subject is good, with issues, such as practical work, identified and action taken for improvement. Management of procedures, such as tracking student progress and providing targeted support, is also good. Further development of the subject is now constrained by the size of the groups and a shortage of laboratories.

CHEMISTRY

155. Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students develop a deep understanding of practical and theoretical chemistry.
- Teachers' high expectations and very good teaching result in effective learning.
- Excellent student teacher relationships foster a desire to learn.
- Results in 2003 fell below expectations on the basis of students' prior attainment.
- Evaluation has led to prompt action to improve standards and achievement but systematic use of assessment to guide students is only now being developed.

Commentary

156. Standards in GCE A level in 2002 were close to the national average. Students begin the course in Year 12 with A*-C grades in GCSE science. In examinations the grades of some have fallen below those expected on the basis of prior attainments. Standards now seen in coursework and in lessons are above average. Year 13 higher attaining students draw on previous learning to give lucid explanations, for example about molecular structures in organic chemistry. Their notebooks reflect excellent research, and analytical and laboratory skills. Most are achieving well and some very well. However, a small minority do not do as much as they could and are too reliant upon the teacher. Year 12 students are achieving very well. They all learn safe and precise laboratory skills and very competently draw on a very clear grasp of both the rationale for procedures and the underlying chemistry.

157. Teaching quality is very good overall. Expert knowledge is effectively used to plan and realise the purpose of lessons. All teaching is characterised by good use of questioning to consolidate learning, by appropriate challenge and by considerate support. For example, Year 12 students gain a deep understanding about volumetric analysis by the teacher reinforcing care and precision in practical techniques and consolidating their knowledge of the chemical reactions and calculations needed. Of particular note is the way high-level examination requirements are used to clarify expectations for top quality work. This is teaching of the highest order. Homework and ICT are used well to consolidate learning. Excellent student teacher relationships lead to students showing a marked desire to learn and become fully involved in lessons. The school makes good use of opportunities available to enrich and extend the learning of its most able students, for example through supporting their participation in master classes at local universities.
158. The recently appointed head of department is leading well and managing the subject very effectively. Students benefit greatly from a very well structured chemistry course backed by very good guidance, relevant supportive notes and access to appropriate text books and ICT resources. Large teaching groups fill laboratory accommodation to capacity but do not limit practical work. An evaluation of the 2003 examination results led to prompt changes that are focused on improving standards. Students' work is very diligently assessed, but arrangements are only being developed to use the information in a scheduled way to give subject-specific guidance to all students. Progress has been satisfactory since the previous inspection. A perceptive management strategy for raising standards and achievement is backed by commitment and endeavour to give students excellent support and strengthen the work of the relatively new teaching team.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most learning activities are well planned, prepared and delivered, resulting in good achievement.
- Students apply considerable intellectual effort to their work.
- Access to ICT resources in the sixth form is very good.
- Digital projectors and worksheets are well used in lessons to support students' learning.
- In a minority of lessons, plans do not contain clear enough learning objectives.

Commentary

160. In 2003 examination results in the GCSE A level course were well down on the previous two years. Seven out of 22 students were unclassified. However, performance data analysis by the department shows that these seven students also attained poor results in the other subjects that they sat. It is doubtful given the data available whether this was an appropriate course for these students.
161. Standards now are above national expectations. The current cohort had 100 per cent success (A-E pass) in the AS examination and all are on course to pass the A level examination in 2004. This represents good achievement for these students.
162. Students working on 'Access' database systems in Year 13 were able to write macros to open and link forms and queries from a front end that they created themselves to maximise the efficiency of their systems. In another lesson students did a similar thing using sophisticated 'switchboards' to control the front end of their database systems. A simple charting package was used to support the planning phase for the design of these boards.

163. Most lessons are well planned and carefully structured to support students and enable them to develop their work independently when appropriate. In a minority of lessons there was no planning, or learning objectives were too vague.
164. The departmental documentation contains clear schemes of work for the GCSE AS and A level courses. From September 2004 it is proposed to introduce some lower level ICT courses as a supplement for those students to whom it is more appropriate. The department has introduced a European Computer Driving Licence course, which is being followed by some students as an alternative to ICT Key Skills, which has been phased out.
165. Sixth form students have very good access to ICT resources. When not in use they have desktop machines available in the newly equipped resource room. Alternatively there is a pool of wirelessly networked laptop computers that they can use.

HUMANITIES

166. History and geography were inspected in detail. Good lessons were also seen in sociology and law and one good and one very good lesson in classical studies.

HISTORY

167. The provision for history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and students achieve very well overall.
- Teaching is generally very good and intellectually demanding.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and collaborate very well.
- The use of ICT for class teaching and independent study needs development.
- More guidance to students about note taking during teacher expositions is needed.

Commentary

168. Standards at both A2 and AS level are above average, reflecting the results in GCE examinations in recent years. A particularly good feature is the very good results at A and B grades that are consistently higher than the national figures. Students generally achieve very well, particularly those who enter with high prior attainment. History is deservedly popular and the department accepts some students onto the course with weaker grades at GCSE.
169. This very good level of achievement is due to the department's good understanding of course requirements and high expectations for learning. The head of department provides very good leadership so that the courses are planned thoroughly, taking full account of the range of skills and knowledge required. Teachers are able to motivate and engage students with well-prepared and interesting lessons and provide high quality guidance and support to individuals.
170. In Year 13, students typically show that they can grasp challenging historical sources, showing a good understanding of context. Answers focus well on key issues, making critical reference to the usefulness and reliability of sources. They can write mature, analytical essays that directly attempt to answer the question. Though in general they have developed sound note-making techniques for independent study, their files show they are often too dependent on teacher handouts in class and make few additional points of their own to aid their understanding. In lessons, they engage well in discussion based on thinking skills exercises or collections of sources. For example, they enjoyed speculating about the decisions facing Edward VI or working out different views about Ferdinand and Isabella, showing good powers of reasoning.

171. Students in Year 12 are coming to terms with the higher demands of AS level study and their work reflects a good standard at this stage of their course. They respond well to challenging teaching that expects them to apply previous knowledge to understanding, for example, how Henry VII may have responded to different problems. Over 50 students opted to study AS history and one of the classes is very large. The style of teaching is engaging but the wide range of attainment and prior experience in the class is creating new demands to ensure that all understand the techniques that are used to explore and understand sources at this level and can take notes effectively.
172. Teaching is mainly very good and based on a secure platform of specialist subject knowledge. Teachers are conversant with current developments that they use well to focus on major areas of debate. As a result, students learn very well and make good progress on the whole throughout the AS and A2 years. Lessons are well planned with very clear outcomes in mind that are shared with students. A range of teaching methods is used which provides opportunities for different kinds of learning and engages students' intellectual curiosity. Teachers are beginning to make use of ICT but this could be explored more frequently to extend learning.
173. Good management systems have been established for assessing and monitoring progress and these provide effective feedback on how the students can improve. There is an evident commitment by the two specialists to further improvement. As a consequence, history is growing in popularity in the sixth form; a high proportion of students continue from Years 12 to 13 and are considering higher education in the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

GEOGRAPHY

174. Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have high expectations and very good knowledge of examination requirements.
- The geography department is very well led.
- ICT is underused in lessons.

Commentary

175. Standards are well above national average. A level results have improved from below the national average in 2001 to well above in 2002, and in 2003 another very good set of results show half of the students gained the highest grade. AS results were very good for 2002 and 2003. Geography is a high performing subject compared to other subjects in the school. Achievement of students is very good and they produce some very good work. Students have well-organised, detailed notes, from a range of sources, which provide good learning resources for examinations revision. They have the ability to write examination-type answers at a high level and there are some examples of outstanding, excellent quality coursework.

176. Teaching is very good with many strengths. Lessons are well planned with resources always prepared in advance. Very good knowledge of examination requirements and broad subject knowledge are well deployed to help students improve the quality of their work. All teachers have good supportive relationships with their students; they have high expectations and demand the best from them. High order, probing questions ensure that students think about their work. This ensures that they reach the right conclusions and consolidate their learning. For example, in one lesson students were skilfully questioned about a model used in studies of population, to ensure they were developing the correct analytical skills. From this work students were able to analyse numerical data, construct accurate graphs showing birth and death rates and describe their findings. Time is never wasted in lessons, ensuring that much work is covered and students are fully engaged. Students have very positive attitudes to geography and are keen learners. They work hard in lessons and enthusiastically address any tasks. Opportunities for independent study could be increased. Library reference books are very limited, restricting opportunities for research. ICT is underused in lessons.
177. The department has a good assessment system that feeds into effective tracking to monitor students' progress and set targets for them. Students are kept well informed about how they are doing. Their work is well marked, giving a thorough evaluation about the quality and what they need to do to improve.
178. Leadership of the department is very good and management is good. The head of department has been in post for only two years, but has accomplished a lot in a relatively short period of time. He is very enthusiastic, has clear vision and high expectations, and leads the team of teachers very well. Regular team meetings are held to share information and ideas, but the head of department not being located with the rest of the teachers hinders management. The head of department is well organised and a good administrator. Management could be enhanced with better opportunities to monitor teaching, identify strengths and any weaknesses and share good practice. The quality of development planning could be better.
179. Progress since the last inspection is good. Standards are higher and the quality of teaching is better. New programmes of work have been introduced ensuring continuity and progression in students' experiences. The outstanding issue still to be addressed is the use of ICT in lessons.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

180. The AS/A level design and technology (Product design – resistant materials and textiles options) course was inspected. The provision for design and technology in the sixth form is **very good**.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good.
- Standards are high and achievement is very good.
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Activities need broadening to include working with metals.

Commentary

181. Standards are above average in both years of this two year A level course although in the second year students demonstrate more individualistic and mature design styles and have more innovative approaches to developing their ideas and products. Some students joining the course in the first year from other institutions do not always display the same knowledge, skills and confidence as internal students who have progressed from GCSE product design. Nevertheless all students receive very good individual support from their teachers and their peers, and their achievement is high when they take part in discussions related to the development and specification of products.
182. A level students are very proficient at analysing products, generating their own design specifications and ideas, and contrasting commercial products with their own well-developed personal opinions and tastes. They are also able to write an account of an intellectual investigation into the study of a product and the requirements that influence that product. Examination assessment criteria are well established as a useful guide for students, supported by effective comments and advice from the teachers, aimed to help individual students to improve. When operating in groups, students also discuss social and moral issues, for example the relationship between costs and affordability, and the impact on the environment of the choice of materials and subsequent manufacture of products. ICT is also used very effectively for collecting digital images of products and merging these with examples from specialist subject software and from the Internet.
183. Teaching in the sixth form is always at least good and often better. Specialist teachers make effective use of their industrial and business experiences to provide the students' perspectives on the reality of manufacturing products. Expert demonstrations by teachers of modern manufacturing processes, such as computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM), enable students to realise their innovative design ideas and to work with precision. Students have positive attitudes to learning, respect the advice and guidance they receive from their teachers and work hard to keep to busy schedules.
184. The department has very good leadership, is forward looking, and is up to date with developments, particularly with examination requirements. Specialist teachers are available and are well deployed to maintain the improvements and standards brought about since the previous inspection, and to extend the curriculum opportunities to students in the future. Sixth form students benefit from their own separate area, good access to ICT, and the opportunity to make links with professional designers. The department has access to a good range of commercial products and other resources, and to an experienced technician to support the specialist areas of design in textiles and resistant materials, although students do not yet have enough opportunities to experience working with metals.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

ART AND DESIGN

185. Overall, provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is well above average in AS and A2 examinations, with many students achieving higher grades.
- The curriculum lacks breadth, and students' experience of the full range of fine art media and approaches is limited.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to actively engage in debate or express and justify their opinions about art, especially in relation to the contemporary context.

- Links with local and regional galleries, artists, and further education and higher education providers are underdeveloped.

Commentary

186. Standards attained at examination level are well above average. Students are encouraged to produce thorough research that is carefully presented and they improve their drawing and painting skills during the course, with accurate observational skills and some confident work on different scales. However, most of the work is unadventurous and there is little experimentation. Some of the most able students are beginning to develop a more individual style, but overall the quality of personal response is average and there are few examples of very high achievement. Students have a good knowledge of the work of notable artists from the Renaissance to 1950, but their awareness and understanding of the contemporary context are weak. They are not confident in expressing and justifying their opinions about art and design at the level expected.
187. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The work is well planned and clear guidance is given which helps students meet assessment objectives. However, there is a lack of challenge in much of the teaching and students are not sufficiently stretched by focused questioning or demanding briefs. The opportunities provided are within a narrow range and the work is not placed in a contemporary context. There are gaps in subject knowledge and understanding which limit some of the teaching.
188. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The courses are well organised and delivery is appropriately shared between two teachers. However, the educational vision for the subject has shortcomings. The annual visits to Paris and Glasgow make a positive contribution to the course. However, first hand experience of art and design through visits to local and regional galleries, links with artists and with further and higher education, which put art and design in a real context at this level, have not been built into the provision. Opportunities, for the most able students to achieve highly and for those who wish to make art and design a career, are limited by the narrow curriculum.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

189. Overall, provision for sixth form PE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Strong teacher student relationships facilitate learning.
- Students are able to work independently and think for themselves.
- Students are given opportunities to achieve national governing body coaching awards.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning in the department needs developing.

Commentary

190. Standards are well above average. AS/A level sport and PE is increasingly popular, numbers of students opting for the course have doubled since 2001, and above average results have been achieved in recent years. Year 12 students' results have been better than the national average for the past three years, and the number of students achieving higher A-B grades rose from 21 per cent in 2001 to 33 per cent in 2002. This represents very good achievement.

191. Students are provided with opportunities to participate in PE as part of the enriched curriculum and many are involved in a range of sports offered as extra-curricular activities. Several students achieve the Community Sports Leader Award and support teachers in the production of festivals of sport and competitions for local primary school pupils. The department values leadership in sport and some students are funded by the school to gain coaching awards in swimming so they can support younger pupils in lessons and involve themselves in community sport programmes.
192. These high standards are achieved as a direct result of high quality teaching and learning. Teachers use their detailed subject knowledge to plan lessons that incorporate a range of different methods to stimulate students to learn. In theory lessons teachers set tasks that require students to work independently, find solutions and investigate all sources of information. This is particularly effective as it gives students the confidence to show initiative, offer high quality responses to questioning and contribute to high order discussion on key issues in sport. They can reflect on their own learning and identify links between new and previous knowledge of performance in sport.
193. Subject leadership is very good. The head of department has excellent working relationships with students, shares her high expectations with them and monitors the progress of each individual in her charge. A new work base has been developed for PE theory lessons, with PE texts, resources and visual aids to complement learning. ICT is used to enhance delivery of the subject and study resources are made available on-line so students can revisit aspects of the course or catch up on work missed in their own time. To raise standards further, a schedule of monitoring is required so teachers can share ways of promoting high quality teaching and learning.

Example of outstanding practice

In a sixth form lesson theoretical principles were made meaningful to students.

One excellent lesson, on mental rehearsal techniques for sports performance, made learning meaningful and stimulating by combining complex theoretical principles with games strategy in netball. Having discussed each technique, students were asked in groups to design, demonstrate and then review a strategy that required this particular skill. Groups observed each other perform and then analysed the impact of mental rehearsal techniques on performance. This made the lesson highly active, enjoyable and meaningful for the students, and by putting learning into practical sporting contexts helped them make rapid progress.

BUSINESS

BUSINESS EDUCATION

194. Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The level of the knowledge of teachers is very good.
- There is a good range of activities in lessons.
- Students make good use of prior knowledge to enhance learning.
- GNVQ Intermediate has been successfully introduced.
- Good use is made of targets and progress monitoring.
- Questioning, while good, needs to be more rigorous to enhance learning and assist assessment.
- Comments on assessed work need to be fuller and more directed to specific skills development.

Commentary

195. Results over the last five years have been above the national average. Students demonstrate good achievement. The organisation of the teaching enables students to engage in a wide range of activities. In one Year 13 A level business studies lesson this involved students using the knowledge and understanding gained from part-time jobs, and prior business knowledge, to enhance their learning about appraisal in the work place. This in turn ensures that existing learning is reinforced, and new learning and skills are developed. This has led to students making good progress in lessons, with clear explanations and the development of skills such as analysis. Equally, 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.
196. Students are able to contribute to lessons in a very positive way that enhances not only their own learning, but also that of all the members of the groups. In addition, students were able to explain what they had done to the rest of the class thus enhancing the standard of all. These explanations showed that the students were achieving a good level of understanding.
197. Leadership and management of the department are good. Regular departmental meetings are held and resources are allocated fairly. Targets are set for all students and their work is consistently monitored by the use of progress sheets. Time is found in the GNVQ course to ensure that all are able to develop the necessary confidence and skills. GNVQ Intermediate has been successfully introduced and provision made for Foundation level to be offered when, and if, it is required.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

198. The provision for health and social care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good and helps students to achieve very well.
- The course helps students to become mature and independent.
- A very knowledgeable teaching team is very well led.
- Assessing students' work thoroughly, giving them very good feedback and setting them appropriate targets, are strengths of the teaching.
- The accommodation provides a poor learning environment for the students.

Commentary

199. Standards overall are in line with standards nationally and students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. Their attainment in those units that are assessed by coursework assignments is higher than those that are assessed by external examination.
200. The teaching is very good and helps students to learn very effectively. A strong team of specialist teachers delivers the course, each having very good knowledge of the units for which she is responsible. Students value the wide variety of approaches used in helping them to understand the course content. For example, very good quality discussion in one lesson helped students understand the similarities and differences between the stages of child development in the theories of Freud and Piaget. In another lesson students were able to use the Internet skilfully to look for examples of legislation relating to the rights of children. Lessons are carefully planned and organised so that Year 12 and Year 13 students, who are taught together, are provided with work at a level that meets their needs. Year 12 students report that they value the opportunity to learn from older students.

201. Teachers use assessment very well to help students improve. This often takes the form of verbal comments and discussions about the students' views on their strengths and areas for development. Teachers regularly give very good feedback in written evaluations of students' work, indicating how the next level can be reached. Students are set challenging targets and they are encouraged to submit coursework regularly for interim marking before their final assessment.
202. The work placements that students have access to throughout the course are very well used to link theory with practice. Students' assignments make very good use of the information gained in real health and early years settings. As a result, they achieve very well in those units of work that require them to apply their skills, such as one in which they evaluate the quality of the communication skills observed on their placement.
203. Students respond very well to the opportunities provided for them. They are mature and independent in the way in which they work in lessons and in private study. They often give their views clearly and concisely. Relationships are very good.
204. The course is very well led and managed and resources are good. Students have good access to ICT throughout the course. Students value having their own base room for the course. However, it is very small and poorly decorated and provides a poor learning environment overall.

PART D: SUMMARY OF MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	2
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	2	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well pupils learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the head teacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	3

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

